Crisis and Hermeneutics: Wang Fuzhi’s Interpretation of Confucian Classics in a Time of Radical Change from Ming to Qing Dynasty

by

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A Thesis Submitted in Conformity with the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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Abstract

In an effort to explore how hermeneutic reason functions in cultural crises, and more specifically, how a Ming loyalist Wang Fuzhi dealt with the political and cultural crises at the Ming-Qing dynastic transition, this dissertation critically examines his commentaries on Confucian classics and historical writings as well as his criticism toward other Confucian scholars and heretical schools. My conclusion is that, unlike his peers’ iconoclastic criticism of Neo-Confucianism, Wang’s uniqueness consists in that he attempted to reconstruct it through such criticism. Through this reconstruction, he tried to provide a solution to the political and cultural crises of his time by promoting universal harmony/he and humanity/ren. In his opinion, humanity originated from the harmonious qi in the universe, was identical with human nature, and demonstrated in the humane governance. Thus, he established a comprehensive system that incorporated cosmology, human nature, and political governance.

Wang insisted that human beings’ destruction of the universal harmony caused the rise of perverse qi that gave rise to natural disasters and social conflicts. In order to decrease the amount of perverse qi and in turn the number of bad people and conflicts generated, Wang thought that man could cultivate his own harmonious qi or humanity and thus increase the universal harmonious qi through self-cultivation. Individually, the measures were dependent upon complying with ritual propriety and awakening one’s innate knowledge. Politically, it depended upon the ruler’s humane governance—the cultivation and extension of humanity to the people.
Wang’s motivation of reconstruction was also powered by his arrogance. From his slogan, “the Six Classics require me to start a new phase”, he tacitly assumed himself to be on par with Confucius, justifying his criticism of others. Regrettably, his criticism of other non-Confucian schools was often impertinent and biased although his criticism of Neo-Confucianism was to the point.

Key Words: Crisis, Wang Fuzhi, Harmony, Humanity, the Kingly Way, nature, Neo-Confucianism
Acknowledgments

In the process of writing this dissertation, my supervisor Professor Vincent Shen, has given me patient and careful direction, including selecting topics and methodology, organizing materials, revising drafts and proofreading the whole work. Professor Graham Sanders and Professor Johanna Liu help me to restructure the chapters to make them more coherent, and advise me how to use and explain details and make the whole work more concise and readable. My colleague David Chai patiently proofread my many drafts, offering invaluable advice on how to improve them. Here, I express my sincere thanks to all of them.

I also would like to thank Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholar Exchange (USA). Without the foundation’s dissertation fellowship, I would have been under greater economic pressure during the process of finishing my dissertation.
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Chapter 1 Political and Cultural Crisis: Wang Fuzhi’s Response

In a broad sense, crisis refers to all kinds of crucial and unstable conditions that human beings go through in social, political and cultural life, and in which an abrupt or decisive change is impending. Just as Professor Vincent Shen explains, “Crisis does not refer to a dangerous and frightening situation only, but the radical and profound transitions of social and cultural order and paradigm. At this point, the old order loses its stability and disintegrates; and its negative consequences become more and more serious; but the new order has not been established, although human beings are expecting it with enthusiasm.” (Shen1985: 185) That is to say, during a crisis, the old order and paradigm lose their power to hold society together and to deal with new problems, and society enters a chaotic and precarious state. It is through solving the problems generated by crisis that human beings reach a new cultural or political stage.

Generally, there are two ways to solve problems generated by crisis. One is to solve the problems without fundamentally changing the old order or paradigm, which is called reformation; the other is to eliminate the problems together with the old order or paradigm, and is regarded as revolution. Reformation causes less destruction to society and culture but cannot eliminate the root of the problems or crises, and thus is likely to lead to a weaker society or state. For example, the Western Zhou 西周 (1027-771 BC) was destroyed by the barbarians when its dukedoms were out of its control. The king moved his capital to Luoyang 洛阳 to avoid any further attacks, but did not know to strengthen his power by controlling the powerful dukedoms. Hence, the Eastern Zhou 東周 (771-221 BC) declined and ended in the chaos of dukedom conflict. On the other hand, revolution can obliterate crises completely by throwing away the old social order and paradigm, but it brings more destruction, so the society needs a longer time to recover. Because it abandons the old paradigm and social order, it can develop well once it finds its right course. For instance, the political and cultural crises generated by pure talk/qingtān 清谈 in the Western Jin 西晋 (265-316) were resolved by the replacement of Han Chinese rule with nomadic barbarian rule. As a result, the new-founded northern kingdoms abandoned all previous problems, and gradually developed into a powerful dynasty—the Sui 隋—that finally united China and started the most powerful period in Chinese history. However, it caused a great deal of
destruction to Chinese culture and society during the following 300 hundred years cultural and ethnic blending.

Similar to the Western Jin, the Late Ming 明 also encountered cultural crisis first, then ruin in political crisis, and was conquered by an alien people; different from the Jin which established the Eastern Jin 東晉 (316-420) on the south of the Yangtze River and continued for another 100 years, the Late Ming was completely conquered by the Manchurians. In the Late Ming, the cultural crises were brought about by the Cheng Zhu 程朱 and Yangming 陽明 Schools of Neo-Confucianism, while the political crises were peasant uprisings and the following Manchurian conquest and acculturations. The solution to the problems generated by the crises of the Late Ming could be said to be revolutionary—the overthrowing of the Ming and the acceptance of the Manchurian regime. But this solution led to a new crisis—the survival and preservation of Han Chinese culture and Confucianism in the eyes of the Ming loyalists. In this dissertation, we will elucidate a Ming loyalist, Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619-1692), and his apologetic interpretation and reconstruction of Neo-Confucianism to see how he dealt with the cultural and political crises during the Ming-Qing transition—that is, the reconstruction of Neo-Confucianism in response to the threat of Manchurian acculturation.

Wang Fuzhi was born into a gentry’s family in Hengyang County, Hunan Province. His ancestor was a low rank general of the Ming founder, Zhu Yuanzhang(1328-1398). After he retired from society in his late years, he lived a boat-shaped hill and thus called himself “Chuanshan 船山”. As a result, people called his works as the Complete Works of Mr. Chuanshan/Chuanshan Quanshu 船山全書, or the Extant Works of Mr. Chuanshan/Chuanshan Yishu 船山遺書. Some scholars also use “Chuanshan” to name their own monographs on Wang Fuzhi as shown in 1.4.

1.1 The Political and Cultural Crises in the late Ming
Before Wang Fuzhi was born, the Ming Empire, in its gasps, was full of crises. Internally, heavy taxes caused rampant peasant uprisings in Sichuan, northwest, and central China; political partisan conflicts reached their zenith in the Ming court and spread around the country. The later stage of Cheng-Zhu School produced more pedantic and monk-like scholars and officials on the one side, while the prevalence of the Yangming School left no embankment for people’s desire,
turning morality into a veil or excuse to earn selfish interests. Externally, Manchurian warlords were waiting for an opportunity to invade the Ming capital, Beijing, and establish their new regime. Upon these crises, many scholars, officials, and generals exhausted their efforts to deal with them, but unfortunately, the more they struggled, the deeper the empire plunged into crises.

1.1.1 The Political and Social Crises

Firstly, in dealing with the peasant uprising, the Ming officials’ mismanagement and irresponsibility and the military failures in battle made the rebellious peasant army more and more invincible and powerful. After Li Zicheng 李自成 (1605-1645) occupied Kaifeng 开封, the capital of Henan province in 1636 and Luoyang in 1641, his army soon completed the siege of the Ming capital Beijing. But in front of this pending danger of the empire, the Ming officials were hectically engaged in factional struggles between the eunuch party and the Donglin Party, and the scholar-officials were indulged in their leisurely and dissolute lives in big cities, such as winning compliments, giving parties, touring around the country, and lecturing and organizing clubs. Perhaps their indifference to national crises could be explained with the attitude or thinking that they did not care whether the royal family was Zhu or Li, if only it was a Chinese family. What made them surprised was that after Li Zicheng overthrew the Ming Dynasty, the frontier Ming general Wu Sangui 吳三桂 (1612-1678) led the Manchurian warlord to the invasion and conquering of China, leaving the Ming scholar-officials neither their Ming Empire nor the Han-Chinese culture of which they were so proud. As a result, the Ming loyalists demonstrated remorse at their past behavior with such activities as not entering cities, not attending parties, not lecturing, not going back home, and mourned the end of the Ming through self-affliction. They also wrote a lot of memoirs to record their cherished memory of the wonderful and pleasant events of the perished Ming, but their aim was to show their longing for their past dynasty and their regret for not having saved it from collapse. As one memoir stated, “If I could see the peaceful time of the Ming again, I would be satisfied even if I became a servant or a beggar. Now I recall my past life, I cannot but shed tears.” (Zhou 2002: 407) Wang Fuzhi also showed mixed feelings of blame and regret when he complained that ordinary people forgot the Ming’s beneficence and accepted the Qing. After he compared the taxes in different periods of the Ming, he claimed, “The beneficence of the sons and grandsons of the sagely Emperor Zhu Yuanzhang (1328-1398) was great, but those cultivating their ancestors’ fields and
producing descendants forgot it, rebelling against the rulers. Thus, the miserable fate of being killed by the Manchurians was caused by themselves.”\(^1\) Undeniably, Wang Fuzhi exaggerated the Ming emperors’ beneficence, but it was clear that he showed nostalgia towards the Ming and blamed the peasant rebels.

Secondly, with regard to factional struggles, when the Donglin Party 東林黨 could not overcome the eunuch party, it disclosed the conflict in imperial court to the public and hoped to get support from the people. As a result, the conflict between the Donglin Party and the eunuchs became a national contest. A dialogue between a scholar and Gu Xiancheng 顧憲成 (1550-1612), the leader of the Donglin Party elucidated this situation:

Lou Jiang 倪江\(^2\) asked Mr. Gu Xiancheng, “Recently there was a strange matter, do you know of it?”
What is it?
What the Cabinet of Government thinks right, the external discussion will definitely regard as wrong. What the Cabinet thinks wrong, the external discussion will definitely regard as right.
Mr. Gu said, “There was a strange matter outside too.”
What?
What external discussion regards right, the Cabinet will definitely think as wrong; what external discussion regards wrong, the Cabinet will definitely think as right. (Huang 1994: 8-730)\(^3\)

In this dialogue, Gu Xiancheng apparently was defending the external party and criticized the Cabinet. Although Gu Xiancheng was regarded as a nobleman, he showed more control in a bravado contest than thinking rationally.

The spread of factional struggle out of the court had two unfavorable consequences. On the one hand, it brought the competitive ethos in the court to the entire country, causing it to become antagonistic. Within this atmosphere, people switched their contest for truth to contests for

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\(^1\) Wang Fuzhi, *Chuanshan Quanshu* (CSQS) 船山全书 (*Chuanshan Complete Collections*), Volume 12, p. 623. From now on, all quotations from Wang Fuzhi’s *Chuanshan Quanshu* will use the format CSQS, followed by the volume number and page number in brackets.

\(^2\) Lou Jiang 倪江 may be Wang Shizhen 王世貞(1526-1590) whose hometown is Lou Jiang and whose father was called Lou Jiang.

\(^3\) Except for indication, all quotations are my own translation.
bravado/ qi 氣 and thus severely damaged social custom. Imbued in this atmosphere, people became more inclined to fight, compete, and sue each other. One of Liu Zongzhou’s (1578-1645) letters to Prime Minister Wen Tiren 溫體仁 (1573-1639) describes it thusly:

At present, clamorous lawsuits arose from ministers in prison, duels emerged among women, evaluation of officials was manipulated by ordinary people, and slanders traversed all paths. What order would such behavior bring this “peaceful and calm world,” let alone ask them to worry about the unrest of the country! (Liu 1996: 3-519)

On the other hand, the spread of factional struggle opened chances for petty persons to manipulate political discussion. The original aim of factional struggle advocated by the Donglin Party was the distinction of noblemen from petty persons, especially eunuchs, so that a court full of noblemen was achieved, but once the Donglin Party resorted to the public for support, their good will and method in turn was used by petty persons to earn their fame and power. Consequently, the Donglin Party went against its original purpose and could not be better than the eunuch party that weakened the empire.

Undoubtedly, political discussion and factional struggle could help maintain a healthy and upright imperial court and government, but they could also turn the empire into internal disputes and disharmony if improperly used. To some extent, the Donglin Party’s spread of court disputes into the empire belonged to the latter, and contributed to the collapse of the Ming. After the collapse of the Ming, many Ming loyalists were feeling remorseful about their participation in factional conflict. But Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610-1695), as the son of the famous Donglin leader Huang Zunsu 黃遵素, continued supporting political discussion and academy as a restraint to the emperor’s power in his book, *Mingyi Dai Fang Lu* 明夷待訪錄, and was praised as the prophetic thinker of democracy and the parliamentary system by some 20th century scholars.4 Upon this point, Zhu Yixin 朱一新 (1846-1894) already raised a different view one hundred years ago. Zhu argued,

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Lizhou (Huang Zongxi) knew that political discussion arose from the academy, but ignored that perverse criticism also arose there. He knew that upright men such as Chen Dong 陳東 (1086-1127) and Ouyang Che 欧陽澈 (1097-1127) were students from the Royal Academy, but did not realize that those eulogizing Jia Sidao 賈似道 (1213-1275) were also students from the Royal Academy. Once the custom of the Royal Academy became degenerative, turmoil and slander all came from there.\(^5\)

Different from Huang Zongxi, Wang Fuzhi did not trust the factional struggle which the populace took part in, but proposed to fight against evil power and persons with one’s own righteousness and morale alone. He criticized factional struggle from three aspects.

First, he indicated, it was only when one did not have enough morale and confidence to fight against petty persons and eunuchs that one resorted to the help of the populace. But in doing this, one already lost a lot in the fighting.

Second, Wang Fuzhi found that the populace morale were unusable and unreliable. The populace was very easily susceptible to profit and fame and could be used to justify petty person’s evil purpose. Wang Fuzhi demonstrated this view through commenting on the popular support on Wu Zetian 武則天 (624-705). He said,

After Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BC-23 AD), the phenomenon that scholars and common people under Heaven made formal appeals for someone to mount the throne happened again to Wu Zetian. Once Fu Youyi 傅遊藝 (?-691) was granted a high position, 60,000 people appealed to change the national name from Tang to Zhou. This phenomenon never happened to the emperors of the Han, Tang, Shang or Zhou although the emperors of the Han and Tang made great military achievements and those of the Shang and Zhou accomplished great virtues. Mencius once said, “A person winning the populace’s support will be the Son of Heaven.” That might apply only to the society where the sagely teaching still existed, the people’s minds were simple, and the righteous way prevailed without bending at the end of the Three Dynasties. As for later society, the sagely teaching declined.

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\(^5\) Zhu Yixin 朱一新, *Wu Xie Tang Da Wen 無邪堂答問 (Questions and Answers in the Innocent Hall)*, volume 3, p. 3.
and people’s morality degraded, people’s concern of profit prevailed, no scholar could resist the enticement of position and rank, and no ordinary person could stand firm before profit, how could the populace be trustworthy? Once bandits and thieves became emperors, they accepted them; once women got the throne, they justified her. Once barbarians conquered China, they submitted to them. Confucius said, “When the world follows the Way, the populace will not discuss politics.” Therefore, in later times, common people’s political discussions are the source of great disasters and chaos. (CSQS 10-809-810)

In this paragraph, Wang Fuzhi not only disclosed the untrustworthiness of populace’s morale and intention, he also denied the value of political discussion and regarded it as the origin of trouble and chaos. This was a sharp contrast with Huang Zongxi’s support of political discussion and party politics.

Third, Wang Fuzhi doubted the function of party struggle and political discussion. The Donglin Party insisted that the truth would be exposed through argumentation and debate, but did not realize that it deviated from the pursuit of truth to the contest of bravado in an ongoing debate. Wang said,

What they argued for was to find the truth, but once they developed the pursuit of truth through argumentation as a fashion, they in turn regarded argumentation as their purpose or truth itself. (CSQS 11-171)

As a result, the noblemen failed to stick to their noble course when arguing with petty persons and degraded themselves to the level of petty persons. To some degree, Wang Fuzhi also looked at the Donglin Party from this point of view. This was manifested in his comment on the court debate in the Song Dynasty:

[In the process of argumentation] the so-called noblemen compete with bravado, while petty persons shed off their venom. How far away is bravado from venom? Then the difference between the nobleman and petty person is as small as the difference between xun (eight feet) and zhang (ten feet). (CSQS 11-103)

This kind of partisan struggle continued in Southern China after the loss of Beijing. Even under the Manchurian conquest period, it still continued in the small local regimes the Ming princes temporarily established. It also entrapped Wang Fuzhi and almost consumed his life when he
unwisely participated in the conflict between the Wu Party and the Chu Party in 1650. Only after the Ming princes were completely destroyed did partisan struggles become extinct in China.

1.1.2 The Intellectual and Cultural Crises

If peasant uprising and factional struggle stood for political and social crises in the Late Ming, the degeneration and unhealthy consequences of Neo-Confucianism among scholars and ordinary people might represent cultural and moral crises. To some degree, the relation between the Cheng-Zhu School and the Yangming School was very analogous to the relation between Han Confucianism and Neo-Daoism or Dark Learning in the later Han, Wei and Jin period. It was the corruption and hypocrisy of Han Confucian practice that led to the fondness of naturalness and frankness and thus the rise of Neo-Daoism; so it was the pedantry and inflexibility of Cheng-Zhu School that led to Chen Xianzhang’s 陳獻章 (1428-1500) pathetic outcry of “return to the natural” and Wang Yangming’s 王陽明 (1472-1529) emphasis on the subjectivity of mind. However, when the Yangming School went to the extreme and claimed that mind or innate knowledge had absolute power to decide good from evil and did not need normative rules, it dissolved morality and removed the embankment for human desires. People mistook their selfish desires as innate knowledge or conscience and openly defied Confucian moral principles. As a result, it created a new moral crisis. With the deterioration of moral crisis, political and social crises in the Late Ming worsened, for moral crisis produced more incompetent and irresponsible officials who governed and defended the state poorly and led it to collapse.

6 Because Chen Xianzhang and Wang Yangming emphasized naturalness and spontaneity of mind, they inevitably went closer to Daoist naturalness and Chan Buddhist spontaneity, and thus were condemned as spreading Chan Buddhism in the guise of Confucianism. Unquestionably, this condemnation is unfounded, for a reaction against fixed and pedantic orthodoxy will inevitably choose the spontaneous and dynamic features of the mind. Chan Buddhism rose as a reaction toward the inflexibility of the Vinaya School and thus advocated subjectivity and spontaneity; so it is reasonable that the Yangming School rose against the Cheng-Zhu School and proposed subjectivity and spontaneity too. The Yangming School might have borrowed something from Chan Buddhism because they shared the same Chinese cultural background, but it would be too cursory to conclude that Wang Yangming spread Chan Buddhism in the name of Confucianism.
Based on this, it is easy to understand why Wang Fuzhi condemned Lu Jiuyuan 隆九淵 (1139-1192) and Wang Yangming as more destructive than a huge flood and ferocious beasts, saying, “The emergence of Lu Jiuyuan led to the end of the Song Dynasty.” (CSQS 12-371) Implied in his words was that Wang Yangming led to the collapse of the Ming too. Undoubtedly, Wang Fuzhi simplified the cause of the Ming collapse as merely the corruption of morality and neglected other factors, such as heavy taxes, land usurpation, famine and flood, incompetent officials, emperor’s cruelty, etc. For example, when Wang Fuzhi as a pedantic scholar insisted that the Ming emperors decreased taxes year after year but the peasants still rebelled instead of showing their appreciation, he was ignorant of the fact that the peasants’ land were usurped by the Ming princes and officials while they were still forced to pay taxes. Therefore, the Ming collapse was largely due to the heavy economic oppression rather than the spread and degeneration of Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge. In contrast, the early Han Dynasty adopted Huang-Lao Daoism to govern the people and did not set moral codes for the people, but achieved the prosperous time of Chinese governance with light taxes. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi did not know the main cause of the Ming collapse when he blamed the spread of Wang Yangming School, and thus his prescription for future generations could only function as a subsidiary reference in governance. Moreover, when Wang Fuzhi blamed the Yangming School, he unconsciously looked lightly at the negative consequences of the Cheng-Zhu School. Actually, the Cheng-Zhu School first suffocated students’ mind and vitality with its passive and routine quiet-sitting and produced more incompetent scholars who abandoned practical affairs and indulged in meditation; the Yangming School as a reaction set free the mind from the intellectual suffocation and fetter, going so far as to throw away all moral rules and resort only to the will or innate knowledge, and thus produced more irresponsible scholars and officials. In short, to the collapse of the Ming, they should both be blamed.

According to Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611-1671), Huang Zongxi and Yan Yuan’s 顏元 (1635-1704) condemnation of Neo-Confucianism, it was evident that they targeted both the Cheng-Zhu and the Yangming Schools. Let’s just look several quotations.

As for what have been recorded in the Four Books, the Six Classics, the historical records and various masters’ writings, they originally were the words to investigate principles and the way to deal with affairs. But if one takes investigating principle and dealing with affairs
as nothing but reading the Classics and revising previous books, one will be a thousand miles away from the true approach of seeking the right way.\(^7\)

The Confucian learning should be able to govern heaven and order earth; however scholars in later generations took Zhu Xi and Cheng brothers’ sayings as the final truth. If one could attach one or two items to the Cheng Brothers’ sayings, one would be classified as a Confucian scholar. Then they would cheat people in the world in the guise of Confucianism. They regarded tax collectors as wealth accumulators, frontier defender and expander as uncultivated persons…They only controlled people in the country with the highest principle for human beings, the center of Heaven and earth, and the broad discourse of bringing order and peace for ten thousand generations. Once there were worries that ministers should deal with, which was the time they contributed something to the country, they opened their mouth completely in the dark, just as lost in the mist.\(^8\)

Before I toured southern China, I still had the idea to regard the Cheng-Zhu School as a branch of the sage’s teaching. Since I toured the south, I found that every Neo-Confucian was a Chan disciple, every household read empty texts, and all behaved against Confucius’ teachings. (Yan 1987: 774)

In fact, the negative consequence of the Cheng-Zhu School already appeared right after the Ming Empire ordained it as national ideology. These negative consequences included pedantry, monastery and repressive life-style, and the separation and contradiction between its quietude and its slogan to pacify the world. Wu Yubi’s 吳與弼 (1391-1469) case would be a convincible proof.

The search for sagehood proved Wu Yubi to be incompatible with an official career…This inner drive to achieve a kind of sanctity—in Confucian terms characterized by a state of purity/chun 醇, integrity/zheng 正, serenity/dan 澗, or composure/jing 靜—was

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\(^7\) Fang Yizhi, *Preface to Wuli Xiaoshi*, 物理小識自序

\(^8\) Huang Zongxi, *Grave Motto for Wu Bianyu in Nanlei Wending Houji*, Volume 3, 吳弁玉墓誌銘南雷文定後集.
accompanied by symptoms of alienation from ordinary society and the established forms of social intercourse which one does not normally expect to find in a model of traditional virtue or a “pillar” of orthodox. (de Bary 1975 : 20)

If to be a sage in the Cheng-Zhu School meant to be away from ordinary life, social intercourse and official career, then the sage thus prescribed was not the sage envisioned by Confucius or Mencius any more, but the Buddha in the temple, for any student would find that Confucius and Mencius were busy seeking official positions and never took personal cultivation as their priority. To the most, they regarded personal cultivation as a subsidiary for an official career and did not replace the main goal with the subsidiary. Therefore it was absurd that the Cheng-Zhu School pursued sagehood through quiet-sitting and abandoning social affairs, and thus turned Confucianism into something like Buddhism. From this point of view, it was unfair to condemn Yangming School as adulterating Confucianism with Chan Buddhism only, while exculpating the Cheng-Zhu School from their Buddhist practice.

If we analyze the negative consequences of the Cheng-Zhu School with hindsight, we can infer that Wang Yangming might already have found its passive, pedantic and hypocritical consequences as demonstrated in quiet-sitting, and thus proposed his dynamic doctrine of mind as a correction. Later, Wang Yangming’s disciple, Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1602) identified more clearly the negative consequences of the Cheng-Zhu School right before the Ming collapse. Li Zhi said,

In ordinary times when there is peace, they only know how to bow and salute one another, or else they sit all day long in an upright posture like a clay image, thinking that if they can surpass all stray thoughts they will become sages and worthies. The more cunning among them participate in meetings to discuss innate knowledge, secretly hoping to gain some recognition and win high office. But when a crisis comes, they look at each other pale and speechless, try to shift the blame to one another, and save themselves on the pretext that “the clearest wisdom is self-presentation.” Consequently if the state employs only this type of scholar, when an emergency arises it has no one of any use in the situation. (Li Zhi 1961: 159)

This kind of moral cultivation took the good pretext to become a sage; however what it produced was far from the sage like the Duke of Zhou or Confucius who had the courage to undertake political or social responsibilities, but only those who were incapable, hypocritical, and
irresponsible. As a result, the Cheng-Zhu personal cultivation not only abandoned official career, but also failed to achieve its aim—to beautify social custom. The Cheng-Zhu School thus, from the beginning, already planted the seeds of moral and political crises in the Ming Dynasty when it was ordained as national ideology. It was regrettable that the Ming scholars and officials did not take Li Zhi’s criticism serious earlier, but only reflected the defects of the Cheng-Zhu School after the Manchurian conquest.

One characteristic of Yangming’s theory of innate knowledge was that one should commit oneself on the basis of one’s own judgment without relying on established values or norms. In this way, Wang Yangming restored the dynamic character of mind, proposed to guide human activity with innate knowledge, and brought some vitality to the Ming academic circle. However, along with strengthening the capacity for the autonomy of innate knowledge and judgment, the functions of dissolving established norms swiftly crept in. Innate knowledge did not follow any set rule, but created its own rule as occasion demanded. (Araki Kengo 1975) As a result, when this doctrine spread in society, people more likely took it as a pretext to break moral norms and to earn selfish interests, and thus human desires were liberated from moral norms, increasingly exhibiting the unruliness of an untamed horse. When his doctrine reached Li Zhi, it developed into the doctrine of “Childlike Mind/tongxin 童心” which advocated the identity of selfish desires with principle. For example, Li Zhi claimed, apart from wearing clothes and eating meals, there were no human relationships. All things in the world were nothing but clothes and food. At this point, the consequence of the spread of Wang Yangming’s doctrine again betrayed his good will, i.e., through resorting to innate knowledge and naturalness to cure the hypocrisy brought by the Cheng-Zhu School. It made the situation worse by introducing the overflow of human desires. Just as Gao Panlong 高攀龍 (1562-1626) commented,

The corrupted practice of Yaojiang’s (Yangming) doctrine is: Yangming originally aimed to enlighten the mind (innate knowledge) through sweeping away unnecessary knowledge earned through hearing and seeing, but finally he led people to rely on their mind solely but abandon learning moral principles. As a result, people looked lightly on the Books of Poetry, Documents, Ritual Propriety and Music, and scholars seldom had any real understanding of Confucianism. He in the beginning emptied the mind through sweeping away both good and evil, but at the end he led people to resort to empty mind and thus
abandon moral practice. As a result, people did not value much about loyalty, righteousness, integrity and honor, and scholars seldom had real cultivation. (Huang 1994: 8-784)

The unruliness of human desires resulted from the spread and misinterpretation of Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge, so that people from different camps tried to arrest it. To do this, their primary task was to re-establish the foundation of moral principles—the goodness of human nature so as to deny Wang Yangming’s saying, “The substance of the mind is beyond good and evil.” For this reason, the Donglin Party argued that Yangming must have supposed the existence of the idea of goodness, for when he claimed that the void and luminous substance of mind was desirable, he already admitted that it was good, because no one sought for what he regarded as being bad. Now that the substance of mind was good, one should seek for it and “stand still on the good/zhishan 止善” which needs both the illumination of goodness or innate knowledge but also the knowledge of normative rules for existential situations. Thus the good was connected with the nature of our mind on the one side, and with the objective occasions of life on the other. Hence the thought of Wang Yangming School—which took the good as belonging just to the mind—should be supplemented by the Cheng Zhu School idea of moral reason, that the good was “whatever things should be” and belonged to things as well. (Tang Junyi 1975) But this eclectic view of the Donglin Party could not justify the necessity of normative rules and thus was unable to defeat Yangming’s disciples theoretically, for the Yangming School insisted that the innate knowledge already predicated or subsumed the knowledge of normative rules spontaneously.

Then it came to Liu Zongzhou 劉宗周 (1578-1645). Different from the Donglin Party, Liu dug deep into Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge to the layer of good will, regarded good will as prior to the knowledge of good and evil, and tried to make the moral doctrine of the School of Mind more complete. According to Liu, when one took the knowing of good and evil as of primary importance and as the first step for his moral practice, ordinary good and evil ideas or wills must already be there. Thus the knowing was actually posterior to such good or evil things as were done by him. Thus one should never be a moral being with the confidence that one could be a sage, for all his moral struggles followed after evils already done. With this consideration, Liu advocated the ontological goodness of will, urging students to be “watchful
over themselves when alone/shendu 慎獨” so as to keep all issuance of feelings and actions in perfect harmony with moral principle and so become a sage. (Tang Junyi 1975)

Liu’s prescription was undoubtedly too ideal. Not only was his concept of the sage too perfect and faultless, but also that his concept of absolute goodwill lost any concrete reference to legitimatize it as good. Without reference, the absolute goodwill again fell into what Wang Yangming said, “The substance of mind is beyond good and evil”.

Just as things always reverse themselves after reaching an extreme, the social and moral situation of the late Ming required the return to moral norms. The question, however, lay in how to reconstruct moral norms after the denigration of moral norms in the late Ming. In short, with the prevalence of the Yangming School and the prosperity of commerce in the late Ming, it could be said that society was in a state of full liberty and lack of moral principle, and the academic sphere was full of different doctrines or schools. Neo-Confucianism was facing a crisis to exist or perish. At the same time, the degenerative social ethos produced immoral and incapable officials, and thus brought in social and political crisis. All these crises broke out in 1644. Wang Fuzhi was unfortunately thrown into them while still in his twenties and was asked to give a response. This explains why he provided us a syncretism of Qi-momism, Cheng-Zhu School and Lu-Wang School.

1.2 Wang Fuzhi’s Response to Political Crises

In 1644, the political and cultural crises concluded the Ming Empire with Li Zicheng’s occupation of Beijing and Emperor Chong Zhen’s 崇禎 (1627-1644) suicide. Wang Fuzhi wrote a long poem to express his sadness and remembrance of the Ming and his condemnation of rebellious peasants. He built “the refuge of continuing dreams/xumeng an 續夢庵” in the mountains and wished the Ming princes to restore their reign. But what made him more frustrated was the Manchurian conquest after the collapse of the peasant regime. Formerly, the crisis was nothing but a dynastic transition among Han Chinese people, but now it devolved into an alien conquest which not only ruled Han Chinese politically but also threatened the existence of Han Chinese culture. Especially, the massacres the Manchurian troops did in Yangzhou and Jiangyin and the coercive implementation of Manchurian costume and hair-style made all Ming loyalists feel the threat of the ethnic and cultural extinction of Han Chinese. It was from this
background that Wang Fuzhi wished that it would be better to transfer the throne to Han Chinese bandits than to barbarians. It was also from the point of the preservation of Han Chinese culture that Wang Fuzhi made a distinction between the lineage of political governance/zhitong 治統 and the heritage of the Way/daotong 道統 and claimed that the barbarian rulers could seize the lineage of political governance but never be able to steal the heritage of the Way. Although some traitor-scholars taught them the heritage of the Way, especially Confucian rituals and ceremonies, the barbarian rulers’ performance was nothing more than a monkey imitating humans by wearing a hat and never grasped the essence. On this point, Wang Fuzhi expressed hatred and rejection toward the fusion of different peoples and the barbarian’s acceptance of Han Chinese culture.

Why was Wang Fuzhi so loyal to the Ming and so determined to resist the Manchurians? Apart from his hatred toward the Manchurian cruelty in their conquest and his ethnic prejudice toward barbarians, his family background and education also contributed something to his emotional or enthusiastic behavior.

Wang Fuzhi was born the son of a low-level official. His ancestor’s relation to the Ming court determined his family’s unshakable loyalty. According to his account about his familial history, his ancestor was a general under Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398), the founder of the Ming; his father Wang Chaopin 王朝聘 was an upright scholar studying the Spring-Autumn Annals. The principle of this book, i.e., the doctrine of honoring the Chinese king and driving away barbarians, deeply affected all members of his family. This explained why Wang Fuzhi and his father, when being captured, did not submit to Zhang Xianzhong 張獻忠 (1606-1646), the leader of a peasantry rebellious army, let alone their subject to the Manchurians. More importantly, the ideal described in the book dictated the character of Wang Fuzhi’s orthodox Confucian standpoint; that is, adhering persistently to the Kingly Way and educating the people with humanity and ritual propriety. To some degree, this kind of familial study made Wang Fuzhi’s political and historical thought contradictory, i.e., on the one hand, he advocated an evolutionary historical view; while on the other, he regarded the polity of the Zhou Dynasty as the ideal.

Wang Fuzhi’s loyalty to the Ming prevented him from remaining aloof to the crises of the Ming Empire. In 1639, he organized the “Correction Club/kuangshe 匡社” in emulation of the
Restoration Club\textit{fushe} 復社, the Donglin Party’s new form in southern China, under the influence of Gao Shitai 高世泰, a nephew of the famous Donglin leader Gao Panglong, and actively participated in political discussion and factional struggle unconsciously.\footnote{In 1642, Gao Shitai was Secretary Promoter of Education\textit{ti xue jian shi} 提學僉事 in Huguang Province 湖廣 and judged Wang Fuzhi’s composition on \textit{the Spring-Autumn Annals} as first class. Thanks to Gao’s beneficence, Wang Fuzhi did not attack the Donglin Party publicly although he criticized factional struggle without sparing any energy.} When the Manchurians marched southward in 1646, he wrote Hubei Provincial Governor Zhang Kuang 章曠 about military strategy and asked him to coordinate generals along the Yangtze River so as to prevent military collapse in front of the Manchurian attacks. In 1648, he started an offence against the Manchurian army on Mount Hengshan 衡山 and fled to Zhaoqing 肇慶, the stop-over place of the Yongli court after being defeated.

It was in the Yongli court between 1648-1651 that Wang Fuzhi got a real experience of the severity of factional struggle, the inefficiency of the Ming government and the difficulty in coordinating army generals. The factional struggle continued from Beijing to Nanjing, and then to every local regime of the Ming princes even amidst such a life and death crisis. On the one side, the so-called Confucian scholars and noblemen still despised the eunuchs and their followers and shamed to cooperate with them, and thus fatally weakened their defense and resistance against the Manchurian conquest, such as Jin Bao’s 金堡 (1614-1680) impetuous impeach of the eunuch party member Wang Huacheng 王化澄 (?-1652). On the other, the eunuchs and their followers still competed for power so as to control national affairs regardless of the impending extinction of the small regime. Regarding the non-cooperation between official-scholar and eunuchs, Ian McMorran thinks differently of their loyalty, saying the loyalty of the eunuch party or Wu party in the Yongli court was a loyalty to the emperor’s person, while that of the Donglin Party or Chu party in the Yongli court focused on the emperor’s function. (McMorran 1979) However, it is hard to make a distinction for a Ming official between his loyalty to the emperor and his loyalty to the country or the emperor’s function. A probable explanation is that factional struggle made Confucian scholars instinctually reject whatever the eunuch party did. In other words, what maintained factional struggle was not officials’ different loyalty, but the scholar-officials’ deep prejudice and intolerance toward eunuchs and their followers and the eunuch party’s fear of losing power. Wang Fuzhi, as a supporter of the Chu
party, impeached Wang Huacheng, the leader of eunuch/Wu party, and almost lost his own life in order to save the Five Tigers. From Wang Fuzhi’s later reflection, it was evident that Jin Bao attacked Wang Huacheng with bravado and prejudice, and Wang Fuzhi blindly supported them from the standpoint of scholar-officials. He repented that he forgot his father’s admonishment not to compromise his own principle by becoming involved with contemporary factional conflicts. (CSQS 16-186)

At this point, we can discuss more about Wang Fuzhi’s temperament in order to understand why he was so impetuous in the Yongli court and so opinionated and biased in his commentaries on historical figures and events. Of course, this partly resulted from the general academic ethos of the Late Ming—scholars tended to seek novelty and uniqueness. But his temperament might have a contribution too. According to Wang Fuzhi’s Excerpt of his family genealogy/Jiashi Jielu, he admitted that he did not restrain himself much and often committed errors of speech when he was young. (CSQS 16-152) This kind of temperament predicted that he would be reckless and cursory when evaluating and dealing with people and affairs. Keeping this in mind, one would not be surprised that he hurriedly started a futile offence toward the Manchurian army and then again indiscreetly joined the factional struggle in the Yongli court. One would also easily understand why Wang Fuzhi shed venoms toward almost every historical figure except Confucius and the Duke of Zhou. Right after this life-threatening experience, Wang Fuzhi resigned and ended his short official career in the Yongli court.

Factional struggle led the Ming court unable to set up a feasible and constant policy in fighting against the Manchurian. For example, in 1648, facing the attack of the Manchurian troops, Ju Shisi 瞿式耜 (1590-1650) suggested defense instead of retreat from Guangdong, but eunuch Wang Kun 王坤 persuaded the emperor to flee to the west of Hunan. In addition, the military generals did not cooperate with each other either and competed for their own advantage at the

10 The Five Tigers were Jin Bao 金堡, Ding Shikui 丁時魁, Liu Xiangke 劉湘客, Meng Zhengfa 蒙正發 and Yuan Pengnian 袁彭年, who were thus called because of their unrelenting opposition to eunuch’s participation of national affairs.

11 For example, when commenting Wang Fuzhi’s Unofficial Exegesis on the Book of Odes 詩經稗疏, Zhang Xuecheng thought that Wang Fuzhi used specious arguments, continued the habit or fashion of seeking for uniqueness in the Ming, and thus Wang’s exegesis was not acceptable. (CSQS 16-539-540)
loss of others. In 1651, General Gao Bizheng was ambushed and killed by Sun Kewang, another general of the Yongli court. In short, all officials and generals were fussing over factional or individual interests instead of the future of the nation. Wang Fuzhi learned this, but was incapable to save it because of both his ignorance of military strategy and pedantry. What he could do was only to present some admonishment to the prime minister and emperor at court, but after his resignation, he lost this opportunity too. With unforgettable worry about the fate of the Ming regime, he went home.

Two years after returning home, he planned to go to the Yongli court again. Instead of making a decision through analyzing information about military and political situations at hand, he consulted the divination of hexagram in the Book of Changes, and got Hexagram Kui, which turned into Hexagram Gui Mei. According to his later explanation, the divination put him in a dilemma, i.e., if he stayed home under the Manchurian conquest, he would not be able to live in a pure land anymore; if he went to the court which was manipulated by military general Sun Kewang, he would have to compromise his principles with an evil person. Before long, a general named Li Dingguo recovered Hengyang area for the Ming regime and invited Wang Fuzhi to court. This time, Wang Fuzhi again resorted to hexagrams and again drew Hexagram Kui, which turned into Hexagram Gui Mei, so he decided not to go. From Wang’s hesitation on this matter, he showed how helpless and superstitious he was on the one hand, and incapable in dealing with military and political crises and particular about the situation on the other. His behavior could be viewed as that of a typical Neo-Confucian scholar, who dreamed a perfect situation to let him exert his ability, and was neither willing nor capable to deal with unfavorable situations. This kind of particularity could only show Neo-Confucian scholar’s incapability, and even irresponsibility, despite their worry about the country’s future or loyalty to the regime.

Unquestionably, Wang Fuzhi’s hesitation to return to the Yongli court made him very regretful when the Ming regime was completely destroyed in 1661 and he totally lost any spiritual support. He once lamented, “It is not the way of a minister to save his life for future restoration, because what seems to be able to get through waiting turns into what is unable to get through waiting, and worse is that I cannot find a place to rest.” (CSQS 12-627) He made this more evident when he commented on the recovery of Yan-Yun area from the Liao Empire.
(916-1125) during the Northern Song. He said, “Therefore, an ambitious scholar-official hurriedly catches up with the opportunity but still fears too late. How could he bear to say waiting for a while?” (CSQS 11-59) With the consolidation of the Manchurian conquest, Wang Fuzhi not only lost the opportunity of restoration he was waiting for, but also the place to secure him as a Ming loyalist, because there was no “clean place” left anymore.

1.3 Wang Fuzhi’s Response to Cultural and Intellectual Crises

It is known that Wang Fuzhi built “the refuge for continuing dreams” in the Shuangji Feng 雙髻峰 area of Hengyang soon after the news of the fall of Peking in 1644, his dream then should be the restoration of the Ming one day. But after 1662, this dream turned into a completely pure dream when the Manchurian Dynasty consolidated its reign. At this point, the political crisis of the Ming ended with the start of the Manchurian Dynasty. But the cultural crisis devolved into a new situation—the survival of Han Chinese culture and custom.

Although the Manchurian rulers quickly declared the Cheng-Zhu School as national ideology and tried to establish the Qing Dynasty as an orthodox one in Chinese culture, the Ming loyalists did not believe them but condemned their adoption of Confucianism as a monkey imitating humans by wearing a hat. Moreover, when the Manchurians promulgated new laws to change the Ming costume and hair-style into the Manchurian ones right after they occupied Beijing, according to Chinese tradition that a new dynasty must declare its new costume and banner color after being founded, the Ming loyalists regarded these laws as a symbol of cultural and ethnic annihilation and acculturation. Therefore, they unanimously undertook the preservation of the heritage of the Confucian way and the Ming culture including costume and hair-style as their mission and meaning of life. For example, Li Gong 李顒 (1627-1705) and Wang Fuzhi never wore the Manchurian costume or adopted the Manchurian hair-style even when meeting the Manchurian officials. In Yongli Shilu 永歷實錄, Wang Fuzhi recorded many Ming Loyalists being killed or persecuted because of preserving their Ming hair-style. (CSQS 11-530-533) However, the Ming loyalist took the preservation of true Han Chinese culture—the previous Confucianism and history as more urgent than costume and hair-style. This was demonstrated in

12 To do this, the Manchurian rulers also wanted to discern the submitted Ming people from those resistant ones.
Huang Zongxi’s compilation of Confucian scholar biographies from the Song to the Ming, Gu Yanwu’s seeking for true history and knowledge in *Ri Zhi Lu* 日知錄 and Wang Fuzhi’s painstakingly reinterpreting and commenting on all previous texts on Chinese Confucianism, Daoism and history.

This new cultural crisis helped some Ming loyalists renew their old dreams of political restoration with new ones of cultural preservation although they never forgot the slight opportunity of political restoration. Wang Fuzhi wrote, “Now that the old dreams are no longer continuing, one had better awake to new dreams.” (CSQS 15-341) Regarding Wang’s new dreams, Ian McMorran regards them as a deep commitment to the onward and regenerative movement of the cycles of history, which could still offer present solace to the philosopher caught in a situation where politics seemed too deeply out of phase with philosophy to offer hopes of meaningful personal action. (McMorran 1979) But, apparently, such a remote hope of recovery could not provide much support to Wang Fuzhi’s survival. A more probable explanation should be the loyalists’ turn to cultural preservation, in their words, the preservation of the Ming society or the world under Heaven. Undoubtedly, this Ming society referred to the Ming custom, especially Confucianism and the Han Chinese history. In contrast, those Ming loyalists would not be able to run through the despair of the hopelessness of restoration and the stimulation of cultural annihilation if they could not turn their eyes to cultural preservation. For example, failing to adapt to the new situation after 1662, one Ming loyalist Shen Linqi 沈遴奇 (1603-1664) became mad. As Qian Yiji 錢儀吉 (1783-1850) described,

*He always whispered to others, “I got divine revelation and was told that uprising would break out in a place, and the world would fall into chaos someday of some month.” One night…he rose up suddenly and shouted, “Today the Ming army really comes. The sound of canons echoes in heaven, the boats and warships with banners and flags cover the Yangtze River and are marching down.”*[Qian 1993: 3627]

There were several layers of the meaning of preserving the world under Heaven. The first was the preservation of the Ming or Han Chinese culture as a whole. Through his comments on Yuan Xian 袁憲, Xu Shanxin 許善心 and other ministers at the collapse of Chen Dynasty 陳 (557-589), Wang Fuzhi expressed his own ideal after the collapse of the Ming:
So deeply affected are people’s minds by the Teachings of Names\textsuperscript{13}…. When Chen Dynasty was over, Yuan Xian waited on the last emperor and could not bear to leave; Xu Shanxin wore mournful clothes to see the foreign ruler in his diplomatic mission; Zhou Luohou 周羅睺 wept deeply for three days and then disbanded soldiers and put down weapons…. (Was their loyalty to the Chen emperor leading to these activities? No.) The emperors of the Chen Dynasty were insignificant in their governance, and its founder obtained the throne not through righteous ways, thus its ministers did not have unavoidable duty to the emperor. What they could not bear to abandon is this: Chen as the home country of scholars from central China, preserved the cultural objects and institutions from previous dynasties since the chaos of Yongjia period (307-312), and they could not bear to see that they perished in a day. (CSQS 10-694-695)

The Teaching of Names or Confucianism, in Wang Fuzhi’s eyes, was what made the Ming people civilized and distinguished from barbarians. But under the ruler of barbarians, the Han Chinese might abandon their Confucian culture and accept barbarian custom. In one paragraph in 

\textit{Shi Guang Zhuan} 詩廣傳, Wang Fuzhi expressed this worry about the loss of the Ming culture through commenting on the Song people’s adaptation to the custom of Liao in Yan-Yun area (present Beijing and north parts of Hebei and Shanxi).

Therefore, at the beginning, people would be alarmed when they saw behaviors contrary to ritual propriety and against common sense; then they would let them be for they could do nothing to stop them. After they let them be for a long time, they would forget them contrary to ritual propriety and common sense. Alas, I fear, with the sun and the moon revolving, people under Heaven would follow the barbarian custom, and become soaked within it for a long time, then there will be no such a person who still has “melancholy and longing” about his former custom in the mind. Melancholy and longing about his former custom is the lonely and independent qi or spirit between Heaven and earth. A nobleman can live or die, but should not forget it. He should be cautious to sustain it. (CSQS 3-377)

\textsuperscript{13} Confucianism is called the Teaching of Names/mingjiao 名教 based on Confucius’ doctrine of rectification of names.
To sustain the longing and melancholy about one’s former custom was not to forget one’s culture. In this paragraph, Wang Fuzhi used it to refer to his longing for the Ming culture and institutions. Along with the implementation of the Manchurian costume and hair-style, Wang Fuzhi felt more and more pressed to survive the Ming culture. The populous welcome of Emperor Kangxi 康熙 (1654-1722) in Suzhou 蘇州 could illustrate this situation further. In 1684, Emperor Kangxi arrived at Suzhou; ordinary people there became very hospitable to him and enjoyed the Manchurian drama with him together. From their enthusiasm and hospitality to the emperor’s arrival, it was evident that they already forgot the ruin of the Ming. (Zhou 2002: 407) Moreover, a lot of scholar-officials accepted the Manchurian appointments through expressing their subjection and loyalty. Perhaps it was stimulated by these phenomena that Gu Yanwu cried that a person should keep the feeling of shame and honor, and Wang Fuzhi condemned the populace as no better than birds and beasts in terms of their forgetting loyalty and seeking for profits in the new dynasty.

For Wang Fuzhi, the essence of the Ming culture was Confucianism, and the essence of Confucianism was humanity and ritual propriety. To preserve the Ming culture was to preserve Confucianism through practicing humanity and ritual propriety. In this respect, he highly praised Guan Ning 管寧 (158-241) who taught Confucianism at a remote place in Liaodong (present Liaoyang) at a chaotic time of the transition from the Later Han 東漢 (25-220) to the Cao Wei 曹魏 (220-265). Through praising Guan, Wang Fuzhi actually expressed his own ambition and plan—to continue Confucian practice and preserve Confucianism on a remote mountain, and he did. As he stated, “I just do my best to exhaust my humanity. Although the time is not suitable for carrying out the Way, I myself can still carry out the Way. How can I bear to follow those recluses’ (Jiao Xian 焦先, Sun Deng 孫登, and Zhu Taochui 朱桃椎) arrogance and indifference to the world?” (CSQS 10-404)

The second was the preservation of the concrete institutions and objects of the Ming Dynasty. Upon this, Wang Fuzhi compared himself with Chen Xian 陳咸 who preserved Han laws, regulations, ceremonies and records at the collapse of Western Han 西漢 (206 BC-8 AD). Chen Xian refused Wang Mang’s 王莽 (45 BC-23 AD) appointment with the excuse of illness, and at the same time hid securely the laws and official correspondences of the Han Dynasty. Regarding this, Wang Fuzhi asked,
Could it be only that he kept them to wait for the need of the Han restoration? Truly he had what was unbearable to face, i.e., the loss of the Han institution. If a son longs for his parents, he loves their personal articles; if a minister admires his monarch, he cares for his institutions. Institutions are where the spirits of previous emperors stay. Therefore I know that Chen Xian had unbearable feeling. Alas, Gong Sheng (68-11 BC) kept his purity through death; Chen Xian sustained Han institutions through survival. Their worried minds were same. Except these two people, whom would I stay with? (CSQS 10-209)

Like Chen Xian, Wang Fuzhi aimed for the preservation of the Ming institutions and culture although he was not a high official in the imperial court and was unable to access the Ming laws, regulations and official correspondences. But he wrote Yongli Shilu and Huangshu to record what happened in the local Yongli court.

Moreover, in a general sense, to preserve the Ming culture and institutions could refer to preserving all things inherited from the Ming, especially the spiritual loyalty to the Ming and the bodily symbol of the existence of the Ming. Quan Zuwang’s 全祖望 (1705-1755) record on another Ming loyalist, Wu Zhongluan 吳鈑巒 sheds some light on this point.

Wu believed that if only he was still alive and stood for the Ming, the Ming would be existent although an inch of territory did not belong to the Ming. Therefore, the Shang Dynasty did not end at the moment of the defeat of Muye 牧野, but ended at the moment that Weizi 微子 submitted the Shang vessels to the Zhou court; the Song Dynasty 宋 did not collapse at the time that the imperial seal was given off at Gao Ting 靈亭, but at the time when Wen Tianxiang 文天祥 (1236-1283) was executed at the market of fagot. This is the meaning that a country would exist because one person was alive. (Quan 1965: 9-607)

In Wu Zhongluan’s eyes, if one day he was alive and wore the Ming costume, one day the Ming would survive. Moreover, even though there was no territory, costume and vessels, the Ming would still survive if his loyalty and memory of it continued. At this point, the Ming loyalists transformed the preservation of the Ming to a spiritual level, and it was on this spiritual level that
they fought against the Manchurians to the end of their lives. Likewise, Wang Fuzhi had the same words.

The way of minister and son is to finish the monarch’s assignments because they receive salary from him. Their determinations cannot be changed, and are firmer than a military commander’s will. They will prevent human minds from submission to heretic doctrines, save troops from laziness and lack of training. If their determinations last one day, the spirit of loyal ministers and upright man will be more eternal than ten thousand years. (CSQS 10-411)

The third was, in order to preserve the Ming culture and institutions, the Ming loyalists recorded what happened during the Manchurian conquest for both the Ming martyrs and the Manchurian brutal destruction. In this way, they expressed their mournfulness on martyrs, reminded later generations not to forget their Ming origins and hatred toward the Manchurians, and consequently extended the influence and existence of the Ming. At the same time, they also reflected the mistakes before and during their resistance and warned later generations not to commit again. In this process, Wang Fuzhi wrote Yongli Shilu and Sao Shou Wen 搔首問; Huang Zongxi wrote Si Jiu Lu 思舊錄. With their experience in the collapse of the Ming and the resistance against the Manchurians, the Ming loyalists bitterly realized the distance between their ideal of restoration and their practice to realize it. Thus, almost all Ming loyalists emphasized practical studies and rejected pure talks regardless of what school of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism they inherited. As for Wang Fuzhi, his short official career in the Yongli court awakened him from Confucian utopia to practical governance. For example, although he detested peasant uprising, he explained it through the ill governance of officials and the infeasibility of policies instead of pure custom corruption. Although he insisted that kingly governance should take inner sageliness as its basis, he nevertheless realized the importance of practicable administrative measures and policies and did not believe in the spontaneous moral transformation advocated by earlier Neo-Confucian scholars. These features were shown in his discussion on the eight stages in the Great Learning and his emphasis on sufficient sustenance for ordinary people in the Mencius, and could be regarded as his answers to the problems generated by the political and cultural crises in the Late Ming.
To some degree, many Ming loyalists never gave up their dreams of restoration in their lives. This was why when there were commotions in the Qing Empire, they became active again. In 1673, Wu Sangui rebelled against the Qing in Yunnan province, and soon his army took up Hunan province. This news really made Wang Fuzhi excited for a while although he disdained to cooperate with such a renegade of the Ming. During the following five years, he kept going around and visited his old friends and colleagues, and planned an uprising. But he finally gave it up because there was no proper leader and the old Ming general Zhang Yongming 張永明 refused to cooperate. His despair was reflected in a poem at this time, “The frightened goose cried to the cloud but the sky did not become clear; at an autumn evening he flew lonely and wept at a remote place.” (CSQS 15-240) This was Wang Fuzhi’s last attempt. It soon brought much trouble and drove him to hide in the mountains although his plan ended in the womb.

After this final and futile struggle, Wang Fuzhi completely gave up his dream of restoration, and thus had to completely turn to his new dream—the preservation of the Han Chinese culture through reinterpreting Confucian classics and commenting on previous history and events. In doing this, Wang Fuzhi not only aimed for the reconstruction of a systematic Confucianism but also a solution to the problems generated by the political and cultural crises he met. From this perspective, one could say that the Ming crises led to the rise of Wang Fuzhi’s reconstruction of Confucianism. Later in Chapters 3-6 of this dissertation, we will demonstrate how Wang Fuzhi dealt with the cultural and political crises through this new comprehensive Confucian system.

Wang Fuzhi’s interpretation and commentary show different characteristics before and after 1662, the end of the Yongli court. In a broad sense, his early works showed more vigor and aggression, while his later writings appeared more nostalgic and often used historical personages to symbolize himself. For example, in his early works such as Zhouyi Waizhuan 周易外傳 and Laozi Yan 老子衍, he valued more the firm and resolute character of Qian 乾, and condemned the soft and weak feature of Kun 坤 and Laozi’s fondness of softness and water, although he proposed the joint establishment of Qian and Kun. After 1673, with the hopelessness of Ming restoration and the unfavorable situation, he had to compromise his principle with reality. This compromise led him to understand the Zhuangzi sympathetically and also break his academic ban to write an annotation to Faxiang sect/Xiangzong Luosuo 相宗絡索 of Buddhism, for formerly he warned students away from Buddhist texts in order to avoid being misled.
Especially, his evaluation and commentary on the *Zhuangzi* opened a new world for him although he intended to convert the *Zhuangzi* with the Confucian concept of humanity. He connected the Daoist term, assisting Heaven to the Confucian term, to assist the growth and change of Heaven and earth, and highly praised the *Zhuangzi* for knowing the principle of dark and light, life and death. (CSQS 13-291) More importantly, he incorporated the harmony of Heaven and earth in the *Zhuangzi* with the Great Harmony/ *taihe* 太和 in Zhang Zai’s 張載 (1020-1077) *Zhengmeng* 正蒙, and found a new way to elevate Confucianism and realize the meaning of an individual life. According to his new doctrine, the disaster in the human world resulted from the evil and perverse *qi*. This perverse *qi* could become more destructive or be transformed into humane and good *qi* depending on human behavior. If each person cultivated his *qi* to a peaceful and pure state, then he would make a great contribution to the universal harmonious *qi*, and thus help decrease the disasters and conflicts in the world. Consequently, there would be no war or disasters in the universe any more. It goes without saying that Wang Fuzhi’s concept of harmonious *qi* aimed at the correction of the perverse ethos in the late Ming. Keeping this ideal in mind, Wang Fuzhi developed his doctrines on personal cultivations, Kingly Way, etc.

Wang Fuzhi was a human being after all and could not hide himself in books forever. With time going, he found life more and more unbearable. Through commenting on historical people and poems, he kept talking about his misery and nostalgia, while at the same time, insisted on being a firm Confucian who conducted righteousness and humanity. In a paragraph, he mourned,

Alas, the empire showed the sign of collapse; the sovereign displayed the tendency of losing virtue; then the loyal ministers and remonstrators argued for the right course just like fighting with enemies, and they even presented their proposals through crying for Heaven and ghosts. But once the ancestral temple and the state were ruined, the royal tombs had no one to care for them. The ministers would be forlorn and sorrowful, like the loss of parents. At this time, the man who was my monarch would be my sagely Yao 堯 and Shun 舜, how could I have time to think anything else? For now even though I sought for the person of criticism and remonstrance, I could not find any more. Thus, I could not bear to criticize him if I found one. (CSQS 3-321)
It was evident that Wang Fuzhi regretted his foolish involvement in the factional struggle in the Yongli court, which forced him to resign. As a result, he could not die together with the emperor and now lived in such an embarrassing situation that he could not find a reason to die. (This regret left a strong stamp on his later works, i.e., severe criticism on factional struggles and bravado behavior.) He said,

Alas, a scholar unfortunately lives in the time of national crisis and collapse, the emperor is captured, the royal ancestral shrine has become ruined, all the people in the six palaces are abused, and no princes are left. The lives of all ministers and subjects are subjected to the hands of barbarians and at the mercy of their bite and chewing; and the traitors and villains are happily supporting renegades as their leaders. How can he bear it if he does not die! (CSQS 11-212)

However, Wang had to find support for his survival. Thus he continued,

If one takes death as his determination, leaves success and failure to fate, undertakes human relationships, names and righteousness as his duty, and does not rely on anyone, then how could he not be able to walk and live in this world carrying the sun and the moon on his shoulder, and what is the need to whisper in a low voice? (CSQS 11-212)

In other passages, Wang comforted himself and expressed his acceptance of loneliness as a Ming loyalist.

In a world in which disaster has reached its climax, one stands alone and tries to bring the people back to the sense of compassion, shame and honor, and he should not worry about his loneliness, for in the future his successors will rise and complete his mission. (CSQS 10-1099)

When he commented on the historical events that the Eastern Han had the rituals, ceremonies and music of the Western Han, that Gongsun Shu 公孫述 (?-36) preserved, and Northern Wei (386-534) received Confucian teachings that the district west of the Yellow River (present Gansu) inherited, he believed that his interpretation and preservation of Confucianism would be found and used in the future, and said,
A scholar lives in a time of the collapse of rituals and music, stays in remote places, and takes good care of the institutions and culture of the previous dynasty for a later dynasty that seeks them. Although he may not live long enough to see it, his disciple will meet the new dynasty. This is definitely certain. (CSQS 11-61)

Perhaps it was this slight hope that sustained this unfortunate Ming loyalist and helped him to go through the intolerable hardship of life. But one cruel reality was that neither his old dream nor his new dream could be fulfilled in his life, for the old dream passed away with the death of the Yongli prince, and the new dream was facing the destruction of barbarian custom and distortion of Confucianism. As was known, the Manchurian hair-style needed shaving of the forehead and plaiting of the rest of one’s hair, which was an unfilial behavior according to Confucianism. From this aspect, it was understandable why Wang Fuzhi condemned the Manchurian acceptance of Han culture as a monkey imitating wearing a hat, and had so much wrath and sorrow until his death. This was shown in the bitter tone of his poem on describing his seventy birthday.

Taking a mirror to look, I cannot recognize who this is.
Asking others, they say this is you, Mr. Jiangzhai.
After a tortoise rots, it will let people use for divination at their wills.
Before the dreams are fulfilled, do not guess whom I am. (CSQS 15-717)

Wang Fuzhi’s bitterness in life forced him not to recognize himself. He knew he had no power to reverse the Manchurian transformation of custom. With the fear of the loss of Han culture and the regret of his failure in fighting against the Manchurians, he passed away. From his grave motto, he expressed his hopes:

I have nursed the solitary wrath of Liu Yueshi 劉琨 (270-317) but found no way of sacrificing my life; I have sought after the true doctrines of Zhang Hengqu 張載 (1020-1077) but have not been strong enough to carry them out. Fortunate as I am to have come safely to this grave, surely I shall carry my sorrow with me through the ages. (CSQS 16-270, McMorrán’s translation)

He admired Liu Kun who fought for the Western Jin Dynasty (265-312) to his dying breath, but he regretted that his resignation forced him to live in a time of barbarian conquest and could not die for the Ming with a righteous cause. He appreciated Zhang Zai’s doctrine which
distinguished itself from Buddhism and advocated Confucianism, but he had no energy and place to carry it out. What he could do was to expect the understanding of future generations. From this aspect, Wang Fuzhi shared the same expectation with Huang Zongxi\(^{14}\) to wait for later generation’s consultation of their works.

1.4 The Methods and Necessity to Write This Dissertation

Based on our account of the crises Wang Fuzhi met and his striving for solutions, we come to analyze how he solved them through his reconstruction of Confucianism by reinterpreting and commenting on Confucian, Daoist, and historical texts. Through our analysis, we will attempt to find the new world Wang Fuzhi tried to construct and the point to which he developed Confucianism, thus shedding light on the direction Confucianism will take in our times. As Paul Ricoeur said, “Understanding is not just seeking for the author’s subjective will and psychological motivation in the text, but confronting a new world that the text discloses for us.” (Shen 1985: 311)

In order to disclose this new world Wang Fuzhi opened for us, we will undertake this research using a comparative and hermeneutic approach. As to comparative studies, it is necessary to put Wang Fuzhi back in his special historical and social situation and contrast him with other 17\(^{th}\) century Chinese literati. It is also suitable to incorporate some western thoughts and systems in our research so as to make Wang Fuzhi’s intellectual characteristic more conspicuous. Consequently, we expect to understand the rise and development of Wang Fuzhi’s thought and the similarity and difference between Wang Fuzhi and his peers as well as his attitude towards Christianity and western science. As for hermeneutic approach, Wang Fuzhi mainly developed his thought through commentaries and exegesis on the Confucian classics. For this reason, the hermeneutic circle between the general genre and the particularities of a work or a writer will be of great help in the comparative studies between Wang Fuzhi and his Ming loyalist peers. Moreover, on the relation between thought and experience, Dilthey’s hermeneutical formula related to experience, expression, and understanding, will shed light on our understanding of

\(^{14}\) Huang Zongxi’s *Mingyi Dai Fang Lu* 明夷待訪錄 meant that he was waiting for being consulted in the future although he was in unfavorable situation at present because of the Manchurian conquest.
Wang Fuzhi’s firm insistence on the distinction between Han and barbarians and other ideas. However, we must avoid empathy—to stand in Wang Fuzhi’s shoes and forget ourselves. At this point, Paul Riceour’s method—the understanding and critique of subjectivity is possible only via the objectivity of the text—will help us to draw a critical conclusion on Wang Fuzhi’s thought or system.

What is the world of meaningfulness Wang Fuzhi opened for us? It is the harmonious universe achieved through moral cultivation and the Kingly Way. With this harmonious universe, he believed the perverse ethos and political crisis would be completely eliminated. As he imagined, in this harmonious universe, no perverse person or misleading doctrine would rise, for everything was moderate and harmonious. This was why he emphasized so much on the Great Harmony, humanity (Great Harmony in human mind) and Kingly Way (the practice of humanity in governance) and strived for the implementation of the Way of man/rendao人道. Specifically, the world of existence Wang Fuzhi opened for later generations could be summarized as a doctrine: based on qi-monism, starting from the Great Harmony in cosmology, through humanity in moral cultivation, and ending in kingly governance in administration. Humanity was the thread running through all three levels. With humanity as his main concern, Wang unraveled his doctrines on various topics and tried to solve the problems arising from previous theories and practices. However, few scholars have exploited Wang Fuzhi’s works from this perspective, and thus it is necessary to make Wang’s system manifest in this undertaking. With this perspective as a standard, let us review some secondary scholarships on Wang Fuzhi.

A very comprehensive study on Wang Fuzhi can be found in Zeng Zhaoxu’s 曾昭旭 Wang Chuanshan’s Philosophy. Zeng rightly indicated Wang Fuzhi inherited Wang Yangming’s idea of the creativity of mind, the co-establishment of Qian and Kun, the distinction of Han Chinese from barbarian in regard to the ritual propriety and the emphasis on the unity of body and nature. However Zeng simplified the differences between Wang Fuzhi and previous Neo-Confucians. For example, Zeng claimed that Wang Fuzhi was different from Zhu Xi at the core but similar on the surface, while being different from Yangming on the surface but similar at the core (Zeng 2008: 311). In my view, Zeng did not perceive Wang Fuzhi’s system as different in essence from both thinkers in terms of his qi-monism. In other words, Zeng did not acknowledge Wang Fuzhi’s system as qi-monism (Zeng 2008: 341), that was why he did not pay much attention to
the prime role of \( qi \), and thus did not understand that the Great Harmony was the main core of Wang Fuzhi’s system. As a result, he did not provide a reasonable explanation of Wang’s statement that “Bodily shape is heavenly nature”.

The second valuable book for me on Wang Fuzhi is Ji Wenfu’s 稲文甫 Scholarly Discussions on Wang Chuanshan. Ji Wenfu rightly summarized Wang Fuzhi’s thought as “the unity of Heaven and Man and the continuous creativity of life” (Ji 1962: 98), and then indicated that Wang Fuzhi adopted \( qi \)-monism from Zhang Zai and was influenced by the right branch of Yangming School (Ji 1962: 35). However, it was not proper for Ji to put Wang Fuzhi in a Hegelian/Marxian dialectic circle—Cheng-Zhu School as the Positive, Lu-Wang School as the Negative, and Qing scholars (including Wang Fuzhi) as the Synthesis (Ji 1962: 121). In my view, Wang Fuzhi’s \( qi \)-monism is different from both sides, for Wang Fuzhi denied their basic propositions that “Heaven is principle” on the one hand and “mind is principle” on the other. In addition, Ji was also hasty to conclude that through criticizing the Zhuangzi, Wang Fuzhi transformed it into a Confucian text (Ji 1962: 3). According to my research, I would rather think that Wang Fuzhi could not transform the Zhuangzi with his anthropocentric worldview. On the contrary, after he wrote his annotations, he was transformed by the text, as shown in his acceptance of Zhuangzi’s ideas such as “letting things be as they are” and “assisting Heaven through transforming oneself.”

Cai Shangsi 蔡尚思 also presented a comprehensive and inspiring view of Wang Fuzhi’s thought, but lacked detailed elaboration. Contrary to most scholars’ eulogy of Wang Fuzhi, Cai condemned Wang Fuzhi as conservative and prejudiced. For instance, Wang Fuzhi proposed an absolute monarchism, endorsed a circular historical view, and criticized almost all historical figures with unfounded and specious accusations. (CSQS16-1240-1254) However, Cai failed to analyze Wang Fuzhi’s implicit and unexpressed intention in criticizing other people and schools, i.e. condemning the Manchurian government through insinuation.

Xiong Shili 熊十力 summarized Wang Fuzhi’s criticism of Buddhism from the perspective of realism. However, it was strange for Xiong to conclude that Wang Fuzhi’s thought was both close to Western thought and full of the spirit of Song Confucianism. Xiong Shili did not regard Wang Fuzhi’s system as \( qi \)-monism. He argued that the Great Void was just the substance of \( qi \), but not \( qi \) itself, so \( qi \) could not be regarded as the origin of the world. (CSQS16-989-991) But
Xiong ignored Wang Fuzhi’s further endorsement of Zhang Zai’s statements, “If one knows the void is nothing but *qi*, then being and nonbeing, manifestation and concealment, spirit and transformation, nature and endowment will become one instead of two.” (CSQS 12-23)

Chen Lai 陳來 analyzed many philosophical propositions of Wang Fuzhi and showed much insight in his reading note-style book—*Wang Chuanshan’s Philosophical Spirit*. For instance, he pointed out that Wang Fuzhi asked students to emulate the Great Harmony, had a right view of life and death so as to avoid producing harmful *qi* in the universe. However, Chen did not go further to connect Great Harmony with human assistance of Heaven—Wang Fuzhi’s ultimate concern. Therefore Chen did not feature Wang Fuzhi’s purpose—human’s assisting Heaven through cultivating harmony. Consequently, Chen regarded Wang’s interpretation of the *Western Inscription/ximing* 西銘 as emphasizing filial piety, but failed to realize that Wang Fuzhi aimed at the ultimate extension of humanity (Chen 2004: 297). On the characteristic of Wang Fuzhi’s thought, Chen followed Ji Wenfu to state, “Wang Fuzhi inherited Hengqu, reformed Cheng-Zhu School and rejected Lu-Wang School” (Chen 2004: 7), but he ignored the fact that Wang Fuzhi rejected the Cheng-Zhu School not only on the level of ontology but also in moral cultivation. On the contrary, Wang Fuzhi accepted Lu Jiuyuan’s doctrine—to establish the root first.

In her book *Man and Nature in the Philosophical Thought of Wang Fu-chih*, Alison Harley Black insightfully indicated that Wang Fuzhi’s skeptical empiricism went beyond what many of his contemporaries felt on those aspects of western science. Oddly enough, it drove Wang to commit a kind of mistake very similar to the one for which he berated other people. For instance, he criticized the earth-measurers from the point that human senses were limited and unreliable. But he too was imprisoned by human senses for he had no appreciation of the part played by the intelligence (Black 1989: 177). However, it is questionable that Black regarded spirit/shen 神 as the third element besides *yin* and *yang* (Black 1989: 63). In Chinese philosophy, spirit was seen not as an element, but a quality or function of *qi*. Moreover, she is unclear that Wang Fuzhi’s main concern was to promote the Way of humanity, which led Wang to value knowledge from virtue and nature than knowledge from hearing and seeing. (Black 1989: 188) Thus, she

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15 Wang Fuzhi endorsed *qi*-monism and criticized “Heaven is principle” on the one hand, and condemned “preserving principle through eliminating desires” on the other. Both targeted the Cheng-Zhu School.
incorrectly concluded, that in Wang Fuzhi, there was a considerable blurring of the boundaries between two kinds of knowledge (Black 1989: 182).

Ian McMorran points out that Wang Fuzhi was influenced by Wang Yangming in his modification and criticism of the Cheng-Zhu School and thus showed similarity to Wang Yangming in his emphasis on action. (McMorran 1973) However it was improper for McMorran to conclude that Wang Fuzhi could be distinguished from Wang Yangming in that “Wang Fuzhi sought the moral through reality,” for Wang Fuzhi was regulating the reality with the a priori nature or innate knowledge rather than seeking it from reality. Wang Fuzhi’s difference from Yangming lay not in how to seek the moral ideal but on what to do after one knew innate knowledge. For Wang Yangming, after one awakened his/her innate knowledge, one would be able to act morally. According to Wang Fuzhi, after one established the root or innate knowledge, one should verify and enhance it through compliance with ritual propriety and moral practice, and thereby gradually approach sagehood.

Jeeloo Liu in her paper “Is Human History Predestined in Wang Fuzhi’s Cosmology” (Liu 2001) reached the conclusion that Wang Fuzhi did not succumb to historical determinism through insisting that human agents do have free will and are able to change human history. But it was Liu’s ungrounded assumption to say that, “The rotation of the two forms of qi, yin and yang, when exemplified in human history, is presented as the pattern of the succession of prosperity/治 and chaos/亂”. In fact, Wang Fuzhi never regarded the succession of prosperity and chaos as the manifestation of the rotation between yin and yang. On the contrary, Wang Fuzhi emphasized misgovernance as the cause of chaos, insisting that men could create tendency/勢 or mandate/命 so as to change the course of history, and clearly rejected the notion of the natural alternation of prosperity and chaos.

Chungying Cheng insightfully indicates that the unity of reason/理 and indeterminate substance/氣 in Wang Fuzhi will be necessarily leading the unity of reason and desire/慾, in every desire there is a reason. (Cheng 1975) With regard to the relation between reason and desire, Cheng argues, on the one hand, desire is itself a natural manifestation of life but not a reflection of mind on life as reason can be considered. On the other hand, reason is desire universalized or universalizable in regard to all men, but desire is more or less localized in a
person without universalization. However, Cheng should have realized, although Wang Fuzhi endorsed the idea that each reason must have its corresponding desire, he never claimed, “In every desire there is a reason.” Otherwise, there would not be necessary to restrain desires in Wang’s system. Moreover, in Wang Fuzhi’s opinion, evil or selfish desires just resulted from the incompliance or deprivation of reason when arising. The cause for this arising is the incongruence with reason in the process of interaction between human mind/qi and external things.

In the above we discussed some of the research on Wang Fuzhi, a very small portion in the whole volume of related secondary scholarship. However, we have our own standard to select the works reviewed. First, our focus is the historical and philosophical thought in the works of Wang Fuzhi, thus those on poetry and literature can be excluded. Second, many essays and books only focus on a part of his works, and thus lack a fair understanding of Wang Fuzhi’s thought, so we remove them from our reading list. Third, a lot of essays and books on Wang Fuzhi are written in a cursory manner in order to meet a non-academic purpose, so they are also removed for the lack of serious scholarship.
Chapter 2 Common Concerns and Inter-textuality at the Ming-Qing Transition

To research Wang Fuzhi’s response to the political and cultural crises in the Ming-Qing transition, one has to pay attention to both Wang Fuzhi’s individuality and uniqueness and the common concern of his peers at that time. In this respect, Schleiermacher’s grammatical interpretation is very useful for our research. This grammatical interpretation, as Richard E. Palmer describes, shows the work in relation to language, both in the structure of sentences and in the interacting parts of a work, and also to other works of the same literary type....The individuality of the author and work must be seen in the context of the larger facts of his life and in contrast to other lives and works. (Palmer 1969: 89) Keeping this in mind, we make comparison and contrast between Wang Fuzhi and his Ming loyalist peers so that his individuality and uniqueness are elucidated. This method is further supported by Kristeva’s concept of inter-textuality— “to define the specificity of different textual arrangements by placing them within the general text (culture) of which they are part and which is in turn, part of them”, and “by studying the text as inter-textuality, considers it as such within (the text of) society and history. ” (Kristeva 1980: 36-37) Therefore, a text or an author should be understood through both his individuality and the general genre of his time. Failing to distinguish these two aspects, researchers likely regard some commonalities of a time as a scholar’s unique contribution, and cannot give an exact appraisal of the very scholar’s achievement. Among the secondary scholarships on Wang Fuzhi, some scholars mistake common topics of his time as Wang Fuzhi’s own unique contribution, such as qi-monism, unity of desires and principles, emphasis on practical studies and utility, etc., but they seldom delve into the uniqueness or special perspectives that Wang Fuzhi held in comparison with his peers. In this chapter, we will first describe the common topics of Wang Fuzhi’s time, then the unique contributions of each of his peers, and finally indicate Wang Fuzhi’s own original contributions so as to serve as an opening for later chapters.
2.1 Common Concerns in Wang Fuzhi’s Time

As has been indicated in Chapter 1, the corrupted moral ethos of the Late Ming and the Manchurian conquest jointly worked on the Ming loyalists’ thought and mentality. In their eyes, the former led to the Ming officials and scholars’ incompetence, disloyalty to the Ming and submission to the Manchurians, and thus resulted in the failure of their resistant war against the Manchurians; the latter enhanced their complaint upon the later Ming social ethos, tracing its origin to the prevalence of unfavorable doctrines of Wang Yangming School and the consequences of pedantic teachings of Cheng-Zhu School. As a result, the Ming loyalists unanimously turned to vehement criticism upon Neo-Confucianism, an emphasis on morality or custom reconstruction, and a practical attitude towards social affairs in a time of resistance which practical utility was of prime concern. However, based on this turn, it was not suitable to conclude that they completely returned to reality from Neo-Confucian utopia. On the contrary, the resistance against Manchurian forced them to be practical, but the hopelessness of this resistance plunged them again into another utopia, that is, a dream of cultural restoration, or a spiritual maintenance of the Ming’s shadowy existence.

2.1.1 The Practical Turn in Scholarship

The Ming loyalists showed a unanimous characteristic of emphasis on practical studies. The rise of practical studies, as some scholars suppose, was a reaction against or despair upon the utopian governance proposed by Cheng-Zhu School. (Chen 2006) But this explanation mistakes the remote cause as the proximate cause. Strictly speaking, the proximate cause should be the need of resisting Manchurian conquest and restoring the Ming regime politically, and the reflection and criticism on the perverse academic and social ethos in the late Ming. The blame upon Cheng-Zhu School referred to only a remote cause, at most a partial cause when tracing the cause of the collapse of the Ming and the failure of the resistance war. Moreover, not all Ming loyalists criticized Cheng-Zhu’s humane governance. For instances, Wang Fuzhi still took humane governance as an ideal polity; Yan Yuan dreamed of the realization of humane governance despite his criticism on Cheng-Zhu’s Buddhist and pedantic elements. (See 2.1.2)
Most of the Ming loyalists participated in the resistance war against Manchurian conquest. Gu Yanwu started preparing for future military campaigns after he realized the military hopelessness and administrative inefficiency of the small regimes organized by some Ming princes. He painstakingly traveled around China and investigated the geography and local customs so as to plan his future restoration strategy. Huang Zongxi regretted the inefficiency and powerlessness of the local Ming regime and started reflecting on the validity of monarch polity. He also shed much ink on practical affairs of administration in the Ming Yi Dai Fang Lu. Wang Fuzhi failed in his military attack of the Manchurians, painfully realizing the gap between plan and practice. This explained why he, like Gu Yanwu, paid much attention to geography, custom and other materials for army and government, and his hesitation for uprising during Wu Sangui’s revolt. Fang Yizhi was more unique. For appearance sake he became a monk but he actually never stopped making plans for future revolt against the Manchurians. Thus his emphasis on investigation of things would rather serve him as a practical means for uprising than a simple scholarly criticism upon Cheng-Zhu utopian governance. He once told his son, “Now the world is in chaos. People in the state have to know the situation around, the mountains, rivers and custom as well as the troubles, changes and past cases.” “Once there comes a chance and I undertake the responsibility, being well prepared, I can dispose of and manage it with materials and plans at hand.” (Yu 2004: 245). From Fang Yizhi’s words, he was always watching for the chance to take action, and thus the investigation of things for him was nothing different from military preparation. This explained why the Manchurians arrested him when they suspected his involvement in the Guangdong rebellion in 1670.

With practical purpose in their mind, Wang Fuzhi and his peers displayed much disfavor or more criticism upon pure talks or unrealistic academic studies. Gu Yanwu claimed, “The purpose of a scholar to learn is to make manifest the Way and to save the world from trouble.” 16 The elucidated way here emphasized more on the way to bring the world to order or save it from trouble than the Neo-Confucian’s way of self-cultivation. Although there was a connection between them, Gu Yanwu apparently did not value the way of self-cultivation that was useless for saving the world and the people from trouble.

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More radical than Gu Yanwu, Huang Zongxi openly criticized the way that ignored utilities and achievements. He argued,

The Way has no fixed form or body; the most valuable function of learning lies in its practicability. Why people nowadays take a fixed principle as the way, and divide learning the Way and pursuing utilities as two separate domains? If pursuing utilities does not originate from the Way, then it will devolve into pretense through using tact and deception; if the Way cannot be applied to pursuing utilities, it will exist theoretically in learning, but becomes nothing once being put into practice. This kind of learning seems true in terms of individual behavior, but becomes false in the time of saving nation from crisis. Can this kind of learner be regarded as a true Confucian? (Huang 2005: 10-623-624)

In this passage, Huang Zongxi criticized the separation of the Way and utility and disclosed the pedantry of Neo-Confucianism. He insisted on the mutual support of the Way and the utility so as to avoid both the negative consequences of incompetence and tactful deception. From the function of the Way to correct deception, the Way Huang Zongxi talked about was still the Confucian moral norms. But he was different from Neo-Confucians in that he added in utilities as the purpose of learning the Way.

If Gu Yanwu and Huang Zongxi still kept reservation in criticizing Neo-Confucians, Yan Yuan openly satirized them, especially Cheng Yi 程颐 (1033-1107), Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200), etc., by pointing out their pedantry and incompetence. Yan Yuan said,

There is never such a case that the sage was born but did nothing….For the Northern Song, there were several so-called sages and worthies, but there had not been anyone among them to save the empire from crisis and lead it to pass through difficulty above, and neither anyone to be capable of the position of Minister or General below. What they had done was to offer the two emperors to the Jin 金 (1125-1234), and to give the capital Bianjing 汴京 to Liu Yu 刘豫 (1073-1146). For the Southern Song, there were dozens of so-called sages and worthies, but there had not been anyone among them to save the empire from crisis and lead it to pass through difficulty above, and neither anyone to be capable of the position of Minister or General below. What they had done was to throw the young emperor into the
According to Yan Yuan, the true sages, such as King Tang of Shang and King Wen of Zhou, should be able to save a state from trouble and to put the world in order. If the so-called “sages” could not save their state from trouble but let it collapse or conquered, could they be regarded as true sages? However, these strange phenomena happened in the Northern and Southern Song. In the Northern Song, there were “sages” such as Zhou Dunyi 周敦颐 (1017-1073), Cheng Yi, Cheng Hao 程颢 (1032-1085), Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1077), being enshrined next to Confucius and Mencius, but they could not save the Northern Song from the fate of being conquered by the Jin (1125-1234). Again in the Southern Song, there were “sages” and “worthies” such as Zhu Xi, Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133-1180), Lu Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137-1181) and Lu Jiuyuan 隆九淵 (1139-1192), being enshrined next to Confucius, but they again submitted the state seal to the Mongolians and drowned the baby emperor in the south sea. Apparently, Yan Yuan was attacking these neo-Confucians from a consequential view of their incompetence and negative influence upon the empire, for all these Neo-Confucians died before the collapse of their dynasties.

From above listed examples, it was evident that disfavoring the pedantry and incompetence of Neo-Confucianism had become a trend in the early Qing. Wang Fuzhi, living in this period, could not be an exception. However, different from Yan Yuan’s harsh condemnation, Wang’s criticism upon Neo-Confucianism seemed much milder and appeared more on his rejection of its ontology and methodology of personal cultivation (see Chapter 6). Undoubtedly, Wang Fuzhi also proposed practicability and utility. For example, he emphasized more on the practical function of historical record, and said,

The reason to value history lies in serving a model for the future through recording the past. If a historian is particular in detailed account, but ignorant of the great strategy or policy in regulating the world, later generations will find no way to understand the key or hinge of gain and loss and emulate it, so what is the use of history? (CSQS 10-225)

Wang’s demarcation of things to be nourished and investigated made his practical concern more evident. When interpreting the sentence “the myriad things are nourished” in the Doctrine of the
he argued, “Things are nourished because human beings need them, thus there are the various millets, poultry and fish. As for such useless things as winter aconite, wild oats, lizard and earthworm, what is a nobleman’s purpose to nourish them?” (CSQS 6-475) Although Wang Fuzhi did not cry for the practical strategy in politics, his practical concern was the same as other Ming loyalists. Thus, our purpose later will be to identify Wang Fuzhi’s individuality in this common ethos.

2.1.2 Neo-Confucianism as a Common Target of Criticism

Desperation and despair brought by failure in the resistance against the Manchurians inevitably led the Ming loyalists to blame the irresponsible and immoral customs of the late Ming, and thus Neo-Confucianism and factional struggle became the common targets they criticized. In their regards, Neo-Confucianism had made Chinese scholars incompetent, irresponsible and hypocritical. As a result, in national crisis, no one could save the empire from Manchurian conquest. In the following, we will look into how the Ming loyalists criticized Neo-Confucianism from its pure talk and pedantry on the one hand, and from its absorbed Buddhist elements on the other.

Gu Yanwu compared Neo-Confucians as pure-talker in the Jin Dynasty (265-420), regarded them as senseless people who did not care about the future of nation and culture. As was shown in one of his well-known remarks:

That Liu Yuan 劉淵 (?-310) and Shi Le 石勒 (274-333) were able to bring chaos to China resulted from the evil effects of pure talk. This had been known by one and all. However, who realized that pure talk today was more popular than previous dynasty? The pure talk in the Jin 晉 talked about the Laozi and Zhuangzi; but the pure talk today focused on the works of Confucius and Mencius. These pure talkers today had thrown away the general ideas before they grasped the finer parts; they had abandoned the branch before they understood the root. They did not study the text of the Six Arts, nor did they examine the documents of the hundred kings, or manage present affairs. They put aside the general gist of Confucius’ discussion on learning and administration, and never investigated them, but claimed themselves as maintaining consistency and going beyond words. They used the
empty words of enlightening mind and seeing nature to replace the practical study of cultivating oneself and regulating the people. As a result, they became lazy and sluggish in using limbs, and thus all affairs were in desolation; they lost their claws and teeth and the four frontiers started causing trouble. Then, Central China was agitated and overthrown, and the royal temple and national shrine turned into hills and relics. (Gu 1994: 240)

As is well known, pure talk arose in the Jin Dynasty 晉 as a response to hypocritical Confucian practice and proposed to arrest it with Daoist spontaneity and frankness in the Laozi and Zhuangzi. But its negative consequence was that people mistook frankness and spontaneity as free expression and pursuit of selfish desires and instinctive pleasure and abandoned moral norms. As a result, the Jin court fell into chaos and was driven to the south of the Yangtze River by Liu Yuan and Shi Le. But 1000 years later, in Gu Yanwu’s eyes, the Ming scholars started another current of pure talk which took the Analects and Mencius as their topic. They used the enlightenment of the mind and nature as their goals and claimed that it would lead to perfect personality or sagehood and thus put the world in order, but abandoned real practice in morality and governance. Without being capable in morality and governance, they could not save the empire from being conquered by the Manchurians.

Like Gu Yanwu, Huang Zongxi criticized both the Cheng-Zhu School and the Lu-Wang School for their aloofness and incompetence toward public affairs, but more openly and detailed. He stated,

Why is it that, nowadays those belong to the School of Mind (the Lu-Wang School) do not engage in reading books and investigating principles of things; while those belonging to the School of Principle (the Cheng-Zhu School) read nothing but the exegesis on Classics for civil-examination takers, and investigate nothing but the truth or falsity of words? …Regarding the collapse of heaven and the disintegration of earth, they aloofly think it has nothing to do with themselves. Moreover they still jabber nonsense.  

The collapse of heaven and the disintegration of earth referred to the collapse of the Ming Empire. From Huang’s criticism, it was evident that both the School of Mind and the School of Principle should be blamed. This again showed Wang Fuzhi’s prejudice toward the School of Mind when he blamed Lu Jiuyuan as the cause of the Song Empire but exculpated the School of Principle (see 1.1.2).

Unlike Gu Yanwu and Huang Zongxi, Fang Yizhi attacked the School of Principle and the School of Mind more from the aspect of academics and practical concern. First, Fang Yizhi pointed out the misleading method of learning and practice of the Cheng-Zhu School.

What were recorded in the *Four Books*, the *Classics*, historical records and all books by previous masters, were originally the words to investigate principles, and the Way to deal with affairs. But if one mistakenly regarded reading classics and editing books as investigating principles and dealing with affairs, one would be a thousand miles away from the success of obtaining the Way. If one regarded reading classics and history and editing books as equal to investigating principles and dealing with affairs, and claimed, “The Way is here”, then one would be ten thousand miles from the Way.\(^\text{18}\)

Fang Yizhi indicated the separation of book learning and practice in real situations in the Cheng-Zhu School. In Fang’s regard, the knowledge in the previous classics and books came from ancient people’s practice and experience, and could function only as reference for our practice and pursuit of truth. If we took it as final truth and fettered by it in practice, then we failed to know its proper use. Pushing further, with the separation of book learning and practice, the scholars and officials thus generated would be incompetent in dealing with social affairs and indulged in pure talk of ancient books, and thus could not contribute a bit in saving the country from troubles.

Yan Yuan’s criticism on the Cheng-Zhu School was similar to Fang Yizhi’s. Yan Yuan said,

During the five hundred years from the Northern and Southern Song to the present, was there any scholar who had really put into practice what Yu禹, Yi益, Confucius and Yan

\(^{18}\) Fang Yizhi, preface to *Wuli Xiaoshi* 物理小識自序.
Hui 颜回 had done? People in this period only succeeded each other with empty words, added useless paper upon useless paper. They thought that true scholarship existed in quiet-sitting and records of conversations, not in the Great Learning/daxue 大学 and Small Learning/xiaoxue 小学\(^{19}\); Confucianism existed among rolls of books and under the roof of enshrinement of neo-Confucians, not in the Great learning and Small Learning. (Yan 1987: 396)

Yan Yuan disclosed the pseudo-scholarship that Neo-Confucians promoted and criticized its deviation from the scholarship Confucius and previous sages advocated. In this way, Yan Yuan denied the legitimacy of Neo-Confucianism as the successor of Confucianism and thus opened the trend of a return to true Confucianism. It is reasonable to presume that the call for returning to the authentic Confucianism paved the way for scholars in Qing Dynasty to analyze ancient texts and grasp the true meanings of Confucian classics. From this perspective, there should be a connection between the practical studies in the early Qing and the Exegesis in the Qing as a whole.

Like his peers, Wang Fuzhi also expressed his disfavor toward both the School of Principle and the School of Mind. However, he was concerned about their division of practice and knowledge.

Separating practice from knowledge, the inferior scholars would become the last and trivial group of exegesis, and their learning would be no different from or more superficial than playing with sentences and chapters; those superior scholars would half-close their eyes and lean on a stool, extinguish their minds and isolate themselves from external things. Some of these scholars perhaps got something, but those who failed would deviate from the Way and fall into illusion. (CSQS 2-314)

Wang Fuzhi’s words shared a lot with his peers’ criticism towards Neo-Confucianism. That is, he also disliked the word-playing of the Cheng-Zhu School and the neglect of moral practice of the Lu-Wang School. However, he did not make absolute judgment and kept some reservation. To book learning, he criticized it as shallow and superficial, however he did not deny it as an

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\(^{19}\) The Great Learning and Small Learning in Yan Yuan’s regard refer to traditional Confucian practice and learning specified in the Book of Rites before the rise of Neo-Confucianism.
viable approach; to the awakening of innate knowledge and original mind, he admitted that one would be perfect if having true experience of it, but warned that one would deviate from the right course if failing. Wang Fuzhi’s reservation showed more in his research and cultivation approaches. He adopted exegesis to annotate the Confucian Classics on the one hand, and advocated established the root—Lu Jiuyuan’s finding the original mind and Wang Yangming’s awakening innate knowledge, before learning and expanding knowledge on the other.

When tracing the origin of Neo-Confucian scholars’ incompetence and pedantry, the Ming loyalists ascribed it to the Buddhist elements that Neo-Confucianism absorbed in both methodology and worldview. Gu Yanwu condemned the learning of principle advocated by Neo-Confucians as Chan Buddhism. He said,

> The learning of principle in ancient times was called the learning of classics. Without concentration on one classic, one would not be able to master it….The learning of principle nowadays is truly the Chan Buddhism. (Gu 2000: 262-263)

According to Gu, the learning of principle prior to the rise of neo-Confucianism was the learning of Confucian classics. It was seeking the principle to improve oneself and govern the state. Therefore from learning to practice, a student should take decades. But in Gu’s time, Neo-Confucians instead took the recorded Cheng and Zhu’s conversations and discussions on Confucian classics as studying material and abandoned Confucian classics, just as Chan Buddhist monks took Chan masters’ sayings as final truth but abandoned Buddhist sutras. In this way, they took the means but forgot the goal, and thus their learning was nothing different from Chan Buddhism.

If Gu Yanwu only pointed out the similarity between Neo-Confucianism and Buddhism from the aspect of emphasis on their masters’ sayings, Huang Zongxi disclosed the Buddhist elements in Neo-Confucianism from the perspective of ontology. Huang Zongxi stated,

> Present Confucian scholars divided principle/li and qi as two, and seek principle prior to and outside of qi, thus they fell into the stone seal of Buddhism. (Huang 1994: 7-540)

Apparently, Huang Zongxi was attacking the separation of principle and qi in the Cheng-Zhu School. As is known, Zhu Xi advocated the ontological priority of principle to qi despite their
inseparability on the ontic level. The transcendent existence of principle was similar to the transcendence of emptiness to concrete forms in Buddhism. Therefore, when Zhu Xi asked to seek principle prior to \emph{qi}, he fell into the snare of Buddhism and deviated from Confucianism.

Like Huang Zongxi, Chen Que 陳确 (1604-1677) also targeted the Cheng-Zhu School and sharply indicated the Buddhist adulteration of Neo-Confucianism.

It was the Song Confucians who started adulterating Confucianism with Buddhism. Since then, Confucianism has been severely corrupted, and the disasters they brought to human mind and social custom could not be prevented any more. (Chen 1979: 442)

It goes without saying that the Song Confucians referred to the Cheng Brothers, Zhu Xi, etc. But interestingly, both Huang Zongxi and Chen Que did not attack the Chan Buddhist character of the Lu-Wang School but shed more venom on the Cheng-Zhu School. This stood as a sharp contrast with Wang Fuzhi’s severe condemnation of the Lu-Wang School as a new version of Chan Buddhism but more lenience to the Cheng-Zhu School. This could be explained away by the fact that both Huang Zongxi and Chen Que were Wang Yangming’s disciple Liu Zongzhou’s students, and tried to cover up their masters’ faults. But Wang Fuzhi did not need to pay much respect to Wang Yangming although his father had relations with Wang’s disciple.

Wang Fuzhi openly condemned Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming as spreading Chan Buddhism in the guise of Confucianism. (CSQS 12-10) When commenting on Zhang Zai’s criticism on the negative consequence on Chinese scholars and custom, Wang Fuzhi first indicated the Chan Buddhist essence of Wang Yangming’s doctrine, and said,

\begin{quote}
In recent times, Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge was like this (Buddhism). Its essence was nothing but Buddhist doctrines that the final truth was beyond words and speech, annihilated the locus of mental perception, transcended cognitive faculties and their objects, and did not form any opinion. (CSQS 12-370-371)
\end{quote}

To some degree, what Wang Fuzhi enumerated were the true features of Chan Buddhism, and thus Wang Yangming would have truly adulterated Confucianism with Chan Buddhism if his doctrine of innate knowledge had these features too. In contrast, Gu Yanwu’s condemnation of the Cheng-Zhu School as the learning of Chan Buddhism lacked insufficient justification if it
was only based on the similarity between Neo-Confucians’ sayings and Chan masters’ conversations. Moreover, Wang Fuzhi continued pointing out the troubles and disasters to which Wang Yangming’s doctrine led. Wang Fuzhi said,

Wang Yangming’s teaching was inherited by Wang Ji (1498-1583), then spread by Li Zhi. They thus established the teaching of unscrupulousness, causing the people to lose their sense of shame and honor, and the rise of bandits and thieves, and the perishing of China. All these resulted from their laziness in elucidating human relationships and investigating affairs but hope to obtain without effort, so they could discard their parents and monarch, and not care about their hair and skin (i.e., the Manchurian order to shave hair on forehead). (CSQS 12-371)

From this quotation, it was clear that Wang Fuzhi blamed Wang Yangming School for the ruin of the Ming Empire and condemned its disciples unscrupulous to accept the Manchurian rule. Compared with his condemnation on Wang Yangming and his disciples, Wang Fuzhi just attacked the Cheng-Zhu School theoretically, for example, to criticize Cheng Yi’s doctrine, “Heaven is principle”, and Zhu Xi’s approach, “preserving heavenly principle through eliminating desires”, and implicitly indicated its Buddhist elements. (See chapter 6).

Finally, Yan Yuan was the most severe attacker of Neo-Confucianism. He openly pointed out that Neo-Confucianism as a whole was a new version of Buddhism. Yan Yuan stated,

Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi in the Song, Yangming in the Ming were all so-called great Confucian scholars, but they all had the points of compromise with the thief (Buddhism), the points being deceived by the thief, the place where Bo Yi 伯夷 and Dao Zhi 盪跖 joined in the same club,\(^{20}\) and the place to stop and play with the thief. Master Zhu did his best to argue with Lu Xiangshan on the term “No Ultimate/\(\text{wuji} \) 無極”, then he was eclipsed by the emptiness in Buddhism and the nonbeing in Daoism…..Master Zhu on every occasion talked about the impurity and evil of material embodiment and Buddhist convenient approaches. Yangming had more places to be close to Chan Buddhism. Custom

\(^{20}\) It means confusing nobleman Bo Yi 伯夷 with thief Dao Zhi 盪跖.
changed people, and the worthy people could not escape from it. This was called compromise with the thief. (Yan 1987: 177)

In this paragraph, Yan Yuan put Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming into the same basket and executed his criticism. He listed the concepts and ideas that they borrowed from Buddhism and condemned their deviation from true Confucianism. Yan Yuan further indicated quiet-sitting was not a Confucian cultivation method but a method Zhou Dunyi borrowed from Buddhism and Daoism. Through quiet-sitting, even though one could get enlightened, what he got was also as illusory as the flower in mirror and the moon in water. Moreover, this method led people to be dispirited and annoyed to take up public affairs.

Through the above discussion, it was made clear that criticism of Neo-Confucianism had been a fashion among the Ming loyalists. Their difference lay in the perspective from which they started and the intensity with which they attacked. Gu Yanwu attacked it from the phenomenological level, while Wang Fuzhi and Yan Yuan did from both theoretical and practical aspects. Huang Zongxi and Chen Que concentrated more on attacking Cheng-Zhu School while they tried to avoid criticizing their masters Wang Yangming and Liu Zongzhou. Although Wang Fuzhi and Yan Yuan attacked Neo-Confucianism as a whole, but it was apparent that Wang Fuzhi shed more venom on the Lu-Wang School while Yan Yuan targeted more on Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi.

2.1.3 Qi-monism

Practical concern led the Ming loyalists to choose naturalism in their ontology and cosmology, and all of them chose qi-monism. This could be explained with their disgust at the worldview and ontology of Neo-Confucianism. However, it was more reasonable to explain it with their life experience during their resistance against the Manchurians, for in the battlefield, it was practicable strategy and efficient weapons and soldiers that determined success and failure. This emphasis on concrete things and practicable strategy led them to favor naturalism. In contrast, theory and pure talk were nothing better than dreams or whims. As a result, so idealistic as Huang Zongxi was, he had to compromise his ideas on mind with those on qi; so apologetic towards Neo-Confucianism as Wang Fuzhi was, he would consistently maintain vital force/qi 氣 prior to principle and objects/qi 器 prior to the Way/dao.
A cursory browse of the Ming loyalists’ works would leave us the impression that all of them shared the idea that “What fills between Heaven and earth is qi”. Wang Fuzhi declared his qi-monism through denial of the independence of principle/li from qi. “Principle is not a thing, separating from qi….Principle can only manifest itself through qi. What presides and adjusts the portion of yin and yang is principle. Wherever qi exists, there is the principle/li belonging to it.” (CSQS 6-726-727) From Wang Fuzhi’s remarks, qi became the substance while principle was its function and rules.

As the first logical derivative of qi-monism, the Ming loyalists rejected the distinction of nature of heavenly endowment/tianming zhi xing 天命之性 and nature of physical embodiment/qizhi zhi xing 氣質之性, and insisted that there be only one human nature. For example, Wang Fuzhi insisted that nature of physical embodiment referred to the human nature or principle/li 理 in physical embodiment and was not different from the original nature or nature of heavenly endowment. (CSQS 6-857-858) Yan Yuan argued that physical embodiment should not be bad in terms of the fact that qi was substance and principle was its function. He said, “If qi is regarded as evil, then principle is evil too. If principle is regarded as good, then qi should be good also. For qi is the qi of principle; principle is the principle of qi. How can one say that principle is purely good while physical embodiment is evil only?” (Yan 1987: 37) Yan Yuan denied the discordance between qi and principle by reason of the unity of qi and principle. As an inference, the physical embodiment that qi produced through gathering could not be discordant with principle either, and thus it was illogical to say that principle was always good but physical embodiment was bad. Now that there was no discordance between physical embodiment and its principle, and nature was just the principle in physical embodiment, there should not be the nature of heavenly embodiment different from the nature of physical embodiment. From this aspect, Yan Yuan reached the verdict that principle was the physical principle of qi and physical embodiment, and would likely break the Confucian view that principle was moral principle if pushed further. In contrast, Wang Fuzhi also realized the distinction between moral principle and physical principle in the human body but still insisted on nature as moral principle anyway. As

21 This sentence appears in Gu Yanwu’s Ri Zhi Lu, p. 22, Huang Zongxi’s Mengzi shi shuo 孟子師說 v.2. in Huang Zongxi’s Complete Collections 黃宗羲全集 v.1, p. 60. Wang Fuzhi and Yan Yuan had the same idea through insisting the unity of principle/li and qi and that qi is to principle as substance to function.
we know, following Wang Fuzhi’s qi-monism that principle and qi was one, physical principle should be regarded as the nature of human body. Therefore, when Wang Fuzhi insisted that human nature be moral principle rather than physical principle, he brought in inconsistency between his qi-monism and his doctrine of human nature.

Different from Wang Fuzhi who regarded human nature as innate moral principle from Heaven, Huang Zongxi understood it as the rules or principle to govern the activities and functions of human organs. He stated,

Ears, eyes, mouth and body are material substance; seeing, hearing, speaking and behavior are qi or vital force. What makes seeing, hearing, speaking and acting being executed but not losing their rules is called nature/xing. (Huang 1994: 8-274)

According to Huang Zongxi, nature was only the rule or principle of the activities of human organs and nothing else. In this way, he could be said to disclose the origin of morality—moral principle arising from moderating the activities of human organs rather than existing in itself transcedently. Therefore, he denied the existence of the nature of righteousness and principle (the nature of Heavenly embodiment) and insisted that there was only the nature of physical embodiment. (Huang 1994: 1-253) Undoubtedly, in his eyes, the nature of physical embodiment referred to the rule to moderate the activities of human organs.

In summary, the denial of the distinction between the nature of heavenly endowment and the nature of physical embodiment had become a common topic among the Ming loyalists. All of them insisted there be only one nature—the nature of physical embodiment, and moreover this nature be good instead of bad. However, there was also a slight difference among them. For example, Wang Fuzhi and Huang Zongxi argued that both nature and physical embodiment were good, but did not realize that when they regarded human nature as the rule to moderate human activities, it would be different from the principle of physical embodiment, and thus resulted in inconsistency with their qi-monism. Yan Yuan went further to abide by the unity and harmony
between *qi* and principle, nature and physical embodiment,\(^{22}\) but failed to give a justification of moral principle, and thus would lead to moral externalism.

### 2.1.4 Criticism on Factional Struggle

As is discussed in 1.1.1, factional struggle severely weakened the Ming Empire’s social custom, governance and defense, and finally brought it to a conclusion. During the period of resistance against the Manchurian conquest, the Ming loyalists, more or less were affected by factional struggles in the small regimes of the Ming princes. For example, Wang Fuzhi was involved in the struggle between the Wu party and the Chu party in the Yongli court and almost lost his life. Through reflecting on the negative consequences of factional struggles, the Ming loyalists realized its serious harm toward the efficiency and power of their resistance against the Manchurians. After they turned from their dreams of restoration to their new dreams of cultural preservation, they began to liquidate factional struggle in order to remind later generations of its harm.

Perhaps it was because of his father Huang Zunsu as one of the leaders of the Donglin Party and his deep hatred toward the eunuch party that his son, Huang Zongxi avoided speaking ill of factional struggle. Likewise, Gu Yanwu was accused and persecuted by his enemies and was saved by his party members of the Restoration Club/*fushe* 復社, and thus he also avoided criticism of factional struggle. But for the rest of the Ming loyalists, they more or less showed their disfavor toward factional struggle despite of their participation of the Restoration Club or its sub-organizations.

Fang Yizhi once was a member of the Restoration Club, but he doubted the motivation of partisan members and regarded them as using factional struggle as a tool for selfish interest. He said,

\(^{22}\) Yan Yuan used the metaphor of eyes and their function to deny the distinction between nature of heavenly endowment and nature of physical temperament. The socket, lid and ball are the eyes’ physical nature, whereas the vision that can see things clear are their heavenly nature…If the principle/*li* of vision is heavenly endowed, the sockets, lids and balls are also heavenly endowed.
Those activities such as the formation of cliques, the setup of stone tablets and the prohibition of teaching Neo-Confucianism, aim only at competing for the chamber of phoenix or the platform of chicken (official positions). Those people engaged in arguing would rather fail to meet their obligations to the court than to their friends; and they skillfully contrived false speech and chewed it for a long time. 23

In this poem, Fang indicated that factional struggle served only as a means to compete for power in the imperial court. Moreover, in order to obtain more power, party members would sacrifice the empire’s interest for their loyalty to their party and friends. As a result, factional struggles led both the Donglin Party (later the Restoration Club) and the eunuch party to be busy in their selfish or party interest but forget national security and governance. When factional struggles spread around the empire, they caused common people to be fond of contest and debate and destroyed the peaceful and tolerant social ethos. This contesting and intolerant social ethos in turn increased the intensity of factional struggle.

As Huang Zongxi’s classmate, 24 Chen Que openly avoided criticizing the Donglin Party for factional struggle, but he insinuated it through commenting on the factional struggle in the Eastern Han. He said,

The distinction of noblemen and petty persons has become extremely strict, leaving petty persons no places to stand, then the disasters brought upon the state became more severe.

This phenomenon started from those noblemen in the Eastern Han. (Chen1979: 425)

The term, “petty persons” here referred to the eunuchs and their followers. In the Eastern Han, the noblemen could not tolerate the eunuch’s participation in government, and attacked them at every chance. As a result, the eunuchs fought back and persecuted a lot of them, finally leading to the collapse of the empire. Likewise, in the Ming, the Donglin scholars attacked the eunuch party, leaving them with nowhere to stand, leading the country into chaos and collapse. Therefore, due to the similarity between these two historical periods, it was no question that

24 Huang Zongxi and Chen Que studied together under the direction of Liu Zongzhou.
Chen Que was criticizing the Donglin Party’s extreme attack and intolerance toward the eunuchs that did not improve but worsened the antagonistic atmosphere.

In contrast with Chen Que, Wang Fuzhi had a more personal experience of the negative consequences of factional struggle and thus criticized it more severely although he avoided openly criticizing the Donglin Party. (See 1.1.1 and 1.2) However, through his condemnation of both noblemen and petty persons involved in factional struggle, it was apparent that he disliked the Donglin Party’s approach in dealing with the eunuchs. (CSQS 11-103) In Wang Fuzhi’s opinion, noblemen should abide by ritual propriety and establish their dignity in front of petty persons. He thus valued Hexagram Guan 觀 and advised noblemen to maintain their dignity and ceremonies in front of petty persons and unfavorable situations so as to go through difficulties and avoid worsening the situation. On the contrary, if the noblemen argued with petty persons, they would degrade themselves to their level, and these petty persons would, in turn, shed their venom unscrupulously and make the situation worse. From this perspective, it was understandable why Wang Fuzhi established Great Harmony as his ideal and advocated leniency and tolerance in governance and social interactions.

2.2 The Unique or Original Contributions of Wang Fuzhi’s Peers

Before we discuss Wang Fuzhi’s own original contribution, it is necessary to discuss each of his peers’ unique contributions so as to feature Wang’s in a more manifest way. However, we will focus on those topics also touched upon by Wang, thus showing his strong and weak points on the same topics.

2.2.1 Gu Yanwu: Creating a New Academic Atmosphere

Gu Yanwu’s original contribution lay in his clear break from and rejection of the metaphysical speculation of Neo-Confucianism and his emphasis on practical studies. Gu discarded the morality-oriented mind-rectification and principle-investigation advocated by Neo-Confucians, while he turned to empirical and inductive research of concrete objects and events. This is confirmed by his critical remarks toward Neo-Confucians.
To abandon the accumulation of learning and knowledge but seek for the unity of principles and things; to avoid talking about the crises and troubles in the four seas but all day indulge in the doctrine that the mind of the Way/\textit{daoxin} is subtle but easy to be eclipsed, the mind of man/\textit{renxin} is susceptible to evil, and a person should be cautious at every moment in order to maintain the mind consistent…This is what I dare not accept. (Gu 2000: 176)

Gu’s remark targeted the Neo-Confucian method of investigating things and principle. One may argue that the Cheng-Zhu School also proposed the accumulation of knowledge, and thus Gu’s criticism was not correct. But it should be noticed that there was a difference in their accumulation of knowledge. For the Cheng-Zhu School, their purpose was to grasp the universal principle, especially moral principle, through accumulating knowledge of concrete things and events. For Gu Yanwu, his purpose was to find practical knowledge and general patterns among things and events so as to direct various human activities. For example, Gu’s research on geography and local custom aimed to apply his discovery in military strategy. Even though he asked people to study the Confucian classics, his concern was not purely moral cultivation but useful experiences and lessons from the past. This was demonstrated in his view that the \textit{Six Classics} were all historical records. (Gu 1994: 106) Therefore, the unity he sought was not metaphysical or moral principle, but a unity of practical wisdom inducted from learning and experience. It was from this perspective that he claimed that “The learning of the Confucian classics is the learning of principle”.

With practical concern as a standard, Gu emphasized an inductive method to find practicable principles and measures and compared it metaphorically to “refining copper from a mine in the mountains” (Gu 2000: 388) He also introduced an exegetical approach to understand the Confucian classics, and said, “Reading the \textit{Nine Classics} must start with investigating the correctness of the text while investigating the correctness of the text in turn begins with knowing the pronunciation of characters.” (Gu 1983: 165) On the outside, this method reminded one of the book-learning of the Cheng-Zhu School. However, one must not forget that Gu focused on finding useful lessons and experiences through correct understanding of ancient texts, while the Cheng-Zhu disciple’s aim was to extract moral meanings from them. Gu’s practical concern about exegesis could be further supported by his archeological approach—to confirm literary records with inscriptions on relics such as ancient bronze and stone tablets. From this
perspective, Gu Yanwu could be said to have opened a new academic direction—emphasizing concrete evidence in studies of the Confucian classics.

In contrast, despite their emphasis on practical studies, other Ming loyalists did not develop a practical and inductive method or apply practical concern thoroughly in their Confucian studies. Huang Zongxi and Wang Fuzhi still had nostalgic and apologetic attitude towards Neo-Confucianism. The one compiled the Neo-Confucian biographies from the Song to the Ming, and the other declared to follow in Zhang Zai’s footsteps. Fang Yizhi absorbed more knowledge of Western science, but he also tried to build a syncretism among Buddhism, Daoism and Neo-Confucianism. Therefore, neither their methods nor their worldviews could draw a clear line from Neo-Confucianism.

Specifically, Gu Yanwu’s original contributions lay in the following two aspects. First, Gu Yanwu connected the study of the Confucian classics with the needs of the present world. He said, “If a literary work has nothing to do with the purpose of the Six Classics and the need of present world, it should be discarded.” (Gu 2000: 375). This showed that the purpose of the Six Classics and the need of present world were of the same kind in his understanding. He further indicated that civil examination should test how students apply their understanding of the purpose of the Six Classics to present affairs rather than moral cultivation.

Second, Gu Yanwu proposed realistic moral theory, and sought for feasible moral norms in real situations, but threw away the perfect goodness Neo-Confucians embraced. In contrast, other Ming loyalists did not go thus far to found morality on the need of real situations, and more or less inherited the Neo-Confucian metaphysical characteristics of mind and nature, although they acknowledged the legitimacy of desire.

Gu acknowledged the legitimacy of selfish desires and supported the idea that widows should get remarried. In regard to the practicability of moral rules, he set up a minimum of morality for people’s behavior, i.e., to behave with a sense of shame and honor. He once suggested the beautification of custom through encouraging people to seek for fame. Undoubtedly, this suggestion might result in instrumentalism which used fame to earn profit, but it could still be regarded as building up an embankment for people’s behavior and custom. Otherwise, when people disregarded the sense of shame and became indifferent to bad fame, the society would be beyond salvation.
2.2.2 Huang Zongxi: A Revolutionary View on the Monarch-Subject Relation

The failure of resistance against the Manchurian conquest forced all Ming loyalists to reflect on the misgovernance of the Ming emperors, but only Huang Zongxi completely disillusioned himself from the function of monarchy. In his opinion, from the time of King Jing 周敬王 (?-476 BC) of the Zhou Dynasty, the relation between monarch and subject had been distorted. Before that time, the kings were the servicemen of the people and helped the world out of miseries and troubles; but after that time, the kings and emperors began to regard the state as their own property and did their best to exploit the people without undertaking their proper duty. As a result, China always lingered in the vicious circle of the rise and fall of monarchy dynasties in terms of the intensity of their cruelty and had no good governance at all. Thus he concluded, “What brings the world great disasters is no other than the monarch.” (Huang 1994: 1-3)

Huang Zongxi founded his new doctrine on the assumption that human beings were innately selfish and concerned about their own interests only. In order to reach a harmonious society, an unselfish and impartial person was necessary to coordinate different interests of the people. This was the origin of the king or monarch. Therefore, the role of the monarch was to protect public welfare and social harmony. Huang thus assumed, “In ancient times, people in the world were the masters, while the king or monarch was the serviceman. What the king managed all his life was for the benefit of the people.” (Huang 1994: 1-2) However, Huang deplored that the case in later times was just the reverse.

The kings or emperors in later generations were not as the kings in the ancient times. They thought they controlled all the benefit and harm in the world, so it would not be unacceptable that they took all the benefits for themselves and left all the harms to the people. They forced people in the world not to dare to be selfish or self-interested, but asked them to regard the kings’ selfishness as the public welfare in the world…..Alas, it is the kings that make the people in the world have no place to rest. (Huang 1994:1-2)

Through the above comparison, Huang sadly described the degeneration of the monarchy in later dynasties, condemned the selfishness and irresponsibility of later emperors as the origin of disasters and troubles of the world and the people. This kind of thought could be said to be the first voice to condemn the monarchy system in Chinese history. Before Huang Zongxi, Mencius
once proposed that the sovereign was lighter while the people more important, but still put his hope on the king to improve public welfare. Among Huang’s peers, none of them dared to shake the monarchy system although they more or less advocated that the emperors should be unselfish and humane in governance. Therefore, Huang Zongxi’s criticism of the monarchy system could be regarded as the only voice in an open valley.

With serving the people under Heaven as a standard, Huang Zongxi denied the legitimacy of the laws and regulations which aimed to protect the privilege of monarchy and royal family. In his opinion, the laws of the Three Dynasties were real laws because they aimed to protect and transform people in the world; but later laws were false laws because they tried to protect the privilege of the royal family through restraining the people. It was only through eliminating these unjust laws could a just and reasonable society be set up. From this perspective, Huang Zongxi rejected the traditional political view that if there was a nobleman, there would be an orderly society despite the lack of rules or law, while embraced the opposite idea: the practicable law and institution were prior to the capable governors. If there were not just and reasonable law and institution, and people were fettered by the privilege-protected royal laws, the hero and capable governor would have no room to exert their talents. In contrast, if there were reasonable and just institutions, great disasters would be prevented even though there were no talented governors. In this regard, Huang Zongxi really opened a new direction for Chinese political theory.

The just laws and institutions Huang was expecting were various, including the appointment of Prime Minister, the distribution of power to localities, and the discussion of national affairs in the Imperial Academy, etc. The appointment of Prime Minister would share and restrain the emperor’s power; the distribution of power to localities would strengthen local government’s defensive power in national crisis. Both were prescribed to fix the shortcomings of the Ming institution. The discussion of national affairs in the Imperial Academy was exclaimed as Huang’s unique and pioneering idea to restrain the emperor’s power and predict Chinese-style parliament, and apparently it was originated from political and moral discussion. Although Zhu Yixin expressed different views upon the function of the students of the Imperial Academy and thought they could be manipulated (see 1.1.1), the discussion of national affairs in the Imperial Academy undoubtedly was the best way to avoid the dictatorship of the emperor and the manipulation of eunuchs. When this institution became improved, it would really lead to the constitutional monarchy.
Apart from laws and institutions, Huang Zongxi also tried to restrain the emperor’s power through redefining the monarch-minister relationship. Huang highly praised Confucius and Mencius’ view that the king and the minister should respect each other and were in a reciprocal relation, but condemned Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) who foolishly stated, “The minister’s crime deserves execution, while the heavenly king is always sagacious.” (Han 1977: 1-13) In Huang’s regard, Han Yu’s unconditional submissiveness led to the emperors’ cruelty and disrespect toward officials, and in turn caused officials to be shameless and unprincipled. Understandably, Huang Zongxi insinuated the Ming emperors’ cruelty had caused the corruption and shamelessness of officials.

Also a logical inference from his statement of monarch-people relation, Huang Zongxi claimed that the right duty of a minister was to serve for people under heaven, not for the monarchy and the royal family. If a minister disregarded the welfare of people in the world, he would betray the duty of a minister although he could help the monarch to rise, or die together with him. In this way, he drew a line between a real minister and a servant or concubine of the monarchy and his standard depended on the choice between serving for the people in the world and serving the monarchy himself.

In refuting the identification of father-son relation with monarch-minister relation, Huang Zongxi indicated, the former was based on blood relation while the latter was based on cooperation. To serve for the people in the world was the bond which tied the monarch and ministers together. If the monarch failed to comply with this agreement, the minister could leave the monarch, or even replace him with a new one who could serve the people. In this way, Huang Zongxi reversed the submissive role of ministers and resumed the long-forgotten reciprocity between king and ministers.

Huang Zongxi’s criticism toward traditional politics undoubtedly hit the right points, but he could not yet avoid expressing his anger and despair toward the Ming monarch emotionally. He pointed out the monarch was the source of disaster and evil, however he did not know how and with what to replace it. As a result, he tacitly accepted monarchy again and proposed the use of prime minister to limit the tyranny of monarchy. He again soon realized the weakness of the prime minister in balancing with the monarchy, so he resorted to public evaluation, i.e., letting the Imperial Academy hold the executive power of discerning truth and falsity. In this way, he
really hit the essence of Western parliament unconsciously. Moreover, his explanation of the origin of king or monarchy was just a baseless imagination and contradictory with his doctrine that human beings were born selfish. Provided his assumption could be established, the king or monarch would unquestionably have insurmountable power as Hobbs supposed. Otherwise, he would not be able to implement his duty to promote public welfare. As a result, his proposition of a new monarch-minister relation would be fatally weakened, for the insurmountable power was the prerequisite of the protection and promotion of public welfare, and the submission of ministers would be necessary in this sense. Nevertheless, we should say that his proposal of a parliamentary institution like the Imperial Academy was a great complement to this shortcoming.

2.2.3 Fang Yizhi: Openness to Western Culture, Buddhism and Daoism

Fang Yizhi played a unique role with his erudition among the Ming loyalists. Two aspects of his thought made him outstanding. One was his acceptance of and evaluation on Western culture; the other was his attempt to melt together Confucianism, Daoism and Buddhism.

Fang Yizhi learned a lot of Western science and Christianity from the missionaries he met in Beijing. This knowledge dictated his scientific and positivist attitude toward the investigation of principles and led to his criticism of the metaphysical speculation of Neo-Confucianism. He divided principles into three categories: the principles of concrete objects; the principles of governance and education, and the ultimate principle that made things as they were. He called the investigation of the principles of concrete objects as zhice 質測, and the search for the ultimate principle as tongji 通幾. Through this division, he led the physical principles and the ultimate principle to be independent of moral and political principles, and thus changed the Neo-Confucian way of thinking which used the investigation of things as a subsidiary means of moral cultivation. In this aspect, he was more pioneering compared with other Ming loyalists. For example, Wang Fuzhi still insisted the knowledge from seeing and hearing be the subsidiary and confirmation of the knowledge of virtue and nature. (CSQS 12-144)
Fang Yizhi described tongji as grasping the deep cause from which silence and interaction/ji gan would arise.\(^{25}\) From this definition, although he had the tendency to regard it as philosophy in the sense of Western culture, he followed more on the exhaustion of the incipiency or tendency of things in the Book of Changes. This was verified by his method of grasping incipiency through studying the Book of Changes.

The sage communicated with spirits, classified the myriad things, and then put his understanding in the Book of Changes. He created diagrams and books at his breath, and examined incipiency to the most exactness. Calendar, law, medicine and divination all could be extended and inferred from there. How many scholars could study it to the utmost?\(^ {26}\)

According to Fang, the Book of Changes already contained the highest and general principle for the myriad things and various professions. If a scholar could study and completely understand it, he would be able to grasp the deep cause and incipient signs of the myriad things, and then act timely to achieve great feats. This explanation reminded one of Fang’s dreams of restoration through catching the right opportunity. But it also simplified the search of ultimate principles and differed tongji from western philosophy.

Fang’s description of zhice was very close to modern scientific method. He said,

> Things have their causes, and thus should be investigated concretely. From the big things such as large time-span as yuan 元 and hui 會 to the small creatures such as weed, tree and insect, one should classify their nature and characteristics, disclose their likes and dislikes, examine their constant and changeable states. This is called zhice.\(^ {27}\)

To record the characteristics, activities and existent states of natural things and objects is still the prime approach of scientific investigation. Moreover, the natural principle or pattern thus found would be far different from the moral principle that Neo-Confucians featured in their investigation of things. From this point of view, it could be said that Fang Yizhi refreshed the old

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\(^{25}\) Fang Yizhi, preface to Wuli Xiaoshi 物理小識自序.

\(^{26}\) Ibid.

\(^{27}\) Ibid.
term, investigating things/gewu 格物 with a new concern—seeking for natural principles and patterns instead of moral principle. With this positivistic approach toward investigating things, Fang Yizhi made many new discoveries and wrote down many astonishing remarks. For instance, he pointed out that human intelligence was determined by the quality of brain instead of heart; he also proved the substantial existence of air through the transmission of sound. In order to simplify Chinese pronunciation and writing, he proposed the adoption of a phonetic language instead of a hieroglyphic one.

Fang Yizhi’s insight on zhice was highly acknowledged by his peers. Despite his rejection of Fang Yizhi’s understanding of the ultimate principle, Wang Fuzhi nevertheless agreed with his positivistic method. “The learning of zhice that Master Mi (Fang Yizhi) and his son engaged themselves in was truly a practical approach for the attainment of both learning and thinking. For the investigation of things/gewu was to exhaust principles through investigating objects or things. It was only zhice that could achieve this purpose.” (CSQS 12-637) Evidently, Wang Fuzhi also realized the difference between moral principle and physical principle achieved through investigating things, especially the far distance between moral principle and military strategy. For example, it was only through investigating the topography, equipment, information and soldiers that a battle could be maneuvered. But Wang Fuzhi soon fell back to the old way that regarded moral principle as superior to physical principles.

Fang Yizhi insisted the unity of zhice and tongji, i.e., the finding of the ultimate principle was based on the investigation of concrete objects; and at the same time, the finding of the ultimate principle expanded the limit of the investigation of concrete objects. He criticized the metaphysical speculation of Neo-Confucian scholars as overlooking concrete objects through imagining an illusionary ultimate principle; he also despised those scholars who limited their thinking in concrete forms or circulated stories and could not elevate themselves to the principles of a higher level. In this way, he truly tried to avoid the shortcomings of both pure talk and book learning, and put Confucianism on a very sound and practical basis.

However, due to the fact that Fang Yizhi regarded the general principle in the Book of Changes as the highest principle and did not appreciate Western metaphysics, he could not find a universal principle running through various scientific subjects. So he made a hasty conclusion that, “Western learning is proficient in investigation of concrete objects/zhice, but awkward in
the search of ultimate principle/tongji.”28 For instance, he did not think Westerners really knew Heaven and regarded it merely as creator or God, for in his understanding, Heaven was a ceaseless process exposed in the Books of Changes and Poetry. Moreover, because of his vision that the ultimate principle in his mind was the timeliness and harmony that Confucian classics described, he could not truly appreciate the metaphysical thinking in Western culture on the one hand, and he would not take the ultimate principle as the natural principle found through investigation of objects/zhice, and thus would not be able in the end to maintain the unity between zhice and tongji. To some degree, he returned to a kind of metaphysical speculation like Neo-Confucianism when he tried to set up a syncretistic system of Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism through using the center of a circle/huanzhong in the Zhuangzi or the Great Ultimate in the Book of Changes in his later life.

Different from his peers who severely criticized and blamed Buddhism for its corruptive effect on custom, as a scholastic Buddhist monk, Fang Yizhi proposed a syncretism of Buddhism, Daoism and Confucianism from his unique life experience. He wrote a philosophical book, “Tong Xi Jun 東西均” that aimed to “melt Confucianism and Buddhism as one through complementing the realm in which I actively participate (you wo) with the realm in which I do not (wu wo).”29 He further claimed, “from now on, with regard to Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, we should neither adhere to nor reject any one of them.” (Fang 2001: 160) He insisted on using the emphasis on learning and practice of Confucianism to correct the doctrine of sudden enlightenment of Chan Buddhism so as to build a comprehensive and concordant system. In his eyes, Confucius aimed to tell people the right course, Laozi valued exposing the truth from the opposite aspect, and Buddha’s teaching emphasized more on paradox/beiwu 倍仵, i.e., deliberately do something against one’s original expectation, but they share the same intention to save the world from troubles and disasters. (Jiang 1987: 118) Therefore, one should wipe out the distinction among the three teachings and understand that their doctrines were proposed just in response to different situations. As a result, Fang used the Great Ultimate as the ultimate

28 Ibid.
principle and equalized it with the idea of the center of a circle/huānzhōng 環中 or either way possible/liǎngxíng 兩行 in the Zhuangzi. In fact, his uniting methods, uniting/guān 貫, extinguishing/mǐn 泯, and following/suí 隨, could be seen as the revised version of the middle path/zhōng dì 中諦, the true path/zhēn dì 真諦 and the worldly path/sù dì 俗諦 in Huanyan sect of Buddhism. (Fang 2001: 37)

2.2.4 Yan Yuan: An Uncompromising Attack toward Neo-Confucianism from the Point of Practice

Among the Ming loyalists, Yan Yuan stood out by flatly denying the legitimacy of Neo-Confucianism from the point of its adulteration with Buddhism and want of practice. Using practice as a standard, he condemned Neo-Confucianism as useless and misleading. Hence Yan Yuan aimed to revive Confucianism through carrying out the practical affairs specified in Confucian classics. This was verified in his explanation of investigating things/gèwù 格物 as “doing matter with hands” and his view that one could understand rituals through practice. (Yan 1987: 159)

First, Yan Yuan stated that Neo-Confucianism adulterated Confucianism with the world view of Buddhism. In his regard, Zhou Dunyi adulterated Confucianism with his learning from Chan master Shouya 壽涯 and Daoist master Chen Tuan 陳摶 (872-989) into Confucianism and founded Neo-Confucianism. (Yan 1987: 395) Then the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi continued and continued this practice of borrowing Buddhist ideas without scruple. Yan Yuan painstakingly collected the cases where Zhu Xi borrowed Buddhist ideas in Classified Conversations of Master Zhu/zhūzǐ yùlèi 朱子語類 and criticized them one by one. Taking the Forty-two Chapter Sutra/sìshí èr zhāng jīng 四十二章經 as an example, Yan Yuan said,

The Forty-two Chapter Sutra in Buddhism is extremely illusory; but Master Zhu regarded it as plain and true. This shows Zhu unconsciously disclosed his rooted ideas of Chan
Buddhism in the mind. Likewise, in his annotation to the Analects, he claimed, “Buddhism is closer to reason”. (Yan 1987: 280)

The reason that Zhu Xi appreciated the Forty-two Chapter Sutra and thought Buddhism was closer to reason, might be relevant to his doctrine of heavenly principle, for in Zhu’s regard, heavenly principle as a pure, clean and vacuous realm was similar to Buddhist emptiness. (Zhu 1994: 4) However, in doing this, Zhu Xi unconsciously disclosed the trace of his borrowing from Buddhism.

In fact, Zhu Xi implied that Neo-Confucianism shared the same ontology with Buddhism when he used Buddhist words to elucidate Confucian texts. In the Classified Conversations, he compared the Confucian world vision where “The eagles fly and the fish jump” in the Doctrine of the Mean to Chan Buddhist words, “All green bamboo are nothing but thusness; all lovely yellow flowers are no difference from prajna.” (Zhu 1994: 1534-1535) With this analogy, Zhu Xi implied that nature/xing 性 in Neo-Confucianism was similar to Buddha nature in Chan Buddhism. Therefore, among later generations of Neo-Confucianism, some scholars held the view that the upper part of Buddhism was the same as that of Confucianism. (Yan 1987: 177) That is, from the perspective of substance or ontology, Confucianism was the same as Buddhism; but from the perspective of function or morality, they were different. Toward this view, Yan Yuan set on a sarcastic attack. He contended,

They (Neo-Confucians) often thought the upper part of Buddhism was the same as Confucianism…Alas, wasn’t this almost the same as the view that a plant had the root of hemp but has the sprout of wheat? Was there such a case between Heaven and earth? (Yan 2000: 177)

As a common sense, the same root should give rise to the same sprout and branch. If Confucianism and Buddhism shared the same upper part or ontology, they should not have contradictory views toward filial piety, that is, Confucianism valued filial piety while Buddhism

30 Yan Yuan made a mistake about the place Zhu Xi claimed “Buddhism is closer to reason”. This sentence appeared in Zhu Xi’s preface to his annotation of the Doctrine of the Mean instead in his annotation of the Analects.
abandoned parents to seek for nirvana. Therefore, the view that Confucianism and Buddhism shared the same upper part was absurd.

Yan Yuan continued pointing out that Confucianism and Buddhism were different not only in their external activities and functions, but also in their ontology or upper part. He stated,

Confucianism takes nature as humanity, righteousness, ritual propriety, wisdom and trustfulness, while Buddhism takes it as emptiness and detachment from anything. Humanity and righteousness as nature give rise to loyalty and filial piety, and are their origin. The lower part, loyalty and filial piety are one with the upper part, humanity and righteousness, just as the root is one with the branch. In contrast, the upper part of Buddhism is simply emptiness, so it advocates the teachings of disloyalty and non-filial piety. It throws away human relationships and human affairs, and thus its lower part is also emptiness. How can one say that Buddhism is same as Confucianism on the upper part while different in the lower part? (Yan 2000: 177-178)

This text points out clearly that, Confucianism took humanity and righteousness as its upper part, that was why it advocated filial piety; but Buddhism took emptiness or illusion as its upper part, that was why it embraced unfilial teachings. How could it say that they had any similarities?

Based on the arguments that Zhu Xi and his disciples borrowed ideas from Buddhism, Yan Yuan concluded that Zhu Xi mixed Confucianism with Buddhism and again adulterated Buddhist ideas into Confucianism. As a result, later generations blindly followed Zhu Xi and compared him with Confucius and Mencius, but did not know that he was advocating Buddhism in the guise of Confucianism. (Yan 2000: 283)

However, one might argue that Yan Yuan was too fundamentalist and intolerant to cultural interaction, for the blending of Confucianism and Buddhism would be inevitable after its introduction to China for several centuries. Truly Yan Yuan and his Ming loyalist peers had such inclinations, as they condemned Buddhism from the aspect of its impracticability and indifference to social affairs originated from its doctrine of emptiness, which, when imparted into Neo-Confucianism, caused Chinese scholars and officials incompetent and irresponsible. This comes to Yan Yuan’s second attack toward Neo-Confucianism from the perspective of its ignorance of practice and social affairs.
Second, Yan Yuan criticized Neo-Confucians for their betrayal of the Duke of Zhou and Confucius’ practical concern although they declared “to pursue a peaceful world for endless generations.” (Zhang 2006: 376) In Yan Yuan’s regard, they were fond of dabbling, quiet-sitting and abstract speculation, but did not know that great feats and achievements must be achieved through social practice. For example, Yan Yuan disagreed with Zhu Xi who interpreted “being kind to the people/qinmin 親民” as “renewing the people/xinmin 新民”. “Being kind to the people” originally referred to the act of sustaining the livelihood of the people and securing them a safe environment; but “renewing the people” in Zhu Xi’s interpretation meant to transform the people with moral teachings. In this way, Zhu Xi changed practical concern in the Confucian classics to the pursuit of perfect moral mind through book learning and quiet-sitting. From Zhu Xi’s point of view, to achieve moral perfection needed only reflection and knowledge and had little to do with social affairs such as military activity and agriculture. But from Yan Yuan’s point of view, it was just through undertaking social affairs that moral principle and knowledge became possible and useful. Thus, Yan Yuan condemned,

(Neo-Confucians) imitated each other to read and annotate, incorporated pure talk and exegesis together, and thus ignored effort to perform ceremonies and music, or undertake military training and agricultural works. Then the so-called being kind to the people becomes impossible. (Yan 2000: 395)

The knowledge obtained through pure talk and exegesis was distant from practice, and could not improve the efficacy of ritual and music performance or military and agricultural tasks that were critical to the livelihood of the people. Then the Neo-Confucian’s aim to put the world in order became nothing but empty words. Based on its separation from practice and adulteration with Buddhist views, Yan Yuan concluded that Neo-Confucianism was contradictory with Confucius and Mencius’s teaching and concern, claiming, “Only a piece of Cheng Zhu thought being stripped, can a piece of Confucius and Mencius’ learning recover.” (Yan 2000: 774) “Before Cheng and Zhu’s doctrines stopped, the Duke of Zhou and Confucius’s teachings would not prevail.” (Yan 2000: 398)

Last, from his practical concern, Yan Yuan denounced the pedantic view, “to seek for the Way instead of food”, that Neo-Confucians were fond of. He said,
The Song Confucians went into the wrong way from this point, and led later generations to disregard the sought of livelihood. Actually no one realized that these Song Confucians’ way and teaching had nothing to do with Confucius’ way. (Yan 2000: 671)

Yan Yuan’s criticism aimed at Neo-Confucians’ misunderstanding of Confucius’ words in the *Analects*. Confucius told his disciple Zigong that in the time of crisis, a ruler would rather lose food or die of hunger than lose faith to the people. (*Analects* 12.7) However, Neo-Confucians interpreted it as neglecting the livelihood of the people but emphasizing on moral discipline. Then they abandoned Confucius’ practical concern about the livelihood of the people and the governance of the state, but plunged into the prejudice of looking down on the pursuit of profit and achievements. As a result, the Neo-Confucians knew nothing but pure talk about moral mind and nature. When there were national crises, the better ones among them committed suicide for their country; the ordinary ones watched their homeland being conquered with stunned speechlessness, and the worst ones just submitted to the new conquerors and lost all moral sense. To some extent, all these originated from Neo-Confucian’s despising of practice and profit. Therefore, Yan Yuan prescribed his remedy and contended,

> Hence if one seeks for profit when he is engaged in righteousness, and calculates achievement when he starts elucidating the way, he is hasty and helping the growth of plants; if he does not have a bit of mind in seeking profit and calculating achievement, then he falls into silence and emptiness and becomes pedantic. (Yan 2000: 200)

Yan Yuan attempted to achieve a balance between the hasty expectation of profit and the ignorance of profit. Through finding this balance in practice, he hoped to bring scholars into the right course and purified them of the negative influence from Neo-Confucianism.

### 2.3 Wang Fuzhi: Constructing a New Neo-Confucian System with the Attempt to Solve All Political and Cultural Problems

After the background is drawn, our focus will be manifested. In regard to Wang Fuzhi’s case, we can delineate his original contributions through contrast with those of his peers. Compared with Gu Yanwu, Wang Fuzhi, as a recluse, did not exert much practical influence during his life, and was not involved in initiating a new academic trend either. For the most part, he was just a
participant instead of an initiator of this trend. It goes without saying that he showed practical concern in his works, but he stated it either emotionally from the point of recovering Ming sovereignty and culture, or narrowly from the point of vulgar pragmatism (CSQS 6-475), and did not integrate it into his system through careful consideration. As a result, he was unable to propose the idea that “all the Six Classics are historical records” as Gu Yanwu did. Moreover, it was after Wang Fuzhi’s failure of resistance against the Manchurians and despair in his political life that he realized the distance between theory or pure talk and practice, and therefore became more practical. But he soon went back to a utopian attitude when he tried to reconstruct a feasible Confucian system and regarded the Zhou polity as an ideal polity for later Chinese.

Similar to Huang Zongxi, Wang Fuzhi criticized monarchy polity and raised the idea that the monarch or emperor should be unselfish and regard the world as the world of all people. However, he did not know how to accomplish this ideal, and in turn resorted to the emergence of sagely kings and emperors as shown in his praise of Liu Xiu 劉秀 (6 BC-57 AD), the founder of the East Han and Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤 (927-976), the founder of the Song. This explained why he stubbornly defended the legitimacy of monarchy and showed great admiration to Liu Xiu and Zhu Yuanzhang 朱元璋 (1328-1398), the founder of the Ming. In a sense, Wang Fuzhi had not yet transcended the monarchy and his criticism thus could be regarded only as revisionist rather than revolutionary. On the contrary, Huang Zongxi had seen through the vicious circle and disasters that monarchy brought about, and thus proposed the Imperial Academy as a political body. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi did not have many original ideas on the future of China’s polity, nor any practicable idea to restrain the emperor’s power. He was nothing but an ordinary Confucian scholar from this aspect.

Wang Fuzhi, as a friend and colleague of Fang Yizhi, disagreed a lot on their attitudes toward both Western culture and Buddhism. Fang Yizhi earnestly accepted Western culture, integrated it into the investigation of things of the Cheng-Zhu School and proposed his new doctrine, to investigate physical things/zhiche 質測 so as to grasp the ultimate principles/tongji 通幾; In contrast, Wang Fuzhi limited the things to be investigated to those relevant to immediate human need and moral practice, and did not care about seeking for scientific principles of natural things, so he had not stepped out of the scope and purpose that Xunzi and Zhu Xi described in investigating things. Although Wang Fuzhi came into contact with Western astronomy and
Catholicism, he doubted or denied more than studied it sympathetically based on his rooted ethnic and cultural prejudice. For example, he presumed that Western astronomy stole from Zhang Zai’s astronomic ideas, and doubted about the doctrine that the earth was spherical. (CSQS 12-439, 459) With regard to Buddhism, contrary to Fang Yizhi’s syncretism, Wang Fuzhi regarded Buddhism as the source for the corruption of Chinese custom, so he set up his primary purpose as the purification of Confucianism of its Buddhist influence. This was shown in his rejection when Fang invited him to join in Chan Buddhism. However, they also shared a same academic idea, the acceptance of Zhuangzi’s *huanzhong* 環中 or *liangxing* 兩行, and they both tried to hide this borrowing. Fang Yizhi said *huanzhong* was originally the thought of the Great Ultimate in the *Book of Changes*, while Wang Fuzhi stated, *huanzhong* could be used after being corrected with the *Doctrine of the Mean*. Perhaps their difference could be explained from their different academic background. Fang Yizhi had a familial tradition to study the *Book of Changes*, so he adopted the idea of flexibility and became more open to Western culture and Buddhism; Wang Fuzhi’s family studied the *Spring-Autumn Annals*, and thus he emphasized the distinction between noblemen and petty persons, orthodoxy and heresy, and so was more antagonistic toward both Western culture and Buddhism. In summary, Wang Fuzhi did not show much sympathy of Western culture, and lacked any new ideas on investigating things.*gewu* 格物.

In contrast to Yan Yuan and Chen Que, Wang Fuzhi was milder on the criticism of Neo-Confucianism. Yan and Chen aimed to overthrow Neo-Confucianism completely and to replace it with the practical thoughts Confucius and Mencius proposed, whereas Wang Fuzhi tried to reconstruct Neo-Confucianism on the basis of Zhang Zai’s doctrine while inheriting the Cheng-Zhu and Lu-Wang Schools. Although in many places Wang Fuzhi corrected or disagreed with Cheng Yi or Zhu Xi, he dared not condemn their doctrines as useless or Buddhist, but only insinuated their adulteration with Buddhism to the most. What he did was only incorporate their doctrines of mind and nature into his new system based on *qi*-monism. Thus, in practice, he was not as practical as Yan Yuan and did not have a clear idea on the unity of profit and righteousness. To some degree, he still followed the tradition of valuing righteousness while despising profit. In theory, although he attempted to purify Confucianism of Buddhist and Daoist elements, he never reached the sharpness and clarity of Chen Que’s insight—pointing out that Neo-Confucians practiced Buddhism in the guise of Confucianism. In addition, Wang Fuzhi was
still blind to the harmful effects that the strict distinction between noblemen and petty persons, heavenly principle and desires had brought about, although he had some remarks on the unity of principle and desires, and advised the tolerance of petty persons. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi could be regarded as the most conservative among the Ming loyalists.

After the comparison between Wang Fuzhi's and other Ming loyalists, it can be shown that Wang Fuzhi was far from a revolutionary scholar or an initiator of a new academic trend in the Ming-Qing transition period. To most he was only an apologetic or revisionist scholar of Neo-Confucianism and his strength lay in his revisionist arguments for Neo-Confucianism. From this perspective, it could be said that his unique contribution was to construct a relatively consistent and synthetic Confucian system of thought through critical inheritance of Neo-Confucian thoughts, and thus he could be regarded a comprehensive Neo-Confucian instead of an irreconcilable critic of Neo-Confucianism such as Yan Yuan and Chen Que. His syncretism could be summarized as a system of thought based on qi-monism, starting from the Great Harmony in cosmology, through humanity in moral cultivation, and ending in the Kingly Way in administration. In fact, the concept of humanity was the thread running through all three levels. With humanity as his main concern, he unraveled his doctrines on various topics and tried to solve the problems arising from previous theories and practices.

On the cosmological level, Wang Fuzhi embraced the Great Harmony or the universal harmonious qi in Zhang Zai’s philosophy and regarded it as the essence of Heaven. It was through the Great Harmony that all things were born. Specifically, the Great Harmony manifested as humanity in human beings and thus through humane behavior, man could maintain and increase the amount of harmonious qi in the universe. This explained why Wang Fuzhi highly appreciated the idea of assisting Heaven through cultivating one’s harmonious qi, as proposed in the Zhuangzi. However, Wang Fuzhi distinguished himself from Zhuangzi in his methodology. Wang Fuzhi insisted on cultivating harmonious qi through moral practice, especially in complying with Confucian ritual propriety, while Zhuangzi proposed to achieve that through forgetting all social norms and personal gain and loss.

Through cultivating the harmonious qi to assist Heaven, Wang Fuzhi thought he had found a final remedy to prevent disasters and conflicts from their buds and thus to maintain peace and harmony in the world forever. In his understanding, once everyone in the world was aware of
maintaining his own harmonious qi and followed the right way prescribed in the Confucian Classics, disasters, social or natural, would be eliminated in the long run. In practice, he urged people to be unselfish, be aware of the distinction between righteousness and profit at every moment, and sincerely follow Confucian ritual propriety on the one hand, and criticize and banish Daoism, Buddhism and Legalism so as to prevent their destruction to human mind and custom with their selfish and partial doctrines on the other.

However, Wang Fuzhi did not answer the question of how disharmonious qi arose provided all things were from the Great Harmony in their origin. If the disharmonious qi were bad only because human beings interacted with it untimely, as he supposed (CSQS 12-368), then there would be no bad qi at all in the universe, and his doctrine of improving the harmonious qi of Heaven would go nowhere. Moreover, provided there was bad qi in the universe, how could one improve his harmonious qi when the exchanging process between one’s bodily qi and the universal qi was out of one’s own control? Wang Fuzhi might reply that man could change or improve his own qi through selecting food and good behavior. But this was only one way by which the universal qi entered the human body, and it might not be able to improve the harmonious qi in one’s body at all. Just as a pool with two pipes, the purity of water from one pipe might not improve the pond’s water quality if the water from another pipe was always impure. In this way, Wang’s doctrine of assisting Heaven and improving harmonious qi so as to prevent the rise of disasters and conflicts in human society would become impracticable.

On the level of moral theory, Wang Fuzhi insisted that humanity was the Great Harmony residing in the human mind, and thus human beings were born to have a nature taking humanity as its content. In this way, he thought that he justified human nature as good and thus established the foundation for Confucian moral theory on the cosmological level. He further defended nature as good from the process of heavenly transformation described in the Book of Changes. In explaining the sentences, “the alteration of one yin and one yang is called the Way/dao 道. What succeeds it is goodness/shan 善, and what completes it is nature/xing 性,” (CSQS 1-524-526) Wang Fuzhi proposed the doctrine that the Way/dao was broader than goodness/shan; while goodness is broader than nature. Thus, nature as arising from goodness should be good. However, he also acknowledged the existence of evil nature in the process of the transformation of qi, and thus caused an inconsistency with his ontological justification of good nature. Wang
Fuzhi further assumed the idea that nature kept refreshing itself along with the refreshment of qi in the human body. Based on this, he criticized the static view of nature previous scholars held, and justified the transformation of physical embodiment through moral cultivation and careful choice of one’s food and pattern of behavior. But regarding whether there was a limit of the transformation of physical embodiment, for example, was it likely that a pig would be transformed into a human being, he did not give a clear answer. It was not until Dai Zhen (1724-1777) that this question was answered. Dai Zhen insisted that there be innate categories in the process of creation and thus it was impossible to transform a pig into a human being through the transformation of physical embodiment.

Moreover, Wang Fuzhi’s embracement of qi-monism also led him to be different from previous Neo-Confucians on various issues. First, he regarded courage/yong 勇 as the power of qi, which was independent of humanity and wisdom, and disagreed with the opinion that humanity and wisdom could produce courage spontaneously. Then, based on the idea that Heaven was the accumulation of qi and principle was the pattern of qi transformation, he criticized Cheng Yi’s doctrine, “Heaven is principle” and thus overthrew the metaphysical foundation of the Cheng Zhu School. As his own answer, he insisted that Heaven was the origin of principle and could not be identified with principle. (CSQS 6-1109-1110)

Wang Fuzhi also accused Neo-Confucians of regarding the cognitive mind/renxin 人心 as the whole mind and not knowing the mind of the Way/dioxin 道心 as the true mind. In his opinion, when they mistook the cognitive mind as the whole mind, they fell into the Buddhist understanding of mind. The right way should be to regard mind as the original or moral mind which subsumed under it the cognitive mind and nature. In this way, it was the original or moral mind that directed whatever one did. Furthermore, he reversed Zhu Xi’s approach of moral cultivation which put investigating things and eliminating desires prior to grasping moral principles. In Wang’s opinion, to make a determination toward goodness and preserve one’s nature were prior to the investigation of principles and the elimination of desires. Without preserving nature and aiming to goodness, one would be susceptible of falling into Buddhist practice in seeking for an empty mind through eliminating desires, and losing oneself in playing with concrete things in the process of investigation. Thus, Wang Fuzhi emphasized more on elucidating moral principles than on finding natural principles in investigation of things.
When it came to state governance and moral practice, Wang Fuzhi also advocated the fulfillment of desires properly and the unity of principle and desires. But, when applying it to moral cultivation, he again took Zhu Xi’s approach that heavenly principle prevailed only after human desires were completely eliminated. In order to solve the inconsistency of these two views, he proposed the doctrine that “Heavenly principle and human desires arise from the same origin but have different directions” (CSQS 1-837). However, this doctrine could only widen the gap between the two views, because now that principle and desires had different directions, how could they be united? Together with the problem of the relation between heavenly principle and human desires was that of the relation between noblemen and petty persons. Wang Fuzhi proposed to tolerate and transform petty persons according to ritual propriety, and rejected to compete and argue with them. But on how to deal with petty persons besides ritual propriety, he did not suggest any practicable approaches. This showed that he had not stepped out of the influence of pure talk and did not see the cause that factional struggles and the rise of petty persons were due to Neo-Confucian’s excessive distinction between heavenly principle and desires, noblemen and petty persons. In dealing with ordinary people, Wang Fuzhi proposed the reasonable expression of human feelings, the fulfillment of desires and the guarantee of satisfying basic livelihood. In this way, people would live a peaceful and leisurely life, and would not be misled by heretical thoughts such as Buddhism and Daoism. However, he again condemned ordinary people who were no better than beasts, knew nothing but food and sex and were inconvertible to the Way. As a result, he contradicted himself again.

In short, although Wang Fuzhi advocated the Kingly Way through moral transformation and fulfillment of people’s basic livelihood, his methods were nothing but those which Mencius and the Neo-Confucians already proposed, even if he rejected the sage’s spontaneous moral transformation Neo-Confucians dreamed of, but emphasized more on the practical measures of its realization. From these perspectives, he was much inferior to Huang Zongxi and Gu Yanwu who proposed to base morality and governance on the reasonable acknowledgement and fulfillment of selfish desires.

In order to secure the universal harmony, the peace of human mind and humane governance, Wang Fuzhi took it as his prime concern to banish and criticize heretical thoughts. In his view, Buddhism, Daoism and Legalism were the great heretical doctrines since ancient times, and should be banished and restrained without sparing any energy. He criticized Daoism and
Buddhism as confusing the Way of Heaven/天道 and the Way of Human/人道, and thus insisted the view in the Book of Changes, “Heaven agitates the myriad things and shares no worries with the sage”. (CSQS 1-527) He criticized legalist governance as harming the harmonious qi and causing conflicts. In practice, he went back to the standard prescribed by Confucius and the Duke of Zhou and used it to develop his own doctrine and evaluate other scholar’s thoughts, i.e. he used the doctrine of the mean, the way of humanity and righteousness, the Great Harmony as the standard and purpose of his theory and the Kingly Way as his ideal polity. His appreciation of Zhang Zai also lay in the latter’s proposition of the Great Harmony as the final order of the universe and human society.

In summary, Wang Fuzhi was different from other Ming loyalists in that he was not so revolutionary and pioneering. His aim was to reconstruct the system of Confucian thought and thus he accommodated more than criticized Neo-Confucianism. His strong points lay in his constructing a relatively coherent Confucian doctrine based on qi-monism. In this doctrine, he did his best to explain or make coherent many inconsistent arguments or unclear statements in the previous Confucian or Neo-Confucian works. He relentlessly criticized Buddhism and Yangming School even though he inherited a lot from Yangming, especially the establishment of root or virtue first and the supreme function of mind. He disliked Daoism, but he used Daoist ideas to renovate Confucianism. To some degree, the renovated part of his system mainly came from his borrowing Daoist thought. For example, his tolerant attitude toward human desires and petty persons, his emphasis on the void/虚 in converting people to morality, and his central idea--the Great Harmony had Daoist meanings or components. Therefore, we can conclude that Wang Fuzhi was still an apologetic Neo-Confucian and was essentially different from other Ming loyalists in his accommodating attitude toward Neo-Confucianism.
Chapter 3 Cosmological Harmony: An Ultimate Appeal to Deal with Crisis and Struggle

When tracing the causes of the ruin of the Ming and the conquest of the Manchurians, Wang Fuzhi first criticized the misgovernance of the late Ming, then the degenerative social ethos initiated by petty and heretical scholars. At last he came to appeal to the harmony of cosmological qi/vital force, and regarded human violent disturbance of this cosmic harmony as the ultimate cause of crisis and conflict. From his point of view, people’s immorality and misconduct led to the disturbance of this cosmic harmony of qi, and in turn, the disharmonious cosmic qi would produce more evil-minded people and cause more disasters. Therefore if human beings wanted to end this vicious process, it was mandatory for each individual to cultivate his own qi and bring it to harmony. In this way, Wang Fuzhi raised Gu Yanwu’s words, “Everyone of the state shares the responsibility for its rise and fall” (Gu 1994: 471) to a universal height, that is, everyone in the world shared the responsibility for the maintenance of universal harmony. It was in the maintenance of this universal harmony that the meaning of a person’s life was fulfilled and the disasters and conflicts were eliminated in advance.

3.1 Harmony, Great Harmony and Heaven

Harmony/和 means a perfect fusion of different elements. It rejects sameness but welcomes diversity. The concept of harmony appeared very early in Chinese culture. In the Recorded Sayings of the States/Guoyu 國語, Shi Bo 史伯, a diviner of Western Zhou, first made a distinction between harmony and sameness. He said, “Harmony really sustains things; sameness will discontinue their lives. Using one thing to balance another thing is called harmony.” (Zuo 1978: 515) Shi Bo regarded harmony as the balance or proportionally blending of different things. Later, in the Zuo Commentaries of the Spring-Autumn Annals, Yan Ying 晏嬰, a minister of State Qi 齊, provided a clearer analogy between harmony and tasty broth—Harmony as the tasty soup blended water, salt, vinegar, sauce, sugar with fish and meat in proper portion, and then was cooked with fire carefully, while sameness as water being added with water simply.
Again, Yan Ying compared harmony/he as the melody of music which consisted in various elements. (Zuo 1981: 1419-1420)

From Shi Bo and Yan Ying’s description, harmony was the fusion and balance of different elements. This idea has exerted great influence upon Chinese philosophy and become the core concept in both Confucianism and Daoism. It was inherited by Confucius as shown in his words, “The nobleman is harmonious but not adulatory; the petty person is adulatory, but not harmonious” (Analects 13.23), in which harmony meant the due measure achieved through tolerance and consideration of different views. It was also used by Laozi to explain the rise and sustenance of the myriad things when he said, “The ten thousand things carry the yin and embrace the yang, and through the blending of them, they achieve harmony.” (Laozi 42) The Zhuangzi further coined the term, the harmony between yin and yang and proposed the concept, the Great Harmony/taihé 太和 which meant the heavenly blending and transformation of the myriad things. (Zhang 1996: 348)

The Great Appendices of the Book of Changes inherited these two terms and used them to explain the yin-yang interactions in the diagrams. However, the Great Appendices changed tāihé 太和 to dāhè 大和 which described the way of Qian/Heaven 乾 that was able to reach the perfect harmony and bring all things to their proper nature. The Great Appendices stated, “The principle of Qian transforms and each thing realizes its upright nature and endowment accordingly. All of them keeps united with the Great Harmony and thus achieves their right course.” (CSQS 1-52) If one considered that the basic principle of the Book of Changes was that Qian initiated a thing and then Kun completed it, then it was apparent that the Great Harmony was the fusion of yin and yang with a perfect proportion. It was this perfect proportion that made and sustained all things. From this aspect, the Great Harmony focused mainly on the perfect fusion of yin and yang although it continued the basis meaning of harmony as the fusion and balance of different elements and views.

From the above discussion, the Great Harmony as the perfect fusion of yin and yang should first be a mass of harmonious qi, and have its own principle or dao 道. This principle or dao made the fusion of yin and yang perfectly and directed the movement of yin and yang. This idea was inherited by Zhang Zai and became the basis of his philosophy. Zhang Zai said,
The Great Harmony as *dao* contains the propensity to rise and fall, float and sink, move and rest, and interact, and acts as the origin to give rise to fermentation, agitation, victory and failure, bending and stretching…. When it scatters and can be described, it is called *qi*; when it remains pure, transparent and indescribable, it is called spirit/*shen*. However, if it is not as misty and murky as the wild-horse-like clouds are, it is not sufficient to be called the Great Harmony. (CSQS 12-15-16)

In this quotation, Zhang Zai, right from the beginning, called the Great Harmony as *dao*, which had the propensity to interact and the power to transform things. But then, he turned to interpret it as a mass of *qi* which could be both *qi* and spirit. As Heaven also included both *qi* and spirit, the Great Harmony was identical with Heaven in Zhang Zai’s discourse.

Wang Fuzhi inherited Zhang Zai’s idea of the Great Harmony, but made its characteristic as a harmonious fusion of *yin* and *yang* more conspicuous. Let’s see his description of the Great Harmony and the *dao*:

Great Harmony is the perfection of harmony. The *dao* or the Way is the universal principle for Heaven, earth, human beings and things, and is the so-called Great Ultimate. Although *yin* and *yang* have different essences, they blend in the Great Void, unite and do not harm each other, exist together without separation, and thus reach a perfect harmony. Before the appearance of form and body, there was no disharmony originally; after the appearance of form and body, the harmony has not been lost. Therefore it is called Great Harmony. (CSQS 12-15)

Thus, Great Harmony is the unity of *dao* and the harmonious mass of *qi*. *Dao* runs through both *yin* and *yang* and makes them a mass of harmonious *qi*. It is this harmonious *qi* that penetrates both forms and the formless and thus makes the world possible. On this point, it is noticeable that Wang Fuzhi borrowed the description of *dao* from the *Laozi*. Just as the *dao* in the *Laozi* was the harmonious fusion of yin and yang and the unnameable mass before the appearance of the myriad things (*Laozi* 42), Great Harmony was described in the same way. However, when it went down to the myriad things, the *Laozi* regarded *dao* as natural and amoral, and rejected human interference. However, Wang Fuzhi insisted that Great harmony was the origin of humanity and the spirit of all things, and the cultivation of which was the assistance to Heaven.
Wang Fuzhi further explained Great Harmony as the harmony of yin and yang. He did not regard Great Harmony as a mere proportional blend of yin and yang, but a blend of the essences of the two kinds of qi. This was verified in his annotation of Zhang Zai’s words, “Yin and yang store their essences in each other, and thus each of them achieves its proper state”. He said,

Essence is what gathers first as pure, subtle and harmonious part of qi, contains spirit within and acts as the mother/core of qi when yin and yang show the sign to unite. If it were not so, then all things between Heaven and earth would be the roaming qi without substance. Storing essences in each other means that yang enters yin, while yin displays itself in yang, just as the Hexagrams of Kan 坎 and Li 離 show. The qi of Great Harmony is such that yin and yang blend and preserve the opposite’s essence each other, and thus achieve the purity of Great Harmony. Therefore, yang is not a lonely yang; yin is not a lonely yin. They store each other and form substance, and thus do not lose their harmony but secure proper existence. (CSQS 12-54)

Wang Fuzhi thought that both yin and yang had their essences, and the Great Harmony was the fusion of their essences. Moreover, yin and yang also each contained the other’s essence, and sustained the Great Harmony forever. Under Wang Fuzhi’s elaboration, the Great Harmony was made as the essence of the universe, and the origin of all things. The Great Harmony could be regarded as qi, but it was the pure and subtle part of yin and yang that acted as the essence of qi.

With regard to the relation between the Great Harmony and Heaven, from the concrete perspective, the Great Harmony contained both Heaven and earth. But it often was identical with Heaven in Wang Fuzhi’s discourse when Heaven was regarded as a comprehensive term. This was verified in Wang Fuzhi’s following words,

Yin and yang blend in the Great Harmony, so the Great Harmony is actually qi. But the Great Harmony cannot be called qi. From the perspective that it rises and falls, and floats in the sky and acts as the initiation of the myriad things but does not know how, it is called Heaven. (CSQS 12-32)

As is known, Heaven was regarded as the originator of all things, while earth as the nourishing partner. The Great Harmony also had the capability to initiate all things. Thus Wang Fuzhi identified it with Heaven. As Wang Fuzhi embraced qi-monism, and held that qi had its
principle, the Great Harmony as harmonious \( qi \) also had its principle—\( dao \) and the Great Ultimate (see previous quotation on Wang Fuzhi’s definition of the Great Harmony). Therefore, Great Harmony or Heaven thus contained \( yin \), \( yang \) and the Great Ultimate/\( taiji \) (\( dao \)) in itself. However, Heaven/\( tian \) 天 had various meanings in Wang Fuzhi’s discourse, so it was better to get knowledge of them in order to understand the critical role of the Great Harmony in his system.

3.2 Different Definitions of Heaven

Wang Fuzhi mainly discussed Heaven from three perspectives. He first distinguished Heaven as the universe from Heaven as the Great Harmony. Then, in regard to Heaven as the Great Harmony, he made a distinction between Heaven in the objective and impersonal sense and Heaven related to humanity.

3.2.1 Heaven as the Pure, Void, One and Great/\( qing \ xu \ yi \ da \) 清虚一大

With regard to Heaven as the universe, Wang followed Zhang Zai to call it as “the pure, void, one and great/\( qing \ xu \ yi \ da \)” 清虚一大, which mainly referred to the part of the universe beyond human perception. He said,

\[
\text{Above sky, the } qi \text{ of earth cannot reach, the lights of the sun, moon and stars do not illuminate. The color of this part of the universe is the original color of Heaven. The original color of Heaven is colorless. No color, no substance, no form, and no number, thus it is called pure, void, one and great, and is just where principle originates. (CSQS 12-457)}
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From Wang Fuzhi’s description, Heaven in this sense was similar to the outer space in modern astronomy. This kind of Heaven had little relation with the human world because the \( qi \) of earth could not reach and interact with it, and neither the three lights shone upon it. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi did not think that a scholar should put his mind on it although it was full of \( qi \) and could be the origin of principles. His additional remarks made this idea clear.

\[
\text{Where wind, rain, dew and thunder cannot reach, the transformation of Heaven does not prevail. Where the sun, moon and stars cannot light, the spirit of Heaven cannot prevail…}.
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Where spirit and transformation does not prevail, surely there is principle there; it is the so-called “pure, void one and great”. (CSQS 12-406)

The previous quotation indicated that the $qi$ of earth could not reach this kind of Heaven; this quotation clearly stated that heavenly transformation and spirit could not prevail there. Without spirit and transformation there, there would be no yin-yang interaction, and thus no things generated. In this way, he demarcated the Heaven from the part of the universe where spirit and transformation prevailed.

### 3.2.2 Heaven as What Spirit and Transformation can Reach (Great Harmony)

In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, the Heaven that a nobleman was concerned about was the part where spirit and transformation could reach. In contrast, that remote, boundless and gray part beyond the sky or clouds was not what a nobleman should care about. Therefore, he claimed that what a nobleman knew of Heaven did not go beyond the scope of spirit and transformation. In defining spirit and transformation, he said, “Spirit and transformation were the harmony of Heaven and earth.” (CSQS 12-406) As the Great Harmony was the harmony of $yin$ and $yang$, and Heaven and earth stood for $yin$ and $yang$ respectively; therefore, spirit and transformation were identical with the Great Harmony, but emphasized more on the transforming aspects. In short, the Heaven that Wang Fuzhi cared about was the Great Harmony.

Furthermore, Wang Fuzhi called the Great Harmony—the part of universe between sky and earth as “Heaven of man/ren zhi tian 人之天”, while the part of outer space—the pure, void, one and great as “Heaven of heaven/tian zhi tian 天之天”. But he insisted that these two “Heavens” be always in the process of interaction and have no difference in essence. He stated,

What human beings can have (can perceive) is the Heaven of man. With regard to the crystal purity, the immense void, the undifferentiated one, and the vault greatness, man cannot utilize it. Nevertheless, is there actual difference between Heaven of man and the “pure, void, one and great (Heaven of heaven)”? What once was a part of the Heaven of heaven now becomes a part of Heaven of man; what will be a part of Heaven of man now is still a part of Heaven of heaven. (CSQS 3-463)
Although the “Heaven of man” kept interaction and exchange with the “Heaven of heaven” and was not different in essence, nevertheless Wang Fuzhi insisted that a nobleman should put more importance on the former, for the former is reachable. If one strove to understand “Heaven of heaven”, he would fall into surmise and could not understand Heaven properly. From this aspect, he criticized the astrologists of not knowing the limit of human perception.

### 3.2.3 Heaven as the Impartial and Impersonal Agent

With regard to the production of the myriad things through qi’s transformation, Wang Fuzhi adopted the vision of an impersonal and natural creative process as expressed in Daoism and the Book of Changes. Qi transformation just produced what should come forth at the specific time and place, and did not care what the production would be. It did not care whether it was a human being or a viper, and it just continued its production process unceasingly. On this point, Zhuangzi drew the conclusion that all things were equal, and human beings should emulate Heaven’s impartiality or undifferentiated attitude toward all things, and abandon human deliberation. However, Wang Fuzhi focused on two points when he described this impartial transformation. One was to display the perfection of Heaven; the other was to show the difference between the Way of Heaven/tiandaо 天道 and the way of human beings/rendao 人道, so as to pave the way for his doctrine of assisting Heaven through human efforts.

Wang Fuzhi regarded Heaven as impersonal, and thus it did not have human emotional reaction such as worries. He stated,

> With regard to the variety of transformation in terms of gain, loss, success and failure, it is what Heaven initiates things and runs its right course. It may make this thing successful but the other miserable; it may benefit this one but hurt that one. It indeed never shares worries with the sage. Yet this is the normal state of heavenly process. (CSQS 6-1138)

This showed that heavenly process simply produced all things with its own accord and paid no attention to human beings’ preference. In other words, the so-called gain, loss, success and failure were all human subjective reactions; while Heaven did not have nor know such distinctions. From this aspect, Wang Fuzhi apparently accepted the impersonal character shown in the Laozi’s thought, “Heaven and earth are not humane, but regard all things as straw dogs”
(Laozi: 5) and Xunzi’s idea, “Heaven has its own constancy, it does not exist because of Yao 堯, and not perish because of Jie 桀.”

As is known, what the sage worried about was the welfare and livelihood of human beings, and could be regarded as good and righteous. Now that Heaven did not share the sage’s worries, what Heaven did should not be always good or righteous. However we are surprised to read that Wang Fuzhi insisted that whatever arises from Heaven be true and right; and the so-called falsity result only from the discrimination of human beings. This reminded one of the Daoist ideas that Heaven was perfect while human artifice and construction caused disasters and chaos. Thus, it could be said that Wang Fuzhi adopted Daoist world view in this aspect. He stated,

Principle is the principle of Heaven, and what is in Heaven is principle. Heaven goes back and forth freely, interacts spontaneously with what it meets and does not worry the benefit of things. Therefore, what man regards as false/wang 妄 are actually not false anyway. (CSQS 1-235)

Now that Heaven did not have falsity as human beings thought, it implied that Heaven was always right. On the contrary, falsity was only human construction instead of natural phenomena. Then the problem arose that if Heaven was always right and righteous, why should the sage have worries, and how was it possible to assist Heaven or improve the universal harmonious qi? This problem forced Wang Fuzhi to acknowledge that Heaven had its insufficiency from the point of human welfare, and thus Human beings needed to make up Heaven’s insufficiency. For example, Heaven produced weed and plants; it was human beings who cultivated them to be crops. However, in this way, Wang Fuzhi still could not make his theory of Heaven consistent.

3.2.4 Heaven as an Humane Agent from the Perspective of Initiating Things

Although Wang Fuzhi shed much ink on the impersonal and impartial character of Heaven and came close to the Daoist view of Heaven, he never admitted being a Daoist. Instead he embraced

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Confucian humanism to regard Heaven as humane and therefore was forced to explain how the impersonal Heaven could be humane. Wang Fuzhi solved this problem with arbitrary human imposition, i.e., he simply assumed that Heaven was humane from the perspective of its producing the myriad things. He argued,

Man cherishes life, and thus calls the great virtue of Heaven and earth as initiating and producing life; man takes humanity and righteousness as their nature, and thus parallels them with “the way to establish Heaven is yin and yang; the way to establish earth is softness and firmness. (CSQS 6-704)

In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, the virtue of heavenly productivity was just what human beings thought from their standpoint of valuing life, just as the division of seasons was a human imposition on Heaven. As humanity was regarded as producing and sustaining life, Wang Fuzhi thus justified that Heaven was humane from the perspective of its productivity. In this way, he imposed on Heaven the moral characteristic human beings held. This moral characteristic was humanity, through which Heaven and man were connected, and thus human beings could assist Heaven or interact with Heaven through humane or moral improvement.

After justifying humanity as Heaven’s characteristic, Wang Fuzhi further proved it as Heaven’s essence, and concluded that humanity made Heaven meaningful and creative. Otherwise, Heaven as the “pure, void, one and great” would be a dead world. This time, Wang Fuzhi identified the movement of yang with the productive process of Heaven. He said,

Regarding the activation of yang …it is the continuity of this activation that makes Heaven and earth run four seasons, create various things, and keep themselves working unceasingly forever. Apparently it is not a remote and pure, dead and still mass that can be called as Heaven and earth. (CSQS 1-229)

In Wang Fuzhi’s understanding, yang stood for life and vigor. When yang moved or was agitated in the human mind, it was the mind of compassion; when it was activated in Heaven, it was the

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32 Heaven takes winter as its end, spring as its beginning; or takes the month of hai/pig as its end, and the month of zi/rat as its beginning. All these are what man thinks so. Running round and round, Heaven never knows its end and beginning. (CSQS 12-306)
humanity of Heaven, and thus made the world full of life. From this perspective, he called humanity as the mind/core of Heaven, and said, “Heaven is the whole body of humanity; while humanity is the mind of Heaven. Heaven and humanity are one.” (CSQS 12-66)

Because humanity was a character man attributed to Heaven, and it was only after man realized humanity in his mind that he could regard Heaven as humane, Wang Fuzhi thus drew a conclusion that man was the mind/core of Heaven. In his regard, it was man who evaluated and utilized the natural things, stood independent and thus accomplished and appreciated the marvel and intelligence of Heaven and earth. Hence, he claimed,

After we see human beings, we find that the mind of Heaven and earth is here (in man). …Therefore it is man that makes the marvel or intelligence of Heaven and earth so. Otherwise, Heaven and earth are just those forms and images in the void. (CSQS 13-693)

At this point, Wang Fuzhi raised human beings to a superior place in the universe. It was because of human beings that Heaven became alive and intelligent; it was because of human beings that Heaven was regarded as humane. In this way, Wang Fuzhi shifted the governance of Heaven and earth to the hands of human beings, and insisted that one should seek Heaven in one’s mind. This Heaven was humanity. He said,

Heaven has its accomplished forms. It makes spring as spring, autumn as autumn, human beings as human beings, and things as things. All these things have their order and names without confusing, and this is what Heaven manifests and can be put into words. With regard to its secret transformation and various accomplishments, its knowledge of the great beginning and storage of perfect humanity, where is Heaven? It is in the mind of human beings. Therefore, the sage perceives Heaven in his mind, and thus regards the discovered Heaven as the master of spirits. (CSQS 11-161)

In this passage, Wang Fuzhi distinguished the traces of Heaven from its essence; and this essence was its creative power, i.e., humanity. When this humanity displayed itself, it was manifested in the compassion of human mind. On this point, it was understandable that the union of Heaven and man was that they were united through humanity.
3.3 The Necessity to Assist Heaven

If the essence of human mind is humanity which is Heaven residing in human body, then why is there the necessity to assist Heaven? Daoism holds such a view that everything is produced with yin-yang harmonious qi, and is always in accordance with Heaven. It is only human beings who use their own intelligence, but do not follow natural process and thus lead to disharmony. Therefore, Daoists such as Zhuangzi asked people to abandon deliberation and desires, so as to preserve the harmonious qi in human mind and body and be in accord with Heaven. Wang Fuzhi inherited this Daoist view—disharmony was mainly caused by human selfish desires, therefore, human beings should cultivate their qi and purify their minds so as to preserve or recover their harmonious qi. But different from Zhuangzi, Wang Fuzhi insisted that human beings be the most intelligent creature and should not passively comply with natural process, and thus could produce what Heaven did not provide or complete. In other words, Zhuangzi regarded Heaven or natural process as perfect and thus human assistance to Heaven was redundant. However, Wang Fuzhi regarded Heaven or natural process as imperfect, and therefore human assistance was necessary. As aforesaid, from the perspective of Heaven, Heaven has no mind or choice and it just produces what comes at the right time or place; but from the perspective of human beings, fortunate or misfortunate, blessing or disaster will come forth in terms of human interest. Therefore, if human beings expected that Heaven went the direction to benefit them, then assisting Heaven would be inevitable. Wang concluded,

From the aspect of the greatness of Heaven and earth, their achievement in creating and nourishing [the myriad things] and the principles thus manifested are without defect. From the aspect of human beings, however, they still have the regret of insufficiency and defects. To Heaven and earth, there is the way of Heaven and earth; to human beings, there is human mind. What satisfies human mind is the proper state of the way of human beings; but if it is applied to Heaven and earth, it will not be proper. For instance, to cover and carry, to produce and complete may be done together by human beings, but Heaven and earth divide them; winter and summer, disaster and fortunate have the possibility to meet human expectation, while Heaven and earth may almost go against it. Therefore, it is only after uniting Heaven and earth with human efforts that the affectivity of Way/dao will be enough. (CSQS 7-131-2)
In this passage, Wang Fuzhi again embraced the difference between Heaven and man from the perspective of the objectivity and impartiality of heavenly process. Therefore, man should not strive to identify himself with Heaven but should instead exploit his own intelligence to invent what Heaven had not provided. It was only through supplementing what Heaven and earth did not provide with human inventions that the Way/dao would become complete. From this aspect, the Way/dao for Wang Fuzhi was not the Way of Heaven as Daoism advocated, but the Way of human beings through incorporating what Heaven and earth produced and what man invented. This was Wang Fuzhi’s doctrine of assisting Heaven.

Through elevating human efforts and invention to the level of the production of Heaven and earth, Wang Fuzhi made man stand shoulder to shoulder with Heaven and earth, which was called “To be a triad with Heaven and earth/yu tiandi can 與天地參”. It was man who accomplished what Heaven could not do and thus made the universe complete. Wang Fuzhi’s account of Hou Ji 后稷, a legendary king in Chinese history confirmed this idea. Hou Ji was thought to be the first man who cultivated crops from wild plants. Through selecting weeds and plants, he developed some of them to fruitful crops. In this way, he exerted human intelligence to complement what Heaven and earth provided but did not complete. That is, Heaven and earth provided plants and weeds, but crops were the result of Hou Ji’s cultivation through following the nature of plants and weeds. This was the meaning that “Heaven can produce it, earth can complete it, but it is human ability that selects and cultivates the creatures so as to fulfill the fine and pure potentials of yin and yang.” (CSQS 12-317) Pushing further, Wang Fuzhi indicated all sages’ efforts were like Hou Ji’s, following the nature of things while making them better and beneficial to human beings. From this perspective, it was evident that Wang Fuzhi tried to absorb the Daoist view of nature to his Confucian system.

Based on human beings’ supplement with what Heaven had not completed, Wang Fuzhi made a distinction between the Way of human beings and the Way of Heaven, and warned people not to sacrifice the Way of human beings for the Way of Heaven. It was from this point that he severely criticized Daoist passive attitude to Heaven or nature of completely following natural course and forsaking human efforts. He argued,

The Way of human beings is also the Way of Heaven; but the Way of Heaven cannot be simply regarded as the Way of human beings. With regard to the great accomplishment of
assisting Heaven, we must emulate the sages. With regard to those not able to assist Heaven, they just follow Heaven. Fish swimming and birds flying are all following Heaven or natural instincts. Undoubtedly, man dares not to regard himself as a sage, but it does not mean that he must be same as the living way of birds and fish (to follow natural instincts). Let those Heaven gives birth to live, and let those Heaven kills be killed, then the world can be ruled without a ruler; let those Heaven makes intelligent be intelligent, and let those Heaven makes foolish be foolish, then it would be unnecessary to have a teacher. Let what Heaven provides be provided, let Heaven does not provide be short, then it would be unnecessary to benefit lives and utilize things; let what Heaven governs be governed, let what Heaven disturbs be disturbed, then the principle to comply ritual propriety and adhere to righteousness would become redundant. (CSQS 5-617)

In Wang Fuzhi’s understanding, although the Way of human beings was a part of and thus could be regarded as the Way of Heaven from the perspective that human beings were born from Heaven, yet they were still different and thus man could not regard the Way of Heaven as identical with the Way of human beings. “The Way of Heaven has no differentiation, while the Way of man has its discrimination”. (CSQS1-529) Thus, man should follow the sages and realized the mindlessness and impersonality of the Way of Heaven and complemented it with the subjectivity and purposefulness of the Way of human beings. It was based on the incompleteness of the Way of Heaven and the purposefulness of the Way of human beings that the sages established rulers, teachers, beneficence and ritual propriety for the people and thus distinguished them from the passive compliance of the Way of Heaven or natural instincts that birds and beasts did. It was from this aspect that he condemned Daoism as abandoning the Way of human beings. He explained,

*Yin* and *yang* give rise to man and thus let man obtain his life; *yin* and *yang* govern human beings but cannot substitute human governance completely. After man was born, he uses the nature and feeling endowed as his own nature and feeling. Now that *dao*/Heaven endowed him these things, *dao*/Heaven cannot substitute human beings to govern them. (CSQS 1-992)

This quotation shows that Wang Fuzhi embraced the idea that after being born, man should have his own principle to govern and discipline himself. Man’s autonomy from Heaven allowed him
to choose and invent things for his own benefit. If man did not utilize his intelligence but still followed natural process passively, he would be regarded as giving himself up as hopeless and thereby would lose the true meaning to be a human being.

3.3.1 The Insufficiency of Heaven

As is discussed in 3.2.4, when it is said that “Heaven is false or absurd”, it meant that it was human beings who regarded Heaven as false or absurd. With regard to Heaven itself, it is mindless and does not know either false or right. Therefore, when Wang Fuzhi talked about the insufficiency of Heaven, he meant also that it was man who regarded Heaven as insufficient. In this respect, all normative evaluations on Heaven were made from the perspective of human beings, thus Wang Fuzhi came much close to Zhuangzi who thought all human cultures were originated from human distinctions. However, different from Zhuangzi’s proposal of wiping out all distinctions and accepting whatever Heaven gave, Wang Fuzhi only advocated the acceptance of whatever Heaven gave in order to make one’s mind tranquil and cultivate one’s harmonious qi.

The so-called sufficiency and insufficiency of Heaven manifested as goodness and badness. When tracing their cause, Wang Fuzhi ascribed them to the discordance between Heaven and man. He said,

Heaven does not share worry with human beings, therefore the good sometimes may turn out to be bad for human beings. Nowhere in Heaven is not where principle comes forth; therefore the bad sometimes may become good. Heaven and man do not concord each other; therefore there arise the good and bad. (CSQS 3-549)

On the one side, Heaven was mindless and did not share the concern and worry of human beings. What is good to Heaven might be bad to human beings. For example, earthquake and hurricane might be good for Heaven to release the over-accumulated energy and bring in yin-yang balance again, but they were viewed as great disasters for human beings. On the other hand, Heaven as the origin of all things and principles dictated all possibilities, and might turn bad things into good things. For instance, it was bad for a young man to become handicapped by a wounded leg, but this bad thing again exempted him from conscription and death in military service, and so it turned out to be good. Based on this, Wang Fuzhi concluded that the good and bad arose from
the discordance of Heaven and human beings. Before analyzing the cause of this discordance, let’s look at its consequence first.

The discordance between Heaven and man implied that Heaven did not always meet human expectation in its process of transformation. Thus it produced both prey and predator, good and bad people. From this point of view, Wang Fuzhi went so far as to doubt Confucius’ word, “the nature for all human beings is similar”, but claimed that there were cases that nature of human beings was greatly different. As a result, Wang Fuzhi tacitly admitted that human nature was not always good and some people were born evil and inconvertible to good. He argued,

No man is not close to other in nature, but truly there are men who are not close to others in nature. Yet this case is rare. Is it only for a man of highest intelligence? Put him in extremely bad custom, it is certain that he does not accept it; force him into a situation with no choice, he will turn to goodness in a roundabout way. Is it only for a man of extreme stupidity? Direct him with perfectly good practice, it is certain that he will not follow; drive him with prohibitive order, he will play his crafty in a tricky way. These people are those who cannot be influenced by custom or habit. (CSQS 7-902-3)

In this passage, Wang Fuzhi interpreted Confucius’ words that only those of highest intelligence and lowest stupidity were unchangeable by habit and custom, but Wang explained their inconvertibility from the difference of nature. In doing so, he would not be able to maintain Mencius’ doctrine, “human nature is always good”, which acted as the foundation of Confucian education and self-cultivation. Consequently, Wang Fuzhi would be self-contradictory when he urged people to cultivate harmonious qi through moral practice on the one hand, but admitted that some persons’ temperament was unchangeable from birth on the other.

With regard to those who were inconvertibly stupid, Wang Fuzhi adopted a Daoist attitude of resignation and just left them alone. For instance, on the story that Shun舜 and Yu禹 did not have sagely fathers, and Yao尧 and Shun did not have good sons, he said,

That father is not good is not what a son can worry about. So Shun only worried that he might not obey his parents, and did not worry that his father Gu Sou瞽叟 was stupid….with regard to a son not being good, that is determined by Heaven. If one happily accepted what Heaven gave and knew his destiny, where would worry arise? (CSQS 6-508)
In Wang Fuzhi’s eyes, one could not choose one’s own parents, but had to thank them for their production and nourishment of one’s life. Therefore, if one had an evil father, what one did was only to keep obedient to him, while the father’s evil was not his concern. Likewise, one could not decide what kind of children to bear. If one had an evil and inconvertible son, what one did was nothing but accepted the fate rather than blame Heaven. In fact, in either case, Wang Fuzhi adopted the same attitude, accepting what Heaven gave. In this way, he adopted Zhuangzi’s way to cultivate harmonious \( qi \), for an attitude of resignation toward life would make one’s mind peaceful and one’s \( qi \) tranquil. Truly this was a way to contribute one’s part for the perseverance of Great Harmony. But in doing so, Wang Fuzhi seemed to be contradictory with his doctrine of assisting Heaven through human efforts. This again showed his inconsistency in developing his comprehensive Confucian system.

In explaining the arising of discordance between Heaven and man, Wang Fuzhi proposed two reasons. One was the transformation and interaction of \( yin \) and \( yang \); the other was the time and places that Heaven and man met.

### 3.3.1.1 Yin-yang Transformation Causes Badness

According to Wang Fuzhi’s \( qi \)-monism, things were produced in the transformation of Heaven or Great Harmony which consisted of both \( qi \) and principle. This provided him a way to explain the arising of discordance. He stated,

Principle has no absurdity/\( wang \), but \( qi \) has. Man’s absurdity arises because of \( qi \). Ghost/\( gui \) and spirit/\( shen \) are not purely in accordance with principle, but rely on the bending and stretching of \( qi \), so they also have absurdity. (CSQS 6-617)

Absurdity/\( wang \) was the bad or strange things beyond human expectation, i.e., discordance and badness. Wang Fuzhi thought it resulted from \( qi \), not principle. However, this explanation committed the same mistake that Zhu Xi imputed liability to \( qi \), and would lead the separation of principle from \( qi \), which Wang Fuzhi tried to avoid. For according to Wang Fuzhi’s \( qi \)-monism, principle was only the principle of \( qi \) and could not exist beyond it. If the absurdity arose from \( qi \), it must also arise from principle. Otherwise, Wang Fuzhi had to recognize the existence of a principle beyond \( qi \), and then would not be able to hold on his \( qi \)-monism.
It might be possible that Wang Fuzhi had realized this inconsistency. In order to save his qi-monism, he denied qi as the origin of absurdity, but claimed that the absurd came from the occasional movement of qi. He said,

All qi has its principle/li, but when qi starts moving occasionally and does not keep even and harmonious, it will go against principle. However, this is not the fault of qi.” (CSQS 6-1059)

With this explanation, Wang Fuzhi tried to reinstate his qi-monism, and avoided the separation of principle from qi. But in denying both principle and qi as the origin of absurdity and badness, Wang Fuzhi had to provide an illustration from where they came. In the text mentioned above, he insisted that they resulted from the occasional activation of qi which did not follow principle. Then it seemed again that he thought qi as the origin, but ridiculously, he again said, “this is not the fault of qi.” Then, what on earth was the origin of absurdity? Wang Fuzhi thought that absurdity came from the error and untoward accidents in the transformation and interaction of yin and yang. In his regard, the original qi in Heaven had no absurdity/badness, and badness occurred only in the process of yin-yang interaction. He said,

With change and interaction of yin and yang arises the good, and the good meets principle. With the same change and interaction also arises the bad, and the bad is regarded as not meeting principle. (CSQS 6-1055)

Wang Fuzhi clearly indicated that the bad arose from the error or untoward accidents of yin-yang interaction. But as yin-yang interaction never stops but prevails everywhere, Wang Fuzhi had to admit that badness was a natural result of heavenly process. Pushing further, the evil persons were also natural creatures and were unavoidable. Also, one might argue that the error and untoward accidents of yin-yang interaction was the activity of qi after all, and thus the origin of badness finally went to qi again. Moreover, in consideration of Wang Fuzhi’s word, “it is evident that the qi in Heaven originally has no bad elements”, it showed that Wang tried to make a difference between qi in Heaven and the interaction of yin and yang. But this distinction was unfounded and impossible, and could only demonstrate Wang Fuzhi’s inconsistency in his explanation of the cause of badness.
However, in order to make man as the scapegoat of the rise of badness, Wang Fuzhi again claimed that the so called “not-meeting principle” of yin-yang interaction also met principle, and he continued,

But regarding it (badness) not meeting principle is also based on comparing it with principle, thus how cannot it be in accordance with principle? (CSQS 6-1055)

Through these arguments, Wang Fuzhi reached the conclusion that all things from Heaven, good or bad in human perspective, were in accordance with principle, and thus Heaven was always in its right course and should not be blamed.

In summary, in explaining the cause of absurdity or badness, Wang Fuzhi ran a circle and returned to the starting point. He first stated that the bad came forth because qi did not follow principle; then, he specified it as the error and untoward accidents of yin-yang interaction; and finally he insisted the so-called bad and its originator, the yin-yang interaction followed principle too. We can tell that Wang Fuzhi actually was proclaiming the Daoist view—that was not goodness or badness naturally, and goodness and badness were nothing but human distinction. As a result, Wang Fuzhi would lose his justification of the legitimacy of assisting Heaven with human effort, for the goodness and harmony from human perspective might incur harm to the harmony of the whole universe.

3.3.1.2 Absurdity and Disaster Arises when Heaven and Man Improperly Meet

As aforesaid, goodness and badness were all human evaluational construction instead of natural phenomena, and Heaven itself had no distinction about goodness and badness. Thus, when something was received as good or bad, it was that man judged it good or bad. When tracing how goodness and badness came forth, Wang Fuzhi proposed his explanation in reference to the discordance of Heaven and man. Specifically, this discordance consisted in the fact that something Heaven produced did not meet human expectation, i.e. these things were produced at the improper time or place from human perspective. For example, when human beings needed
irrigating crops, rain was timely and thus was good; when human beings harvested crops, rain was untimely and thus was bad. Wang Fuzhi’s statement made this more clearly,

The coming and going of yin-yang transformation cannot always meet the right time and point, then there arises improper things. To these improper things, the coming and going of yin-yang transformation cannot stop immediately after starting, then the bad arises. (CSQS 6-962)

Undoubtedly, it was up to human beings to decide the rightness of time and place, so the improper things and badness were also nothing but human evaluation. Because the yin-yang transformation was beyond human prediction or control, so whether the things thus produced met the right time or place was also uncertain to human beings. From this perspective, Wang Fuzhi admitted that goodness and badness were natural. He said,

From the aspect that qi transforms itself and physical embodiment completes itself, whether created things meet principle or not also depends on the randomness of time and lot. Hence, goodness and badness are produced differently. (CSQS 6-861)

Here, Wang Fuzhi was explicit in saying that whether a thing met principle or not depended on the time and place it was produced. In other words, goodness and badness were also the result of time and place.

Then, with regard to the possibility of assisting Heaven, Wang Fuzhi had to answer two questions. First, now that good and bad people were born from Heaven, how could bad people be changed into good? How could man prevent Heaven from producing more bad people through the uncontrollable yin-yang transformation? Second, Now that people’s success and failure, fortune and misfortune were determined by time and place, how could man succeed in improving the universal harmonious qi through human effort? Wang Fuzhi did not answer these questions. What he did say was only that man should accept whatever Heaven gave because Heaven was always right. In other word, it was not Heaven but man who was responsible for the arising of badness at the untimely time and place. This was confirmed by his distinction between heavenly endowment/tianming 天命 and human encounter/yu 遇. According to him, heavenly endowment was always right, but human encounter was untimely and thus brought failure and misfortune to people. He argued,
Bi Gan’s 比干 death and Confucius and Mencius’ straits are not caused by heavenly endowment, but by the time they encountered. (CSQS 12-368)

However, we may ask how could one distinguish heavenly endowment from human encounter? Without human encounter, there would be no heavenly endowment at all, for they were essentially one.

3.3.2 The Blame of Man

Since Heaven had no mind to bless or punish any human being, the arising of misfortune and fortune depended on the uncontrollable time and place that man met, the logical conclusion should be that Heaven, rather than man, should be blamed for the misfortune. However, Wang Fuzhi arbitrarily exculpated Heaven and blamed man for the occurrence of fortune and misfortune. He said,

The Way of man originally makes man stand as a triad with Heaven and earth. When man obeys or disobeys the firmness and softness of the earth, the partial qi of yin and yang will respond to or go against them (man and earth). Therefore, no misfortune is not caused by man’s mistake; and no fortune is not caused by man’s proper action. (CSQS 1-612)

In this quotation, Wang Fuzhi concluded the causes of fortune and misfortune to be human behaviors, however, his arguments were still ambiguous. In his explanation, it was man’s proper or improper utility of firmness and softness that caused the interactive yin-yang perversity and thus resulted in fortune and misfortune. Obviously, this position of Wang Fuzhi was questionable, for if it was the interaction among man, earth and Heaven that led to fortune and misfortune, it would be improper for him to ascribe the cause to man solely. This quotation also implied Wang Fuzhi’s other presumption, i.e., if man acted according to the Way of man, he would be always fortunate instead of misfortunate. However, Wang Fuzhi could not explain why the sage Confucius met misfortune, for Confucius was honored as perfect in following the Way. The cause of Wang Fuzhi’s inconsistency was that he mistook human role as the total cause of fortune and misfortune and demanded man to be responsible for the results of the uncontrollable heavenly process.
Let’s check now his explanation of the rise of misfortune from the perspective of human behavior. In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, man was born with physical embodiment and thus had feelings and desires (he did not make difference between feelings and desires). When feelings and desires were issued in due measure, they would meet moral principle and cause no badness or misfortune. However, if they went to excess, badness would result. He said,

The division and union in Heaven actually have no badness although those people who do not know Heaven think that they cause badness. It is only when the feelings and talents of human beings act and turn into badness that there is badness. (CSQS 6-1059)

Here, Wang exculpated Heaven as the origin of badness, but ascribed it as the action of human feelings and talents. After this shift, he began his admonishing tirade on how to restrain human feelings and desires in due measure and thus avoid misfortune and badness.

First, Wang Fuzhi followed the *Doctrine of the Mean*/*zhongyong* 中庸 and insisted regulating feelings with human nature or moral principle in order to avoid badness. He argued,

Feelings will always be goodness if they use nature as their guide; if they leave nature and act by themselves, they can become bad. (CSQS 6-965)

When tracing the origin of feelings, Wang Fuzhi ascribed it to the interaction between human body and external things. Apparently, this interaction was a physio-psychological process, and its due measure could not be determined solely by moral principle/human nature as Wang Fuzhi proposed. Therefore, it was improper for Wang Fuzhi’s use of nature to determine the goodness and badness of feelings.

Second, Wang Fuzhi believed that the rise of badness was closely connected to man’s choice and use of things, for the essence of desires and feelings was the appropriation of external things by human body and organs. Thus, one must beware of his feelings and desires within and regulate

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33 Wang Fuzhi said, “The coarse parts of *yin* and *yang* gather and form shapes. Within, they are ears, eyes, mouth and body; without, they are sound, color, smell and taste. Although they are produced by spirit, but spirit does not reside in them. When those within and those without attack and obtain each other, joy and anger arise. (CSQS 12-95)
them with nature or moral principle, and at the same time, keep discriminating and moderate when appropriating external things. Wang Fuzhi stated,

After birth, man thus has the power to choose and use things by himself. When his choice and use depend solely on what his habits are used to and his feelings are fond of, he will become blind in choosing between pure and impure things....He becomes strong if what he obtains is plentiful and what he uses is broad; he becomes good if what he obtains is pure and what he uses is fine; he becomes bad if what he obtains is impure and what he uses is miscellaneous. All these arise spontaneously and seem no reason. (CSQS 2-300-301)

Here, Wang Fuzhi provided a plausible explanation to the question why man should be blamed for badness. That is, man could choose what he needed after birth with intelligence. Thus, man should choose pure and fine things and improve goodness. If he chose impure and miscellaneous things and caused badness, he should be blamed. However, truly it was that man could choose his food, but man could not choose the qi/air he breathed. If the universal qi was impure, how could man be blamed for causing badness through man’s choice?

In short, Wang Fuzhi’s original purpose was to shift the concern to human cultivation and moral practice when he exculpated Heaven and blamed man for the occurrence of misfortune and badness. But regrettably, he could not succeed in proving that misfortune and fortune were all resulted from human behaviors when he accepted the impersonal and mindless character of Heaven. He thus could not found his Confucian moral principle and practice on the heavenly principle and process without question.

3.4 The Feasibility of Assisting Heaven

According to Wang, the unique relationship between Heaven and man presupposes the feasibility of assisting Heaven with human achievement. Generally speaking, two complete different things will not be able to know or help each other. Therefore, man must be able to share something common with Heaven, which makes his assistance possible. This is because of the fact that man is originally from Heaven, and therefore shares with Heaven the same principle and qi. However, two totally identical things cannot help each other either, for that will be unnecessary. Therefore, man must also be different from Heaven so that he can bring in new elements to Heaven. This is what Wang Fuzhi called that man was the most intelligent creature between Heaven and earth
and had his own way of activity after birth. It was that man had his own different Way from the Way of Heaven that made his assistance possible. In the following, we will explore how Wang Fuzhi justified this possibility from these two aspects.

3.4.1 The Similarity Man Shares with Heaven

Wang Fuzhi accepted Zhuangzi’s idea that man was only one stage of heavenly transformation. In this sense, man never separated himself from Heaven if he followed the principle of Heaven. Wang Fuzhi elaborated,

What has decayed belongs to ghost (death); what is growing belongs to spirit (life). Then from my birth to present, there have been many parts of mine that has become ghost in Heaven. What has decayed has already become ghost, what is growing is indeed spirit. Then very soon I will be able to get my future parts although I have not gotten it today. From the perspective of transformation, the present I is identical with the I before my parents gave birth to. All that fills between Heaven and earth and is fermenting to produce pure qi is my original state/appearance. (CSQS 12-434)

According to Wang, man being a stage of heavenly transformation, kept exchanging his components with Heaven, and would return to heavenly transformation completely after his death. Just as a mass of clay was first moulded into a rabbit, then a snake, and then a human figure, and then back to clay, the whole process was transformation, and rabbit, snake or human figure all were but a part of this transformation or moulding process. Human beings as one stage of heavenly transformation never stepped out of this process. It was just human beings themselves who thought they were different from other creatures. In fact, very soon they would have to forsake human form and be transformed into corpses, and then into other things. If one understood the process of transformation, one would know that one came from a mass of qi in the universe and accidentally obtained the human form, but in essence one was not different from the mass of qi; just as the moulded rabbit was still belonging to the mass of clay. From this perspective, Wang Fuzhi claimed that man’s present form was the same as his form (a mass of qi) before his parents gave birth to. This showed that Wang Fuzhi was using Zhuangzi’s idea of transformation of qi to reconstruct his Confucian doctrine—assisting Heaven.
Based on the idea that Heaven and man were one and always in the process of exchange, Wang Fuzhi pointed out that man was same or at least similar with Heaven in two aspects. The first was that man shared the same principle and the same qi with Heaven; and the second was that man inherited humanity from Heaven’s productivity.

3.4.1.1 Man and Heaven Share the same Principle and Qi

Wang Fuzhi discussed the idea that man shared the same principle and qi with Heaven from two points. First, he indicated that man shared the same principle and qi from Heaven because man was born from Heaven.

When man was born, he was born together with Heaven, for Heaven has the principle of man. When man is living, he depends on Heaven for his survival, for he needs the qi of Heaven. (CSQS 1-883)

Man got his principle and qi from Heaven at birth, so he should have the same principle and qi that Heaven had. Pushing this point further, Wang Fuzhi claimed that man’s bodily form and heavenly nature were not different from those of Heaven and earth. He argued,

Parents carry the powers of Qian/Heaven and Kun/earth to give birth to me, so the running qi and the productive mind of Heaven and earth reside in me. Thus my bodily appearance and innate nature are not different from those of my parents, and so they are not different from those of Heaven and earth either. (CSQS 12-354)

According to Wang Fuzhi’s explanation, Qian and Kun were the two powers of Heaven and earth respectively, and father and mother were their counterparts and representatives in the human world. I was born from my parents and not different from them in principle/nature and qi/bodily form, therefore I would not be different from Heaven and earth either. For this reason, Wang Fuzhi concluded, “Man and Heaven share the same principle and qi.” (CSQS 12-352)

However, Wang Fuzhi seemed to emphasize the same principle that man shared with Heaven, but avoided talking too much about the same qi they shared, for he ascribed qi or the interaction between human body and things as the origin of badness. For instance, Wang Fuzhi claimed that the unity of man and Heaven was the unity with the principle of Heaven. He said,
The unity with Heaven is the unity with the principle Heaven gives birth to me. (CSQS 8-822)

The principle in Heaven becomes relationship among human beings; the endowment in Heaven becomes nature in man. The decisive power and ability of Heaven becomes human knowledge and ability to assist heavenly transformation and nourishment. They are one after all. (CSQS 7-230)

In these quotations, Wang Fuzhi not only pointed out that the unity of man and Heaven was the unity in principle, but also indicated that the principle of Heaven was the same as human relationship—moral principle. In this way, Wang Fuzhi connected the Way of Heaven and the Way of man together, and justified his theory that man could assist Heaven through complying with human relationships or moral principle.

Although Wang Fuzhi insisted on the sameness between the principle of Heaven and the principle of man, he nevertheless made the distinction between the Way of Heaven and the Way of man. He pointed out that if man could understand they both were one in principle, man would be able to unite with Heaven through following the Way of man. He argued,

Initiation, prosperity, smoothness and integrity are the virtues of Qian, the Way of Heaven. In nobleman, they become humanity, righteousness, propriety and trust, the Way of man. They share the same principle, but have different functions. If one can understand these principles as one, then the Way of man will match the Way of Heaven. (CSQS 1-59)

Here, Wang Fuzhi acknowledged that the Way of Heaven and the Way of man were different in their functions, while he insisted that they were same in principle. With regard to why they were same in principle, Wang Fuzhi pointed out that the Way of man originally came from the Way of Heaven. He argued, the Way of man was that Heaven took a part of its single, true and infallible Way and endowed it to man, and thus becoming the nature of man. (CSQS 7-105) In other words, the Way of man could be regarded as the specification and concretization of the Way of Heaven, and should be identical with the latter in nature and essence. Therefore, the compliance of the Way of man could eventually lead man to unite with Heaven and thus assist Heaven.
Wang Fuzhi did not abandon the sameness of qi between Heaven and man either although he knew it was a complicated issue. He regarded the qi from Heaven as always good, which was the Great Harmony. For him, the qi man received at birth was also pure and good. From this point of view, man shared the same pure and harmonious qi with Heaven at birth, and thus it could be said, “Man and Heaven are same in both principle and qi.” However, after man grew and had the intelligence to choose and appropriate external things, man’s qi became impure because of the influence of his feelings and desires. Hence, man could not unite with Heaven because of his impure qi. The remedy Wang Fuzhi proposed was to cultivate one’s qi through regulating one’s feelings and desires with principle. When man’s qi became pure, and his principle was always united with that of Heaven, then one would be able to unite with Heaven completely, and in this process, the purification of one’s qi would automatically act as assistance to heavenly process. For this reason, Wang Fuzhi highly recommended Mencius’ cultivation of vast and righteous qi. He said,

Man cannot emulate the immensity of Heaven, but can share its goodness. It is because the qi of man is always purely good without badness, it can match the Way/dao and righteousness to fill the space between Heaven and earth. (CSQS 6-1059)

This meant that once a person cultivated his qi to be pure and good through complying with the dao and righteousness, his qi would be able to fill the space between Heaven and earth and become as immense and vast as Heaven. At this point, it was clear that although Wang Fuzhi emphasized the compliance of principle to unite with Heaven, his goal was still to cultivate the vast and righteous qi and then accomplished the nobleness of human life and the feat of assisting Heaven.

After man united with Heaven in both principle and qi through human self-cultivation, he would be able to participate in the heavenly process of producing the myriad things, and thus bring harmony to the universe. In Wang Fuzhi’s words, with my upright mind, the mind of Heaven and earth would be brought to uprightness; with my harmonious qi, the qi of the myriad things would be brought to harmony. (CSQS 7-105) Then, through inner sageliness, one would be able to accomplish the outer kingliness.
3.4.1.2 Man Inherits Humanity from Heaven

As the section 3.2.4 indicated, humanity as the harmonious and productive qi was regarded by Wang Fuzhi as the mind of Heaven. “Heaven is the totality of humanity, and humanity is the mind of Heaven.” (CSQS 12-66) However, when Heaven produced human being, it endowed humanity to him too, and so human mind was born to be humane, and the humanity of Heaven was in human mind. Thus, Wang Fuzhi drew a conclusion, “Man is the mind of Heaven and earth.” (CSQS 1-227) In this way, man can assist Heaven through cultivating his own mind and improving his own humanity. Wang Fuzhi continued,

Humanity and righteousness are what the Way of man is based on, and are the Way of Heaven in man. (CSQS 12-405)

Humanity, righteousness and propriety are goodness. Goodness is the manifestation of sincerity, the Way of Heaven. Only man thinks it necessary to practice humanity, righteousness and propriety. This is the Way of Heaven in human beings, and is also the Way of man. (CSQS 6-531)

These words indicated that the Way of man was nothing but the embodiment of the Way of Heaven in human beings. The Way of Heaven took goodness and humanity as its essence; while humanity, righteousness and ritual propriety in the Way of man were also goodness, and originated from Heaven. Thus, through following the Way of man, one could reach the Way of Heaven.

But this does not mean that the humanity of Heaven and the humanity of man were identical, or that there was no distinction between the Way of Heaven and the Way of man. At this point, Wang Fuzhi still maintained his own principle, “the Way of Heaven has no distinction, whereas the Way of man is discriminative.” As he stated,

Heaven makes man delight in food and beauty. This is the humanity of Heaven. The humanity of Heaven is not the humanity of man. Heaven has love for human beings, man also has his love for Heaven and the myriad things. If man depends on the humanity of Heaven and ignores his own humanity, he would not be far from birds and beasts. (CSQS 12-406)
The critical point was that Heaven made no distinction when applying its humanity to the myriad things; while man had intelligence to select what he should treat with humaneness. It was man’s selection that made his humanity unique. If man abandoned his intelligence to emulate the undifferentiated humanity of Heaven, man would lose the meaning to be human. Thus, Wang Fuzhi finally reached the conclusion that man’s assistance and unity of Heaven was achieved with his intelligence and distinction despite the sameness between them. In this sense, it was evident that the sameness between Heaven and man did not exclude the difference between them, and it was this dialectical relation between them that led the assistance of Heaven feasible.

3.4.2 The Difference between Man and Heaven

Although man never completely separated from Heaven, he nevertheless distinguished himself from Heaven with his own intelligence. This difference was that Heaven was mindless and undifferentiated in producing things, while man was able to discern good from bad.

Because of man’s intelligence, he was able to maintain autonomy and govern his life by himself. Just as Wang Fuzhi described, *yin* and *yang* could give rise to human beings but could not substitute human beings to govern human society. It was human beings’ duty to govern themselves with their own intelligence. (CSQS 1-992) Wang elaborated,

> What fills between Heaven and earth (*qi*) becomes my body, but my body does not use all of what fills between Heaven and earth. Therefore, I utilize the myriad things for the benefit of human beings, and will not love things in the same way as loving human beings. What directs Heaven and earth (principle) becomes my nature, but after my nature is established, I can change my *qi* through concentrating my will, sustain my life through careful choice, so as to achieve the significance of the Way of man, and won’t again use what directs Heaven and earth as my guide. Therefore, I have control on my joy, anger, sadness and happiness; and will not sustain or kill other living things mindlessly. (CSQS 12-407)

In this way, Wang Fuzhi made a distinction between human choice and Heaven’s non-distinction. Specifically, when Heaven produced and sustained the myriad things, it made no difference between the good and the bad, the ferocious and the tameable, while man, with his
intelligence, would love and support human beings first, and then those things beneficial to them, and drive away or eliminate those harmful things. Moreover, man would not follow the mindless and undifferentiated heavenly process to kill and produce things. Instead, he moderated his joy, anger, sadness and pleasure, and promoted humanity and avoided unnecessary destruction.

Therefore, although man received the principle and qi from Heaven to form his body and nature, after he was born, he became different from Heaven and would have his own way to behave. In this sense, the Way of man was different from the Way of Heaven. If one did not realize this difference, and strove to emulate the mindless Heaven, he would degrade himself to animal and insentient beings. Thus, Wang Fuzhi criticized Daoist doctrine of following natural process or Heaven, and proposed the Confucian doctrine that man should exert his ability to make up what Heaven had not provided. He stated,

The Way of Heaven belongs to Heaven, and the Way of man belongs to man. Man has his own way, and the sage completely fulfills it, and then realizes his heavenly endowment through exhausting his own nature and disciplining his body. Therefore, the teaching of the sage and the worthy will distinguish man from things below, and won’t let man equal to Heaven abruptly above. Heaven is natural, things are natural. The righteousness of bees and ants and the ceremony of rats do not need deliberately learning, for they just follow their natural instincts. If one overemphasizes the following of natural instinct in order to unite with Heaven, the Heaven he refers to may become a concrete particular thing. It will be dangerous. (CSQS 6-1144)

In Wang Fuzhi’s understanding, the Way of Heaven was natural, and all other things except human beings were also behaving naturally. However man was not completely natural in following heavenly process, instead he had his own way. With his own way, he distinguished himself from other creatures and Heaven. From this aspect, it could be said that man used human effort and self-cultivation to complement natural process. For this reason, Wang Fuzhi claimed, “the Way of man comes from the Way of Heaven; but the Way of Heaven cannot be completely used as the Way of man.” (CSQS 5-617) The apparent reason for this difference was that the Way of Heaven was broader than the Way of man from the perspective that the Way of Heaven gave rise to the myriad things without differentiation, while man made distinction in his humane practice. But ironically, the Way of man could be said broader than the Way of Heaven too. With
the distinction of human intelligence, man could not only choose the part of heavenly process to follow, but also change heavenly process to produce what he needed. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi concluded that “It is only after uniting Heaven and earth with human efforts that the capacity of Way/dao will be enough.” (CSQS 7-131-2)

Hence, man as the most intelligent being, could stand out to distinguish his way from the Way of Heaven, and undertake the responsibility of assisting Heaven. With his intelligence, man could evaluate the performance of Heaven and produce what Heaven did not provide according to his standard. In short, man could achieve the welfare for human beings through assisting Heaven. This assistance took human welfare as its prime concern, and was nothing but an anthropocentric and practical approach. Thus, it was far different from Daoist idea of compliance with heavenly process and equal treatment of all creatures. If this idea were pushed to the utmost, it would reach the conclusion that man and Heaven stood on antagonistic positions.

3.4.2.1 Man’s Intelligence and Heaven’s Insufficiency Make It Feasible to Assist Heaven

With his intelligence, man was able to evaluate Heaven’s performance and consider Heaven as insufficient in terms of human welfare. In order to get human welfare fulfilled, man must influence heavenly process to the direction that he expected. Therefore, assisting Heaven was in essence a way to improve human welfare. Wang Fuzhi was very frank on this point.

It is only after we cannot get our need from Heaven that we depend on ourselves; it is only after we do not meet a timely state of affair that the Way of man will be extended. (CSQS 2-238)

In other words, if Heaven already provided what man needed, man would not trouble himself to seek further. If time and situation always favored man, he would not exert his energy and intelligence to fulfill his desires. It was that Heaven could not provide what man needed that he started his endeavor to extend himself. This was verified in Wang Fuzhi’s quotation from Zhang Zai.
With the appearance of fortune, misfortune, advantage and disadvantage, human activity arises and great feats are done. If no practice of Heaven is unsuitable, what is the need of the sages’ achievement? (CSQS 12-217)

Apparently, fortune and misfortune, advantage and disadvantage were all human concerns instead of Heaven’s. Therefore, the so-called human plan and great feat all aimed to improve human welfare. Wang Fuzhi complemented this idea with his commentary on Yao’s and Shun’s activities.

Yao had a bad son but this son did not compete for the throne; Shun had a disharmonious younger brother, but this younger brother did not commit fratricide. Xia had uncooperative states Guan and Hu, but it was not overthrown; Zhou had rebellious states Shang and Yan, but it passed through the crisis. (CSQS 2-238)

This passage discussed Yao, Shun and other sages’ treatment with unfavourable situations through prudent choice. In Wang Fuzhi’s eyes, for all these cases, the sagely kings exerted their efforts, changed the development of the events to a better direction, and avoided the worst consequences.

From the above discussion, it goes without saying that the sages made up Heaven’s insufficiency with the Way of human beings. Thus, Wang Fuzhi highly appreciated the idea that “Heaven and earth stay in their positions, and the sage exerts his ability” in the Book of Changes, and believed that human ability manifested itself through assisting Heaven. He argued,

The Way of Heaven and earth runs without purpose and unceasingly, but through the sage’s assistance and balance, yin-yang can be made harmonious, the Five Elements can be made concordant, the human relationships can be made orderly. His assistance extends the function of the Way of Heaven and earth, and his knowledge manifests its teachings. All these are the ability of man. (CSQS 6-832)

Based on the importance of man’s ability to assisting Heaven, Wang Fuzhi insisted that the unity of man with Heaven was through the practice of the Way of man. If one perfectly fulfilled the Way of man, one will automatically be one with Heaven. He claimed,
With regard to the experience of the Way of Heaven, one should experience it through the practice of the Way of man. The unceasing marvel of the Way of Heaven must accomplish its ability through the Way of man, and thus if one can carry out human affairs to their perfection, he would match the Way of Heaven with no difference. (CSQS 6-541)

In this way, Wang Fuzhi shifted the approach to unite with Heaven from observing impersonal heavenly process to undertaking the Way of man. This echoed with Confucius’ saying that, if one practiced Confucian ritual propriety without deviation, he would always win Heaven’s bless. Through this transition, Wang Fuzhi shed off the inconsistency between the impersonal Heaven and human efforts, and focused on the Way of man alone and regarded it as the only way to improve human virtue and assist Heaven. Hence, it could be said that Wang Fuzhi in turn used the Way of man to subsume the Way of Heaven.

In summary, Wang Fuzhi advocated that Heaven and man were in the relations of interdependence and mutual influence. On the one hand, man was originated from and never completely stood out of Heaven; on the other, man was partly independent from Heaven because of his intelligence and ability to influence and change heavenly process. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi believed that either part of Heaven and man changed, the other part would be influenced thereby. Man should thus improve his own harmonious \( qi \) through moral practice, and thereby improve the harmonious \( qi \) of Heaven, and directed the Heaven-man relation to harmony. Otherwise, if man behaved immoderately, and increased the perverse \( qi \) in his own body, he would finally increase the amount of perverse \( qi \) in the universe and made Heaven-man relation disharmonious. It was from this perspective that Wang Fuzhi concluded, “When the \( qi \) of Heaven becomes prevalent, it can transform man; when the \( qi \) of human beings is prevalent, it can in turn influence Heaven.” (CSQS 10-974) However, it is obvious that Wang put more importance on human effort than the uncontrollable heavenly process. That is, man should cultivate his own harmonious \( qi \) and change the heavenly process.
3.5 The Means to Assist Heaven

3.5.1 Man Embraces Harmony to Transform Disharmonious Things

According to Wang Fuzhi, although harmony was the essence of Heaven, the activity of yin and yang might deviate from its normal harmonious way, and produced disharmonious things. Upon this situation, firstly, man could use harmonious activity or things to transform disharmonious things. This was shown in Wang Fuzhi’s explanation why the past sagely kings employed handicapped people as musicians to play harmonious notes. He stated,

Thus, with regard to the past kings’ treatment with music, it was not because there were no handsome men and pretty women who, skilful in gesture and pace, could entertain spirit and mind with their performance after they were taught music. But the kings used the hunchbacked to beat chime, the crook to strike bell, the blind to discern sound and the grumble to maintain measure. They brought those handicapped people in the world to a harmonious and pleasant place. Why? Music was where harmony was cultivated. Harmony reached the extreme disharmonious things to disperse their daily sadness and depression, then the helpless and ill-born would not be fed vainly, and the essence of life would be fulfilled. Then all people would pride in life and did not take death as a pleasure. This was what to moderate the ill-qi of yin and yang, and extend the principle of life endlessly. (CSQS 1-940)

Truly the handicapped people could be regarded as the outcome of disharmonious qi. In order to correct and make their qi harmonious, the sagely kings used harmonious things—music to transform them. With the harmony of music, the handicapped people’s mind was brought to harmonious and peaceful and thus the perverse qi they inherited was partly corrected. Based on this, Wang Fuzhi exclaimed what the sages were doing was to supplement what Heaven could not achieve.

It goes without saying that, for those handicapped people, what was harmonized by music was their mind or spirit rather than their handicapped bodies. As Wang Fuzhi endorsed the view that spirit or mind was formed with fine and pure qi, while body with coarse qi, and the spirit or mind made a man as he was, therefore, to assist Heaven focused mainly on cultivating the harmonious
qi of mind/spirit. This explained why Wang Fuzhi emphasized on the rectification of mind and the moderation of feelings and desires with moral principle.

Secondly, man should avoid the disharmonious and embrace the harmonious, and thus preserve the harmonious state of Heaven through man’s choice. Wang Fuzhi stated,

\[\text{Yin is certain to be cold, and yang is certain to be hot, this is the normal state of } qi. \text{ Yin stubbornly stays below to cause frigidity, yang proudly stays above to cause extremely heat, this is the excessive state of } qi...\] 

If man embraces their harmonious part through cautious choice, then the hot and cold situations might be changed....Those skilful in serving Heaven will avoid its excess and welcome its harmony...They do not indulge in their desires, and neither lose their essence of harmony. Thus even in an unfortunate time, their harmonious qi will not disappear indeed. (CSQS 1-956-957)

In this passage, Wang Fuzhi mentioned two aspects to preserve harmonious qi. In regard to Heaven, man should embrace its harmonious qi while avoid its perverse qi. For example, a person should go out in a bright and warm spring day to absorb heavenly harmonious qi, while he should stay at home on a stormy day. In regard to human beings, one should regulate his desires and preserve his essence of pure and harmonious qi, such as eating and sleeping moderately and not having excessive sex or eating too much. In this way, a person would be able to preserve the harmonious qi even at unfavourable time, and thereby accomplish the task of assisting Heaven.

In order to embrace Heaven’s harmonious qi while avoid its perverse qi, it was necessary to predict the time and place that an event happened or a person acted. For this sake, the ancient sages produced the Book of Changes to predict or decide the time and place or the incipience of an event so as to act timely. Through the movement of strokes and the change of diagrams, the sages told people how to use objects and choose the right time for human welfare, and avoid unfavorable situations. In this way, the sages led the people to be in harmony with Heaven.

Wang Fuzhi concluded,

First, it (the Book of Changes) lets people know their lots, so they will accept what they encounter and know them as natural occurrences. Second, it makes people worry about their situations, so they will follow the Way (of man) to expel worry. Finally, it leads
people to good ends, so they will abide by the Way devotedly and eliminate unexpected disasters. These are how the sages extend Heaven and bless human beings. (CSQS 1-993)

When explaining how the *Book of Changes* had such functions, Wang Fuzhi continued,

The *Book of Changes* regulates human affairs through complying with the Way of Heaven. One learns it to determine what one should maintain through fortune telling. Then one can predict the proper time and place so as to keep cautious about gain and loss and not to forget his worry. In this way, whether he advances or retreats, moves or rests, he can always be in accordance with principle. Then he gains the blessing of Heaven, and is propitious without disadvantage. (CSQS 1-516)

In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, the *Book of Changes* regulated human affairs with the Way of Heaven, so the time and place it disclosed corresponded with heavenly process. If a person could abide by the time and place it disclosed, he would be able to maintain due measure in gain and loss, and act in accordance with heavenly principle. Then he would be always fortunate. In this way, Wang Fuzhi thought man could control or predict the unpredictable heavenly process through diagrams and strokes and thus subsumed the Way of Heaven under the Way of man.

### 3.5.2 To Preserve Harmony through Complying with Ritual Propriety

As spirit and mind was nothing but the harmonious *qi*, Wang Fuzhi regarded the cultivation of spirit as the highest degree of cultivating life and harmony. On how to achieve harmony, he proposed serious attentiveness/*jing*. He said,

The best way to achieve harmony is no other than serious attentiveness. Attending to one’s body so as to harmonize one’s mind, then one’s spirit will not be fatigued but will act as the master of body. It will lead body and *qi*, make them intimate and cooperative, and fill and circulate *qi* around the organs and body completely. Then where would arise the immature death of one’s life, and how could the blessing of Heaven not be gathered? (CSQS 5-556)

Here, Wang Fuzhi indicated the relationships among attentiveness, harmony, body and spirit. In general, serious attentiveness would lead to harmony. In practice, one should be attentive to
one’s bodily activities so as to harmonize one’s mind. As mind and spirit were identical, with a harmonious mind, one’s spirit would be able to govern body and qi in turn and make them more harmonious. With harmonious qi prevailing in both mind and body, one would be able to live a mature life and receive lots of good fortune.

Then how could one maintain the state of serious attentiveness, and what should one be attentive to? Wang Fuzhi argued that one should be attentive to human affairs and obtain heavenly virtue (harmony) through carrying out human affairs in accordance with ritual propriety. He stated,

> Serious attentiveness is human endeavour, harmony is heavenly virtue. To achieve heavenly virtue through human endeavour, serious attentiveness will act as the essence of ritual propriety and use it to achieve harmony. (CSQS 6-592)

In this quotation, Wang Fuzhi pointed out that serious attentiveness was the approach to obtain harmony, and the essence of ritual propriety. If one maintained an attentive mind, he would show harmonious on the appearance, and would conduct in accordance with ritual propriety. However, one could not achieve attentiveness from nowhere, but must have something to follow. On this point, Wang Fuzhi again proposed to achieve and maintain attentiveness through complying with ritual propriety.

With this approach as his standard, Wang Fuzhi criticized the Daoist method of cultivating harmony [although his understanding of Daoist doctrines is very prejudicial]. In his regard, although both Confucians and Daoists advocated harmony as the essence of cultivating spirit, Daoists were far different from Confucians in their way to achieve harmony. He numerated the ways to achieve harmony in the Zhuangzi and said,

> [In order to achieve harmony,] will one be Ji Xing’s 紀渻 wooden cock, or Shu Shan’s 叔山 treatment of his toe, or Nan Guo’s 南郭 loss of his ego, or Ju Baiyu’s 蘧伯玉 innocent baby? If one achieves harmony in these ways, truly it is harmonious, but one’s intention to reach harmony will be shameful of disclosure. (CSQS 5-554-555)

In the Zhuangzi, the approach to reach harmony was to forget human constructed distinction among things, realize the unity that all things were the transformation of the same mass of qi, and thus follow the natural transformation without preference and attachment. Abandoning
distinction and attachment, the cock raised by Master Ji Xing would lose fear and looked like a wooden cock in front of other cocks; realizing the oneness of all things, Shu Shan Wu Zhi and Nan Guo Zi Xu would not mind the loss of a toe or the ego. Forsaking preference and attachment, Ju Baiyu would be able to act as an ignorant baby in front of others. Through these approaches, one would be able to maintain one’s peaceful mind, and thus achieve harmony. To some degree, these were better ways to achieve harmony than mere compliance with ritual propriety. On the contrary, if one followed ritual propriety to cultivate harmony, one already made a distinction among things and would not be able to reach peace and harmony. Ironically, Wang Fuzhi ended his comments on these approaches with “(Zhuangzi’s) intention to reach harmony is shameful of disclosure”, which could only show Wang’s prejudice toward the Zhuangzi and his apology for Confucian rituals.

Somehow ridiculous was that Wang Fuzhi falsely accused Zhuangzi of fulfilling desire through these approaches. In explaining that “the intention to reach harmony is shameful of disclosure”, he continued,

To sleep, he [Zhuangzi] desires to be sound; to sit, he tends to spread his legs; to go abroad, he does not want to defy other’s smile and faces; and to enter home, he wants to get his ears and eyes rest. If he achieves all these, he will be harmonious; otherwise disharmonious. Most of common people behave in this way. (CSQS 5-555)

That is, in Wang’s understanding, Zhuangzi was a man seeking for the fulfillment of his own desires, avoiding defying other people, and then enjoyed a harmonious life. Wang’s understanding was apparently contradictory with the previous examples he cited from the Zhuangzi, for when one achieved the state-of-mind of the wooden cock or the baby, there would not be any desire for comfort or any concern of other things. Moreover, with these desires and concerns in mind, it was impossible to achieve harmony either, however Wang Fuzhi already admitted that Zhuangzi’s approaches were able to achieve harmony. Thus, Wang Fuzhi’s criticism was self-contradictory.
3.5.3 Preserving Spirit for the Maintenance of Harmony

Why could harmony be achieved or maintained through preserving one’s spirit/shen 神? According to Wang Fuzhi, spirit was the principle of Great Harmony. “In Great Harmony are there both qi and spirit. Spirit is nothing but the principle of the pure and penetrating yin and yang.” (CSQS 12-16) Therefore, preserving spirit could in turn achieve harmony. He continued,

If man can preserve his spirit and fully unfold his nature so as to keep union with the Great Harmony, and bring yin and yang to follow their principle, man will make contributions to Heaven and qi will be regulated through human will. (CSQS 12-44)

In this passage, Wang Fuzhi frankly pointed out that man could preserve and unite with the Great Harmony through preserving his spirit and fully unfolding his nature. Through preserving one’s spirit, one would be able to bring the yin and yang in his own body to follow their principles and thus turn disharmonious qi into harmonious with human will.

Pushing further, Wang Fuzhi regarded preserving spirit and thus contributing harmonious qi to Heaven as the universal mission of all past sages. He argued,

It is only through preserving spirit to fully unfold one’s nature, thus unite as one with the Great Void, then one will not lose his normal state when alive, and regain his original body when dead. Then between Heaven and earth, he will not leave the qi that causes perversion, disaster, wickedness, turbidity and chaos. It is in this way that Yao, Shun, the Duke of Zhou and Confucius live forever. (CSQS 12-22)

This passage explained that the sages had become one with Heaven after preserving their spirit. Therefore, whether alive or dead, he always kept one with the heavenly transformation and did not disturb the Great Harmony. In Wang Fuzhi’s imagination, if everyone in the world emulated the sage to preserve his spirit and thus contribute with his harmonious qi, the Great Harmony would not be disturbed or destroyed by human desires and evil-behaviours, and the world would become more peaceful and less antagonistic.

The problem then became how to preserve spirit? Wang Fuzhi proposed two approaches, the first was the compliance of ritual propriety and the grasp of the essence of righteousness; and the second was to fully unfold one’s nature.
First, ritual propriety was the external manifestation of spirit. Wang Fuzhi said, “The principle of spirit and transformation becomes wen 文 (patterns) when dispersed in the myriad things, and is regarded as ritual propriety when manifested in events.” [CSQS 12-159] Thus, a serious compliance with ritual propriety would lead to preserving spirit.

Second, Wang Fuzhi proposed to preserve spirit through fully unfolding nature. In his regard, nature was spirit or the Way of Heaven in human beings; therefore, nature, spirit and heavenly way were same in essence. He said,

Heaven uses spirit as its Way. Nature is the substance of spirit. Nature and the Way of Heaven are spirit, nothing else. (CSQS 12-95)

Nature is what spirit gathers in human beings; the Way of Heaven is the transformation of spirit. (CSQS 12-255)

Now that nature was the gathering of spirit in human body and spirit in turn was the Way of Heaven, fully unfolding one’s nature would automatically lead to preserving spirit, and uniting and assisting Heaven.

Interestingly, although Wang Fuzhi criticized Zhuangzi’s methods of cultivating harmony and preserving spirit, he tacitly adopted them. He regarded right thinking as the sign of spirit and asked to preserve spirit through purifying mind and pacifying qi. He even advocated an empty mind in order to get sharp intelligence. All these were nothing but Zhuangzi’s methods. Wang stated,

The right brightness and right watch of mind is the moving sign of spirit. If it is preserved, then the spirit will be preserved too….If one purifies his mind and restrains his qi, cultivates them with serious attentiveness, then desires and intention will not arise. The empty mind will give rise to its brightness. If one muses on principle to a deep degree and does not let it be interrupted, then he will be able to preserve his mind for a long time. Both of these are the way to preserve spirit. (CSQS 12-90-91)

If an empty mind could give rise to brightness and preserve spirit, Wang Fuzhi would have to acknowledge the existence of a pure mind without either principle or desires. It would rather push him to the camp of Chan Buddhism and Wang Yangming School which proposed the
purification of mind in order to grasp nature, and which were what Wang Fuzhi severely attacked. From this perspective, it was evident that Wang Fuzhi was confused on how to preserve spirit and thus could not develop a coherent doctrine on it.

3.5.4 Knowing Heavenly Endowment, Life and Death to Preserve Harmony

One main cause of disharmony came from the complaint of human beings toward Heaven and others. If man accepted what he encountered with satisfaction and delight, the disharmonious qi would not arise. Generally, this was called knowing or establishing heavenly endowment/liming 立命; specifically, this required man to know the meaning of life and death. Hence Wang Fuzhi said, “It is heavenly transformation that produces life. Yet heavenly transformation does not share worry with the sages. Therefore it is necessary to know the doctrine of life and death in order to make contribution to heavenly transformation.” (CSQS 6-753) To make contribution to heavenly transformation was to assist Heaven and maintain the Great Harmony.

First, Wang Fuzhi proposed to assist Heaven through knowing and establishing heavenly endowment. Establishing heavenly endowment meant preserving what Heaven had given and not harming it with human desires. What Heaven had given were human spirit and body that manifested as human nature and desires. Thus, establishing heavenly endowment critically lay in fulfilling human nature and using it to moderate desires and bodily activities. Hence, Wang Fuzhi claimed, “It is only through complying with principle (human nature) and revering Heaven that endowment will be established in oneself.” (CSQS 10-935) It goes without saying that “principle” here referred to human nature. Through firmly complying with this principle, one would be able to fulfill one’s nature, understand life and death and accomplish the assistance to Heaven. Wang stated,

It is from the perspective of perfect knowledge that Heaven will not go beyond its (principle’s) scope, one will see that it is the principle alone to give birth to him, and the lots of qi cannot influence the process. One will calmly regard life and death, bend and stretch as identical…From the perspective of perfect service to Heaven, one will realize what one can make contribution to Heaven is just this principle, and one’s words and behaviour should not betray it. (CSQS 8-823)
As this paragraph shows, it was principle that gave birth to human beings, and it was also by the same principle that man contributed to Heaven. Therefore, what man did was only to understand and comply with this principle. If man could do this, man would be able to transcend the influence of the lots of qi, see life and death as without difference, and maintain peaceful in front of longevity or immature death.

However, if it was principle alone to give birth to man and the lot of qi had no influence, there would be the separation between principle and qi. This was contradictory to Wang Fuzhi’s qi-monism. If man could transcend life and death, satisfy longevity or immature death through following heavenly principle, man would completely become a stage of heavenly process as Daoism proposed, and the Way of man and human effort Wang advocated would be redundant. These problems showed that Wang Fuzhi did not have a clear view between principle (Heaven) and human effort (man), and he was swayed between the Daoist view of heavenly Way and Confucian view of human effort.

Second, Wang Fuzhi elucidated the process of life and death from both the aspect of qi and that of principle. From the aspect of qi, he regarded them as the bend and stretch of the same mass of qi or the heavenly transformation. He explained,

Those departing actually do not depart, but are just the bend of qi; those coming do not come at all, but are just the stretch of qi. Therefore, a person may die here and be born there. There is no planned retribution in this process, but only the fermentation of heavenly transformation. (CSQS 1-590)

Therefore, if one understood the reality that life and death were just the bend and stretch of the same mass of qi, one would not cling to human body—the trace of the bend and stretch of qi, but to unite with the origin—the mass of qi. Then one would be peaceful in front of life and death, gain and loss, always maintain his harmonious qi, and achieve his assistance to Heaven. Wang Fuzhi also called the bend and stretch of qi as the gathering and dispersion of qi. He stated,

Dispersing and returning to the Great Void, and recovering its original fermenting body, this is not to perish. Gathering and producing the myriad things, this is the normal nature of the fermenting body or qi, and is not to produce things from illusion. (CSQS 12-20)
One important feature of Wang Fuzhi’s explanation was that the bending and stretching, gathering and dispersing of qi was concrete, random and purposeless. In this way, he tried to differentiate his doctrine from Buddhist retribution and illusory arising, and denied the theory of re-incarnation or the belief that a person would be born in another place after perishing. (CSQS 1-1045) However, it was obvious that Wang Fuzhi was using Zhuangzi’s thought to explain life and death and justify his view of assistance to Heaven. His following remarks made this borrowing clearer. He argued,

What makes me alive will also make me dead. When the qi bends, it is ghost; when it stretches, it is spirit. I will let it come or go freely, while keep my pure and integrated substance not lost. Then pure, bright, peaceful and obedient virtues will not cease between Heaven and earth, and will not be disturbed by the gathering and dispersion of body and spirit. Life and death is so, let alone the success and failure of events, or the gain and loss of things. (CSQS 1-590)

In this quotation, the sentence, “What makes me alive will also make me dead”, was copied from the Zhuangzi, and the transcendence of success and failure, life and death was also Zhuangzi’s idea in the chapter Da Zong Shi/the Great Master. Obviously, this Daoist method of equalizing all things would be inconsistent with his cultivation of harmonious qi through complying with ritual propriety.

3.5.5 Transforming Bodily Temperament/ Bianhua Qizhi

Although Wang Fuzhi insisted that man should be able to establish his heavenly endowment and assist Heaven through compliance with principle, and thought that qi exerted no dominant influence, he could not ignore the role of qi in terms of his qi-monism after all. This was shown in his argument on the impurity of bodily temperament and the change of it through complying with principle and preserving spirit.

First, Wang Fuzhi emphasized the transformation of bodily temperament through preserving spirit directly. He said,
Although there is difference in stupidity and brightness, softness and firmness of qi in human body, there is no difference in human nature. Therefore a good scholar preserves his spirit and then his qi can be transformed. (CSQS 12-368)

Here, nature and spirit were the same as principle. As we have discussed in 3.5.2, to preserve spirit so as to transform bodily temperament is actually to follow the principle or ritual propriety. In Wang’s regard, this transformation was made through concentrating on ritual propriety. He said,

As to the partiality of bodily temperament, although it cannot meet the Way, what it relies on is also the right part of yin-yang and Five Elements. Thus, one can reconnect it with sincerity [the Great Harmony] through persistent concentration on this part. As to success or failure, it depends on the intensity of one’s effort. (CSQS 7-657)

Apparently, the way of persistent concentration was not to focus one’s mind on some part idly, but to correct and change it through practice of Confucian ritual propriety or the Way of man. For example, if one had a quick temper, one should always restrain its breakout through abiding by ritual propriety. However, Wang Fuzhi had to answer the question: how could spirit, the principle of qi, transform the very qi, if principle was determined by qi in his qi-monism?

Second, Wang Fuzhi believed that through complying with the Way of man or ritual propriety one could transform his bodily temperament. He optimistically claimed,

Then, can spirit transform body? I reply, how could it not be impossible? At the beginning, Heaven transforms body, and that is the Way of Heaven. Afterward, man transforms it, and that is the Way of man....The Way of man gradually influences and nurtures it through human effort, so it can turn the ugly into the pretty, the partial into the complete, and the impure into the pure. (CSQS 10-404)

This passage showed that although Heaven made difference among different bodies, such as ugly and pretty, tall and short at the beginning, man could change them with the Way of man.

Wang Fuzhi did not forget to transform bodily temperament through prudent choice of food and drink. He firmly endorsed Mencius’ doctrine, “one’s dwelling can transform one’s qi, and one’s
food can change one’s body”, and thus emphasized the role of food in changing one’s bodily temperament. He argued,

> With regard to the Way of food and drink, one nurtures *yin* with the taste of food, and *yang* with the *qi* of food. To nurture *yin* is not just to nurture blood, but mainly nurture the soft, obedient, pure and clean virtue. To nurture *yang* is not just to nurture *qi*, but mainly nurture the firm, vigour, bright and elegant virtue. The purity and clarity of blood and *qi* will lead to the integrity and uprightness of nature and feelings. (CSQS 7-619)

Here, Wang Fuzhi described how to cultivate *yin* and *yang* through food intake. He looked down the material and substantial role of *yin* and *yang*, but emphasized their virtues—softness, firmness, purity and elegance. Then he summarized with the purpose of cultivation as the cleanness and purity of blood and *qi*. Truly this prescription met the art of cultivating life in Chinese medicine. But as man must have body and spirit, he must therefore depend and use coarse and condensed *qi* to form his flesh, muscle and bone. If man aimed only for the pure, clean *qi* for life cultivation, he would weaken his body and improve his spirit, and artificially created imbalance between them. Without a strong body, how could spirit prevail? From this aspect, Wang Fuzhi fell into the snare of his premise—pure and clean *qi* as good while coarse and turbid *qi* as bad, and did not keep his view consistent with the inseparability between *yin* and *yang*, pure and impure *qi*.

Third, Wang Fuzhi gave a complete justification of the feasibility of transforming bodily temperament from cosmological perspective. In his opinion, although bodily temperament was formed before a person was born and therefore beyond his control, nevertheless he could transform it through his own habit and practice. His arguments could be summarized as the followings,

1. Bodily temperament is formed with defects or partiality because of the difference between the purity and impurity of *qi* that forms it.
2. Once bodily temperament is formed, it will not be easily affected by the *qi* coming afterward, for the *qi* coming afterward just comes and goes through body randomly. From this aspect, different creatures have different and specific bodies, and stupid and wise people are unchangeable.
3. However, now that bodily temperament is originally formed through the gathering of *qi* and must more or less exchange with external *qi* continuously, it may still be changeable by the coming *qi* if circumstance permits.

4. This changeability can be accomplished through repetitive practice with the same *qi* on the formed body. This repetitive practice is habit.

Based on these assumptions, Wang Fuzhi claimed,

> After being formed, body still keeps on growing and decaying unceasingly. At the beginning growth and decay remain within the limit of body. But body will be changed once it becomes in fond of receiving disordered *qi*. Likewise, to transform bad into good also lies in cultivating one’s *qi* well. When it lasts long, bodily temperament will be changed. Therefore it is said, “Dwelling changes one’s *qi*, and food changes one’s body,” for body will change along with the change of *qi*....This is human ability. This is habit. (CSQS 6-860)

In other words, the repetitive absorption of disordered *qi* would change the formed body, and likewise, the persistent good behaviour and cultivation of good *qi* would improve one’s bodily temperament. But was it possible to degrade a human body into a pig body through absorbing disordered *qi*? Or was it possible to repair the handicapped to be wholesome person through cultivating good *qi*? Wang Fuzhi did not discuss on these questions. To some degree, this showed the limit of his view of the transformation of bodily temperament. Here, he should at least point out a scope of the transformation.

It goes without saying that Wang Fuzhi also disclosed some inconsistency here. Although he mainly insisted the changeability of turbid *qi* into pure *qi*, he also admitted something against this idea. In a passage, he believed the good *qi* of past sages and the bad *qi* of past tyrants, such as King Zhou of Shang 商紂王 and King Jie of Xia 夏桀王 would both last forever in the universe. (CSQS 12-23) In another passage, he even claimed that all *qi*, bad or good, would remain in their state forever, as he claimed,

> When *qi* gathers, it can be shown as existent; when *qi* dispersive, it is doubted as inexistent. After *qi* gathers to form forms and shapes, its capability, substance, nature and feelings will gather there according to their kinds...Thus, good *qi* is always good, bad *qi* is always bad,
harmonious qi is always harmonious, and perverse qi is always perverse. They all bend and stretch, come and go according to their original traces and do not betray them. (CSQS 12-19)

In this point, we can ask Wang Fuzhi, if different qi had no possibility to change into each other, how could human being transform bad qi into good qi? Wang Fuzhi might not be able to provide a reasonable answer.

3.6 Conclusion

Although Heaven and man were different in their scope of qi and principle, Wang Fuzhi insisted that man could still assist Heaven because the qi and principle of man came from Heaven. In order to compromise his discourse on the similarity and difference between Heaven and man, he explained the feasibility of assistance from two sides, principle and qi. In his eyes, man could not reach Heaven in terms of the scope of qi, but could unite with it through principle. Therefore, on the one hand, the sage did not let Heaven keep distant from man and asked man to serve Heaven and realize the principle as the final origin of both Heaven and man. On the other hand, the sage also did not let man mix with Heaven or guess heavenly process with his petty intelligence, so he asked man to regard Heaven as spirit, and keep feeling awe toward Heaven’s immensity. In this way, man could unite with Heaven, but could not identify with it, just as a drop of water could unite with a river but was not the river.

Actually, except for some discussions where Wang Fuzhi asked to keep the gap between Heaven and man so as to avoid mixing them, Wang Fuzhi mainly focused on man’s potential union with Heaven in principle or humanity through human effort. In his belief, if we could stick to principle or humanity, we already contributed a lot to the maintenance of the Great Harmony.

Then Wang Fuzhi described the ideal Great harmony that man achieved through preserving his spirit and body and following moral principle. After proposing that one should maintain his nature/spirit first in order to preserve his body intact and thus return to Heaven and earth the complete and pure spirit and body after the period of human life, Wang prospected an optimistic view to be achieved through human assistance to Heaven. He envisioned,
If both (spirit and body) are not harmed/lost, then the pure and clear qi of Heaven and earth will be moulded by me. When they [body and spirit] disperse and return to their original states, their purity and clarity will marvellously match the void. They will improve the brightness of the sun, moon and stars above, and nourish the prosperity of all things below. They become the breeze blowing between Heaven and earth, and their life-principle will gather good qi to form new person. In this way, although body changes, the pure and clear harmonious qi does not change, but becomes the focus of good and fortune, and greatly benefits the living things under Heaven. Then they will assist the transformation of Heaven, last forever, spread in the universe, mix with the myriad forms. No benefit is greater than this. (CSQS 13-293)

This passage meant that one would be able to return to the universe with pure and harmonious qi and principle if one maintained his spirit and body intact through one’s self-cultivation. This pure and harmonious qi and principle would in turn gather more good qi and produce more good things. Here, Wang Fuzhi tacitly believed that good qi would attract good qi while bad qi would gather bad qi according to their kinds. This bright perspective became the power and motivation for Wang Fuzhi to cultivate harmonious qi through moderating desires and complying with principles. But as Wang Fuzhi admitted, Heaven transformed all things randomly, and might gather pure and clean qi together to produce sages and worthies, or disperse the previous sages’ qi to generate common and stupid people. (CSQS 1-1045) Pure and impure, harmonious and disharmonious qi could be changed and generated by Heaven. Even human beings could contribute some pure and harmonious qi to Heaven, how could man be able to change heavenly process? In this point, Wang Fuzhi’s optimism of participating in heavenly process would become nothing but a good will.
Chapter 4 Humanity: the Meaning of Human Life

Assisting Heaven is accomplished through cultivating one’s harmonious $qi$ and preserving the Great Harmony. However, after being endowed in human mind, the Great Harmony becomes humanity/ren 仁. Thus, human beings can improve their own humanity to accomplish the mission of assisting Heaven. In this way, Wang Fuzhi completed a switch from the cultivation of the harmonious $qi$ to the promotion of humanity, changed his topic from cosmological issue to moral issue and justified the importance of Confucian moral cultivation to the maintenance of a harmonious universe, for humanity is the core concept of Confucianism. Accordingly, the meaning of human life lies not only in the maintenance of pure and harmonious $qi$, but also in the promotion of humanity. Using humanity as the thread, Wang Fuzhi started unraveling his Confucian moral cultivation, including cultivating mind, exhausting nature and regulating desires.

However, one point should be made clear. Although humanity takes human welfare as its content, it does not mean that it is the biological and material satisfaction as human beings enjoyed. In Wang’s regard, it would rather be the order and harmony of human society achieved through the following of Confucian principles, or the Teachings of Names/mingjiao 名教. This was shown in his criticism on Feng Dao’s 冯道 (882-954) opportunism. Feng Dao was a prime minister in the Five Dynasties and kept on switching his loyalty to different masters in order to secure his salary and high rank. Feng’s philosophy of survival was that one should be practical and adapt to situation without respect to righteousness and ritual propriety, and thus was condemned by Wang Fuzhi. In the following, we will analyze how Wang Fuzhi unraveled his theory of humanity through mind, nature and desires.

4.1 The Origin and Definition of Humanity

Etymologically, humanity/ren 仁 is the dearness or closeness of two people, and means that they support each other. It became the key concept of Confucianism after Confucius interpreted as loving other people  and used it to substantiate the performance of rituals and music when he
criticized his contemporary nobles, “If a man is not humane, what has he to do with ceremonies/li 禮? If he is not humane, what has he to do with music?” (Analects: 3.3, Wing-tsit Chan’s translation) Thereafter, it had not only the meaning of loving others, but also the meaning of true feeling or sincerity. Since the Song Dynasty, the Neo-Confucian scholars added metaphysical meaning to it, and regarded humanity/ren 仁 as the substance of human nature, the principle of life or heavenly principle. In this way, it became a concept referring to both human feelings and human nature. From the following unraveling of this term, we can see Wang Fuzhi still followed this Neo-Confucian tradition.

4.1.1 Humanity Originated from Heaven

As aforesaid, Wang Fuzhi regarded humanity/ren 仁 as originated from Heaven and claimed that “Heaven is the whole of humanity/ren 仁, and humanity/ren 仁 is the mind of Heaven. In this sense, they are identical.” (CSQS 12-66) In explaining “Heaven is the whole of humanity”, Wang Fuzhi stated that “Humanity is what all living creatures must have. Life is the prosperity of humanity of Heaven above.” (CSQS 10-1122) That is, all creatures must contain humanity to produce and sustain their lives; and their lives were the prosperity and manifestation of Heaven’s humanity. There was no humanity that stood beyond Heaven.

In explaining “humanity is the mind of Heaven”, Wang Fuzhi interpreted it as the tendency of Heaven to produce and sustain lives. This tendency was compared to the mind. He said,

What gives rise to human beings is the mind of Heaven and earth, isn’t it?… Heaven and earth are mindless, but they accomplish transformation. When they initiate the beginning and lives of things through the formation of shape and qi, there seems to be something that is determined and cannot stop. Compared with the mind of human beings, this is called the mind of Heaven and earth. (CSQS 1-227-8)

Here, the mind of Heaven was a metaphor of the tendency of Heaven’s production and sustenance of the myriad things. In short, it was Heaven’s productivity. Wang Fuzhi further specified Heaven’s productivity and humanity as the principle of life/sheng zhi li 生之理.

Humanity is the principle of life that I and the myriad things share. (CSQS 12-202)
Humanity is the principle of life in human beings. The principle of life is what makes human beings alive. (CSQS 7-836)

In this way, Wang Fuzhi connected man’s humanity with Heaven’s humanity and productivity. As the principle of life was called human nature too, Wang Fuzhi thus identified humanity, human nature and the Great Harmony as one. Hence, through promoting humanity, man would be able to preserve the Great Harmony and assist Heaven.

4.1.2 Humanity as the Mind of Compassion

In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, humanity as the mind of Heaven and earth became the mind of compassion in human beings. He explained,

The mind of Heaven and earth keeps moving and recovering every moment, and does not depend on its past and neither listens to natural course. Thus it becomes the unbearable mind in human beings, and cannot stop or rest even temporarily. (CSQS 1-229)

The unbearable mind or the mind which could not bear to see the suffering of others was the mind of compassion in Mencius’ discourse. As the unbearable mind was the mind of Heaven and earth in human beings, the mind of compassion was also the manifestation of humanity.

After justifying the mind of compassion as humanity from Heaven, Wang Fuzhi proposed two points. The first was that humanity became the substance of mind, and the second was that the critical way to achieve humanity or compassion lay in the peace of one’s mind/心之安.

With regard to the former, Wang Fuzhi first claimed that “Humanity and righteousness are the substance of human mind.” (CSQS 8-712) The reason that humanity and righteousness were mentioned together was that righteousness was the proper application of humanity in real situations. Then Wang Fuzhi indicated that humanity and righteousness were what made human beings different from other animals and also the standard to distinguish good from bad. He argued,

Of course, Wang Fuzhi was contradictory when making this statement because the mind of Heaven and earth was itself the very natural course. How could it not listen to natural course?
What makes a person a human being is humanity and righteousness. Man receives them from nature, and contains them in mind. Good and bad are distinguished in terms of keeping them or not... As man is different from animals, there is human mind. Human mind has the intelligence of knowing and perceiving, which animals can share; but what makes human mind unique is the true love developed from childhood, and the principle of love accordingly. This principle of love is one with the subtle and intelligent power of mind. (CSQS 8-727)

In this passage, Wang Fuzhi pointed out that humanity and righteousness were the essence of human beings and the criterion to distinguish good from bad. In manifestation, they became true love and the principle of love. The true love and its principle were one with the intelligence of the mind and made man different from other animals.

With regard to the latter, Wang Fuzhi argued that humanity was the origin of all that which makes human mind feel satisfied and peaceful. He said,

Humanity uses no desire as its body, and gives rise to the pattern and standard of hearing, seeing, speech and movement. Therefore, man embodies it in all his actions to achieve the peace of his mind/心之安. (CSQS 12-66)

Wang Fuzhi further specified the peace of the mind as the unbearable mind in ordinary life. For instance, one might desire something, but still demonstrated scruple in getting it; one might want to do something mercilessly, but still felt uneasy and intolerable in doing it. This uneasy and scrupulous feeling was the manifestation of the mind of compassion or humanity. It was the voice of Heaven in human beings. It was from this point that Wang Fuzhi justified the Confucian doctrine of humanity as a natural and inalienable law for human beings, which echoed Mencius’ words, “One would not be a man if one did not have a compassionate mind.” (Mencius 2A.7)

Wang Fuzhi then resorted to common sense to show that the unbearable and unsatisfied mind was innate, especially in the case when one saw the sorrow and suffering of one’s kin. Wang assumed, if an ordinary person was in danger, we would do our best to rescue him but would not sacrifice our lives for him. However, if our parents or brothers were in danger, we would risk our lives to rescue them. If we failed, we would feel sad for the rest of our lives. Based on this, he concluded,
A person may have a limit in loving others. But regarding his humanity to his father, son and brother, he will not set a limit to obstruct it. (CSQS 10-1123)

With this explanation, it was understandable why Confucius insisted that filial piety and fraternal love was the root and starting point of humanity, and later Confucians, including Wang Fuzhi, firmly endorsed it. This was verified in Wang’s identifying filial piety as the peace of one’s mind. He stated,

When a filial son serves his parents, he serves them with [the peace of] his mind. When situation does not allow, he decides it with his mind. Why must he comply with the norms specified for a son and dare not trespass? It is because his mind dare not to do that and cannot bear doing so. Why he considers carefully the special situations of serving parents and dare not to be self-affirmed? It is also because his mind dare not to do that and cannot bear doing so. (CSQS 8-476)

From this discussion, it was evident that mind, the peace of mind rather than external ritual was the final voice in one’s filial service to one’s parents. The peace of mind depended in turn on one’s unbearable and scrupulous feelings. It was these feelings that made a person follow social norms and rituals. Otherwise, one’s practice of norms and rituals was no better than pretentiousness or hypocrisy. To some degree, Wang Fuzhi’s whole system was based on the peace of mind, and thus should be regarded as the doctrine of mind instead of the doctrine of principle.

Although the peace of mind was the root and foundation of true filial practice, Wang Fuzhi did not think it a sufficient premise for moral practice, but insisted supplementing it with norms and rituals. This showed Wang Fuzhi’s attempt to avoid falling into the subjective moral theory proposed by Wang Yangming. As is known, Wang Yangming resorted solely to mind or innate knowledge as the standard of moral practice, and led to the destruction of morality when an unscrupulous person replaced innate knowledge with selfish desires. If Wang Fuzhi ignored norms and rituals but resorted to the voice of innate knowledge, he would not be different from Wang Yangming in moral theory; however if he insisted on norms and rituals as a supplement to the peace of mind, he would create inconsistency in his moral theory, for the peace of mind or filial piety would not be judged only from within, but jointly by the mind and external rituals
suitable to situations. Nevertheless, Wang Fuzhi chose the risk of inconsistency and proposed the balance between the peace of mind and norms. He said,

   Name is good but mind cannot be peaceful, then one should not follow name. Mind is satisfactory but name is not good, one should not listen to his mind. (CSQS 2-319)

Name was norms and rituals. For example, Confucius proposed the rectification of names in governance, and identified names as the compliance with ritual propriety. Thus, to achieve humanity lay in the balance between these two ends, the peace of mind and the propriety of rituals. This brought the topic to the relations among humanity, righteousness and ritual propriety in Confucianism.

   Humanity was the satisfaction of mind and it was manifested as love. Righteousness was the proper realization of humanity in situations. Ritual propriety was the due measure of an activity in social practice. If a person truly wanted to achieve humanity, he must carefully consider and balance of these three. Wang Fuzhi explained,

   The manifestation of humanity is love. No love could be more superior than loving one’s parents. Truly loving one’s parents is lofty, and it should not harm the practice of humanity in principle. However, if one takes love as humanity, one may harm humanity despite his love. In consideration of this problem, if one desires to love and avoids harm to humanity, without following righteousness it would be impossible. To love one’s parents to the utmost, it should not be improper. However, one may harm his parents through his love. Following and serving one’s parents, and not harming them, it is impossible without complying with ritual propriety. (CSQS 2-315)

This passage could be regarded as a concrete explanation of the balance between name and the peace of mind through discussing the relations among humanity, righteousness and ritual propriety. Wang’s theme was that the peace of mind as love and ritual propriety as names were in a relationship of mutual complement and restraint. That is, on the one hand, ritual propriety as external rules must be founded on the peace of mind. On the other hand, ritual propriety acted as the manifestation of humanity and righteousness, and thus avoided their theoretical pure talk and the deviation of humanity into selfish desires. In this way, Wang Fuzhi thought he corrected the
subjective consequence generated by Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge through emphasizing the manifestation of ritual propriety.

4.1.3 Humanity as the Content of Human Nature

From the identity of Heaven and humanity and the statement that “what Heaven endows is human nature”, it could be inferred that Wang Fuzhi would endorse the proposition that humanity was the core of human nature. In fact, Wang Fuzhi did think that humanity as the principle of life became human nature when a person was born. He said,

Humanity is the principle of producing the myriad things. For this reason, after things being produced, each of them consolidates it as nature, and follows it all the life. (CSQS 12-157)

As a result, human nature became the microcosm of Heaven, and man would be able to unite with Heaven through fulfilling his nature. Wang elaborated,

To trace the origin of humanity, righteousness, centrality and uprightness, they all are contained in the undifferentiated Great Harmony originally, and became nature after man received them. Therefore the following of one’s nature is the Way of man. (CSQS 12-182)

Here, Wang Fuzhi connected Heaven and human nature with humanity or the principle of life. Following one’s nature would comply with humanity or the principle of life, and thus accomplish the Way of man and the assistance of Heaven. This idea was critical for it distinguished Wang Fuzhi’s system from his predecessors’. In Wang’s regard, now that humanity and nature were innate in the human mind, the critical approach for self-cultivation would not lie in the investigation of external things but in the perfection of one’s inner virtue, the fulfillment of one’s nature or mind. Through exhausting one’s mind or fulfilling one’s nature, one would truly practice humanity and purify one’s mind from selfish and excessive desires. As a result, Wang Fuzhi appreciated more the crucial role of nature and mind in self-improvement—to establish the root (innate knowledge) before accumulating knowledge, and tacitly followed the approach of Lu Jiuyuan’s approach although he criticized the latter relentlessly.
4.1.4 Humanity as the Love Complying with Principle

Connecting to humanity as the principle of life, Wang Fuzhi further specified humanity as the principle of love, for to sustain a life was actually an action of love. Among the actions of love, Wang Fuzhi insisted one’s love of parents be the crucial and natural manifestation of the principle of life/love. He said,

Only because man does not neglect his principle of life mindlessly, but contains it as humanity, does loving parents give rise firstly when humanity manifests itself as knowledge and ability. (CSQS 13-676)

Based on this, Wang Fuzhi regarded the love of parents as one’s natural and instinctive love arising from heavenly principle (the principle of life). This love was the true expression of humanity, but Wang Fuzhi did not identify it as humanity. In his regard, love belonged to feeling, related to qi; while humanity belonged to nature, related to principle. He argued,

Love is not yet humanity; it is the principle of love that is humanity…love is feeling, while the principle of love is nature. (CSQS 6-1060)

One might wonder what kind of relation between love and humanity Wang Fuzhi would embrace if he distinguished them in terms of the difference between nature and feelings. Through this distinction, he would fall into inconsistency from the perspective of qi-monism. As is known, principle as the principle of qi must demonstrate itself in the activity of qi, so the principle of love must show itself through love (the activity of qi or feelings). Otherwise, an abstract principle would be meaningless. In order to avoid a baseless humanity, Wang Fuzhi redefined humanity as the love complying with principle or reasonable love. He said,

Master Zhu Xi says, humanity is the principle of love. But this sentence can be understood reversely. In order to show the content of humanity, it is said humanity is the principle of love. If we distinguish nature from feeling, humanity from not-humanity, it should be said, humanity is reasonable love. (CSQS 6-1060)

In this quotation, Wang Fuzhi indicated that when talking about humanity, the principle of love and the love complying with principle were just two definitions of love from different perspectives. That is, in terms of its content, humanity was the principle of love; in terms of
practice, humanity was the reasonable love or love complying with principle. However, when humanity was defined as the love complying with principle, it implied that excessive love would be excluded from the expression of humanity. This would contradict with Wang Fuzhi’s claim that humanity was the principle of love.

Wang Fuzhi used an example to illustrate humanity as the love complying with principle. He said,

Feeling arises from interaction, and is not the right course of nature. Therefore in regard to common people, one’s love of his younger brother is not yet humanity. To reach the realm of humanity, one must stand on the point as Shun stood: Shun’s younger brother Xiang planned to kill Shun every day, but Shun still loved him without demur, and shared his worry and happiness without pretentiousness....For a common person’s love of his younger brother can be called love only, but Shun’s love of Xiang really fulfilled the principle of qi that they both shared from their parents. (CSQS 6-1061)

Here, Wang openly denied the affective feeling of ordinary people as humanity or the right expression of nature. On the contrary, he chose the extreme case, Shun’s love of his younger brother as the expression of nature or humanity. In his regard, ordinary people loved their brothers just because of the natural interaction of their shared qi, but did not realize why they should do so. Shun’s love was humanity because he realized the shared qi and the principle of life with Xiang, and thus his love would not be influenced by selfish or personal interest or emotion. Humanity should transcend personal concern, even life and death, and meet the principle of qi that one shared with his brothers. Apparently Wang’s arguments were not plausible. If only Shun’s love could be regarded as humanity, then there would be no humanity in the world, for most people did not meet that standard. With Shun’s love as standard, it also went against his idea to see humanity as the principle of love. That is, the love of most people in the world would have no principle; and humanity as the principle of love would reside nowhere.

Wang Fuzhi’s inconsistency originated from his attempt to subsume feelings under nature as he classified love as feeling and humanity as the principle of love and nature. This attempt served to support his doctrine of moral cultivation—one cultivated oneself through following one’s nature or Confucian moral principle. That is, using humanity (the principle of love) to love, one would
be able to fulfill one’s nature. This was called “to regulate one’s feelings with nature/yi xing qi qing 以性節情.” If one truly accomplished this, one’s nature would be one with one’s feelings, and nature became the nature of feelings. This was called “to make nature as the nature of feelings/ xing qi qing 性其情.” (CSQS 6-637) However, in this way, he separated nature from feelings, specifically, the principle of love from love, and fell into dualism.

4.1.5 Humanity as Filial Piety and Fraternal Affection

As the reasonable love or the love complying with principle, humanity was identical with filial piety and fraternal love in Wang Fuzhi’s discourse. First, Wang indicated that filial piety and fraternal love as innate abilities were the manifestations of humanity. He stated,

As a child, one knows to love one’s parents; when becoming older, one knows to respect one’s elder brothers. These abilities are not instructed or ordered, but one realizes and does them instinctively. From these abilities, humanity and righteousness are manifested. (CSQS 8-479)

As the quotation suggests, filial piety and fraternal affection were human abilities that arise instinctively, and were the manifestation of humanity and righteousness. They were humanity because they automatically met the principle that the same qi interacted accordingly in terms of the fact that one was born from his parents and shared the same qi with his brothers. Obviously Wang Fuzhi was inconsistent here with his previous statement that ordinary people’s love of their brothers was not humanity and humanity was only reasonable love, for if filial piety and fraternal love were instinctive, they would not be reasonable, given his distinction between “instinctive” and “reasonable”.

Wang further insisted that filial piety and fraternal love were not only the manifestations of humanity, but also their substance and core. He argued,

From my love of parents, I know humanity is innate in my nature; from my respect of elders, I know righteousness is innate in my mind. Why? Because loving one’s parents is the substance of humanity, and respecting elders is the substance of righteousness. (CSQS 6-1125)
As a result, filial piety and fraternal love were both the substance and manifestations of humanity. Based on this, Wang Fuzhi replaced humanity with filial piety and fraternal love and regarded these two as the essence of all moral behaviors and virtues. Otherwise, one’s moral behaviors would fall into pretentiousness. He elaborated,

Serving one’s parents is the essence of humanity, obeying one’s elder brother is the essence of righteousness. Knowing these two is the essence of wisdom, making these two elegantly is the essence of ritual propriety, taking delight in these two is the essence of music. If one does not sincerely do his best, then his behavior will become meaningless although he may regard love as humanity, respect as righteousness, discerning as wisdom, ceremony as ritual propriety, skillful in sound and pace as music. Meaninglessness then has nothing to do with oneself, and cannot be one’s virtue in mind. (CSQS 6-1006)

This passage indicated that filial piety and fraternal love ran through all Confucian virtues—humanity, righteousness, ritual propriety and music. That is, all Confucian principles and virtues were originated and developed from these two innate abilities. Furthermore, he extended filial piety to the realm of Heaven and earth and that of the myriad things and claimed,

Filial piety is the principle of life of Heaven and earth, and is what human beings and living creatures receive commonly. From it, we can know the virtue of mind, and the universality of nature.” (CSQS 8-483)

In this way, Wang Fuzhi elevated filial piety and fraternal love to the level of heavenly principle or the principle of life, and thereby completed his justification of Confucian doctrine, “filial piety and fraternal love are the basis to achieve humanity.”

4.2 Humanity, Righteousness and Mind

Through the definition of humanity, it is evident that humanity has a close relation with mind. It takes mind as its residence, and manifests as the peace of mind. However, this does not mean that humanity and mind are identical. To make this point clear, it is necessary to explore the origin and structure of mind and its relations with other virtues.
4.2.1 The Origin and Structure of Mind

According to Wang Fuzhi, mind was originated from the fine qi of yin, yang and Five Elements. This fine qi naturally had the ability to sense and perceive. Thus mind from its beginning had the power to perceive and sense. (CSQS 6-1111) More specifically, Wang Fuzhi indicated the perceptive power of mind was the incipient movement of the harmonious qi in the Great Void (Heaven). He said,

Regarding what makes mind as mind, the sun gets it so as to give off light, the thunder receives it so as to produce sound, and it is the subtle incipience of the rise and fall of the fermenting qi in the Great Void.(CSQS 12-147)

Hence, it was evident that the perception of mind shared the same origin and mechanism with the sun and thunder which gave off light and sound. This mechanism was the rise and fall of the subtle qi—the interaction of yin and yang. In this way, Wang Fuzhi presented readers a material explanation of human mind.

As qi had principle, Wang further insisted that mind was formed according to principle, and in turn could contain principle. He said,

From the aspect of origin, through transformation Heaven creates mind according to principle. From the aspect of end, man receives what Heaven endows, and mind contains principle. (CSQS 6-1112)

Thus, mind was formed with the fine qi according to principle. This formation dictated two facts or functions of mind: with its perceptive power, it could understand principle (nature); with its material volume, it had principle (nature), could contain principle (nature) but also give rise to feelings and desires. Therefore, mind subsumed under itself nature and feelings, principle and perception.35 When a person needed to unfold his nature or seek for principle, he should look for it in his own mind instead of external objects and events.

35 This was Zhang Zai’s idea that mind subsumes under itself nature and feelings/心統性情, which was inherited by Zhu Xi and Wang Fuzhi.
Based on the premise that mind subsumed under itself nature and feelings, principle and perception, Wang Fuzhi followed Zhang Zai to propose a bifurcated doctrine of mind, and stated,

Master Zhang said, “To unite nature and perception, there comes mind.” Nature is the mind of the Way/daoxin 道心; perception is the mind of man/renxin 人心. The union of the mind of man and the mind of the Way is regarded as mind. Thus it is clear again that “mind is principle” is not acceptable. (CSQS 6-1112)

In this way, Wang Fuzhi redefined mind as the union of perception and nature or that of the mind of man and the mind of the Way. From the aspect of perception, it was a perceiver and container of principles and nature; from the aspect of nature, it was identical with nature or principle.

However, this bifurcated definition of mind had a problem—Wang Fuzhi had to explain why the mind of man (perception) could not perceive the mind of the Way (nature) spontaneously, now that nature was the principle of mind. Much worse was that Wang Fuzhi openly admitted the separation of nature from perception, which showed that this bifurcated mind was nothing more than a random juxtaposition of two things. Let’s look at his following remarks.

The mind of man refers only to the mind of perception and movement, is indeed the residence of nature and has its body even without nature. Thus, it is called the mind of the Way when nature is there; and it is the mind of man when nature leaves it. (CSQS 6-1086)

This passage shows that the mind of man is nothing but the container of nature (the mind of the Way) and has no essential relation with nature. Thus, it can be inferred that Wang’s concept of mind consists of three dimensions: the qi forming it and its perceptive power, the principle of this qi, and nature (the general principle). The principle of the qi forming the mind was different from nature; otherwise, there would be no such bifurcated structure of mind. Obviously, this structure of mind contradicted with both his qi-monism and his claim that nature was the principle of mind. Worse was that it would disclose that “human nature” was not innate to man, but obtained after birth, and thus thwart Wang’s promotion of moral cultivation through reflecting on human nature.

In order to solve this inconsistency, Wang Fuzhi further explained the mind of the Way and the mind of man from the relation of substance and function, and stated, “From the perspective of
substance, the mind cannot be divided as two indeed; yet from the perspective of function, the two cannot be regarded as one simply. (CSQS 6-1082) Unfortunately, Wang did not provide a clear description of “substance” and “function” in these sentences.

One might wonder why Wang Fuzhi made such an inconsistent distinction between the mind of man and the mind of the Way. This could be explained from the problems he intended to solve. Wang first attempted to justify Confucian principles cosmologically and ontologically, so he could not accept the idea that nature or moral principles were obtained through human perception, while he must insist that nature was endowed from Heaven. He again found the negative consequence that the unity of or non-distinction between the mind of man and the mind of the Way in Wang Yangming School resulted. If the mind of man and the mind of the Way were one, people would mistake the mind of man as the mind of the Way, and finally would regard human desires and feelings as the mind of the Way or human nature. Then it would disintegrate moral principles, which had been proven in the spread of Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge. For these reasons, Wang Fuzhi chose a new way—the bifurcated definition of mind. But in doing so, he could not make his arguments consistent.

Let’s follow Wang Fuzhi and see what he wanted to do with this bifurcated definition. His aim was to justify humanity (nature) as heavenly endowed and because of this, man ought to realize it with their intelligence and perception. Because nature as the mind of the Way and the principle was purely good, it stood as a right guide for human effort. Because perception as the mind of man was separated from nature, then students would not be able to confuse it with the mind of the Way or human nature, but use the latter as their guide and avoid being misled by desires. His discussion on the relationship between the content of mind and the function of mind confirmed this idea. He stated,

Humanity and righteousness are good; and they are the virtues of nature. Mind contains nature and acts according to it, therefore, it is called the mind of righteousness and humanity. Humanity and righteousness are the substance of mind, just as Heaven has *yin* and *yang*. Perception and action are the function or mechanism of mind, just as Heaven has the transformation of *yin* and *yang*. If forsaking the substance and discussing the functions of mind only, then for this intelligent organ of perception and action, being put aside, it
definitely is dissolute and immoral; even being pursued, it can only exhaust its function of attack and obtainment, love and dislike. (CSQS 6-893)

Here, Wang Fuzhi distinguished the mind of humanity and righteousness from perception, and clearly indicated that humanity and righteousness were the virtues of nature, the content and guide of the perceptive mind. Without humanity and righteousness as content, the perceptive mind was nothing but a tool, susceptible to be good or bad. Thus, what a person should do to his mind did not consisted mainly in sharpening his perceptive ability, but in the perseverance of the mind of the Way or humanity and righteousness. In this way, Wang changed the focus from discussing mind in general to cultivating the mind of the Way. Therefore, when he was talking about fully unfolding or preserving one’s mind, or regaining one’s lost mind, he referred to the mind of the Way or the mind of humanity and righteousness only.

4.2.2 Rectifying Mind/zheng xin 正心 and Making Intention Sincere/cheng yi 誠意

The structure of human mind showed the fact that the perceptive mind was not always in accordance with nature or principle. As a result, the action of mind would deviate from principle and resulted in selfish desires or unfavorable consequences. This was demonstrated in Wang Fuzhi’s claim, “Under Heaven there is no principle outside of mind, but man has mind or intention deviating from principle.” (CSQS 7-380) Wang’s meaning was that all principles were contained in mind originally, but mind (the mind of man) could not comply with them perfectly. The claim, “there is no principle outside of mind” also meant that nature resided in mind and summarized all principles in the world, for nature was originally the universal principle of yin-yang alteration. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi shared Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming’s view that one should reflect one’s innate principle in the mind rather than seek principle from outside. With regard to “man has the mind not following principle”, Wang Fuzhi insisted that mind was external to nature and was not always complying with it. Therefore, mind and nature were analogous to a container and its content on the one hand, and water and its course on the other hand. Wang Fuzhi’s aim was to justify nature as the guide of mind in order to construct his moral theory—nature or Confucian principles were innate and men should comply with them through learning process and consciously attending to them.
According to Wang’s classification, the mind of the Way was nature and principle, and was always good; while the mind of man gave rise to intentions, feelings and desires, which were potential to be bad. Hence, the crucial approach to avoid badness was that mind issued its activities according to nature or principle. He stated,

Intention/yi 意 arises from the spiritual intelligence, not from what mind preserves and relies on. The spiritual intelligence is unpredictable. In order to avoid its unpredictability, it is necessary to set up an embankment for it through following what mind preserves and relies on. (CSQS 13-633)

“The spiritual intelligence” referred to the mind of man or perception; “what mind preserved and relied on” was the mind of the Way or nature. Perception might change according to its interaction with external things and situations, while nature maintained the same always. Thus, Wang asked students to regulate spiritual intelligence with nature. This was his doctrine of rectifying the mind/zheng xin 正心—to rectify the mind of man with the mind of the Way and make human mind always comply with principle or nature.

In regard to rectifying mind, Wang first indicated that if one’s mind was not rectified, it was because there was no principle/nature as its master. (CSQS 7-70) As for how could one make mind take principle as its master? Wang replied, “To rectify one’s mind lies in the maintenance of one’s will/zhi 志.” (CSQS 6-415) Then what was will/zhi 志, and what was its relation to mind and nature?

Wang thought will/zhi 志 as nature, or the determination to take nature as one’s goal. He said,

When nature is endowed, it arises together with five senses and body and acts as their master, always staying in human mind. Those who accomplish great things will take it as their will. (CSQS 6-400)

Here Wang took nature as will and the master of human body, and claimed it always existed in human mind. But Wang did not explain why nature, the master of body, could not make body follow its order automatically, but had to depend on body to understand nature and force itself to comply with it. After this switch, Wang directly claimed that will was the master of human body
and mind. He said, “Therefore, it is said mind is the master of body, but it is will that governs seeing, hearing, speaking and action.” (CSQS 6-401)

As nature manifested as the Way/dao and righteousness, Wang also regarded will as the Way and righteousness or the determination to take the Way and righteousness as one’s goal. He argued,

Taking righteousness and the Way as mind is Mencius’ will/zhì 志. To preserve one’s will is to preserve them. (CSQS 6-421)

In short, whatever nature, will, the Way and righteousness were, Wang’s aim was to discipline human perception (the mind of man) with nature (principle). The maintenance of will was nothing but an alternative of “complying with nature consciously”. This was verified in his following arguments.

Before the issuance of ideas/intentions….one keeps preserving and sustaining his will, sets up an invincible fortress with the principle of loving good and detesting bad, and governs his qi with it and waits the arrival of things and events. Then the patterns and principles for cultivating personality, regulating family, governing state and putting the world in order all are ready in the realm beyond seeing and hearing. This is the substance of mind at the interaction of body and idea/intention; and this is the real achievement of rectification of mind. (CSQS 6-401)

In this passage, Wang ran a circle and returned to rectifying mind with principle/nature. If one always kept aware of principle in his mind and used it as a standard, one would be full of the patterns and principles of all social affairs, and deal with them properly and without fear of the deviation of ideas and behaviors. Hence, he continued,

If one wants to rectify one’s mind, one should employ one mind [the mind of the Way] as a bright mirror or standard, and watch out for one’s ideas with this standard. Once ideas arise, one will know their gains and losses. Then which idea can cheat this bright mirror? …If one wants to rectify one’s mind, one should use one truth as master, and command all ideas to obey its order. Once ideas arise, they cannot go beyond its scope. Then which idea can cheat this master? (CSQS 13-634)
At this point, Wang again resorted to his old formula—to rectify the mind of man with the mind of the Way. This was why he said, “Employ one mind as bright mirror” and “use one truth as master”. In his regard, if a person sincerely abided by the mind of the Way (nature), he would be able to rectify his mind and issue his ideas properly without causing misbehavior.

Based on the premise that to rectify mind was to rectify the mind of man with the mind of the Way, Wang Fuzhi criticized Zhu Xi who regarded rectifying mind as making the perceptive mind clear and void. (CSQS 6-420) In Wang’s regard, rectifying mind meant to make mind comply with nature consciously, not to make mind void, intelligent and bright, for the mind of man or spiritual intelligence was always void, intelligent and bright. In order to make mind comply with nature, the mind of man must expect, hold and attach to principles and engage in what one was doing. It was through these attachments and engagement that the mind of man was rectified and therefore was able to avoid misbehavior.

If one understands Wang’s real purpose, one will be able to know the right meaning and method of rectifying mind in his discourse. That is, using perception (the mind of man) to seek and understand nature (the mind of the Way) internally, a process of self-reflection independent of seeing and hearing. After one accomplished this mission, one would be able to take nature as the guide of perception spontaneously and keep oneself immune from any disturbance or deviation of ideas, desires and external things.

As aforesaid, rectifying mind aimed to make one’s intentions sincere, i.e., sincerely following principle. This brought to the issue how to make intention sincere. As intentions arose from spiritual intelligence while spiritual intelligence might disobey nature when it acted, so intentions thus generated might not follow nature either. This was why one needed make one’s intentions sincere.

In an effort to do so, first, Wang Fuzhi indicated the necessity of making intention sincere. In his regard, mind was manifested and knowable while intention was spontaneous, secretive and unpredictable, and a whimsical idea/intention might ruin a rectified mind. (CSQS 13-633-634) Therefore to rectify one’s mind, one also needed to make one’s intention sincere. He continued,
What mind contains is good without badness. After the arising of intentions, badness also appears sometime and subverts the disciplined/moral mind, so results in self-deception. (CSQS 6-415)

“What mind contains” was nature, so it was good without badness. But intentions arose from the mind of man and might be bad or might go astray, this was why they might overthrow the rectified mind and caused one to be self-deceived.

Second, based on the characteristics of intentions, Wang Fuzhi proposed to guide intentions with the rectified mind so as to make them sincere and compliant with principle. He argued,

The Great Learning classifies mind and intention as static and active respectively, and lists each of them as a category...What it takes as master is the static principle which mind uses to correct intentions; what it takes as guest is the active intentions which interact with things and creates difference. So it establishes mind as master, uses the right principle of mind to regulate intentions, brings intentions under the control of mind, and prevents the subversion of mind by the suddenly-rising bad initiation. (CSQS 6-995)

Here, Wang Fuzhi distinguished mind from intentions in terms of static and active. As is known, the mind of the Way was static while the mind of man was active. So it was evident that the mind here was the mind of the Way or nature. Hence, Wang’s view should be like this: to use the rectified mind to regulate intentions and prevent the subversion of mind by intentions, while the rectified mind was achieved by complying with nature (principle). In short, it was to regulate intentions and their issuance with nature.

Wang further called the application of rectified mind upon intentions as extending the goodness of mind to intentions. He said,

With regard to the rectification of mind, it depends on the perseverance of will (nature). Therefore it is known that it always resides inside, being good without bad. Only those who keep their intentions sincere can expand the goodness of their mind, infuse it to the acting intentions and make them true, and then their preserved mind will circulate all around without deflated. (CSQS 6-415)
From this passage, it was evident that the rectified mind was fully in concordance with will and nature and thus was always good. To make one’s intentions sincere, one should earnestly expand the goodness of mind to intentions and make intentions full of goodness. Then, one’s intentions would always match with principle and be sincere. Once mind being rectified and intentions being made sincere, one would be able to abide by nature and principle perfectly, and achieve a sagely personality.

Furthermore, Wang Fuzhi put rectifying mind and making intentions sincere into a dialectical relation. On the one hand, one must rectify his mind in order to make intentions sincere. On the other hand, making intentions sincere again served for the rectification of mind. Wang argued,

> When people in ancient times wanted to rectify their minds, they must keep good sincerely at the point of the issuance of intentions and action, and prevent any bad intention to subvert their minds. (CSQS 7-48)

Once one’s intentions were sincere, the sincere intentions would help to maintain the rectified mind. So Wang concluded,

> After making my intentions sincere, the initiation of my acts and intentions will always follow my will and be good completely, and not be influenced by badness, thus mind will be always rectified. (CSQS 7-49)

In conclusion, Wang Fuzhi embraced the view that using nature or innate principle to purify one’s perceptive mind and make it rectified, and then applying the rectified mind to the issuance of intentions. In essence, it was still to regulate the mind of man with nature. However, nature was static and unchanged, in order to deal with the changeability of intentions, one must keep watching out of the issuance of intentions and sincerely following nature. Through this, one might make one’s intentions always sincere.

### 4.2.3 Preserving and Fully Unfolding One’s Mind, the Recovering of the Lost Mind

The twofold structure of mind led to the necessity of fully unfolding mind/ Jinxin 盡心. Although the meaning of this term in the Mencius was to grasp the innate moral principle in the mind,
Wang Fuzhi mainly interpreted it as using the mind of the Way as a guide to make full use of the mind of man or perception. He said,

As to human mind, the power of its intelligence and perception is boundless originally. No tiny thing it cannot penetrate, and no distant place it cannot reach. The students pursuing sageliness must exploit its abilities so as not to be blind to principle. (CSQS 8-823)

Here, Wang focused mainly on intelligence, wondered about its marvelous ability and insisted on making full use of it in order to understand principle. However, with regard to how to do it, he proposed to use nature as its guide to understand various patterns and deal with everyday events. He said,

To fully unfold one’s mind is not to lead mind to a boundless place through exhausting one’s wisdom and using up one’s thinking power. It is that, being not eclipsed by one’s feelings nor limited by one’s qi, one substantially knows the perfect goodness within, which gives rise to spiritual intelligence and makes it contain principles and respond to things and events. (CSQS 8-823)

“The perfect goodness” referred to the nature or principle in mind. In Wang Fuzhi’s understanding, it was through containing and complying with nature that mind gave rise to its spiritual intelligence and responded events properly. In return, with its proper use of intelligence, one would know clearly human nature and abide by principle.

Connecting with his idea of fully unfolding one’s mind, Wang Fuzhi proposed “preserving mind/存心”. From Wang’s description of preserving mind, it was to hold nature or principle persistently in one’s mind. He stated,

With regard to the spiritual intelligence of mind, it acts when interacting with external things, and thus may drift away with things, so it will go against to my innate principle of life. Therefore, it is necessary to preserve one’s mind, keep its intelligence from straying, and concentrate on tranquility. To govern mind, there is no fixed method, yet what acts as master of this mind is nature. (CSQS 8-823)
This quotation indicated that preserving mind was nothing but preserving nature or the principle of life so that one could prevent one’s intelligence from going astray and drifting away with things.

After making it clear what is preserved, Wang Fuzhi criticizes Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178-1235) who interpreted preserving mind as preserving cognitive mind or perceptive power. Wang contended,

Mind is what subsumes nature and feeling, and the goodness of human nature is all concentrated here...Xishan (Zhen Dexiu) seemed to regard mind as the bright, perceptive mind, and take preserving mind as keeping it awake, not sleepy. (CSQS 6-1022)

Here, Wang Fuzhi disclosed his true intention—to regard nature as the true mind while spiritual intelligence as only a tool of nature. To preserve mind was to preserve the mind of the Way or nature, not to preserve the intelligence. Therefore, when Wang Fuzhi said “to make full use of spiritual intelligence”, it was not to improve one’s intelligent ability but to use it to know and comply with nature perfectly. It was only on knowing and complying with nature that the improvement of intelligence was recommendable.

Based on the premise that preserving mind was to preserve nature or principle, Wang Fuzhi further indicated preserving mind was to preserve humanity, for nature or principle was identical with humanity. He argued,

What is preserved is humanity. It is to preserve what humanity manifests on events and patterns, and what one has obtained through learning, devoting, questioning, and thinking on humanity. (CSQS 6-883)

Then he supported this view through reinterpreting Confucius’ words, and said,

When Confucius said, “if you grasp, it will be there”, he refers to the existence of humanity and righteousness if you grasp the mind of humanity and righteousness. When he said, “it will disappear when you give it up”, he refers to the loss of humanity and righteousness when you give up the mind of humanity and righteousness. (CSQS 6-1077)
Through replacing nature with humanity and righteousness in preserving one’s mind, Wang Fuzhi tried to bring the abstract talk of nature to moral practice of humanity and righteousness. But as to how nature or innate principle manifested itself on external humane and righteous behavior, Wang Fuzhi did not give clear explanation. Usually, he just made a quick transfer from nature to humanity and righteousness through identifying them as one thing or through insisting that one would be humane and righteous if one behaved according to nature. For example, when he talked about how to preserve mind in practice, he just described it from the aspect that what one should not do, but did not tell what one should do. He said,

To preserve mind lies in seeing clearly heavenly principle, social norms, human relations, and details of things. On the one hand, one will not let oneself fall into the snare of self-interest and desires, like a deer’s debauchery, a tiger’s ferociousness, and a wolf’s greed. On the other hand, one will not preserve a void and bright mind, and grasp and protect it firmly, like a crane’s vigilance, a parrot’s cleverness, and the satisfied ox and pig’s indifference to seeking food. (CSQS 6-1023)

In this passage, Wang asked students to preserve their mind so that they could see heavenly principles that manifested in human affairs. But one might further ask how? If one was endowed with nature or heavenly principle in mind, what was the need to find it among external things and events? If one was endowed with it, why could one not know it spontaneously but need to seek and understand it? Moreover, Wang Fuzhi required students to avoid both extremes—the indulgence of desires and the mistake to regard perceptive mind as the true mind. But without knowing nature in advance, how could one not regard the perceptive mind as the true mind? Without knowing a standard in advance, how could one maintain desires in due measure? Thus, following Wang Fuzhi’s prescription, students might be at a loss and did not know what to do. Wang’s doctrine of preserving mind thus was no less abstract and ungraspable than Zhu Xi’s preserving heavenly principle.

Opposite to preserving one’s mind was losing one’s mind/放心. As the mind being preserved was nature or humanity, Wang Fuzhi thought that the mind being lost was nature or humanity too. He said,
“Mind is not there”, this is what Mencius called the state that one has lost one’s mind. Does “the mind being lost” refer to one’s void and bright mind? No, it refers to the state that one’s mind of humanity and righteousness has been lost. (CSQS 6-422)

The mind that has been lost is called “the lost mind”; if the mind is preserved, what is preserved is humanity indeed. (CSQS 6-1084)

At this point, it was evident that the “mind” in “preserving mind” and “losing mind” all referred to nature or the mind of the Way actually rather than the mind of man or intelligence, for the mind of humanity and righteousness was just an alternative term for the mind of the Way or nature. However, one might doubt how one could lose his nature or humanity innate to him? To explain this, Wang Fuzhi resorted to the misleading of desires and profit. He argued,

This mind is conscience, being capable of knowing and acting without learning and thinking. It can stay together with things peacefully and deal with events properly. When it activates and begins to interact with things, it desires what is desirable and gets fulfilled, then it may desire what is undesirable and try to get fulfilled too; it does what is feasible and gets rewarded, and then it may do what is infeasible and try to gain the profit too. As a result, this mind drifts away and does not pay attention to its origin. What lead it astray are profit and desires. (CSQS 8-713)

Here, Wang insisted that one lost humanity or conscience because of the deviation of desires and interests. But he still could not answer how one could lose humanity or conscience innate to him? Why could the innate abilities of ears and eyes not be affected by one’s desires and profit? Wang Fuzhi again fell in a strait generated by his bifurcated structure of mind.

Then in order to avoid the loss of mind, one’s effort should focus on purify one’s mind from being misled by desires and profit, and more importantly, always adhere to nature and principle as the guide of one’s behavior. Regarding the relationship between principle and desires, we will discuss it in the section on nature (see 4.3). Regarding the purification of mind, it was to purify the mind of man from selfish desires, and fill it with humanity. On this point, Wang Fuzhi criticized both Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi for misinterpreting the meaning of the lost mind, and as a result, they did not know how to seek the lost mind. Wang said,
Master Cheng said “once sleepy or faint, one has already lost one’s mind.” Master Zhu said, “Refraining this mind and not allowing it to accommodate anything.” From my point of view, both have faults. To seek the lost mind is to seek humanity…. “The state that one loses one’s mind” is just that one loses the content of one’s mind—humanity, so heavenly principle is eclipsed because of the obstruction of selfish desires and intentions. Once heavenly principle appears, the mind will be bright and sincere, contains all things, and how can it not accommodate one thing? ...Mencius was busy in urging people to seek humanity, but Cheng and Zhu provided us a void, dark realm which was there without seeking. How strange. This is what I dare not to follow. (CSQS 6-1082)

From Wang’s point of view, neither Cheng Yi nor Zhu Xi knew that the lost mind referred to the lost humanity or the eclipsed conscience or nature in human mind. They just regarded the lost mind as the perceptive mind deviating from the right course or being occupied with desires, so they asked students to keep the perceptive mind attentive to the right principle or to evacuate it. But Wang Fuzhi insisted the lost mind as the mind of the Way or humanity. To seek the lost mind was to recover humanity or to call back one’s conscience. One need not evacuate one’s mind or maintain it empty.

Furthermore, Wang Fuzhi pointed out the reason that Zhu Xi interpreted the lost mind as the loss of perceptive mind, and mixed the mind of humanity with the perceptive mind. In Wang’s explanation, Zhu Xi did not make a distinction between the mind of man and the mind of the Way, for Zhu feared that would lead student to think there were two minds in human body. But Wang Fuzhi argued, without distinguishing these two minds, Zhu would lose more, for that would introduce Buddhist ideas into Confucianism and therefore lose the core of Confucianism—to seek humanity. Wang continued,

Only after realizing this, can one know that the mind being lost and sought is humanity. Seeking the lost mind then is to seek humanity with this mind of spiritual intelligence. Humanity is the substance of the mind of spiritual intelligence. After being abandoned, humanity leaves but the mind of spiritual intelligence is still there, and then it is to use this mind of spiritual intelligence to seek the mind of humanity. From the point of substance, mind cannot be divided into two; from the point of function, the two cannot be regarded as one simply. But, Master Zhu said, “Not using one mind to seek the other, since the seeker
is already the lost mind.” I do not see his difference from the Buddhist ideas—without function or substance, the initiated idea at the very beginning already reached the Bodhi, and from the ground the outcome or fruit has been produced. (CSQS 6-1082)

From this passage, it was obvious that Wang Fuzhi consistently adhered to his purpose---to promote humanity and apply it to human activities. He regarded humanity as the essence of Heaven, human nature and kingly governance, and could not tolerate any deviation from the promotion of humanity. Following Zhu Xi’s interpretation of the perceptive mind as the lost mind, nature or humanity would be external to human mind, and thus would consequently shake the foundation of Confucianism—the seeking of humanity and promotion of the way of human beings.

4.2.4 Mind and Righteousness

The application of principle in concrete situations was called the Way/dao, but this application was determined by how mind grasped principle and applied it to various situations. The due measure that mind found to apply principle to particular situations was called righteousness. Thus, righteousness and the Way were two aspects of an action. Righteousness started from mind to decide the suitability of an action to the situation, while the Way lay beyond the mind to show mind’s compliance with principle. Hence, a clear understanding of righteousness would facilitate the practice of the Way.

Wang Fuzhi first stated that righteousness arose from the decision of mind, “Mind is where righteousness is established; bodily behavior is where righteousness is manifested; the Way/dao is the expansion of the mind; ritual propriety is the rule of the body.” (CSQS 5-590) Here, righteousness was regarded as the decision of mind, while the Way as the extension of mind. In this way, righteousness took the way as its mediation to bodily behaviors and ritual propriety—its completed application to concrete situations.

Moreover, Wang Fuzhi proposed to govern external things and events with righteousness and denied the influence of external things on the application of righteousness. He argued,

With regard to righteousness, one must consider it from his own standpoint first; then from the point of external things. If he does not lose himself to follow things, then the
righteousness to govern things will be established by him. Hence, it is said, righteousness is inner…Righteousness is inner, thus external things do not have leverage upon it. From mind one generates righteousness; and in turn, one keeps righteousness to follow one’s mind. (CSQS 5-111)

Here Wang openly indicated that righteousness was merely a matter of mind although it might take account of external things and situations and aim to govern them. Now that external things and situations played no influence upon righteousness, the question then went to the relationship between mind and righteousness—mind generated righteousness and righteousness must obey the order of mind. Hence, the voice of mind dictated righteousness, the external events and situations.

As is known, the voice of mind was conscience or innate knowledge. So, it could be said that conscience determined righteousness, and righteousness manifested the true feelings and experience of one’s conscience. The following remark confirmed this assumption. Wang said,

Righteousness may be classified into the general principle in the world and the fine meaning in the mind. To get the fine meaning is that one purely rewards, punishes, gives favor and shows authority in accordance with the joy, anger, love and hatred of his innate knowledge, and does not adulterate a bit of selfish interest. (CSQS 10-84)

Here, the innate knowledge became the master of one’s decision and behavior. Following the order of this innate knowledge was the critical approach to get the essence or fine meaning of righteousness. This showed that a persistent adherence to the voice of one’s conscience would guarantee the proper issuance of righteousness. This was utterly a matter of cultivating one’s mind. In this case, Wang Fuzhi obviously came closer to Lu Jiuyuan’s doctrine of mind. For Lu Jiuyuan strongly recommended students to behave according to their conscience without regard to anything else. According to Lu Jiuyuan, a person was born capable of filial piety and fraternal love just as the eyes and ears were born capable of hearing and seeing. These abilities were innate to all human beings, making them perform filial piety and fraternal love perfectly if they followed the voice of their innate knowledge. In contrast, all external norms and rules were nothing but the notes for the innate knowledge or mind. (Lu 1980: 399) Comparing Lu’s idea with Wang’s, it was evident that Wang endorsed Lu’s view—to behave and decide righteousness according to the voice of mind or innate knowledge, especially Wang’s idea that righteousness
was inner and was determined by mind solely. Thus, the popular view that Wang Fuzhi criticized Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming while he supported Zhu Xi is partial.\textsuperscript{36}

After having justified the internality of righteousness from the perspective of innate knowledge, Wang Fuzhi further extended the determination of mind to all social activities. This was understandable because all social activities had their feasibility to human beings and this feasibility could be regarded as righteousness and thus determined by the mind. Based on this, Wang insisted one should trust one’s own intuition and voice of mind rather than blindly listen to other people’s suggestion. He called this behavior “using one’s sole wisdom/\textit{yongdu} 用独”. Especially during the time of crisis or great events, one should decide timely with one’s own insight and avoid the loss of opportunity generated by misleading debate and consultation. In Wang’s regard, it was this ability to make decisions with one’s mind at the critical point that heroes and noblemen were distinguished from ordinary people. Why? Because norms and principles were generated by mind (conscience) and thus were narrower than the scope of mind, and mind could decide where norms and principles did not reach.

Based on the determinant role of mind and innate knowledge, the standard for one’s behaviors first should be the satisfaction of mind. If one mistook norms in society as righteousness, and practiced them without respect to the satisfaction of his mind, he would fall into hypocrisy sooner or later. However, this did not mean that norms or ritual propriety played no role in the practice of righteousness. First, except for sages, no one could always keep righteous through listening to the voice of one’s mind. In order to make the voice of one’s mind one with righteousness, one must rectify one’s mind with ritual propriety and make one’s mind full of principle. Second, it was only after one filled one’s mind full of principle and accomplished heavenly virtue that one could discern situations and use one’s mind properly. Therefore ritual propriety helped ordinary people to achieve righteousness.

The reason that ritual propriety could supplement righteousness was because it derived from righteousness. Wang stated,

\textsuperscript{36} Ji Wenfu (1962:109) and Chen Lai (2004:7) hold this view.
What does ritual propriety depend on? It depends on righteousness. What does righteousness depend on? It depends on humanity. Why must ritual propriety depend on righteousness? Ritual propriety is that a proper place is given to a thing according to its kind. Why must righteousness depend on humanity? Righteousness is that a person gets satisfied or peaceful according to his mind. (CSQS 2-315)

In another place, Wang Fuzhi indicated both righteousness and ritual propriety arose from mind.

Where does righteousness arise from? It is from the decision of mind; where does ritual propriety arise from? It is from the moderation/pattern of mind. (CSQS 5-130)

Now that ritual propriety was the pattern of the mind and the derivative of righteousness, it is not surprising that it could work back on righteousness and mind. With ritual propriety as a rule for the mind, Wang Fuzhi prescribed a means to rectify the mind on the one hand, and also avoided mistaking the whim and desires of the mind as innate knowledge, which happened in Wang Yangming School. In this way, inner and outer, mind and ritual propriety were united and worked on each other. That is, for ordinary people, one should comply with ritual propriety to show that one was righteous inside; and one also needed to creatively apply righteousness to real situations where ritual propriety did not cover. He stated,

The inner and the outer mutually enhance and support. After beautifying one’s appearance, one must also improve one’s inner motive, this is what requires a nobleman to act sincerely; in order to move one’s mind, it is necessary to beautify one’s appearance; this is what directs people under Heaven to grow their humane mind. (CSQS 10-422)

With the mutual support and enhancement, the noblemen would truly experience the feelings of filial piety; while the ordinary people would be embanked with the scope of ritual propriety and gradually give rise to the true love and feelings. Then, the social custom and morality would be maintained at a decent level. Hence, the role of ritual propriety could not be ignored in the process of cultivation of mind. Wang Fuzhi thus established a practicable doctrine on the cultivation of mind and the compliance with ritual propriety although the weight still lay on the innate knowledge of the mind.
4.3 Nature, Feeling and Habit

Humanity is the principle of life in mind, but the principle of life is called nature, thus it is logical to see humanity as the nature in mind. In this way, the expansion of humanity lies in the fulfillment of nature. However, this fulfillment must be carried out by the perceptive mind because nature and humanity are not active agents. Therefore, Zhang Zai claimed that (the perceptive) mind could fulfill nature but nature did not know how to regulate mind. (CSQS 12-124) Wang Fuzhi inherited this idea and stated,

The work to achieve sageliness lies in fulfilling one’s nature. Nature is received from Heaven, and is solidified in man, so the work to fulfill it depends on human efforts instead of Heaven. (CSQS 8-954)

From Zhang Zai and Wang Fuzhi’s remarks, it was obvious that they regarded nature as passive while the mind as active. After nature was endowed in man, it was man’s duty to use his mind to understand and fulfill it.

In order to justify the necessity of fulfilling nature with mind, Wang Fuzhi indicated that the intelligence of mind was the function of heavenly principle. He said,

As for the natural state of heavenly principle, it is called nature when it acts as the qi of Great Harmony to penetrate all things without exception; it is called mind when it gathers in man and is contained in the body, and gives rise to perception and ability on the basis of body. (CSQS 12-124)

From this statement, Wang Fuzhi seemed to go back to his qi-monism and regarded nature and mind as just the principle and qi of the Great Harmony respectively. Following this, mind should be able to understand and fulfill nature spontaneously just as qi and its principle were always unified and harmonious. If this were the conclusion, it would be again unnecessary to fulfill nature with human effort. Nevertheless, Wang Fuzhi did not realize this inconsistency, and went on proposing the dialectical relationship between the perceptive mind and nature—“from nature perception arises; so one use perception to know nature.” (CSQS 12-33)

However, due to its material component, mind also gave rise to feelings and desires which might not follow nature but subvert it. Hence in order to fulfill nature and extend humanity, it was
necessary to regulate one’s feelings and desires with nature. This regulation again relied on the active role of mind as demonstrated in human habit and choice. As a result, Wang Fuzhi suggested developing good habit through following nature and ritual propriety so as to fulfill one’s nature.

4.3.1 The Origin and Content of Nature

Wang Fuzhi followed the *Doctrine of the Mean* to regard Heaven as the origin of nature. He said,

The Way of man is that which Heaven endows man a part of its true and infallible heavenly way, and creates his inborn nature. This is what is meant to say “that which Heaven endows is called nature.” In this point, nature is from Heaven. (CSQS 7-105)

Here, Wang identified the Way of man as nature, insisting that it was a part of the Way of Heaven, and thus gave a cosmological explanation of human nature. Then he explained what the Way of Heaven was and how it was endowed to human beings. In his regard, the Way of Heaven was that by which Heaven used its true and infallible principle to guide *yin-yang* and the Five Elements to produce the myriad things. This process of production was the spiritual transformation or spirit. Hence, it could be said that nature was endowed to man through the transformation of spirit. He stated,

Spirit has its own principle. This principle is the Way/dao in Heaven, and becomes human nature when gathering in man. (CSQS 12-42)

Nature is the spirit that which gathers in man; the Way of Heaven is the transformation of spirit. (CSQS 12-255)

However, there was slight difference between these two quotations. The first maintained nature as the principle of spirit, whereas the second simply regarded nature as spirit. Although it was acceptable from the perspective of *qi*-monism that the existence of the principle of spirit must predicate the existence of spirit, there was still inconsistency between the part and the whole. Wang Fuzhi seemed not to notify this inconsistency, so he simply went on identifying nature and the Way of Heaven as spirit.
Heaven uses spirit as its Way; nature is the substance of spirit. Nature and the Way of Heaven are spirit, nothing else. (CSQS 12-95)

In this sentence, Wang Fuzhi demonstrated more inconsistencies. If spirit was the transformation of yin and yang, it should be the same as Heaven, and thus should not be regarded as the Way of Heaven. If nature was regarded as the body or substance of spirit, nature as principle should be different from spirit and spirit should not be principle only. Then, Wang’s conclusion, “Nature and the Way of Heaven are spirit, nothing else,” would be contradictory, for how could the principle of one thing be the same as that thing?

Generally, Wang Fuzhi regarded nature as principle or the principle of spirit. This was shown in his following remarks.

Nature is that principle is contained in human mind. (CSQS 12-198)

Generally, nature is the principle of life. (CSQS 12-128)

Following these definitions, nature should be the principle of life and thus could not exist beyond the productive qi or the transformation of yin and yang. Then nature should be the nature of human body and mind and should not exist beyond sense and movement. But Wang Fuzhi saw the issue differently. He said,

Sense and movement prosper when man is alive, and lose their power when man is dead. Nature is the spreading of heavenly principle. When qi gathers, it gathers in man; when qi dissolves, it returns to the Great Void. Just as Heaven keeps going despite the change of day and night, there is no life or death for nature. (CSQS 12-126)

This quotation shows Wang Fuzhi arbitrarily separated nature from sense and movement of human body, and regarded it as an independent principle beyond them. His purpose was to elevate nature to the eternity of heavenly principle and encourage his students to fulfill their nature, unite with Heaven and achieve immortal fame in morality. But in doing this, he again contradicted his definition of nature. On the one hand, nature was called nature because it was heavenly principle residing in man; if it was not in man, it was heavenly principle only and should not be called human nature. Hence, it was improbable to say that human nature had no life or death. On the other hand, human nature must have life and death along with the formation
and disintegration of human body. It appeared along with the rise of sense and movement, and disappeared when the human body stopped to function. How could Wang Fuzhi separate human nature from human body and activities?

Based on his separation of nature from sense and movement, Wang Fuzhi proposed a standard to distinguish human beings from birds and animals—the assumption that man knew both his nature and perception while birds and animals knew only their perception and movement. He argued,

Alas, if one takes perception and movement as one’s nature, and thinks it nothing more than this, then how can human beings differentiate themselves from birds and beasts? For what is nature? It is the principle of life, the principle of perception and movement, and the principle of food and sex. This principle does not exist in the mind of birds and beasts, but does exist in human mind solely. Therefore, what man shares with birds and beasts is perception and movement, whereas man has his own unique principle in addition to these. (CSQS 8-676)

Following Wang’s argument, if a person only regarded perception and movement as his nature, he would not be able to raise himself above animals. If he really wanted to be a man, he should realize nature besides perception and movement. In this way, Wang thought he solved the problem of the difference between man and animals ontologically, but he did not realize that he already fell into another contradiction. One might ask Wang Fuzhi whether life, food and sex, perception and movement had their own principles for animals. If they had, animals should also have their nature. If not, Wang Fuzhi would fall into the separation of principle from qi, and have to admit that animals were only a mass of qi without principle. This was absurd to his qi-monism.

In order to justify his distinction between nature and perception and movement, Wang Fuzhi argued that they originated from different parts of qi. Nature was the principle of life in qi while perception and movement, food and sex arose from the activation or mechanism of qi. He contended,

“Life is called nature.”…Gaozi 告子 thus thought, nature is together with life, and resides in life, so Heaven produces man and man survives by himself. There is no fault in his
remarks. The problem is that the life he referred to is the mechanism of life, not the principle of life. Thus he mixed man and birds without distinction. (CSQS 8-682)

Here, Wang conceded that perception and movement, food and sex were also a part of human nature from the fact that nature and life prospered together. But he arbitrarily assumed that there was a difference or even separation between the principle of life (nature) and the mechanism of life (life itself), and argued that animals did not have the principle of life. So Wang tacitly admitted that man had two kinds of nature—nature as the principle of life and nature as the mechanism of life. Obviously, he again fell into paradox, for it would be impossible for the principle of life to exist beyond the mechanism of life.

For Wang Fuzhi, if nature as the principle of life was stated from the aspect of origin, then nature as humanity and righteousness was proposed from the aspect of outcome. For example, Wang saw the four human virtues as the counterpart of the four heavenly virtues:

It is only because Heaven creates man with its principles of initiation/yuan 元, penetration/heng 亨, advantage/li 利 and impartiality/zhen 貞, and endows him all of them, so what is completed as human nature is gathered in human mind, and the four virtues exist there. (CSQS 8-700)

The four human virtues were humanity, righteousness, ritual propriety and wisdom. Wang regarded them as a manifestation of the four heavenly virtues—initiation, penetration, success and impartiality. Based on this claim, he went further to claim that morality was innate or previously existent in Heaven, and turned Heaven into a moralized universe. He continued,

To trace the origin of humanity, righteousness, centrality and impartiality, they are originally existent in the undifferentiated Great Harmony. Man receives them as nature. Thus through following his nature, the Way of Heaven is practiced. (CSQS 12-182)

Obviously Wang Fuzhi was inconsistent in drawing such a conclusion, for he committed the error of identifying the outcome as the origin. Although human virtues were the manifestation of heavenly virtues, it did not mean that Heaven had human virtues previously, just as a flower was from a plant, but it could not be said that the plant already had the flower. Thus, Wang Fuzhi confused potentiality with reality, origin with consequence.
In short, through exploring the origin, content and manifestation of human nature, Wang Fuzhi tried to secure Confucian morality a cosmological basis, but failed. On the one hand, his distinction between the mechanism of life and the principle of life was unfounded, and on the other hand, he mistook potentiality as reality or branch as root, which was unacceptable as philosophical arguments.

4.3.2 Nature Renews Daily as Heaven Endows Daily

Wang Fuzhi endorsed the proposition that “what Heaven endows is called nature”, but turned it into an active and unending interactive process between Heaven and man. In doing this, he attempted to reject the static view that nature was completed at birth once and for all, and thus bad and good nature were predestined and human effort could exert little influence after birth. Believing heavenly endowment as an unending interactive process, Wang thought he would be able to justify the view that nature could be transformed by human effort so as to persuade people to engage in moral cultivation. But the problem was to what extent human effort could change this process of endowment, and what was the relation between human effort and heavenly endowment in this process. Wang Fuzhi seemed not to present a clear answer.

Now let’s look at his arguments. Regardless of his distinction between the principle of life and the mechanism of life (qi), Wang again resorted to qi-monism in order to argue for his statement—nature renewed itself along with the renewal of heavenly endowment daily. He said,

For nature is principle, this principle regulates qi and is the principle of qi. How can it be that a principle is out of qi but runs through qi? …When Heaven endows man, qi is endowed unceasingly, so principle is endowed unceasingly too. Therefore heavenly endowment is without stop, and nature renews itself daily. (CSQS 6-1076)

In this quotation, Wang Fuzhi insisted that man received principle unceasingly along with his reception of qi from Heaven. As qi and principle were one, so nature renewed itself along with the renewal of qi.

If nature was the principle of qi, while qi could not be said to be either good or bad ontologically, then endowment and nature should not be regarded as good or bad either. But Wang Fuzhi saw it
differently. He insisted whatever Heaven endowed was good and thus the nature of man and things was good too. He claimed,

   Heaven and earth use harmony and obedience as their endowment, the myriad things use harmony and obedience as their nature. What is inherited is goodness, and it is so because of harmony and obedience; what is completed is nature, and it is so because of harmony and obedience. (CSQS 1-1074)

Apparently Wang Fuzhi attributed goodness to nature and endowment through claiming harmony and obedience as good. Yet he could not explain why harmony and obedience were good unless he arbitrarily assumed them as good. Nevertheless, Wang might have his own explanation, i.e., obedience and harmony were good because they were the principle of life. If a thing could give rise to life or sustain life, it should be regarded as good. This was verified when he claimed that Heaven kept endowing man the Way to sustain life. He stated,

   At birth, the Way that makes Heaven as it is and the Way that Heaven sustains all things, both enter human body and gather there as virtue/de 德....After birth, the Way that makes Heaven as it is and the Way that Heaven sustains things, both prevail and enter man daily, without stopping their function. (CSQS 13-663)

Virtue here referred to the two ways man received from Heaven. These two ways gave rise to lives and continued to sustain them. It was also them that formed human nature and then kept shaping it unceasingly. Thus, it could be inferred that they were identical with the endowed obedience and harmony as indicated in previous quotation.

Then Wang Fuzhi had to answer two questions. First, what could be regarded as human nature if what man received from Heaven kept changing from birth to death? Is there any essential difference between the nature formed at birth and the nature transformed afterwards? If nature kept changing, was it possible that man’s nature was changed into a dog’s nature? For questions like these, Wang just ambiguously distinguished the nature at birth from the nature after birth in terms of “volume/liang 量 and authenticity/zhen 真”. He said,

   At birth man receives the volume/liang 量 of nature; after birth, man receives the authenticity/zhen 真 of nature. (CSQS 12-413)
But what was the volume/liang and authenticity/zhen of nature, he did not define. If we guess his meaning, the volume of nature might decide the nature to be either human nature or pig’s nature; while the truth of nature might determine the scope or changeability of human nature from bad to good. Provided this was true, the scope of renewing nature would be very limited. Then the efficacy of “that nature renews along with endowment daily” would be seriously weakened.

If we take into account Wang Fuzhi’s idea of “transforming physical embodiment” in 3.5.5, it would be obvious that he followed our guess. There, Wang discussed the different functions of qi 气 and essence/zhi 质 in the process of transforming a person’s physical embodiment. The essence determined whether a human body or a pig’s body would be formed, while the qi kept shaping the body within the limit of the essence. In ordinary condition, qi’s coming and going would exert no significant influence upon the bodily embodiment unless it was regulated consciously. In consideration that the renewal of nature was the same process of the coming and going of qi, it was evident that this renewal exerted little influence upon the nature received at birth indeed. Although Wang Fuzhi thought one could transform bodily embodiment through consciously regulating one’s qi with habit and choice, what one changed was still in the limit of the essence. In other words, one could not change human physical embodiment into pig’s embodiment, or human nature into pig’s nature. Therefore, the renewal of nature had a limit which was set up by the nature received at birth. It might better or worsen the degree of nature received at birth, but it could not change the nature received at birth essentially; just as the transformation of bodily temperament could change the degree of purity of the bodily qi, but could not transform the human figure into the pig form.

This in turn incurred another question. Was there an essential difference between the physical embodiment and nature of ordinary people and those of sages? If they were born different in essence, how could ordinary man achieve sageliness through transforming his physical embodiment and renewing his nature with human effort? Unquestionably, Wang Fuzhi insisted that sages and ordinary people shared the same essence and the volume/liang 量 of nature, what they were different were the purity of their qi and the authenticity/zhen 真 of their nature, so an ordinary person could become worthy or sage through cultivation. His approach was to choose the qi (such as food and drink) carefully, and to regulate feelings and desires and thus to channel one’s qi smoothly.
Second, provided nature kept renewing along with heavenly endowment, how could human choice lead the renewing process to a good direction? As is known, man received the endowment from Heaven through two ways—breathing and taking food and drink (including desires and feelings). Since no one could manipulate one’s own breathing, so the purity and turbidity of the \( qi \) one breathed would be out of one’s control. Fortunately, one could choose one’s food and drink and thus do some contribution to the purification of one’s \( qi \) and the renewal of one’s nature to goodness. But apparently, the final outcome was uncertain. Therefore, the renewing of nature to goodness was not practicable in this way either.

Now let’s follow Wang Fuzhi and suppose that nature kept renewing itself spontaneously, Wang Fuzhi had to answer why we would bother to interfere with this natural process by preserving and cultivating nature. Wang seemed to be able to answer this question from two aspects. On the one hand, if man did not consciously preserve nature, he would be swayed by feelings and desires, and thus lose his nature. For example, the stupid and unfilial people could completely destroy or forget their inborn nature through indulging in desires and feelings. On the other hand, Wang Fuzhi did not think it right to leave nature as it was although nature could renew itself spontaneously. Even without the influence of desires and feelings, man should consciously preserve his nature and not passively listen to the coming and going of \( qi \). This was verified in his distinction between the Way of man and the Way of Heaven. It was man that assisted Heaven and accomplished what Heaven had not done. It was man’s intelligence and effort that made up the insufficiency of Heaven’s mindlessness. If man left nature as it was, man would lose his responsibility to be the mind of Heaven and earth, and thus degraded himself to the level of birds and beasts.

At this point, it should be clear that, when Wang Fuzhi proposed “nature renews itself daily”, he was justifying the necessity of moral cultivation from another perspective. He aimed to reject heretic doctrine that regarded human nature as static and endowed once for all at birth. According to this doctrine, if human nature was fixed at birth, it would be unnecessary to preserve or cultivate it any more. Worse was that good or bad would be predestined, and thus any education or self-cultivation would be redundant. Hence, Wang’s view, “Human nature kept renewing”, paved the way for the beautification of nature in the lifespan of human life, and thus gave Confucian morality a justification, especially through the choice of food and drink and the regulation of desires and feelings although it still had pitfalls.
4.3.3 Nature and Habit

Now that the renewal of nature resulted not only from heavenly endowment but also from human choice, it showed that human choice played an important role in the formation of nature. In Wang Fuzhi’s view, this role was crucial to the completion of nature after birth. He called human choice as habit, mainly referring to a person’s like and dislike developed in his life experience. He stated, “Habit joins the formation of nature. Nature is formed along with the completion of habit.” (CSQS 2-299)

As aforesaid, Wang Fuzhi insisted whatever Heaven endowed was good while badness arose from careless human choice. (CSQS 2-300) Thus, at birth, human nature was pure and good; after birth, heavenly endowment and human choice worked together to form human nature, so nature might become impure or bad. However, he exculpated Heaven from the formation of bad nature and ascribed badness mainly to human beings. Then, the question is, as whatever from Heaven was good, whatever man chose and used was from Heaven, then how did impurity and badness arise? In Wang Fuzhi’s understanding, truly whatever was from Heaven was good, but there was a degree or due measure when man obtained and used them. Just like raining, it would cause flood when excessive, and drought when insufficient, so things or material would affect the quality of human nature if being used improperly. Wang Fuzhi stated,

> When man obtains material, he will become strong if what he obtains is plentiful and what he uses is broad; he will become good if what he obtains is pure and what he uses is fine; he will become bad if what he obtains is impure and what he uses is mixed. All these come into existence without a seeming reason. Therefore, the noblemen make moral effort without stop, keep cautious day and night, select and maintain what they need, so as to cultivate their nature. Thus after birth, their daily renewed nature will become better rather than worse. (CSQS 2-300)

This quotation indicates that nature would become good or bad in terms of the quality of the material chosen. Therefore, human choice or habit could help form human nature. A person should be cautious about the food, drink and interaction at every moment in order to secure a good nature.
Wang illustrated this point with the change of Tai Jia 太甲, a king of the Shang Dynasty. Wang explained the recovery of good nature through the joint work of heavenly endowment and human choice. On the one hand, Heaven kept endowing even though a person already developed a bad habit and destroyed his original nature. Because of this unceasing endowment, good nature would appear again once the bad habit stopped working temporarily. Based on this, Wang Fuzhi stated, “Nature cannot be eclipsed anyway. Although some people eclipse it, they cannot do that all the time. It still emerges from time to time.” (CSQS 6-395) On the other hand, even though a person had a bad habit and an unacceptable nature, he could change them to good through careful choice of his like and dislike. Wang Fuzhi thus optimistically exclaimed,

Yet, at the time when indulging in disobedience, Tai Jia’s nature was not the original nature endowed at birth; at the time when he kept in mind good virtues, Tai Jia’s nature again threw away the unrighteous formation. Because heavenly endowment is incessant and unfixed, nature can transform and become different. Because heavenly principle is right without any original fault, goodness is recovered thus without any difficulty. Nature can be completed if it is not; and it can be changed if it is already completed. How can nature be beyond transformation after being formed? (CSQS 2-300)

Tai Jia’s nature changed from his inborn goodness to disobedience, from disobedience to virtuousness. The reason for his change was that heavenly endowment was unending and changeable and thus nature was changeable too. Moreover, his nature became good instead of bad because the principle of life was right at the origin. This explained the possibility to change human nature from the side of Heaven.

At the same time, Wang Fuzhi did not ignore the role of human effort. Although heavenly endowment played a role in Tai Jia’s change, Tai Jia himself also consciously changed his bad habit and then was disciplined with good virtues. Were he left to follow his former way, there would not be the recovery of his good nature. Hence, Wang Fuzhi continued,

Therefore, when a nobleman cultivates his nature, he acts naturally, but does not leaves it to its own way. He selects goodness carefully, grasps centrality/rightness firmly, and dare not to indulge himself in idleness. (CSQS 2-300)
The crucial point of human effort was that one should put mind on goodness and be prudent in one’s behavior. This could be summarized with Mencius words about cultivating the mind—not forgetting, not helping, but keeping oneself attentive to it, just as a farmer cultivating his crop.

Based on his commentary on Tai Jia’s change, Wang Fuzhi divided the role of Heaven and the role of man in the development of nature. He argued,

There is the role of man and the role of Heaven. What is completed is nature; this is the role of Heaven, and it runs through both the formation at birth and the accumulation after birth. To select fine material and use things and thus to help form nature, this is the role of man. This does not exist at birth, but grows daily in his childhood and adulthood. (CSQS 2-302)

Hence, the formation of nature depended on both Heaven and man. On the appearance, heavenly endowment seemed to be more crucial in the formation of nature at birth and the renewing power after birth. However, Wang insisted that habit or human choice actually play a more important role because people often succumbed to habit and could not get rid of it. Wang explained,

Mencius discussed nature; Confucius discussed habit. Nature is the Way of Heaven, and habit is the Way of man….When a person wants to seek his nature after he succumbs to bad habit, he will not be able to recover good habit even though he knows his nature, let alone those who do not know their nature. (CSQS 12-494)

He further warned the harm of bad habit and said,

Habit catches a person’s qi/temperament, as miasma catches man unconsciously, while it causes blood and qi simmering when it activates. Therefore, the partiality of bodily embodiment can be corrected through concentrating on a part; the arousing of desires can be extended to other people. It is only habit that makes a person incorrigible after it has changed him. (CSQS 12-492)

So Wang Fuzhi recommended the development of good habit through education at an early age. He thus appreciated highly Zhang Zai’s proposal—educating children with orthodox doctrine. He respected Zhang Zai as his paradigmatic model and wrote a commentary on Zhang’s work,
Zhengmeng 正蒙 (Rectifying the Children). Through educating children with proper and orthodox doctrine, it was possible to develop good habit and thus achieve good nature.

In order to develop good habit, Wang Fuzhi also recommended associating with noblemen besides complying with proper doctrines. He stated,

Associating with noblemen, one will like what noblemen like, and dislike what they dislike. Associating with petty person, one will like what petty person likes, and dislike what he dislikes. Much worse, associating with those vulgar, stubborn and abject people, one will also abide by their like and dislike. (CSQS 12-490)

This showed that Wang emphasized the influence of environment and custom on the development of personality. As family and neighborhood exerted direct influence upon a person, Wang gave priority to their role in the formation of habit and nature and warned the bad influence of unhealthy community and custom.

As Wang Fuzhi identified good nature with the universal harmonious qi, so he believed, through developing good nature, one would be able to contribute one’s part to the universal harmonious qi or the Great Harmony. In return, if the universe was full of harmonious qi, there would be less selfish and vulgar people, and so the custom would be better. Thus a person once born would be easier to keep his innate nature and become a nobleman. In this way, Wang Fuzhi connected Heaven, society and individuals together, and advocated that everyone should contribute his part to the harmony and humanity of the world.

4.3.4 The Definition and Origin of Feeling

It is time that habit could participate in the formation of human nature, but, what was habit? Habit could be called one’s developed constant preference. With preference, habit was connected to feelings. To some extent, good habit referred to moderate feelings, while bad habit referred to excessive or unrestraint feelings. Therefore, when habit participated in the formation of nature, it was actually feelings that did that. This explained why Wang Fuzhi shed much ink on the origin and regulation of feelings.
First, what was feeling? From the cosmological perspective, Wang Fuzhi regarded it as the mechanism or incipience of *yin-yang* interaction. He stated,

> Feeling is the mechanism of *yin-yang*, gathering in nature and rendering service for nature. (CSQS 1-889)

> Feeling is originally the mechanism of *yin-yang* interaction; nature is the substance of *yin-yang*. (CSQS 6-1066)

From these two definitions, Wang analogically saw feeling and nature as function and substance. Specifically, nature was the substance of *yin* and *yang* while feeling was the function or mechanism of *yin-yang* interaction, and feeling should serve nature. But to regard nature as the substance of *yin* and *yang*, Wang Fuzhi apparently contradicted with his own interpretation that nature was the principle of *yin* and *yang*. Moreover, now that feeling and nature were the function and substance of *qi* (*yin-yang*), they should be one naturally, just as the function of eyes (seeing) was one with the body of eyes. Then to regulate feeling with nature would seem unnecessary.

Now, let’s look at Wang’s argument. From the ontic perspective, Wang thought feeling as the interaction between the activation of mind and the external things. He said,

> Generally, the activation of my mind looks for things. Then the seemingly attractive things interact with my activation, thereby feeling arises. Thus feeling is not purely external, and neither purely internal. It may come or go. Going and coming, it arises in the interaction between my activation and the activation of Heaven and earth. (CSQS 6-1066)

In short, feeling resulted from the interaction between mind and external things. It resided neither in the mind nor in external things, but in their interaction. It manifested as a person’s seeking or avoiding external things. Following this explanation, feeling would be beyond the control of mind, and then Wang Fuzhi’s doctrine of cultivating nature through regulating feelings would be impossible. In order to avoid this consequence, Wang Fuzhi denied this definition and embraced the view that feeling belonged to mind only. He said,

> Feeling is the mechanism of *yin-yang*; things are the produce of Heaven and earth. When *yin-yang* mechanism starts in mind, the product of Heaven and earth responds outside.
Therefore, when things exist outside, feeling may arise inside accordingly; when feeling arises inside, there must be things outside accordingly. (CSQS 3-323)

According to this explanation, feeling, as the mechanism of \textit{yin-yang} interaction, arose in the mind first, and was echoed by external things, so it was different from the previous definition which regarded it as the joint outcome of the interaction between the activation of mind and the activation of Heaven and earth. Feeling and external things could be in the relation of response instead of interaction. In this way, Wang Fuzhi tacitly drew feeling back to the mind, and paved the way to regulate feelings with nature.

Based on his ontological definitions that feeling was the mechanism of \textit{yin-yang} while nature was the substance of \textit{yin-yang}, Wang drew the conclusion that nature gave rise to feeling. His following words verified this assumption. He stated,

\begin{quote}
It is only that nature gives rise to feeling, and feeling thus manifests nature. So the mind of man originally serves for the mind of the Way. (CSQS 6-473)\textsuperscript{37}
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
Nature gives rise to feeling, and feeling is used to substantiate nature….\textit{yang} moves and gives rise to joy; \textit{yin} moves and gives rise to anger, so it is said, nature gives rise to feeling; joy promotes good, anger checks evil, so it is said feeling substantiates nature. (CSQS 1-1023)
\end{quote}

These arguments showed that nature gave rise to feelings while feelings manifested and substantiated nature. When tracing further, both nature and feeling arose from \textit{dao} or the Great Harmony. This was consistent with Wang’s ontological definition that nature and feeling were substance and function of \textit{yin-yang} respectively.

When explaining why feeling might go against nature from which it was originated, Wang compared their relationship as father and son, and insisted that nature could not control the activities of feelings just as father could not do that toward his son. He argued,

\textsuperscript{37} Wang Fuzhi simply calls feeling as the mind of man/\textit{ren xin} 人心, and nature as the mind of the Way/\textit{dao xin} 道心. “Feeling is just the mind of man; while nature is the mind of the Way.” (CSQS 6-1066)
With regard to father and son, father actually gives birth to son, yet after the son grows up, it is impossible to ask the son to emulate the father in every conduct. The relationship between feelings and nature are so. (CSQS 6-964)

However, this analogy was improper. According to Wang’s ontological definition, feeling was the function of nature and could not separate from it. This was different from the father-son relation in which the son could become independent from the father. If Wang insisted that feeling could betray the order of nature, he must admit that the mechanism of yin-yang was able to be apart from the substance of yin-yang. This would be absurd for Wang’s qi-monism.

As we indicated earlier, Wang Fuzhi adopted qi-monism in order to find a cosmological origin for human nature and Confucian moral principles, i.e., all moral principles were innate and ought to be complied with naturally. However, qi-monism also required him to regard qi as substance and principle/li as function, that was why Wang Fuzhi loudly claimed that principle was only the pattern of qi’s movement, and could not exist apart from qi. Applied to human body, principle and qi should correspond to human nature and human feelings respectively, and thus human nature should be secondary to human feelings. If Wang Fuzhi accepted this inference, he would not be able to propose the idea of regulating feelings with nature and his theory of moral cultivation would be baseless. In order to save his theory of moral cultivation, he might deliberately neglect the logical inference of qi-monism—the unity of nature and feelings, but adopt a dualistic view on nature and feelings. Consequently, his discussions on the relation between nature and feelings were confusing. At one place, he regarded them as the relation of substance and function; at another place, he compared their relation as that of father and son.

Understanding Wang Fuzhi’s standpoint in discussing nature and feeling, it would not be surprising to see his denial that nature gave rise to feeling. In fact, when he claimed that feeling arose from the interaction between the activation of mind and the activation of Heaven and earth and existed neither within nor without, he already implied that feeling could not arise from (human) nature. Moreover, even though he admitted that feeling arose from the mind as an echo to the rise of external things, he did not think feeling arose from nature either. For example, he said,

As to nature from birth, it exists regardless of interaction or not. During interaction with external things, the discord of difference and identity, gains and loss makes mind move,
thus the mechanism/function of joy, anger, sad and happiness prevails. This is called feeling. (CSQS 8-698)

Here, nature existed independent of interaction with external things, while feeling arose from mind when a person interacted with things. They were totally two different things, let alone the possibility that feeling arose from nature. Wang Fuzhi made this point clearer when he said:

Nature automatically runs through feelings, but it is not the case that nature gives rise to feelings, and neither is the case that nature interacts with things and converts into feelings. (CSQS 6-1066)

In these sentences, Wang Fuzhi completely separated feeling from nature. To this point, Wang Fuzhi expressed his true intention—human nature as the rule or principle to guide human feeling. But after stripped of any relation to feeling, nature became an external rule to feeling and was no more than constructed norms. Thus Wang’s discussion on the relation between nature and feeling from the aspect of cosmology could only cause confusion.

More interesting was that Wang Fuzhi had the phrase, “feeling gives rise to nature.” (CSQS 10-132) When commenting on Zhufu Yan 主父偃 (?-126 BC) and other officials, he was surprised that they had good proposals while they were in low ranks, but changed their principle when they were at high positions. To trace the reason, Wang Fuzhi ascribed to their being influenced by the emperor’s like and dislike at court and thus losing their power of fair judgment. He argued,

For ordinary people, feelings give rise to their nature, but nature cannot regulate their feelings. What change their feelings are the emperor’s likes, and the popular fashion of the times. (CSQS 10-132)

Here, Wang Fuzhi indicated the causative chain, the emperor’s preference and the fashion of the times changed a person’s feeling, and then the changed feeling gave rise to his nature. This reminded us of “habit participates in the formation of nature”. In fact, the changed feeling was nothing but habit formed by popular fashion and emperor’s preference, the nature that feelings gave rise to was the nature formed by habit.

In summary, ontologically, nature and feeling were both originated from yin-yang and were in the relation of substance and function. Ontically, feeling was the result of mind’s response to
external things, and existed neither within nor without, but in the process of interaction between mind and things. From the ontological perspective, Wang Fuzhi preferred to endorse that nature gave rise to feeling, but he denied it again and insisted that feeling was not from nature in order to keep distance between nature and feeling and use nature to regulate feeling in moral cultivation. From the perspective of moral cultivation, Wang Fuzhi again proposed “feeling gives rise to nature”, which echoed to his doctrine that habit participated in the formation of nature. At this point, the complicated relationships between nature and feeling could be said clear, now let’s turn to Wang’s discussion on how nature regulated feeling.

4.3.5 The Regulation of Feeling with Nature

If feeling were the mechanism or activation of *yin-yang* interaction, it should be regarded as a natural function of the *qi* in the human body, just as seeing was the natural function of the eyes. Then there would not be so-called proper or improper issuance of feeling. This Daoist view of feeling was implicated in Wang Fuzhi’s ontological definition of feeling, and would bring trouble to Wang’s justification of regulating feeling with nature or Confucian principles. In order to avoid this trouble, Wang Fuzhi did not carry this definition through his theory of human nature; instead he proposed the ontic explanation of feeling. According to the ontic definition of feeling, it was regarded as the response of human mind to external things. With the participation of mind, different people might respond to the same thing differently, so there arose the difference between moderate and excess, and the necessity of regulating feeling with nature or principle.

With regard to the excess of feeling, Wang Fuzhi discussed two cases—the overflowing of feeling and the partiality of feeling. The partiality of feeling would lead to the overflowing of feeling, and the cause of partiality was the surrender of feeling to the attraction of some external things.

The partiality of feeling referred to the fact that one indulged in one kind of feeling (such as joy or anger) but forgot other kinds of feeling. Wang said,
Therefore the so-called fairness and impartiality consist in not indulging in joy and ignoring anger, sadness and happiness; and neither losing joy because of being impartial to joy, nor losing joy because of being impartial to the absence of joy. (CSQS 6-470-1)

In other words, the partiality of joy included two cases. The first was that one indulged in joy and forgot anger, sadness and happiness. The second was that one lost joy in order to be fair to all kinds of feelings. However, in Wang’s works, he mainly focused on the first. In Wang’s regard, once a person being partial to a specific feeling, he would not only forget its counterpart, but also ignore the reality that other people had the similar feeling. Wang Fuzhi’s remarks on the partiality of worry and happiness elucidated this point. He said,

Being partial to worry, one will not understand pleasure in the world. Being anxious about one’s worries, one will not understand what other people worry. Being partial to worry, once one is released from it, one will be partial to happiness. Being partial to happiness, one will not understand worry in the world. Being partial to what one enjoys, one will not understand what other people enjoy. (CSQS 3-384)

This indicated that one would be blind to other possibilities and options once one was partial to one’s feeling. This blindness showed the cause of the partiality of feeling, i.e., one concerned oneself too much and could not have a fair mind to think in other’s shoes. As a result, one was driven by one’s egoistic concern and feelings and swing between joy and anger, pleasure and sadness, and could not have a fair mind to communicate with others. Wang Fuzhi made this idea clear through his comments on the poem Dong Shan 東山 in the Book of Odes. In Wang Fuzhi’s opinion, people generally tended to consider things from their own points of view but neglected to consider them from others’. Without taking account of others’ standpoints and possibilities, one would value what one was doing while complained not being understood. As a result, one could not achieve a peaceful and satisfied mind.

The partiality of feeling would inevitably lead to the indulgence in one feeling and thus to its overflowing. Wang stated,

Setting feeling free and going against nature, the extremity of happiness will become extravagance, and the end of sadness will become melancholy. (CSQS 7-344)
The extravagance of happiness and the melancholy of sadness were the overflowing of feelings. Their causes were that one set feelings free and did not obey nature. If one could issue feelings according to nature, the overflowing of feelings would be prevented. Wang continued,

Happiness and sadness, these are the feelings that man must express. Being happy but ending properly, being sad but moderating rightly, these are cases which nature runs through feeling. Based on the uprightness of nature to issue feeling, sadness and happiness will each meet their measure properly. (CSQS 7-344)

On how to regulate feeling with nature, Wang Fuzhi suggested to select things and feelings prudently. For instance, through careful selection, noblemen issued their feelings and used things properly. With careless choice, petty persons could not issue their feelings and use things properly. Illustrated in the case of crossing a river, noblemen knew to cross it at a shallow place or a proper time, while petty persons crossed it without prudence, so the former crossed it while the latter got themselves drowned.

On how to select things and feelings, Wang Fuzhi proposed to do it with one’s own mind and principle and not to subject to external things completely. The mind and principle were that one should not focus or indulge in one feeling, but realize the existence of the counterpart of this feeling. In this way, either sorry or pleasure, one would avoid indulgence and always be able to meet due measure. For instance, with regard to the poem Cao Wei採薇 in the Book of Odes, Wang commented,

It makes a soldier sad when going to the frontier; and it makes him happy when returning home. But when going he sang “willows are drifting lovely”; when returning, he signed “snow is falling heavily.” Skillful in expressing feeling, one will not use the prosperity and withering of natural things to enhance his sorrow and happiness. How can natural things be reliable? When I am sad, there are things making me sadder; when I am happy, there are things making me happier. A shallow person will quickly collect them because of his narrow mind. When I am sad, it does not mean that there are not things making me happy; when I am happy, it does not mean that there are not things making me sad. Alas, those concentrating on one corner cannot see it. (CSQS 3-392)
In this quotation, Wang Fuzhi made a distinction between nobleman (the author of the poem) and petty person (the shallow person) in response to external things. The nobleman balanced his feelings with their counterparts and avoided excess and overflowing. He did this through finding the happy side of natural things when being sad and the sad side when being happy and thus brought his feelings to due measure. On the contrary, petty person would enhance his sorrow with the dark side of natural things and his happiness with the bright side, and thus lead his feelings to excess and overflowing.

Due to the nobleman’s prudence in selecting feelings and things, the feelings he issued were different from the feelings ordinary people issued. The difference was that his feelings reached due measure while ordinary people’s did not. His secret was that he always abided by nature when issuing feelings. Wang stated,

Although a nobleman’s feeling is already proper in general, he must preserve something in his mind as master in order to obtain peace when he issues what is hidden in mind. The master is his nature. (CSQS 8-858)

“Something in his mind” referred to nature or principle; “What is hidden in mind” referred to feelings. To issue feelings properly, the nobleman must take nature as his master. For this reason, Wang Fuzhi urged that “a nobleman’s mind has no other thought except for his nature; a nobleman’s body has no business except for his nature.” (CSQS 8-860) As nature took Confucian moral principles as its content, it was evident that Wang Fuzhi tried to discipline a person as a complete reasonable and moral person, acting according to principle all the time. Achieving this, as Wang Fuzhi thought, a person would always enjoy true joy and happiness. Truly, this state could make a person tranquil all the time, but it also crashed the vitality of feelings or qi and thus led a person into a boring and senseless life.

As nature and principle all took ritual propriety and righteousness as their concrete forms, the most practical approach to regulate feelings would be to govern them with ritual propriety and righteousness. Wang Fuzhi endorsed this idea and said,

The rise of ritual propriety is to measure feeling indeed. Feelings may be fully realized, yet may not. Frank expression of feelings will result in much regret. However there is not a fixed method to regulate feeling. If one measures the issuance of feeling with ritual
propriety and reach the proper point, then one will not be swayed from one’s standing. If one does not know ritual propriety, one will not be able to reach the right point through bending down when going beyond the measure; and neither can he catch up with the right point when not reaching the measure. Then things will make him confused, and he will lose the proper issuance of feeling. (CSQS 7-1000)

Here Wang Fuzhi finally stepped out from the abstract discussion of regulating feelings with nature, while resorted it to a concrete measure—ritual propriety. The rules and norms of ritual propriety were recorded in the *Four Books* and the *Five Classics*, and thus one should learn them and emulate the sages’ behaviors to regulate his own feelings. Through familiarizing oneself with these rules and more importantly grasping their essence and spirit, one would be able to reach the proper issuance of feelings with their guide. In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, if one used ritual propriety and righteousness to govern complaint and anger, one’s anger and complaint would be in due measure. He stated,

Therefore a nobleman governs his complaint with righteousness, and will not complain if he is not righteous. If he complains, his complaint meets righteousness. He moderates his anger with ritual propriety, and will not become angry if he does not meet ritual propriety. If he is angry, his anger matches ritual propriety. (CSQS 5-131)

From this passage, it would be better for Wang Fuzhi to say that a nobleman should not have feelings but only behave according to ritual propriety and righteousness. According to Wang’s prescription, there would be no feelings but only ritual propriety and righteousness. This echoed his former claim that “a nobleman’s mind has no other thought except for his nature; a nobleman’s body has no business except for his nature.” In this way, a biological and lively human being would be converted into a moral and reasonable person and always follow the Confucian principles. This kind of person was good to social custom and governance and was the ultimate goal that Wang Fuzhi and other Neo-Confucians strove for. However one might still ask, could this kind of person be regarded as a true human being?
4.3.6 Fulfilling Feeling to Stabilize Nature

Truly feeling was the potential origin of badness (CSQS 8-698), but why didn’t Wang Fuzhi propose to get rid of it and stop the arising of badness completely? In dealing with this question, Wang Fuzhi drew a line from Buddhism which extinguished feeling in order to recover nature. In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, feeling was the mechanism of yin-yang, and represented the vitality of life. Without feeling, there would be no human life, nor the realization of the principle of life (nature and goodness). Therefore it was through feeling that goodness was achieved and nature was fulfilled. He argued,

Although badness is the blame of feeling, yet without feeling, goodness will not be achieved either, for the mind of the Way (nature) is subtle and relies on feeling to get fully expressed….Failing to understand this, one would say, now that feeling can cause badness, why not get rid of it so as to prevent badness right from its origin? Truly heretic doctrines propose such a view. However, one fails to realize, if man does not have feeling, one will not be able to do badness, yet one will not be able to do goodness either. In this way, it is impossible to fully utilize one’s capabilities, let alone to fulfill one’s human nature. (CSQS 6-1069-1070)

Because the mind of the Way or nature relied on feeling to prevail, feeling must be preserved even though it might cause badness when overflowing. Otherwise, without feeling, truly badness was removed, but goodness also lost its opportunity to be achieved. Therefore, the problem for Wang Fuzhi was not to remove feeling, but how to use feeling—to regulate feeling for good purpose. As we have already discussed how to regulate feeling, here we will focus on the service of feeling toward nature.

First, Wang Fuzhi elaborated the view that nature depended on feeling to get expressed. He said,

Before the issuance of feelings, nature alone has its normative rules; after the arising of feelings, nature depends on feelings to manifest its innate abilities. (CSQS 7-107)

Here, feeling was regarded as arising later than nature and served to manifest the abilities of nature. Wang’s aim was to put feeling at the service of nature and thus justify his doctrine of regulating feeling with nature or moral principles.
Second, Wang insisted, in order to preserve or cultivate nature, one must first fulfill one’s feeling. Feeling acted not only as the expression of nature but also as the stabilizer of nature. He argued,

> When nature is eclipsed and cannot become integrated, it is necessary to pacify feelings. If feelings already become overflowing, it is impossible to calm nature. Feelings are the pivotal of safety and danger, and it is through pacifying feelings that nature is preserved. (CSQS 2-366)

In detail, Wang Fuzhi explained how feelings could calm nature. In social interaction, people mainly dealt with each other in terms of feelings. When people talked to each other, the talk would not be able to continue if one didn’t appreciate the other’s feeling. In persuasion, if one did not understand the other’s feeling, one’s words would affect no influence. On the contrary, if one could follow the other’s feelings and get them realized, they would become close friends; if one could express one’s own feelings and share them with the other, one would be understood and become harmonious with the other. Therefore, it was through expressing and understanding feelings that nature got fulfilled. This was why Wang Fuzhi concluded,

> Feeling is the reliance of nature. Going against one’s feeling will lead to going against one’s nature. Nature is the resort of Heaven. Going against one’s nature will lead to going against one’s Heaven. (CSQS 10-389)

However, Wang Fuzhi did not recommend that people completely rely on feelings and neglect the work of preserving nature/principle. In his regard, although feelings were the way to express and fulfill nature, the premise was that nature was preserved or at least not lost in advance. If one had lost or did not know one’s nature, although nature occasionally appeared along with feeling, one still could not rely on feeling to calm one’s nature. In order to recover the mind of the Way, one needed to use the perceptive mind to think principle and nature, rather than depend too much upon seeing and hearing—the mind of man (feeling).

### 4.4 Desire and Principle

In essence, the relation between principle and desire was also the relation between the mind of the Way and the mind of man, or that between nature and feeling in Wang Fuzhi’s works.
However, Wang Fuzhi had his reason to discuss them as separate categories. With feeling and the mind of man, Wang emphasized more on the cognitive, emotional and aesthetic aspects of mind; with desires, he mainly focused on biological need and fulfillment. To some extent, he regarded desires as the degradation of feelings. This was verified by his acceptance of Zhang Zai’s words, “Thus the feelings of love and hate both arise from the Great Void, but finally become desires.” (CSQS 12-41) He also rejected simply identifying desires as feelings. He said, “Joy, anger, sorrow and pleasure are just the mind of man (feelings), not human desires.” (CSQS 6-473) However, due to his view on desires as the derivatives of feelings, Wang Fuzhi often discussed them together without differentiation. He regarded the issuance of anger, joy, sorrow and pleasure as the starting points of both feelings and desires. (CSQS 6-640) He also thought both of them as the proper manifestation of heavenly principle, and stated,

Man has feelings and desires. This is nothing but the proper manifestation of heavenly principle. If they reach due measure, one will always comply with heavenly principle even though one wears unlined jacket and strikes lute, and interacts with the myriad things daily. (CSQS 1-421)

Here, Wang Fuzhi again went back to his formula—the due measure of feelings and desires were heavenly principle. If one could issue feelings and fulfill desires properly, whatever one did would always match heavenly principle. Pushing further, he developed the idea that one could not realize heavenly principle beyond human desires and rejected Zhu Xi’s idea of eliminating desires for the sake of heavenly principle.

Then, what was desire and how did it arise? Wang Fuzhi mainly defined it biologically and regarded it as the satisfaction of bodily organs. He stated,

What makes ears, eyes, mouth and body feel satisfied and thus aspire to gain is called desire. (CSQS 10-1149)

Ears, eyes, mouth and body to things in the world, they get along well and match each other, thus desire arises automatically. This is also a natural process. Desire is not only what petty people rely on, but also what noblemen cannot ignore. (CSQS 11-66)
These passages showed that Wang mainly took the biological need and satisfaction of human body as desire. In contrast, his definition of feelings focused more on the psychological and aesthetic need of mind. Because no one could survive without body and mind, desires and feelings were thus inalienable to both ordinary people and noblemen.

Now that desires were regarded as the need and satisfaction of body, while body was regarded to be formed by yin in the Book of Changes, Wang Fuzhi thus insisted desires arose from yin ontologically. He argued,

\[
\text{\textit{Yang} is in charge of nature; \textit{yin} in charge of body. Principle arises from nature, while desires start from body. (CSQS 1-837)}
\]

\[
\text{The virtue of \textit{yin}: it is petty person, women and barbarians in human beings; and it is profit and desires in human mind. (CSQS 1-354)}
\]

Through this classification, Wang Fuzhi distinguished nature and body, principle and desires from the perspective of yang and yin, and established the superiority of nature and principle over body and desires. But Wang Fuzhi also knew that yin and yang could never be separated, but must work together to form unity and harmony, thus he showed obscurity on the yin-yang relation. Sometimes, he proposed the co-establishment of Qian and Kun 乾坤並建, i.e., \textit{yin} and \textit{yang} were two basic elements to form the universe; (CSQS 1-989) sometimes, he again insisted \textit{yin} and \textit{yang} were one \textit{qi}—the Great Void was only one mass of \textit{qi}. (CSQS 12-41) When this ambiguity was reflected on the relation between body and nature, desire and principle, Wang Fuzhi proposed the unity of desires and principle, body and nature on the one hand, while again insisted on the idea that desires and principle shared the same human body but had different contents on the other. (CSQS 1-837)

4.4.1 Body Is Heavenly Nature/\textit{xing se ji tian xing} 形色即天性

The unity of desires and principle first manifested on Wang Fuzhi’s elaboration of Mencius’ word, “body and shape are heavenly nature.” (Mencius 7.38) Wang explained their unity from the perspective of the unity of principle and \textit{qi}, but regarded principle as what made \textit{qi} flow and work smoothly and thus set up the dominance of nature toward body. He said,
When it says that body is heavenly nature, it means that man has his body after he has received his nature, so right in his body resides the nature Heaven has endowed him…. Actually, body is qi, while nature is principle. Qi is indeed the qi having principle, so body is heavenly nature; however it is principle that makes qi work smoothly, thus only through fulfilling nature can body be perfected. (CSQS 6-1132)

In order to make nature and principle dominant, Wang Fuzhi played with words. Instead of saying “nature comes forth after or together with body” that corresponded to the statement, “without objects, there would not be the corresponding dao or principle” (CSQS 1-1027), he stated that human body came forth after human nature. Instead of saying “qi gives rise to principle”, he claimed that it was principle that made qi work well. In this way, he established the dominance of principle and nature over body and qi, and proposed that it was through fulfilling nature that human body was perfected. But he did not realize that in this way, he preconceived a nature existing previous to human body and thus contradicted with his idea of the unity of principle and qi.

Let’s focus on now his remarks on the unity of nature and body. Because of this unity, Wang insisted that every part of body was filled with nature and students should not seek nature out of body. It would be wrong to value nature while despise body, or to preserve principle while wipe out desires, for without body and desires, nature and principle would be able to reside nowhere. Wang argued,

The whole body is filled with nature. Where body arises is where nature is from. (CSQS 13-638)

There is no place without principle under Heaven. Where there is qi, principle occupies it. There is no part of my body without nature. Where there is body, nature fills. (CSQS 6-1131)

In these quotations, Wang came back to value body and became consistent with the statement that qi determined principle. Where body existed, nature filled. There would be no reason to think body not following nature or being the origin of badness. Then Wang Fuzhi had to provide an explanation for the origin of badness. He resorted to the case that body did not act according to nature but was controlled by its pursuit of external things. He said,
Therefore Mencius regarded all these bodies and shapes as lovely and beautiful. All bad shapes and bodies were not bad indeed. Badness just arose from the untimely and imprudent actions when human beings were misled in the process of interacting with things. For this reason, the fondness of courage, property and women was the manifestation of heavenly virtue and the Kingly Way if their issuance followed nature; while the feelings of compassion, shame, courtesy and right and wrong would turn into badness if their issuance followed external things instead of nature. (CSQS 6-960)

Here, Wang Fuzhi proposed that badness arose when man interacted with external things untimely and imprudently. To do that timely and prudently, the key was to interact according to nature or principle instead of desires and external things. Pushing further, he indicated that following nature or not was the criterion to determine the goodness and badness of all bodily behaviors. Through following nature, the so-called bad behaviors would become good. Failing to do so, the so-called good behaviors would turn into bad. Wang made this idea clearer:

Although what the whole world regard as bad, such as the fondness of property and women, will cause no badness if they are issued properly, and will have no goodness if they are issued improperly….Therefore loving property and beauty is not sufficient to cause badness; badness rises when one’s eyes indulge in property and beauty imprudently, and want to pursue them when they are present. (CSQS 6-961)

Then Wang Fuzhi prescribed the method to avoid the rise of badness. This was to fill body with heavenly nature, not to let body function freely. If one just lets body function by itself, what one obtained was only the bodily activities, but would be blind to nature or the rule of bodily activities. Then, one would get lost in one’s desires and external things, and commit badness inevitably.

4.4.2 The Unity of Desires and Principle

After proposing to see desires as the necessary mechanism of the substantial *qi* of the Great Void, Wang Fuzhi further claimed that ritual propriety (heavenly principle) was also from the transformation of *qi*—the interaction of *yin* and *yang*, and thus concluded that there was no principle beyond desires. He said,
Ritual propriety in human nature is the fruit when \textit{yin} and \textit{yang} give rise to the Five Constancies. When \textit{yin} and \textit{yang} produce the Five Constancies, it is through the change of \textit{yin} and its union with \textit{yang}. For instance, humanity and ritual propriety rise when one \textit{yang} unites with the changed \textit{yin}; \ldots Hence, ritual propriety as the pattern of heavenly principle must manifest itself through human desires. (CSQS 6-910-911)

“The Five Constancies” referred to humanity, righteousness, ritual propriety, wisdom and trustworthiness in Neo-Confucianism. Since they were the content of human nature that was regarded as derived from the principle of \textit{yin-yang} and the Five Elements, they could not exist beyond desires which were the mechanism of \textit{yin-yang} and the material of human body. In this way, Wang Fuzhi justified the unity of principle and desires ontologically from their same origin—the interaction of \textit{yin} and \textit{yang} and the Five Elements of the universe.

Now that principle could not exist beyond desires, unquestionably it was infeasible to seek principle apart from desires, and neither was it permissible to get rid of desires. Thus, one must seek principle within desires and think how to realize desires properly. With this in mind, Wang Fuzhi had many remarks on the unity of human desires and principle, which later scholars were fond of. For example, Wang said,

The sage has desires, yet his desires are heavenly principle…Scholars have both principle and desires. When principle is realized, it matches human desires. When desires are extended, they meet heavenly principle. So it is evident that the fulfillment of each desire is the common good/\textit{da tong 大同} of heavenly principle; the common good/\textit{da tong 大同} of heavenly principle has no difference from human desires. (CSQS 6-639)

This passage made distinctions between the sage and scholars (ordinary people) on how they dealt with the relation between desires and principle. The sage could issue his feelings and desires naturally in due measure, and thus his desires were indeed identical with principle. (Here Wang Fuzhi followed Xunzi. (\textit{Xunzi} 27.14)) Ordinary people could not fulfill their desires in due measure spontaneously, so their desires were not always in accordance with heavenly principle. To unite their desires with principle, they should fully understand principle and extend their desires to other people. If a person accomplished this, he would fulfill his desires properly and the realm of the unity of desires and principle would be achieved.
From the above arguments, it can be seen that Wang Fuzhi did not think that desires and principle were in unity in ordinary people. (This was different from his ontological argument that desires and principle were one or in unity.) In order to distinguish ordinary people’s desires from the sage’s, Wang Fuzhi coined the term “gongyu (universal desire)”, and insisted that only universal desire was identical with principle. In other words, the sage’s desires were born to be universal desires and so identical with principle. But ordinary people’s desires were not born to be universal desires, and must be disciplined before they were able to identical with principle. Wang stated,

The common desires in the world are principle. What everyone can get fulfilled individually is common. (CSQS 12-191)

The universal share of human desires is the perfect rightness of heavenly principle. (CSQS 7-137)

From these sentences, universal desires referred to the desires that everyone could have and fulfill individually. If so, they should be the basic needs and satisfaction of human beings. This was verified by the following quotation.

Among these sound, color, smell and taste, one broadly sees the common desires of the myriad things, and these common desires are the common principle of the myriad things. (CSQS 6-911)

Sound, color, smell and taste were the basic and universal need for human body. Through them universal desires were manifested, so it was obvious that Wang Fuzhi regarded universal desires as basic biological need and satisfaction. To some degree, the satisfaction of these basic needs could be regarded as the basic right of survival, and thus matched the principle of life or humanity. Therefore, it was identical with heavenly principle for heavenly principle was nothing but the principle of life. In consideration that humanity or the principle of life took compassion as its manifestation, Wang Fuzhi’s description of the mind of compassion made this point more clearly. He said,

The mind of compassion originates from the qi of the Great Harmony. If I have this mind, others will desire it too. To unite the common desire of the whole world and not to go
against the right course of *yin* and *yang*, the perverse people will be thus changed. (CSQS 12-157)

Here, Wang Fuzhi assumed the mind of compassion as the universal desire that all people sought for. This universal desire not only identified with heavenly principle (humanity), but also transformed perverse people to good ones. Now, it became clear that in Wang’s discourse, the unity of desire and principle was the unity of universal desire with principle, and the universal desire was the mind of compassion and the basic right of survival. In other words, those desires that did not show humanity or the principle of life would not be universal desire.

However, to make readers confused, Wang Fuzhi also had arguments that denied the existence of universal desire. In *Siwen Lu*, he said,

> There is universal principle, no universal desire. Only after selfish desire was completely eliminated, did heavenly principle prevail, and then desires could be regarded universal. If principle prevailed in the world, it will be able to satisfy desires of the whole world. If one tries to share his desires with other people, he will fail inevitably. (CSQS 12-406)

On the outside, these sentences went against previous affirmations of the existence of universal desires. Actually they did not. In the previous paragraph, universal desire referred to the mind of compassion and the basic right of human survival, which already met heavenly principle. Here, Wang Fuzhi insisted “Only after selfish desire was completely eliminated, did heavenly principle prevail, and then desires could be regarded universal.” In essence, they were same from the point of matching heavenly principle. Then the “universal desire” Wang denied here referred to another kind of desire, i.e. to share one’s desire with others without respect of principle. Wang Fuzhi’s discussion on popular like and dislike clarified this point. He said,

> “To collect what they desire; to stop what they dislike.” However, ordinary men and women seek for fast and near-sighted interest. When this habit became popular, it looks like universal like and dislike but actually not. It needs to be corrected by noblemen….Hence, there is universal principle, no universal desires. Universal desire is only the illusory popular habit. (CSQS 12-428)
It seemed that ordinary people’s desires for food and sex were universal desire, however Wang Fuzhi denied them. The reason was that ordinary people did not know the due measure or heavenly principle to govern their desires. It was only through complying with heavenly principle that universal desire could be realized.

4.4.3 The Inalienability of Desires to Human Beings

Based on the unity of desire and principle, Wang Fuzhi criticized some Neo-Confucian scholars who imported Buddhist ideas into Confucianism and advocated seeking principle through eliminating desires. For example, Zhen Dexiu 真德秀 (1178-1235) evaluated Confucius’ disciples according to the degree of eliminating desires, and claimed, “Master Yan (Yan Hui) had no desire; and the rest disciples had few desires.” (CSQS 6-673) This meant that having no desire would be superior to having few desires for Yan Hui was regarded superior in virtue to other disciples. In response, Wang Fuzhi argued,

The extant learning of Confucius and Yan Hui in the Six Classics and the Four Books mainly requires student to preserve heavenly principle. When have they treated desires as snakes and scorpions, must draw a clear line from these desires and let them die thousand times? (CSQS 6-673)

For Wang Fuzhi, once heavenly principle was preserved, one would be able to apply it to desires and make the issuance of desires properly. Therefore, it was unnecessary to get rid of desires in order to achieve the sageliness.

In order to avoid confusion, Wang Fuzhi further defined the term “no desire” in Confucian works, and interpreted it as “the desire meeting principle”. He said,

Thus a nobleman has no desire and does not deviate from principle. There is no other reason, for his eyes, ears, mouth and body stop at their proper places, and do not show other people special favors. (CSQS 11-67)

This quotation indicates that if one stopped the desires of his eyes, ears, mouth and body at their proper place and did not have the desire to show off, one would be called “no desire”. In this
sense, “no desire” did not mean getting rid of desire at all, but the proper satisfaction of desires within their limit.

After having clarified the meaning of “no desire”, Wang Fuzhi continued criticizing the idea of “less desire”. He thought of desire as the power and drive for human achievements. Without desires, one would not be able to make great contribution to the world. If a sagely king did not have desires, he would not be able to extend his humanity and contribute benefit to the people. If Confucius had not had the desire to establish the civilization of Zhou kingdom in the east, he would not have become the sage. (CSQS 6-899) For this reason, Wang made a distinction between the proper desires and selfish desires, and insisted the latter be eliminated. In his understanding, selfish desires mainly focused on the pleasure of body and organs, such as the fat meat and sweet sugar and wine, instead of the concern of human welfare as a whole. At this point, Wang Fuzhi continued Confucian tradition that defined proper desires as the fulfillment of basic need for survival and human welfare and selfish desires as the individual pleasure without concern about other people.

Based on his argument for desire as the drive for achievements, Wang Fuzhi criticized those people who valued “less desires”, and said,

I fear that those who look light desires will look light principle too, and those who are unwilling to receive world affairs will be unwilling to undertake them too. (CSQS 3-374)

It was true that Wang Fuzhi rightly pointed out the incurable weakness of Neo-Confucians which looked down world affairs but satisfied themselves in the promotion of moral virtues with few desires. Principle was naturally one with desires, how could one not look down principle when looking down desires? World affairs needed desires to be accomplished, how could one get them done with few desires? From this aspect, it could be said that Wang Fuzhi adopted a practical approach toward world affairs and desires and thus differentiated himself from previous Neo-Confucians despite the fact that he inherited a lot of ideas from them.

Now that desires were inalienable to both noblemen and ordinary people on the one hand, and were crucial to the undertaking of world affairs, it was obviously infeasible to eliminate or lessen them. Then, the proper way to dispose desires was not to eliminate or repress desires, but to
fulfill them properly. To realize this purpose, one must use principle to govern desires. Wang said,

    Using righteousness to govern profit and using principle to govern desires, heavenly principle will reside in desires. Heavenly principle prevails, and thus through complying with it, sound, color, goods and profit all reach their right points. (CSQS 1-355)

It goes without saying that principle referred to ritual propriety. Hence, the criterion to determine one’s indulgence or due measure in utilizing things and fulfilling desires was not his subjective and biological need, but ritual propriety. In this way, Wang Fuzhi inserted ritual propriety into human desires and turned the ontological principle-desire relation into the social ritual-desire relation.

Wang’s appreciation of desires distinguished him from his Neo-Confucian predecessors. It not only secured desires a proper place in human life, but also gave students a clear way to deal with material welfare and thus avoid hypocrisy in moral practice. From this point of view, the acknowledgement and proper issuance of desires could lead people to deal with desires more reasonably, and thus bring social custom more healthy.

4.4.4 How to Regulate Desires

Based on the inalienability of desires to principle, Wang Fuzhi did not advocate preserving principle through eliminating desires. Although he proposed to regulate desires, he also warned to do it cautiously. In his view, desires were the manifested signs of heavenly principle. If they were repressed at the beginning, there would be no chance to realize heavenly principle. He said,

    [Desires] are the incipient sign of the movement of human mind and the innate ability to manifest heavenly nature…As for the way to repress desires and prevent badness, one should know that heavenly principle originally does not exist independently beyond human desires. If one repressed the incipient sign of desires, one would extinguish human feelings and not match the right course of heavenly principle, and thereby he would commit the mistake of stopping what ought not to be stopped. (CSQS 1-413-414)
Here, Wang seemed to make an analogy of desires with plant sprouts. At the beginning, one should let sprouts grow freely. Only after a due time, one would be able to cut out side-twigs and correct the plant. If one worked on the sprouts too early, it would cause the plant to die very likely. Likewise, desires were the body to manifest principle. If desires were not strong enough, principle would fail to be manifested. Then Wang proposed the right way to regulate desires, i.e. waiting until the time desires reached due point. He said,

After the pliant *yin* (desires) has reached its proper points, one has extinguished evil intention within but has not been able to be purely good without, then one sticks firmly to principle and prevent tiny and subtle mistakes. That is a good way to regulate desires. (CSQS 1-414)

This indicated that desires at their beginning were not bad and should not be repressed arbitrarily. They became bad only when becoming excessive. The right point to regulate desires was to find the right time and prevent them from overflowing. This right time was when evil intention had not arisen within while desires were influenced by external things. Then one applied principle to desires and prevent them from going to the excess. Because the problem was to prevent external influence, ritual propriety became the best way to follow.

Hence, it was evident that Wang Fuzhi required the proper realization of desires rather than their elimination. Instead of repressing desires, his concern became how to moderate desires and make them proper. To moderate desires needed to know principle clearly, so preserving principle instead of repressing desires became the prime concern. Wang first indicated the shortcoming of repressing desires prior to preserving principle, and said,

In learning, if one starts from repressing desires and does it with all his strength, on the shallow level, one can avoid the practice of competition, boasting, resentments, and covetousness; on the deep level, one will fall into nirvana. (CSQS 6-793)

According to Confucius, if one could avoid the practice of competition, boasting, resentments, and covetousness, one could be regarded bravery, but still far from humane. Why? If a person did not have any desires, he would not be able to do good things, how could he be regarded as humane. The purpose of Confucianism was to promote humanity. This was why the arbitrary
repression of desires was infeasible. On the contrary, if one had principle in mind and used it to guide desires, one would not fear their excess. Wang argued,

Using righteousness to govern profit, using ritual propriety to govern desires, and using serious attention to govern laziness, there will no *yin* (desires) that one is not able to deal with. (CSQS 1-363)

Then, he concluded,

So in learning, one must preserve principle first, and then can one repress desires. (CSQS 6-793)

Based on the above ideas, Wang Fuzhi started criticizing Fu Guang 輔廣, a disciple of Zhu Xi, and said,

Qingyuan (Fu Guang) said, “Only after desires are completely wiped out does heavenly principle prevail.” There is a big problem in this saying. From the perspective of substance, if there were no heavenly principle filling in one’s mind, what will be the master to prevent the rise of human desires? From the perspective of function, at the place where heavenly principle does not prevail, one has to do human affairs. Once one does so, one has to do them with human desires. As a result, it is impossible to get human desires completely wiped out. (CSQS 6-762-763)

This passage indicated the impossibility that heavenly principle prevailed after human desires were completely eliminated. It required one to fill the mind with principle first in order to guide desires. Only through abiding by principle, one could discern and get rid of selfish desires. Once principle has filled in the mind, desires (selfish desires) would not have room to occupy, then the prevention of selfish desires would be achieved without driving them away.

In short, ritual propriety (principle) must be present whatever one did. There should not be a time without ritual propriety, so the approach to the recovery of ritual propriety after having eliminated desires was infeasible. In this way, Wang Fuzhi distinguished Confucian moral cultivation from Buddhist discipline. Buddhism aimed to extinguish desires, and thereby reached a realm of emptiness. Therefore, he criticized Zhu Xi’s idea to remove the root of desires completely. As Wang said, if there were no desires, one would not be able to interact with
concrete things that activated seeing, hearing, speaking and moving. Then, one would not be a human being any longer, and neither be able to find the true rule or principle of conducts. Then all human self-cultivation would become empty and useless because of its separation from reality. For this sake, he painstakingly warned again and again the unfeasibility of eliminating desires.
Chapter 5 The Kingly Way: the Ideal Polity

The Kingly Way/wangdao 王道 was humane governance and institutions carried out by the so-called Confucian sagely kings in Xia, Shang and Zhou Dynasties. It was Wang Fuzhi’s ultimate concern and practice of his doctrines on the Great Harmony, humanity and human nature. The doctrine of the Great Harmony justified humanity and goodness of human nature ontologically, while the theories on human nature and humanity further paved the way to humane governance. Once a ruler or a scholar sincerely cultivated his mind and nature, he would be able to carry out humane governance and beautify customs spontaneously. Then, he would not only help preserve the Great Harmony but also extend humanity to the world. This had been called inner sageliness leading to outer kingliness. This was an epitome of Wang Fuzhi’s system and could be summarized with his following remarks,

When a nobleman teaches, he must trace the origin of human nature to heavenly mandate; he must establish sageliness as the goal of learning, and follow the Kingly Way to govern the world. (CSQS 8-750)

In this chapter, we will investigate the meaning and possibility of the Kingly Way in Wang Fuzhi’s works.

5.1 The Meaning and Content of the Kingly Way

5.1.1 The Meaning of the Kingly Way

Generally, the Kingly Way was regarded as the governance and institutions of Confucian sagely kings such as Yao 堯, Shun 舜, Yu 禹, Tang of Shang 商湯, Wen and Wu of Zhou 周文周武. However, Wang Fuzhi did not provide a clear definition of the Kingly Way though he kept on discussing it. From his discussions, it could be inferred that he regarded it as humane governance and institutions. At one place, he regarded the Kingly Way as King Wen and King Wu’s governance and institutions in the Zhou Dynasty. (CSQS 7-172) At another place, he indicated the prime concern of the Kingly Way was humanity and righteousness through comparing it with the Way of Despot/badao 霸道. (CSQS 8-878) He also followed Mencius to endorse the idea
that the way to protect people and to rule over the world was nothing but humanity. (CSQS 8-67), and believed that the way of Yao and Shun was humanity only. (CSQS 8-420) Hence, the Kingly Way should be identical with the application of humanity in governance in his works.

Because filial piety and fraternal love were considered as the root of humanity, Wang Fuzhi further stated that the way of Yao and Shun was the practice of filial piety and fraternal love, and thus based the Kingly Way on the sagely and humane mind. He stated,

Truly the way of Yao and Shun is broad; however it can be nothing else but [filial piety and fraternal love]. When one extends his natural conscience of knowing love and respect and carries out the unbearable and commiserate matters, one will consequently achieve the lofty virtue and great accomplishment which settle the world orderly and are as bright and perspicacious as Heaven and earth. (CSQS 8-762)

As shown in this quotation, Wang Fuzhi believed that the Kingly Way was a logical extension of one’s innate knowledge. This innate knowledge was the knowledge of loving parents and respecting brothers. His idea was to extend this knowledge to all human beings and realize it in all activities, then one would be able to accomplish great virtue and feats. Thus, it was evident that Wang Fuzhi subsumed the Kingly Way within the humaneness of human mind, and affirmed his belief that sageliness within could lead to the realization of kingliness outside. In this way, he connected self-cultivation, especially the rectification of mind, with the governance of state, and regarded mind as the pivotal of governance. The following quotation makes this relation clearer.

With regard to the perfect way of governance, if one seeks it in the Book of Documents first, and complements it with Confucius’ words, then nothing will be superior to it. Its pivot is the seriousness or recklessness of the monarch’s mind; its forbiddance is laziness, negligence and harshness, tiredness of those who do not reach the standard, and hastiness of those who go beyond the standard. Its great function is to recruit worthy people and establish schools; and its application to ordinary people is love, humanity and fulfillment of their need. (CSQS 10-1179)

This passage indicated that Wang Fuzhi sought the Kingly Way or the perfect way of governance not in reality but in ancient books—the Book of Documents and the Analects. He defined it from two aspects. From the inner aspect, it depended on the ruler’s mind; from the outer aspect, it
manifested as educating the people with worthy scholars and loving them through satisfying their need. However, the inner was the pivot of the Way, while the outer was only the application of the inner.

Furthermore, Wang Fuzhi regarded this way of governance as the eternal, universal and efficient way of governance despite the change of time and place. He continued,

Then, for the governance of the world at Emperors Tang 唐 and Yu 虞 Period, the Three Dynasties, the time since Qin and Han dynasties, and nowadays, all can be inferred or extended from this principle/pattern; for recruiting officials, assigning tax and labor, maneuvering wars, specifying penalty and reward, and establishing ceremonies and rituals, all depend on this to achieve their suitability. (CSQS 10-1180)

In other words, Wang Fuzhi regarded the cultivation of humane mind and its application to governance as the eternal and universal governing way. With a humane mind as the guiding rule, one would be able to govern any society at any time and deal with any affairs properly. This became more evident when he concluded, “There is not another Kingly Way out of mind.” (CSQS 6-908)

Obviously, Wang Fuzhi committed the mistake to simplify the governance of a real state. On the one hand, the extension of humanity needed wisdom and rituals as Wang Fuzhi admitted, which in turn must take account of real situations. Therefore, a rectified and humane mind was far from enough to govern the world well. On the other hand, the Kingly Way or humane governance was only Confucian scholars’ imposition on ancient kings. The legendary emperors were unclear to us, but the records on King Wu of Zhou showed that he did not solely rely on humane governance. King Wu of Zhou was condemned by two famous hermits of his time, Bo Yi 伯夷 and Shu Qi 叔齐 to seize the throne with force. How could he be regarded as practicing humanity? Moreover, Confucian scholars’, especially Mencius’ simplification of governance as purely the extension of humanity led to the impracticability of their proposal and the pedantry of their teaching. However, due to their proposal of education and ritual propriety which helped maintain social order, Confucianism was ordained as national ideology. But finally, it destroyed social order again with the pedantic and incompetent scholar-officials’ misgovernance.
Wang Fuzhi seemed to have realized the inadequacy of a humane mind to perfect governance too. Although he regarded mind as the pivot of the Kingly Way, he also emphasized the concrete measures in administration. This was shown in his emphasis on the adaptation of the Kingly Way to real situations and the role of ritual propriety in governance. He argued,

What the ancient kings used to enjoy spirits and human beings and correct ministers and ordinary people is rituals; …what they used to welcome dark and bright spirits and transform custom is music. (CSQS 7-917)

In consideration of such supreme role of ritual propriety, Wang Fuzhi exclaimed,

Since ancient times, what emperors and kings governed and taught people in the world was only ritual propriety; when later generations followed the way of past kings and set up the standard of human Way, it too was only ritual propriety. (CSQS 7-329)

At this point, the Kingly Way unraveled from the mind of humanity to ritual propriety. It was with ritual propriety that the sagely kings and later generations governed the world well and established the norms and rules for human beings. In this way, Wang Fuzhi justified ritual propriety as the Kingly Way and completed his apologetic argument for Confucianism.

In summary, the Kingly Way was the Way of humanity and manifested as ritual propriety. When one realized the Way of humanity in his mind, one had sagely virtue. When this sagely virtue was applied to the world, it became the Kingly Way or humane governance. From the point of cultivating virtue, one should keep one’s mind sincere and serious and comply with ritual propriety; from the point of governing the world, one should show respect and love to all people, be serious about all matters and comply with ritual propriety. In this way, the sage united inner sageliness and outer kingliness, or in other words, accomplished outer kingliness on the basis of inner sageliness.

5.1.2 Virtue as the Essence of the Kingly Way

Wang Fuzhi’s emphasis on humanity led him to regard virtue as the essence of the Kingly Way for virtue was the realization of humanity. As the realization of humanity lay in the peace of mind and acted according to the voice of conscience which could adapt to situations freely and
was the origin of righteousness and ritual propriety, Wang Fuzhi thus suggested to inherit the previous sagely kings’ virtue instead of their Way/dao, i.e., rituals and institutions, and claimed, “The sagely kings establish institutions and put them in practice, but they pass on virtues instead of Way/dao.” (CSQS 2-395) In Wang’s regard, if one grasped their virtue, one would be able to carry out the Kingly Way in consideration that the former was the essence of the latter. Hence, he argued, “Yao and Shun’s governance resulted from their ways. Their ways in turn originated from their virtues.” (CSQS 11-153) On the contrary, if a ruler just imitated their methods and institutions/dao without grasping their essence, he would not be able to adapt them to his own situation and solve real problems. Wang continued,

Thousand sages’ teachings and thousand kings’ governance were all carried out according to Heaven and man. They graded or moderated, divided or united the world. Thus, if a person who establishes institutions for a generation does not ponder on his end so as to make beginning good, but just imitates past kings rigidly, then he will go against the way suitable for his own time even if he imitates the ways of past kings. Just as a sailor hoists sail downstream in order to imitate those who hoist their sails upstream. (CSQS 2-395)

This passage indicated that all previous teachings and governance were suitable for their specific time and situations. The emulation of previous sagely kings was not to copy their methods and institutions mechanically, but to use them creatively, i.e. to find inspiration from them for a better approach to one’s own situation. This required one to learn the essence, i.e. virtue with which previous kings enacted laws and institutions. Wang Fuzhi further supported this argument with comments on the loss of the Way of King Wen and King Wu of Zhou Dynasty. In his regard, the Kingly Way was put in practice and recorded by King Wen and King Wu of Zhou, but their descendents could not carry it out although they knew the methods and institutions from the record. The problem was that their descendents did not have the required virtue. (CSQS 7-172)

Wang’s argument on virtue and Way/dao shared much similarity with Zhuangzi’s attitude toward words and experience shown in the story of Wheeler Bian/lunbian 轮扁. (Zhang 1996: 341) In Zhuangzi’s words, the sage passed away together with his experience, while the book he left was no better than dirt. Wang Fuzhi also thought that the sagely kings went away with their Kingly Way, while the record about their governance had nothing to do with order and chaos of a
state. However, Wang Fuzhi did not completely deny the value of record; instead he thought it still carried on the ancient kings’ “essential meaning/jingyi 精義”. Undoubtedly, the essential meaning consisted in the past kings’ virtue, or their humane concern. He stated,

To achieve good governance before chaos, to secure state before the emergence of threat, this is the great strategy from the past. Specifically, it is to maintain one’s throne with humanity, and to govern the world with righteousness. It is a principle which cannot be changed even after it goes through thousand years. As for the institutions of classifying officials, Zhou Dynasty already made changes on those of Shang Dynasty; Shang also did on those of Yu and Xia Dynasties. The world has changed, custom has transformed, function has finished and unexpected consequences have emerged. How can they be inherited without distinction? (CSQS 2-396)

This passage contrasted essence with institutions and indicated that humanity and righteousness would last forever while institutions must change according to time and situation. Thus a later ruler should inherit the humanity and righteousness that ancient kings governed the world, while modified previous institutions and ways of governance according to new situations. At this point, it was clear that the virtue transferred were humanity and righteousness, and the Way he referred to was those good institutions and administrative measures.

After having justified the prime role of virtue to the Kingly Way, Wang Fuzhi continued describing the transformative power of virtue—the realization of the Kingly Way. He stated,

Whom the subject emulated was the ruler. That by which the ruler changed the people’s mind and brought them to Way/dao was his own virtue….If the ruler purified his mind and had no desire, and what he implemented was nothing but the virtue of love and nourishment/yang 養, then the superior and the inferior would love each other, and filial piety, friendliness and harmony would expand, and all people without exception would become humane. If the ruler truly loved righteousness and became unselfish, what he carried out met due measure, then name and honor would be established, uprightness, magnanimity and impartiality would be accomplished, and no one would be unrighteous. Therefore, one should not worry about the degeneration of custom; one should worry
whether or not the ruler was setting up humanity and righteousness as the foundation of education and governance. (CSQS 8-495)

In Wang’s belief, if a ruler could educate and govern the people with humanity and righteousness, i.e., with virtue, even degenerative customs and greedy persons could be transformed into good ones. Therefore, a ruler should not worry about the degeneration of the people and customs, but he should worry about the degree he aimed to educate and govern the people with humanity and righteousness.

Following Confucius, Wang Fuzhi named the Kingly Way or humane governance as wuwei (non-action). He said,

To govern people with virtue but call it motionlessness and non-action, it means that the ruler does not rely on reward, persuasion, penalty and coercion while people will rectify themselves automatically. (CSQS 6-595)

This meant that the Confucian understanding of non-action was to transform the people with humanity and righteousness rather than govern them with administrative measures. Wang’s following remark made this point clearer:

Keeping oneself respectful is cultivating one’s own virtue. Sitting in facing south (being a ruler) is governing the people. All these are the ruler’s regular tasks, and should not be called active governance. (CSQS 6-822)

Now that it could not be called active governance if a ruler governed the people with virtue, the Confucian non-action apparently differentiated from Daoist non-action. For Daoist non-action, it was to follow natural principle, and let everything govern itself without interference. For example, in the Zhuangzi, it analogized the ruler as a twig above while the people were roaming deer below. The ruler was nothing more than a symbol of governance and actually did nothing. In contrast, Confucian non-action required the ruler to cultivate his own virtue first and then use it to transform the people.

However, one might ask how a ruler could cultivate virtue if it was humanity or the voice of innate knowledge. To solve this problem, Wang Fuzhi seemed to resort to two approaches. One
was to practice filial piety and fraternal love which was the root of humanity. The other was the fulfillment of human nature in terms of its identity with humanity. For example, Wang remarked,

In my human nature there is innately this virtue of humanity and wisdom. If I can complete my human nature, I will be able to complete my virtue. (CSQS7-196)

However, both approaches required one to discipline oneself with ritual propriety which was regarded as the Way/dao. Although Wang Fuzhi might defend his standpoint by claiming that ritual propriety was only a means to facilitate and strengthen the cultivation of virtue, he nevertheless did not provide a clear relation between innate knowledge and ritual propriety, or virtue and Way/dao, but he swayed between the two extremes. That is, sometime, he gave virtue and innate knowledge the absolute power and therefore stood on Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming’s side; sometime, he again emphasized the compliance with ritual propriety as crucial to virtue and humanity and criticized the doctrine of innate knowledge. This disclosed his inconsistency in the attempt to merge Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge with Zhu Xi’s emphasis on compliance with ritual propriety.

5.1.3 Inner Sageliness Leading to Outer Kingliness

Wang Fuzhi firmly believed the Kingly Way was the necessary outcome of inner sageliness or virtue. This idea ran through all his reinterpretations of the Confucian classics. In his understanding, if one had sagely virtue within, one would inevitably implement kingly governance outside. As virtue was identical with humanity and humanity manifested as the mind of commiseration, Wang Fuzhi concluded that the mind of commiseration could protect the four seas and achieved the Kingly Way. He stated,

If one has the mind of commiseration, one will not worry the lack of method to carry it out. Mind has only one sprout of humanity, but has countless methods to extend it. Therefore, at the moment of the rise of commiseration inside, one does not lose this true nature, then the pattern and principle in the mind will be enough to protect the four seas and exclude nothing from his beneficence. (CSQS 8-76)

Here, Wang Fuzhi regarded the mind of commiseration as the source of the Kingly Way, and subsumed the Kingly Way completely under inner sageliness. That is, the mind of
commiseration would automatically give rise to the methods to extend it and then achieved the Kingly Way in the world. In his commentary on the *Mencius*, Wang repeated this idea many times. For examples, he stated,

Methods are not beyond humanity, while humanity is contained in all methods completely. (CSQS 8-72)

If the king can extend humanity in his governance, the humanity in his mind is adequate. The methods or strategies naturally existing in this humanity is governance. (CSQS 8-81)

These showed that human mind already contained the ways and methods to govern the world humanely because it had humanity innately and could give rise to the methods of governing automatically. Hence, for Wang Fuzhi, the realization of the Kingly Way was not to investigate the real situations, but to make the mind completely humane. Once this was done, the Kingly Way would prevail spontaneously. For this reason, he highly praised Mencius’ doctrine of humane governance, and concluded that the prosperity and decline of a state were determined by the ruler’s mind. It was in the mind that the Kingly Way resided. He concluded,

At this point, it is evident that inner sageliness and outer kingliness share the same principle, and the life and death of people in the world depend on the king’s mind. (CSQS 8-86)

There is no other Kingly Way out of mind. (CSQS 6-908)

Obviously, Wang Fuzhi not only regarded outer kingliness and inner sageliness as being governed by the same principle, but also put them in the mind. As a result, both the cultivation of mind and the governance of the world were contained and determined by the mind. Hence, Wang Fuzhi exaggerated the power of the mind or humanity in the realization of the Kingly Way.

Now that human mind already had the Kingly Way inside, the problem lay in the fact that to what degree human mind could give rise to the Kingly Way. Evidently, Wang Fuzhi did not think that everyone could give rise to the Kingly Way spontaneously. It was only an impartial and sincere mind that could issue the Kingly Way properly as was shown in his interpretation of the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*. Thus, it was only a theoretical possibility and idealistic description that mind gave rise to the Kingly Way in terms of the fact that everyone
had a mind of humanity. In other words, if one truly hoped to carry out the Kingly Way, the first prerequisite was to rectify his mind. This explained why Wang Fuzhi talked so much about the rectification of mind and sincerity of intentions.

When one truly accomplished the perfect state of mind, one would maintain integrity and centrality within, while behaved harmoniously without. This was the accomplished personality specified in the *Doctrine of the Mean*. In Wang Fuzhi’s view, the mean was the very virtue that united inner sageliness and Kingly Way. This virtue was passed down from Yao and Shun, inherited by the kings of the Three Dynasties, and became the necessary principle for all later rulers. It internally contained the great function to unite man and Heaven, to cultivate human personality and govern state. He elaborated further on this,

The sages in ancient times, based on their perfect endowment of nature, did the works of preserving human nature and examining human mind, and achieved the supreme state of their self-governance and secret deposit/neizhi micang zhi jizhi 内治密藏之極致. As a result, when they expressed this deposit in matters that ought to be done daily, they could always meet the principle of centrality and due measure, without excess or deficiency. Specifically, what is deposited is sincerity, what is achieved is wisdom, humanity and courage; what is manifested is words and practice; what is applied to the world is music, ritual and administration. Thus, they reached the highest point of transformation and achievement, and united their virtue with that of Heaven and earth. Then people and things all accepted their governance. Their perfect virtue of uniting inner and outer is named as the Mean.

(CSQS 7-104)

In Wang Fuzhi’s understanding, to achieve the Kingly Way, the ancient sages firstly cultivated their goodness or humanity to a perfect state. Then, they would be able to act properly not only in their personal activities but also in their governance of the world. As a result, their inner virtue exerted its power to transform the people and to unite Heaven and man.

Moreover, Wang Fuzhi exaggerated the function of the sage’s virtue as a magic power. In his regard, if a nobleman had virtue inside, he would not depend much on administrative measures such as laws and education in governing the world. What he needed was only to maintain a
peaceful mind and adhere to heavenly principle; then the expression in his countenance and behavior would automatically be emulated by his officials and subjects. He described,

Regarding the nobleman’s manifested virtue it was more than the transcendence of the measures of punishment and reward. Although he administers them, he does not rely on administrative measures; although he educates the people, he does not put too much importance on it. Thus, the nobleman cares only to maintain his mind completely in complying with heavenly principle in movement and rest. Then what is deposited inside shows no trace of cultivation; while what manifests outside is only the countenance of seriousness and respect. His ideas succeed each other, and his mind maintains continuity, and he keeps honest, benevolent and deferent, and nothing else. Then, all officials will regard him as a model; all tribute kingdoms will be transformed by his manner, and the world is thereby put in order. (CSQS 7-239)

Here, Wang identified the nobleman as the sage for he regarded a nobleman as the pure Confucian scholar who sought for sageliness persistently and methodically. (CSQS 1-503) If the nobleman had sagely virtue inside, he would be able to transform the world spontaneously through the power of virtue, and all measures of education and administration would seem unnecessary. What he needed was only to maintain his mind peaceful and his idea constant, then his countenance and manners of respect and seriousness would affect all people around the world.

If these descriptions of the power of virtue were not enough to prove that Wang Fuzhi regarded the sagely king as a magician, the following paragraph confirms that he truly thought so. Here, he compared a nobleman with a sage so as to show the sage’s magic power. He said,

When a nobleman purifies people’s bad habits and customs and leads them to good, he must use measures to transform them. He must discipline and educate them, so that they will be transformed. Then his transformation will have a limit, and cannot make the whole world adopt the same custom. The sagely king will be different. When he travels through his state, or visits the suburbs of his capital, his subject will have been transformed…When he thinks people are not easy to become deferent, then there should be someone to come out, embody the king’s intention, and lead the people to be deferent; when he thinks Heaven not easy to get touched, then Heaven will respond, carry out his plan, and make
people healthy. All these are beyond the influence of model and education, for model and education rise afterward. (CSQS 8-842-843)

Wang Fuzhi thought the sage would transform the people through telepathy instead of concrete means. Once the sage had an idea or intention, his subject, minister or Heaven would notice it and get it done. At this degree, the sage even abandoned the traditional approach of education and transformation, but just barely depended on his mind or intention. Who could deny that this sage was a magician?

Wang Fuzhi also tried to give a theoretical explanation of the sagely king’s magic power. This was the interaction of vital force/\(qi\). In other words, this was his theory that one would move not only human beings but also Heaven if one reached the perfect sincerity of mind, and completely united with heavenly principle. He argued,

For the nobleman’s [sage king’s] mind is the same as the people’s mind in the world, so the \(qi\) of Heaven and earth will automatically respond the nobleman’s \(qi\)…There is no other reason. The nobleman has no desire and shares the same body with Heaven and earth, so he can follow the principle of ten thousand things, and carry out penalty and reward without any calculation. He preserves sincerity and shares the same function with Heaven and earth, so he can communicate with the will of people in the world, and establishes rituals and music. (CSQS 8-844)

In other words, the sage or nobleman could transform the world with his virtue spontaneously because he shared the same mind and \(qi\) with them. According to the mechanism that things belonging to the same \(qi\) would respond to each other, the nobleman and sage’s intention would spontaneously be felt by the people and Heaven, and get their response. The pivotal point for this was that the nobleman or sage purified their mind to have no desires but complied with heavenly principle completely, thus they could communicate with people and Heaven magically in a sense.

However, when coming back to reality, especially when commenting on Confucius’ failure in politics, Wang Fuzhi had to admit the fact that inner sageliness still had its limit. That is, whether sageliness could give rise to the Kingly Way depended not only on inner virtue, but also on the time and situation. If one had sagely virtue but did not live in the right time, then one had to
listen to the mercy of fate. At this point, the sage’s magic power would fade into nothing. Wang said,

Regarding the person who fulfills his nature and makes use of his virtue and ability to accomplish great feats, his success and failure, gain or loss will be determined by Heaven (fate), and he has no control over it. The sage is the most perfect one of all human beings, and should be endowed with the mandate of Heaven. However, no one can go against Heaven. So the sage knows only human nature, and does not care about the reception of mandate. Although there is the difference of rise and fall in a sage’s virtue, it nevertheless matches the Way. (CSQS 8-954)

One might ask Wang Fuzhi, how Heaven could not give the mandate to the sage based on his words, “When the sage thinks Heaven is not easy to get touched, Heaven will respond, carry out his plan, and make people healthy”? Wang Fuzhi would be dumbfounded.

Moreover, a reader could ridicule Wang Fuzhi further with his own criticism of Zhu Xi and Buddhism. Previously, Wang argued that the sage must use laws and measures to extend his humanity and put the world in order rather than establish them for later generations only. Then he rejoined,

If one thought that ancient sagely king established these laws and institutions for the sake of later generations, while when he governed, at a glimpse, square and circle would be determined; once hearing, the five notes would be discerned; once thinking, humanity would prevail in the world; then such a sage would be like the Buddhist who watched the world in ten directions as a fruit in the palm, once pressing his finger, the sea would shine, and everything would be accomplished. Such exaggerating words were inauspicious. (CSQS 6-987)

Apparently, Wang Fuzhi criticized some scholars who took the sage as a magician and able to transform the world effortlessly with his virtue and without relying on concrete laws and measures. He condemned them as imitating Buddhist scholars who favored telepathy to transform the world. However, a reader might ask Wang Fuzhi, would you include yourself among the people you criticized here? Did you not take the sage as a magician and as able to
transform the world with telepathy? This showed that Wang Fuzhi tried to but had not yet built a consistent system on Confucianism.

5.2 The Approaches to the Kingly Way: Inner Cultivation

Now that inner sageliness led to outer kinglyness, there was no doubt that self-cultivation played a critical role in the accomplishment of the Kingly Way. Besides rectifying mind, fulfilling nature and regulating desires discussed in Chapter 4, Wang Fuzhi prescribed several practical methods to achieve the Kingly Way, such as no desire/wuyu 無，unselfishness/gong 公，respect/jing 敬 and lenience/kuan 宽.

5.2.1 No Desire/wuyu 無欲

As aforementioned, the nobleman had no desire, thereby he could be one with Heaven and earth, comply with the principles of the myriad things and thus achieve the Kingly Way. (CSQS 8-844) However, in Wang Fuzhi’s discourse, no desire did not mean extinguishing all desires, but meant not having any selfish desire. As humanity was the sincere embodiment of heavenly principle and excluded any bit of selfish desire, no desire could be regarded as humanity too. In this way, Wang took no desire as the prerequisite of the Kingly Way. He said,

Having no desire, a ruler can start the Kingly Way…Hence, his humanity protects people in the world, but he does not aim to retain the throne; his achievement is well-known in the world, but he does not aim to win people. With regard to the throne, either abdication or succession is fine with him. He just listens to the mandate of Heaven and people’s choice, and does not have any intention of his own. One day he stays on the throne, he will perform the work to govern the people on behalf of Heaven. (CSQS 7-551)

From this quotation, no desire meant that a ruler carried out his duty without any selfish concern and his activities were all concerned about public welfare. This showed that Wang Fuzhi borrowed Laozi’s thought to construct his Confucian system, for Laozi once said, “Dao accomplishes achievement but does not claim it. It sustains the myriad things but does not master
them.” (Laozi: 34) In other words, no desire required a person to become a complete altruist, and submit his own interest to the collective and public welfare.

Now that no desire put public welfare before individual interest, obviously it did not exclude practical measures to benefit the people. On the contrary, if one had desires to benefit the world, his desires would be equal to heavenly principle and humanity. For example, Guan Zhong (725-645BC) accomplished his desires through stopping the chaotic state of the world and letting people enjoy their lives. Then Confucius approved his achievement as humanity. For this reason, Wang Fuzhi did not agree with Mencius’ contempt of Guan Zhong, but insisted that Guan Zhong had realized humanity and partly accomplished the Kingly Way. He also showed different view from Mencius’ advocating few desires, and argued,

The Kingly Way indeed takes a pure mind and less desire as basis, yet it does not mean that living a simple life, having no desire, and forgetting external things are enough to extend beneficence to people in the four seas. (CSQS 8-118)

This indicated that no desire did not mean eliminating all desires but referred to having no selfish concern only. If a person did not have desires to undertake duties and benefit the world, his no-desire could only show his irresponsibility rather than help him to achieve the Kingly Way. From this point, Wang Fuzhi implicitly criticized Neo-Confucian tradition that looked down upon practical affairs through favoring few desires and indifference to the world.

In short, no-desire meant no selfish desire, but does not exclude altruistic desires. If one’s desire aimed to serve the public and matched heavenly principle, it automatically identified itself with no desire. This went back to Wang’s proposal to regulate desires with heavenly principle and ritual propriety. To some degree, it was through compliance with ritual propriety that no-desire became the prerequisite of the Kingly Way, and differed therefore from Daoist concept of no-desire.

5.2.2 Respect/jing 敬 and Tolerance/kuan 宽

As to ritual propriety, Wang Fuzhi urged his readers to comply with it with respect and modest. If one used ritual propriety to govern oneself properly, he would be able to govern the state easily. Wang argued,
A nobleman promotes ritual propriety through respect, prudence and modesty…. So he dare not to be arrogant to others, spendthrift in activity, and excessive in ceremony. He will naturally understand that the three hundred rituals and three thousand etiquettes are the certain rules of heavenly principle. Then when he cultivates himself and governs people, he will exhaust his own ambition, moderate his energy, do it modestly, and not allow a bit of discrepancy. In this way, he can match ritual propriety, and become at ease in governing state. (CSQS 6-635)

This showed that the crucial point to practice ritual propriety was to behave with respect, prudence and modesty. In this way, one would grasp the spirit of rituals and ceremonies and understand them as the manifested rules of heavenly principle. Then, the Kingly Way would be realized easily.

Wang Fuzhi’s emphasis on respect as the essence of rituals echoed Confucius’ idea in the Analects, where Confucius criticized his contemporaries who regarded the practice of rituals as merely the ceremony of presenting silk and jade while did not understand its essence—respect and sincerity. As a result, the Kingly Way of Zhou could not prevail. Wang Fuzhi embraced this idea and claimed, “The Way of sagely kings is nothing but respect.” (CSQS 11-240) In detail, the sagely king respected Heaven for he was its representative. He respected people in order to direct them to righteousness. He respected ministers in order to encourage them to faithfully carry out their duties and care for agriculture. Moreover, if a king could sincerely maintain respect, he would transform people automatically. Wang continued,

One poem of the Book of Odes said, if the person in charge of sacrifice (the king) fulfilled his sincerity and respect, unites with the formless spirits at the time of interaction, he would not need to order the staff, and they would by themselves carry out their duties at presentation and withdrawal and did not have the chaos of competition and hastiness. This proved that once a person accomplished sincerity and respect, the staff would spontaneously become solemn and elegant. Thus, now that there were no words, what was the need to warn them with penalty and reward in advance? Yet, people were moved as such by the ruler’s will and ambition. Therefore, when nobleman governed people, he had reward at his hands but did not rely on it, for people were bathed in his perfect virtue, would be ready to give rise to their adoration and were exhorted to the right way
spontaneously. He had anger but did not need to express it, for people were awed under his perfect virtue and gave rise to their fear, which was more forbidding than knife and axe. (CSQS 7-238)

This paragraph described the power of sincerity and respect in transforming the people. In Wang’s regard, if a ruler could reach the perfect degree of sincerity and respect, he would be able to unite with spirit and move his people automatically. Then the people would be transformed without the application of reward and penalty, and the Kingly Way would be realized. This paragraph could be regarded as another version of his idea that ritual propriety was the Kingly Way to transform the world, thereby the focus was the role of ritual propriety from its essence—sincerity and respect.

However, what should be noticed here is that Wang Fuzhi emphasized more on the transformative power of the ruler’s virtue than the ruler’s demand on the people. In Wang’s regard, to make the people in compliance with ritual propriety, the approach was education and transformation rather than forcing them to comply. Otherwise, it would fall into legalist measures and go against Confucian theme of humanity. Therefore, maintaining respect and sincerity was mainly used in self-cultivation. When dealing with others, one should be generous and tolerant/kuan 宽. Wang made the analogy between cultivating oneself and tolerating others with the virtues of Heaven/qian and earth/kun respectively, and stated,

Thus, regarding the great virtues of Qian and Kun, if one uses firmness and persistence to govern people, then one will go against their nature. If one uses humbleness and pliancy to discipline oneself, one will lose the right way. The recommended approach is to improve oneself with Qian [firmness and persistence], and to govern people with Kun [pliancy and tolerance]. Then the way of inner sageliness and outer kingliness will be complete. (CSQS 1-78)

The virtue of Heaven was firmness and persistence, and the virtue of earth was humbleness and pliancy. A person should emulate Heaven to cultivate himself with resolution and persistence, while emulate earth to tolerate other people. Then one would be able to transform people with his virtue according to their nature. If a nobleman urged ordinary people with his standard of self-discipline, few people would be qualified, and he would discourage people from complying
with ritual propriety sincerely and force them to be hypocritical. This could explain why the scholars and officials became so hypocritical after the rise of Neo-Confucianism. The reason was that Neo-Confucian scholars demanded common people with the nobleman’s standard and drove desires no place to stand. Based on this idea, Wang Fuzhi concluded that all past sagely kings adopted tolerance to achieve their Kingly Way. He concluded,

Thus, when emperors and kings put the world in order, they abdicated the throne or overthrew the previous kings according to different situations, emphasized pattern/wen 文 or essence/zhi 質 according to their functions. But when they received heaven mandate and suited people’s will …what they used were tolerance/kuan, trustworthiness, prudence and unselfishness. None of them did not take these as virtues or employ them to make great achievements. (CSQS 7-994-995)

This was Wang Fuzhi’s interpretation of Confucius’ words on tolerance, trustworthiness, prudence and unselfishness. However different from Confucius, Wang Fuzhi elevated tolerance to the first place; and this showed his emphasis on tolerance in governance and his intention to correct the stringent requirement of Neo-Confucianism.

In conclusion, with respect to cultivating one’s virtue and tolerance to extend one’s love, one would be able to move the people and win their sincere support. Then the Kingly Way would be realized. This was Wang Fuzhi’s correction and apologetic justification for Confucian political doctrine.

5.2.3 Unselfishness /gong 公

In connection with the theme of no desire was unselfishness. Wang Fuzhi used unselfishness as a standard to evaluate past kings and emperors, and condemned emperors after Zhou Dynasty as selfish. It was selfishness that led to the disappearance of the Kingly Way. For this reason, he strongly proposed sharing the state with the people and rejected emperors’ taking the state as their own private property. He claimed,
The reason that Qin Dynasty was condemned by later generations was only its emperor’s selfishness. Rejecting Qin’s selfishness, but wishing one’s offspring to maintain the throne forever, was that unselfish in the world? (CSQS 10-68)

In regard to governing the world, one must follow the principle of unselfishness. The throne/world cannot be occupied by barbarians, thieves and traitors, and neither is the property of one family. (CSQS 10-1175)

The Kingly Way was that the kings acted as the servants of the world and regarded the throne and the world belonging to the people. So the Qin emperor and the later imperial families were all selfish because they took the throne and state as their own property. In this respect, Wang Fuzhi echoed Huang Zongxi’s criticism on monarchy and showed the common academic concern of their time.

In contrast to the emperors of Qin and later Dynasties, Wang Fuzhi praised Yao, Shun and Yu’s unselfishness to the throne and sighed over the loss of the Kingly Way in later dynasties. He said,

Does the king really plan to share the world with people and not pass it on to his sons? The only option is his unselfishness to the throne, not anything else. Does he plan to establish a good heir, trust worthy ministers and secure his kingdom? The only way is that he knows to whom he should abdicate the throne, and does not consider to whom his successor will abdicate. Therefore, Yao abdicated the throne to Shun and did not consider that Shun would abdicate it to Yu (minister). Shun abdicated the throne to Yu and did not consider that Yu would abdicate it to Qi (his son). (CSQS 11-46)

This meant that a ruler should be unselfish to the throne and think only to promote public welfare. Yao and Shun had done this through abdicating the throne to the right persons. However, they just did what they could do, but did not plan the remote future which was beyond their control. On the contrary, emperors in later dynasties took the throne as their property and worried about the loss of the throne to other’s hand, how could they be able to carry out the Kingly Way?
Wang Fuzhi highly praised the kings’ unselfishness in the Three Dynasties and regarded their governance as the Kingly Way too. He insisted that the throne was established on behalf of people in the world. If a king abided by this principle, he would be a good monarch and able to carry out the Kingly Way, otherwise the monarch should be replaced. Based on this point, he deemed both King Tang of Shang and King Wu of Zhou truly had a humane mind to save people from miseries and strive for their long-term wellbeing. His evidence was: after defeating Xia Dynasty, Tang immediately sought for the worthies, shared the country with them and was ready to abdicate the throne to a virtuous person; after killing King Zhou of Shang, King Wu and the Duke of Zhou established many dukedoms, and shared the country with them.

However, Wang Fuzhi seemed to have misinterpreted ancient historical events. It was unclear about Yao, Shun and Tang’s activities due to lack of historical records. With regard to King Wu of Zhou, Wang Fuzhi obviously exaggerated the good motives of the Zhou royal family. From historical records, among the 72 established dukedoms, 54 were Zhou family members. The rest were mainly the old kingdoms that already existed in Shang Dynasty but submitted to Zhou. For this reason, the Zhou kings were not as unselfish as Wang Fuzhi interpreted. On the contrary, they were striving to consolidate their control of the world. Moreover, Wang’s remarks on evaluating Zhou’s dukedom system were contradictory too. On the one hand, he regarded it as a demonstration of humanity from his racist prejudice, and argued,

The Son of Heaven did not compete for profit, so he let dukes compete with each other. Dukes did not compete for profit, so they allowed big families to compete. Thus, if the throne fell into the hands of Qi, Jin, Qin and Chu, it was the same as if it stayed in the hands of Zhou. If the throne fell into the ministers of Qi and Jin, it was the same as if it stayed in the hands of Qi and Jin. All of them were from the ancient holy emperors, and extended their merits to people and things. So all of them could succeed Zhou and rise to power. This is the perfection of humanity and the suitability of righteousness. (CSQS 2-400)

Here Wang Fuzhi presumed that both the Zhou royal family and the dukedoms were unselfish and aimed to make the Chinese prosperous and powerful. Therefore they did not care about where the throne fell. Even if it fell into the hands of a minister of a dukedom, the minister still belonged to the Chinese people. Wang’s point was that the kings, dukes and ministers in the
Zhou and the Spring-Autumn Period all shared the throne and the world with the people, and were satisfied with the outcome that the throne could be taken by anyone if only he was a Chinese. Based on this assumption, he praised them as being perfect in humanity and righteousness.

Wang’s praise not only contradicted with the historical reality but also went against his sage Confucius. In the Spring-Autumn Period, dukes killed their fathers or sons for the sake of the throne, would Wang Fuzhi admit their killing was unselfish and humane? In the Analects, Confucius condemned the dukes and ministers’ betrayal of rituals; would Wang Fuzhi say they were humane and righteous? Therefore, it was obvious that Wang Fuzhi liked to make new and strange points without respect to the historical reality and the consistency of his arguments, especially when he shed his anger and condemnation on the Manchurian conquest through commenting on historical events. To some degree, his praise of the Zhou kings and dukes demonstrated his wish that the throne should be kept in the hands of Chinese, and his anger was that the throne was seized now by the Manchurians.

Wang Fuzhi’s praise of the dukedoms of Zhou also contradicted with his severe criticism toward it. In discussing the advantage of the system of prefectures and counties/junxian zhi 郡縣制, he criticized the chaos caused by the competition and wars between dukedoms in Zhou Dynasty.

Indiscreet selection of officials causes them to maltreat people; unappealing heirs lead dukes to disturb social order. Both are harmful, yet to the cruelty and greediness of magistrates, people have chance to relieve their miseries through dismissing the officials. Thus, since Qin and Han, the Son of Heaven stood alone without assistant dukes, and their rule were not so long as that of Shang and Zhou. But the disasters brought by feudalism were removed and people in later generations suffered less. These disasters included: for several hundred years since Zhou moved east to Luoyang, dukedoms fought each other and oppressed their people, adopted different polity and custom, applied heavy tax and cruel penalties, regarded their people as light as weed and cut them without any scruple. The system of county is not good for the Son of Heaven, so the royal family cannot stay on the throne longer; it is for the benefit of the world, and its harm is not as severe as that of feudalism. (CSQS 10-68)
In contrast, the feudalism caused more chaos and harm to the people and the world because it was hard to stop the competition and wars among the dukedoms once the Zhou King was not powerful enough. From this point of view, the Qin conquest of China was praiseworthy for it ended the five hundred years of chaos since 770 BC. Moreover, the Qin emperor established the system of prefectures and counties/郡縣制 to eradicate the root of feudalism once and for all and brought the people to a more peaceful and livable world. Therefore, the Qin emperor should be praised as humane. But it was strange that Wang Fuzhi condemned the Qin emperor as selfish while he praised the Zhou kings as humane; isn’t this absurd and prejudicial?

In order to persuade later emperors to be unselfish, Wang Fuzhi indicated that it was futile to protect the throne from seizure. He argued,

The more one worries about the loss of a thing, the more others desire to snatch it stealthily. The more one protects it, the more others desire to get it….Qin prevented northern barbarian from invasion, however it lost its throne to domestic peasants. Song prevented powerful ministers’ usurpation, but lost it to foreigners. Now that they regarded people in the world as others and enemies, they would not be able to know who would snatch the throne. How could they prevent the loss? (CSQS 3-365)

Here Wang Fuzhi analyzed the loss of the throne from a psychological aspect. Generally, if a place or a thing was accessible to everyone, people would not compete for it. Once it was taken as private property, other people would desire to get it. He applied this theory to the protection of the throne. Through his discussion about the Qin and Song’s loss of their thrones, he compared the throne as a precious item in the open wildness, and dissuaded the owner from protecting it being stolen, and then concluded that the better way was to share it with others if one wanted truly have it and save the trouble of defense.

5.3 Approaches to the Kingly Way: Outward Implementation

Although the Kingly Way was determined by inner sageliness, it nevertheless must be implemented in real situations. In Wang Fuzhi’s discourse, it mainly manifested as humane governance which focused on extending the ruler’s humanity, securing the people’s safety and sustenance and educating the people. As humanity took the mind of commiseration as its sprout
or starting point, the crucial point to realize humane governance thus lay in the extension of this commiserative mind. Wang Fuzhi argued,

Pacifying the world depends on the monarch’s mind…. Extending the commiseration in my mind, I thus carry out the measures of management; extending the mind that cannot abandon the people, I thus teach them the method of love and nourishment. When nourishing, I know what to nourish; when teaching, I know what to teach. Then people get what they need and the world can be put in order. (CSQS 8-411-412)

In this quotation, the pacification of the world depended on two factors. One was to manage the world affairs, and the other was to educate the people. Both were based on the ruler’s commiseration. For once a ruler had the mind of commiseration he would not bear to see his people’s suffering and would manage to save them. From this point of view, it could say that the mind of commiseration gave rise to the measures of sustaining the people, and once a ruler had the commiserate mind, it would give rise to the commiserate measures automatically. Therefore Wang Fuzhi followed Mencius to claim that humanity was the basis of governance, and mind was the root of methods. If a ruler could extend his commiserate mind and sustain the people, he would surely achieve the Kingly Way and become undefeatable. (CSQS 8-82)

Based on the premise that a humane mind would give rise to practicable measures leading to the accomplishment of the Kingly Way, the following section would analyze the measures generated from it.

5.3.1 Cultivating People’s Harmonious Qi through Providing Them with Healthy Habitat and Exact Calendar

The highest way to protect people and carry out the Kingly Way was to maintain the harmonious cosmic qi. For Wang Fuzhi, all disasters originated from disharmonious qi. If the king maintained harmonious qi for the world, he would not need any laborious administrative work and would be able to enjoy the non-action governance. This was called putting the world in order before the emergence of disorder.
Wang Fuzhi insisted that a healthy habitat and an exact calendar were necessary for the people to maintain harmonious qi and immune from diseases and grow crops timely. This was shown in his praise of Duke Zhao of Zhou Dynasty who built a healthy city for the people. Wang stated,

When ancient kings constructed a city …they filled its marsh, removed its ridges, cleaned its dirt, and obtained its fresh stuff. They assisted the people through balancing what Heaven and earth provided, and thus fulfilled a monarch’s duty. Ridge and marsh being made even, stream and spring being made clear, Duke Zhao still carried out this ancient way when he built city Xie. As a result, people could rest their limbs, broaden their ears and eyes, blend smell and taste properly, and keep distance from disease and disasters. Regulating earth, they received heavenly harmony; receiving heavenly harmony, they accumulated people’s welfare. Moreover, they made scholars feel at ease when climbing high and looking distant, pacified the cowardliness of those who were in worry and failure. Once abjection and niggard were cleaned, complaint and dislike were forgotten, people would enjoy their lives. Therefore, ancient kings did not hasten to attract people. They relaxed people’s worry, pacified their restlessness, and moderated their blood and vital force/\textit{qi} so as to beautify their mind and heart, then people came to them and did not leave.

(CSQS 3-434)

Here Wang Fuzhi took the construction of a city as an example to elucidate how ancient kings cultivated the people’s harmonious qi. Through leveling the place and removing dirt, ancient kings built a clean and even place for the people. When people lived in such a place, they felt comfortable and peaceful and thus harmonious qi was cultivated and preserved. With the prevailing of harmonious qi, the ancient king achieved the Kingly Way effortlessly.

In the above quotation, the critical measures were “Regulating earth so as to receive heavenly harmony; receiving heavenly harmony so as to gather people’s welfare.” It was through maintaining the harmonious qi that ancient kings beautified their people’s mind and heart. Wang Fuzhi named it as “respecting the Five Elements and abiding by the Three Regularities/\textit{jing wuxing shou sanzheng} 敬五行守三正.” (CSQS 2-282)

With regard to the Five Elements (metal, wood, water, fire and earth), they were inalienable to human life. If they were insufficient, people would not live well; yet if they were excessive,
human nature would be harmed. For example, the scarcity of rain caused drought, while the excess of rain brought flood. For this reason, ancient kings set a proper measure for their use, prevented their scarcity or excess which disturbed the universal harmony, and thus protected people’s nature from harm. With regard to their methods, Wang specified,

So they dug canal to clean dirt, renewed fire to keep regularity, cut woods to expand human vital force/\textit{qi}, hid weapon to pacify human mind, and leveled the land to pacify people’s will. They did not let them insufficient to affect daily use; they especially did not allow them excessive to disturb people’s feelings. (CSQS 2-282)

This quotation made the ancient kings’ method clearer. It was to moderate the amount of the Five Elements so as to bring people’s feelings and will to due measure. For example, with regard to the amount of iron and bronze, if they were too much in the society, that would lead to the spread of swords and weapons and caused people fond of fighting; if too little, that would affect the amount of plow and utensils and cause inconvenience to people’s daily life. Therefore, the ancient kings set up a proper measure for the people and brought their \textit{qi} to moderate and harmonious so that they could prevent the harmful \textit{qi} of the Five Elements from affecting people’s life.

As for the Three Regularities, they were the regularities of Heaven, earth and man. Because each of the three had its principle, the ancient kings required people to follow their principles when dealing with them. Because these three were always in the process of interaction, the ancient kings demanded to use the activities of Heaven and earth to benefit human beings. Wang Fuzhi explained,

The Three Regularities are what Heaven shows human beings the coming of its \textit{qi} and gives rise to interaction/\textit{gan 感}. Therefore man receives his \textit{yang} according to Heaven’s regularity; enhance his body according to the earth’s regularity; and implements his ability to govern people according human regularity. (CSQS 2-282)

Obviously, the compliance with the Three Regularities focused on the benefit of human beings. Then Wang Fuzhi numerated how ancient kings did it. The ancient kings observed the movement of stars to perform sacrifice to Heaven, discerned wind and right seasons for planting and harvest, and chose the right time for penalty and reward. This was the function of an exact
calendar (including weather report in modern times). Through following calendar, people would know the change of the weather and seasons, and then respond with proper activities, just as it is going to rain, people will bring an umbrella. In accord with the destructive character of autumn and winter, the judge executed death penalty, so as not to weaken the yang in spring and summer. If people did not behave according to the Three Regularities, they would destroy the universal harmony and the resulted disharmonious qi would lead to disasters to human beings.

In short, to cultivate harmonious qi, one must behave according to seasons and geography. If one went against seasons, what one did could only increase the amount of disastrous qi. For example, we might imagine that when people nowadays used technology to grow vegetable and crops against the proper season, they could disturb the harmonious qi in plants and crops. When people ate such produces, people could easily grow cancer and catch various unexpected diseases.

5.3.2 Commending Virtue but not Abandoning Achievements

As is known, Wang Fuzhi followed Mencius to value the Kingly Way but devalued the Way of Despot/badao 霸道. He insisted that the Kingly Way won people through virtue and humanity while the Way of Despot did that through merits and benefits. Virtue and humanity subsumed merits and benefits, not vice versa, so the Kingly Way degrading to the Way of Despot symbolized the decline of governance. He sighed,

Alas…provided the sagely king did what Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公 and Duke Wen of Jin 僖文公 (warlords) did, long time ago they had achieved it…Regarding the achievements of Duke Huan and Duke Wen, the sagely king had also recorded them and ordered ministers to achieve them. Yet, there were greater one he was considering, which would penetrate the reality and talents of all things and manifest his virtue; there were longer one, which would cover affairs and principles of past and present and accomplish his achievements. (CSQS 1-988)

This meant that the sagely king aimed greater and longer feats than the military lords, and Duke Huan and Duke Wen’s achievements were only comparable to that of the king’s ministers. When Wang assumed that these greater and longer feats would penetrate all things’ talents and abilities
and cover all principles, he obviously exaggerated the sagely king’s achievements to the realm of utopia and deliberately devalued the Way of Despot.

With regard to how to achieve these greater and longer feats, Wang Fuzhi again resorted to practicing rituals and righteousness. He stated,

“The ruler loves rituals, and then people dare not to be disrespectful; the ruler practices righteousness, and then people dare not to be disobedient; the ruler behaves trustworthily and then people dare not to be dishonest.” Due to this, where the ruler passes over, people will be transformed. “The ruler carries on the essence of Guan Ju 关雎 and Lin Zhi 麟趾 (humanity), then he can put in practice the laws in the Rites of Zhou 周官. Due to this, what the ruler preserves is magic/spiritual. These are the realm where military lords could not reach. (CSQS 6-1123)

The essence of Guan Ju and Lin Zhi was humanity or humane concern. That is to say, if a ruler preserved a humane mind within, he would be able to carry out all laws and rituals prescribed in the Book of Rites. Through this description, the sagely king was portrayed as having a spiritual and transformative power to govern the people. But in order to obtain this power, he must comply with rituals, righteousness, trustworthiness and humanity. In short, it was through practicing Confucian principles that a ruler achieved the Kingly Way and surpassed the military lords.

In contrast, Wang Fuzhi described the achievement of military lords (the Way of Despot/badao 霸道) with a despicable tone. He assumed the military lords just took humanity and righteousness as tools to win the people and control other dukes, and thus destroyed the tradition of the sagely kings and the Kingly Way. Moreover, the manipulation of humanity and righteousness would make people blind to their true meanings and thus incurred endless disasters. (CSQS 8-878) It goes without saying that Wang Fuzhi again wronged the military lords and exaggerated their harms.

Moreover, this also contradicted with Wang’s own eulogy of the military lords in other places. He once insisted that the military lords also had virtues, and criticized Mencius who went too far and was particular about the military lords. He argued,
Virtue cannot be pretended to have, humanity cannot be bought from outside. Mencius simply classified the Five Military Lords as pretence in virtue. This is exaggerating words. If they pretended to be humane but still achieved the Way of Despot, and continued to preserve the peace of the world, then all people in the world, and all dukes and ministers would not have had any mind of right and wrong. Yet, Mencius indeed affirmed, all human beings had mind of right and wrong. How could they be blind to it? Therefore, the military lords were mixed or impure in their virtue and humanity, and had not made a complete pretence. (CSQS5-167)

In Wang’s regard, the Way of Despot must rely on virtue and humanity too, otherwise it would not be able to last. Then Wang Fuzhi concluded humanity or virtue ran through all successful missions in the Kingly Way and the Way of Despot, and military achievements must take sagely virtue as their prerequisite. He said,

Virtue is substance and achievements are its function. There is no substance without function and neither vice versa in the world. …Virtue is what is obtained in mind. What is obtained in mind has a basis, then one will be able to carry out tasks in the world without failure. …Power is the strength of humanity. For what the military lords advocated trust and harmony in the world, enhanced faith and righteousness in states, and thus completed the principle of love as the virtue of mind, it was evident that these were not the humanity obtained through pretence. (CSQS 6-804-805)

Here, from the relationship between virtue and achievements, Wang concluded that the Way of Despot must have had virtue, for the power for the Way of Despot originated from nowhere but humanity. Therefore, the military lord’s achievement was not simply pretence of practicing humanity, but showed that he truly had humanity within. Therefore, it was virtue that made it possible for both the Kingly Way and the Way of Despot.

Based on his preference to virtue instead of achievement, Wang Fuzhi explained the reason that the Tang emperor, Li Longji’s 李隆基 (685-762) misgovernance in the later part of his reign. Li Longji achieved the most splendid governance—the prosperity of Kaiyuan Period (713-741), but ended his rule with fleeing from the capital Xian during An Lushan Rebellion. In Wang Fuzhi’s explanation, if a ruler set achievements as his goal, he would become neglectful and idle once the
goal was fulfilled. When he put the empire in order, he would change his attention toward entertainment or expansion, and neglect latent dangers. Therefore, at the peak of Tang Dynasty, Li Longji did not care so much about An Lushan’s pending threat although some ministers admonished that to him. In contrast, if a ruler focused his mind on virtue, he would maintain serious and alerted all the time, bewaring not only his own behavior but also his ministers and people’s activities. Then he could wipe out latent dangers in advance. For this reason, Wang Fuzhi embraced the standpoint that ancient sagely kings valued virtue and devalued achievements.

However, valuing virtue and devaluing achievements did not mean abandoning political achievements and material gain. Wang Fuzhi argued,

Being humane, the sage does not aim at achievements; being wise, he does not seek for fame. Humanity and wisdom cannot be accomplished for the sake of some expectations. Yet achievements and fame are not what the sage abandons. Without achievements and fame, the sage will not be able to benefit the people, and the people will not have anything to depend on. (CSQS 1-960)

Moreover, Wang Fuzhi indicated that whether or not the sage achieved achievements and fame depended on the time and situation. When time was prosperous, his humanity and wisdom would automatically manifest as achievements and fame; when time was declined, he would use achievements and fame to preserve humanity and wisdom. For example, at the time of Yao and Shun, the sages did not need consider achievements and fame, for their humanity and wisdom already contained them. But at the time of King Tang of Shang and King Wu of Zhou, they had to make achievements and fame through dethroning the previous kings in order to promote humanity. Especially, when a sage rose from low rank or small place, he must depend on achievements and fame in order to implement humanity. Wang continued,

For instance, when the first king of Zhou moved to Bin, he never expected hundred years ago that through selecting this place, his descendant would be lucky to seize the throne. However, to found a kingdom and develop a family, one must have a sizable area allowing the rise of kingly governance. One should not neglect those present necessary affairs in the world, or simply enjoy a pure and detached mind. (CSQS 6-899)
Thus, Wang Fuzhi admitted that the Kingly Way could not be accomplished on the king’s inner virtue solely, but also depended on external achievements. Moreover, even a ruler already had virtue; it did not mean that the Kingly Way would be realized spontaneously, but still need to undertake world affairs. For this reason, in his commentary of the *Mencius*, Wang Fuzhi supported King Xuan of Qi 齊宣王 to expand his state, for a big and powerful state was the prerequisite of kingly governance.

Consequently, Wang Fuzhi criticized those pedantic scholars who despised and abandoned achievement and material gain. Through reinterpreting Dong Zhongshu’s 董仲舒 (179-104BC) words, “rectifying rightness without scheming for profit; enlightening the way without calculating efficaciousness”, Wang reinterpreted, these sentences meant that if one behaved righteously, harm could be prevented; if the Way was carried out, merits would not fail. (CSQS 5-177) They did not mean abandoning material gain and external achievements. If Confucian scholars did not understand this and abandoned material gain and achievements, their failure would be the same as those inhumane people and rulers.

5.3.3 Rectifying Oneself to Rectify the People

In cultivating and maintaining the harmonious *qi* among the people, Wang Fuzhi, like Confucius, emphasized the ruler’s crucial role and transformative power. According to Confucius, the ruler was like wind while the people were like grass; where the direction the wind headed to, the grass did too. Thus, a ruler’s initiative would be emulated by the populous. Therefore, a good ruler would lead people to be moral and improve harmony; while a poor ruler would worsen the unfavorable situation. For this reason, in order to make the world more harmonious, the ruler must rectify himself and become the people’s paradigm. Wang Fuzhi eulogized the significance of a ruler’s self-rectification, and said,

Scholars’ fashion and popular fad depend on what the ruler focuses his mind on when educating the people. When a nobleman rises, there will appear more noblemen in the world; when a petty person emerges, most of the people will be transformed into petty persons. The people’s mind in the world changes along with the ruler’s mind, either being encouraged or dissuaded by it. (CSQS 7-709)
This indicated that the ruler’s mind was crucial to the people’s behaviors and social custom. In order to transform the people to goodness, the ruler must make his mind perfectly impartial and modest. Then the people would be transformed. Wang said,

Therefore, the way of nobleman takes perfect goodness as goal, and regards ten thousand things as one. He must pursue the accomplishment that goodness prevails in the world, while penalty and reward become unnecessary, and custom becomes pure and simple. The only approach is that he encourages people to improve their goodness daily through his perfect modesty and impartiality. Then, without teaching, people will abide by the five relationships; without persuasion, people will do their works. What will be more powerful than this? (CSQS 8-228-229)

This passage described the ruler’s goal of governance—to construct a society in which reward and penalty became unnecessary and custom was pure and healthy, and indicated the crucial measure was that the ruler was perfectly modest and impartial and consistently led the people to goodness. To become modest and impartial perfectly was nothing but rectifying oneself or purifying one’s mind from any selfishness. It should not be sought outside but resort only to self-reflection. This was verified in Wang’s following remarks.

The sage does not labor his mind on governance, education, administration and penalty to get support from his people, although he shares their worries. He only reflects himself and reaches the realm of sincerity, then he is rectified and the world is put in order. Therefore, he does not show mercy, administer or respond to the people. All is done without calculation. (CSQS 12-69)

This again confirmed that rectifying oneself was the premise of putting the world in order. It required the ruler to reflect himself and make his ideas sincere rather than govern the people with administrative measures. Then, the question is: how to rectify oneself and make one’s ideas sincere? Wang Fuzhi replied,

For example, in order to lead others to be filial pious, the ruler must carry it out and has true experience. In order to lead others to be merciful, the ruler must be merciful and has true experience. To govern in this way, the ruler acts subtly and does not touch upon people’s affair, but according to the principle that orders and regulates and the vital force/qi
that influences each other, the ruler’s promotion in high place will certainly transform custom and trend, and the people are thereby moved. (CSQS 6-596)

Here, Wang Fuzhi urged the ruler to sincerely practice filial piety and mercifulness, and then the people would be transformed or corrected without using force. In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, the so-called teaching was not to teach the people how to be filial pious with words, but to teach them through sincere practice. Nor was it to establish one’s filial behavior as a standard and force people to emulate. It was just a matter of cultivating oneself to the utmost, and then people would be automatically affected or transformed. He acclaimed,

[Once the ruler sincerely practices filial piety,] where his personality moves and his mind penetrates, all those having blood and vital force will give rise to commiserate feeling and regard it shameful to abandon their parents, living or dead. Once people’s feeling and nature is moved toward this, they will automatically not bear to do cruel and harsh matters, and thus are transformed to filial piety and brotherhood. All of these originate from the ruler’s idea of filial piety, but they move the stupid and wicked unnoticeably. (CSQS 7-262)

This quotation showed that the ruler could move the people with his commiserative mind and thus achieve transformation. In explaining how the ruler’s practice could move the people, Wang Fuzhi resorted to the fact that the myriad things shared the same principle and vital force, or the Great Harmony. He stated,

The great man just corrects himself. Even though he rules the people with his perfect principles, he does so for himself, too. He grasps the universal principle and vital force of the myriad things, so he can move others successfully and definitely. (CSQS 12-166)

Here, Wang Fuzhi resorted to the cosmological explanation that all things were from the Great Harmony and shared the same principle and qi, and so the sage could move other people and things. However, Wang Fuzhi must explain why there were the difference between stupidity and smartness among human beings now that they shared the same principle and qi. If he admitted this difference, he should admit that the sage might not be able to move other people, for it was the different degree of qi’s condensation that led to different people and things, so this different
degree of qi already excluded the prevailing of the kingly transformation. Regrettably, Wang Fuzhi did not notice this inconsistency.

With regard to how to become perfectly impartial and modest and thus to be able to move the people to filial piety and mercifulness, Wang proposed to moderate one’s love and detest with ritual propriety, which was the topic of regulating feelings with nature. We have discussed this in 4.3.5.

5.3.4 A Sequence from Self-rectification to Putting the World in Order

Unscrupulously contradicting his eulogy of the sage’s magic transformative power (see 5.1.3), Wang Fuzhi again denied that the ruler’s self-rectification would transform the people and realize the Kingly Way spontaneously when he criticized Zhu Xi. Putting this in the context of his commentary on the Great Learning, he did not think that self-cultivation would sufficiently lead to putting the world in order. In other words, it was true that kingly governance depended on the ruler’s virtue, but it sufficed only to set the right beginning and direction for its accomplishment. Its accomplishment would need to take more steps, which included regulating family, governing state and putting the world in order. There was not such instant transformation that the ruler accomplished sagely virtue, and the people would be transformed spontaneously. He argued,

Bright Virtue/mingde 明德 was the basis of refreshing people, but one should not prematurely expect its efficacy on refreshing people. So after self-cultivation, there must be three leaps before reaching putting the world in order. Therefore to refresh people, one certainly has to base on the already enlightened virtue, but one must also add the rest works such as regulating family, governing state and putting the world in order. How can it be that after virtue being enlightened, the world will be put in order? (CSQS 6-441)

From this passage, it was evident that Wang Fuzhi saw the gap between self-rectification and the realization of the Kingly Way (putting the world in order). This coincided with his idea to transform and govern the people with both self-rectification and practice of rituals. Right after this, Wang Fuzhi claimed that self, family, state and the world each had its own affairs and
principles and should not get confused although humanity could run through them. He further specified, from self to family, what one did was to set model behavior for other members. When one was filial pious, other members would be affected to change or restrain their unfilial behavior. From family to state, what one extended was his teaching methods and principle, not his lenience in dealing with relatives. Otherwise, lenience without principle, people would not obey. From state to the world, what was extended was governance and administrative measures. The reason to unite these together was that they share the same principle of humanity. Wang Fuzhi summarized this idea as follows,

Family and state are different, but same in teaching; state and the world are different but same in governance. They are the same in teaching for they share the same basis to establish it; they are same in governance for they share the same basis for carry it out. However, governance and teaching are different but same in principle. Their principles are same because people share the same mind of obedience and disobedience, and the same heavenly principle of life and death. (CSQS 7-87)

The same teaching between family and state was to educate the people with ritual propriety; the same governance between state and world was to govern the people with humanity. The so-called sameness in the basis of teaching and governance was virtue or humanity. The same principle for governance and teaching was heavenly principle or the principle of life. In short, all these things should be founded on humanity or the principle of life, but in application, the concrete measures were different. Therefore, one should not expect instant transformation of the people or the realization of the Kingly Way after self-rectification or cultivation. In this way, Wang Fuzhi disillusioned Neo-Confucians’ dream—the realization of the Kingly Way through moral cultivation solely.

5.3.5 Rectifying Name and Maintaining Rank

As mentioned in 5.2.2, when Wang Fuzhi discussed the role of ritual propriety in governing the people, he focused mainly on its function to maintain order and rank. This idea became more manifest in his elaboration of Confucius’ view of rectifying names and ranks/zhengming正名.
In the *Analects*, Confucius once stated, if name was not correct, words based on it would not be listened. As a result, all activities and administrative measures turned into playful games, and people would not know what to abide by. Therefore, if a ruler aimed to put his state in order, rectifying names was the prime task. Wang Fuzhi embraced this idea and elaborated,

Only these names are set up from Heaven, completed according to reality, and named on the basis of the peace of human mind. Correcting those incorrect names and bringing them back to proper ones, thereafter governance and teachings can be carried out step by step. (CSQS 7-730)

This showed that Wang Fuzhi viewed correct names and ranks as coming naturally from Heaven, and appealing to human beings because they were based on the peace of mind. It was through rectifying names and ranks that other administrative measures could be implemented.

Wang Fuzhi further justified the legitimacy of names naturalistically with his interpretation of the *Book of Changes*. In this book, the ancient sages emulated natural phenomena to establish names and ranks. Heaven is above and earth is below, from there arose the superior and inferior among human beings. Therefore, noblemen were eligible to govern ordinary people, and human beings had the right to utilize other things and creatures. In order to maintain society in stability, the names and ranks in social hierarchy must be maintained. Wang Fuzhi expressed this idea through his interpretation of the hexagram *Lu* 履 (Heaven above and swamp below) in the *Book of Changes*, and said,

Like wind and fire, swamp also belongs to the kind of earth/yin, but stays lowest, far away from Heaven. Each of them stays in its place and does not disturb the other. In comparison, a ruler is not so separated from his people for they express their will and communicate their desires reciprocally. However, it is only through rectifying names and setting down ranks, establishing strict rituals and laws, letting people realize that swamp can never reach Heaven, then they will not give rise to disloyal intention. Consequently, the superior will be resolute and serious and the inferior being obedient and lovable. This is the way to maintain long-term orderly governance. (CSQS 1-137)

Here, Wang Fuzhi compared the relation of ruler and people to that of Heaven and swamp and wanted to fix this rank forever, which showed his foolish loyalty to the monarchy. Through
setting down this rank forever, he thought that people would have no other choice but be loyal to the ruler, just as the water of swamp could never reach Heaven but satisfy its low status. To maintain this rank, the ruler should be resolute and strict and leave no opportunity for the low rank people to seize the throne. Otherwise, once names were misused, rank would be destroyed, and the Kingly Way would disappear, as Wang said, “Before the disappearance of the Kingly Way, the relation between names and reality becomes confused.” (CSQS 5-322) At this point, it was understandable why Confucius and Wang Fuzhi made great efforts to rectify names.

Then, Wang Fuzhi sighed, the gradual decay of ranks led to the disappearance of the Kingly Way, especially King Huan of Zhou’s 周桓王 (?-697 BC) destruction of the rank between the Son of Heaven and dukes. According to historical record, King Huan did not treat the Duke of Zheng according to ritual propriety; on the contrary, he started wars against Zheng 郑, and was defeated with an arm being shot with an arrow. From then on, the Son of Heaven lost his superiority to dukes; the dukes rose to the motive to seize the throne and the world fell into chaos. Then, the situation continually deteriorated to the degree that thief and robber could usurp the throne; and barbarians could invade and conquer China. In Wang Fuzhi’s eyes, all these consequences resulted from King Huan’s destruction of ranks. He argued,

What King Huan as monarch and Dukes of Jin and Zheng as ministers had done resulted in disasters that lasted for thousand years without end. Thus, the calamity of Red Eyebrow and Yellow Turban rebellions, the disasters of Barbarian Liu Yuan 刘渊 and Shi Le 石勒, Jurchen and Mongol all rose after him, which never appeared before Zhou Dynasty. King Huan did not behave like a king, so the Kingly Way perished forever. His evil is hundred times of that of King Jie of Xia and King Zhou of Shang; his harm is worse than huge flood. (CSQS 5-389)

In this quotation, Wang Fuzhi blamed King Huan of Zhou for all later rebellions and barbarian conquests. The reason was that King Huan destroyed the names and ranks between the superior and inferior and did not act what the Son of Heaven should do—acting as the cord to unite and control the dukes. However, Wang Fuzhi exaggerated the power of rectifying names and maintaining ranks, ignored the fact that this power was based on military and wealth, and thus seriously wronged King Huan. According to historical records, at the time of King Huan, the Zhou kingdom occupied only a small area, lacking both taxes and soldiers, how could King
Huan force the dukes to pay tribute just relying on ranks and names? Moreover, the later rebellions and barbarian conquests broke out because the later rulers misused the people and misgoverned the state, how could they be ascribed to the destruction of names and ranks only?

Nevertheless, Wang Fuzhi insisted, in order to maintain or realize the Kingly Way, a ruler must be resolute and strict to defend names and ranks. Otherwise, to be tolerant and take expediency at a time would bring up endless troubles, for it opened the chance for the inferior’s infringement. For example, when Duke Li of Jin 晉厉公 (?–573 BC) was assassinated, his successor, Duke Dao of Jin 晉悼公 (586–558 BC) tolerated those assassins at the beginning, but finally became powerless and thereby led to the disintegration of the state. The reason was that he did not rectify names and punished those assassins righteously. Therefore, in Wang Fuzhi’s regard, if a ruler decided to bring the world in order and pacify people’s mind in a chaotic time, it was only through rectifying names. He argued,

   When people in the world lose the reality of names, the nobleman saves the people with reality, cultivate the reality and take it as virtue. When people in the world have lost reality and will lose names, the nobleman shows the people names, rectifies names in order to establish the Way. Names are the essential of the Way of human beings. (CSQS 2-332)

This quotation shows that for Wang Fuzhi, names were the essential part of the Way of human beings. It was through rectifying names that the Way of human beings was maintained. Therefore, to restore the order of the world, a ruler needed to rectify names; to achieve good governance or the Kingly Way, a ruler had to maintain names.

5.3.6 Devaluing Legalist Measures while Promoting Ritual propriety

Wang Fuzhi showed a strong inclination to replace law and regulation with rituals in governing the people. In his regard, if a ruler acted according to rituals and righteousness, the people would obey his orders without being forced. He argued,

   If ritual propriety is carried out, people will not trespass their ranks or become extravagant; if righteousness is prevailing, people will not value profit to entreat their ruler. If the ruler practices rituals and righteousness to enlighten his people, then his ministers and people will be peaceful and obedient without resort to law and institutions. (CSQS 8-914)
This meant that if a ruler could practice rituals and righteousness in governing the people, laws and institutions would become unnecessary. If someone argued that laws and penalty were necessary to punish corrupt officials and bring people to integrity, Wang Fuzhi would say laws and penalty could not stop corruption but served only to lead people to be hypocritical and evasive. In his view, to fight against corruption and promote integrity, the only way was to develop people’s sense of shame through promoting ritual propriety and righteousness. He contended,

For a bribe up to one thousand dollars, the receiver will be severely punished. Establishing laws to restrain people, this is called once-and-for-all law. However, to fight corruption and encourage integrity, the best way is to lead people to give rise to the sense of shame. Setting a once-and-for-all standard to restrict people severely, few officials will be able to avoid infringement. Then they will disregard the sense of shame and think of how to evade the law. Their superiors will hide their crimes for fearing that they will be over-punished for minor offence. Thus, the stricter the ruler, the more evasive the inferior are. This is the inevitable consequence that the situation leads to….It is only through lenience that the ruler can accomplish his stringent order. Where is the need of this once-and-for-all law? (CSQS 12-571)

Here Wang Fuzhi proposed an approach that uprooted corruption, i.e. to cultivate people’s sense of shame. As the sense of shame was the essence of righteousness, this approach was not different from cultivating people’s sense of righteousness. Then the final resort was still to discipline the people with ritual propriety. However, in addition to cultivating the sense of shame, Wang Fuzhi also suggested the ruler be lenient instead of being harsh. The reason was that a harsh control could only drive officials to the realm of hypocrisy and evasion; while a lenient rule would make officials obey the ruler’s order. If connecting lenience to humanity, it was obvious that Wang Fuzhi was advocating the doctrine that the ruler fought against corruption through righteous and humanity.

After this, Wang Fuzhi proceeded to justify the effectiveness of lenient rule with historical events. In his opinion, the four-hundred reign of Han Dynasty resulted from its founder Liu Bang’s 刘邦 (257-195 BC) lenience and another emperor Liu Xiu’s 刘秀 (6 BC–57 AD) mild policy. In contrast, Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220) adopted strict law and penalty to correct the slack
and dissolute custom at the end of Han Dynasty, and resulted in a short rule of Wei Dynasty 魏 (220-265). Obviously, this was merely Wang Fuzhi’s assumption. The fact was that the former Han mainly governed the people with legalist measures and Huang-Lao Daoism, which favored non-interference and could not be identified as Wang’s Confucian version of leniency. The later Han adopted Confucianism as national ideology that incurred the hypocritical and degenerative custom at the end. It was Cao Cao who adopted strict law and penalty to correct the slack and dissolute custom. However, Wang Fuzhi denied Cao’s contribution and the function of legalist measures based on the short reign of the Wei Dynasty. One might ask, for Wang Fuzhi, was it better to let the society corrupt with leniency?

In devaluing legalist measures and criticizing the proponent of laws, Wang Fuzhi often attacked other’s view out of historical context. For example, in one passage where Wang Fuzhi was commenting on Jia Yi’s 賈誼 (200-168 BC) recommendation of law to govern the Han Empire, Wang Fuzhi argued,

> Provided the world could be put in order through law and political strategy solely, prescribing the size and color of people’s chariots and clothes, custom becomes identical; using proper words and texts carefully, sense of shame is enhanced; stripping dukes’ power, the power is gathered to the monarch; then why King Jie of Xia and King Zhou of Shang perished despite the existence of Xia and Shang laws? (CSQS 10-104)

The historical fact was that Jia Yi proposed to govern the state with laws and strategy but did not abandon educating the people with rituals and music. Then how could Wang Fuzhi assume that Jia Yi proposed to govern the state with laws only? Nevertheless, Wang’s attack also showed his hesitation in completely denying the function of laws and strategy although he claimed that laws and institutions could not have saved Jie and Zhou from extinction. This became evident in his discussion of the relation between a good governor and a good institution or law.

In his discussion on the Spring-Autumn Annals, he plainly supported good laws and institutions instead of good governor. In this way, he severely weakened his criticism on legalist governance and his favor of humane governance achieved through extending the ruler’s humanity. Wang said,
Someone says that there are only good governors, no good laws and institutions. This is not true. Good governors cannot outnumber corrupt officials. Without laws but seeking for putting the state in order, it depends on good governors. However, good governors are few but corrupt officials many. … Therefore at the final stage of later dynasties, even there were pure and prudent prime ministers and resolute and impartial officials, they could not have stopped the corruption and bribes in the world. On the contrary, in the Spring-Autumn Period, with the good institutions and laws, Duke Huan of Qi and Duke Wen of Jin could have stopped corruption although both of them had many desires. Thus one hundred good governors cannot be equal to one good institution or law, who says that there is no good law or institutions? (CSQS 5-405)

Thus, Wang Fuzhi eloquently justified the legitimacy of laws and institutions while suspected the availability of a good governor. The reason was that he also realized that sagely kings existed nowhere but in Confucian scholars’ imagination. Without laws and institutions, a capable prime minister could not stop corruption in the world, just as without building banks and channels, even Emperor Yu 禹 could not stop the flood of a river. However, in favoring laws and institutions and devaluing good governor, Wang Fuzhi contradicted his doctrine that the ruler could realize the Kingly Way through extending his commiserative mind and thus overthrew his eulogy of the role of ritual propriety.

Moreover, Wang Fuzhi openly advocated supplementing rituals with law and penalty in order to govern those petty persons and showed inconsistency with his kingly transformation with humanity and rituals. He argued,

Among the previous kings’ teachings, it was rituals that corrected people’s will in the world. However, after rituals were posted, petty persons always trespassed beyond them, so penalty was used as a subsidiary. Noblemen might be confined by them, so music was used to broaden rituals. (CSQS 2-251-252)

Obviously Wang Fuzhi tacitly admitted the limit of the transformative power of rituals and humanity. It was through penalty that petty persons were restrained in the scope of rituals. At this point, Wang Fuzhi inherited Xunzi’s idea to supplement rituals with laws.
When commenting on the traitor-ministers in East Jin Dynasty, Wang Fuzhi abandoned his idealistic belief of the magic transformative power of rituals, music and lenience and showed his favor of penalty. He in turn believed that loyalty and filial piety could be maintained and encouraged through punishing the traitors and unfilial sons. He contended.

Alas, loyalty and filial piety can be maintained not through persuasion but through penalty…A person cannot be loyal, but dare not be a traitor; a son cannot be filial, but dare not be a wicked; this is because penalty prevents them so. In penalty lies the subtle meaning of rituals. Penalty is not just to threaten them with death, but strip their glory of life. Then petty persons will fear its loss more than death. (CSQS 10-531)

Obviously, Wang Fuzhi contradicted with himself if he believed that loyalty and filial piety could be achieved through penalty in terms of his eulogy of ritual propriety. This again proved that Wang Fuzhi expressed his comments often impromptu without careful thinking. Thus it was not surprising that he denied his own position from time to time.

5.3.7 Two Instances Close to the Kingly Way

Historically speaking, the so-called Kingly Way practiced before Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) was nothing but Wang Fuzhi’s imagination although he still believed its feasibility to later dynasties. On the one hand, he wished the birth of a sage to save and transform the world, just as King Wen of Zhou made mulberry collectors and woodcutters willingly comply with rituals. On the other hand, he was disappointed at the fact that no emperor in later dynasty could be sage or practice the Kingly Way. However, he argued that even though one did not have sagely virtue, one still could achieve sagely achievements at a proper time. He thus chose a practical attitude toward the practice of the Kingly Way, and contended,

If we must wait a Yao or Shun to set up the standard of clothing, it would be acceptable that King Wuling of Zhao 趙武靈王 (340-295 BC) abandoned Chinese clothes; if we must wait for Confucius to compile the Confucian classics, it would be allowable that Qin emperor burned books. Man may not reach the height of a sage, but sageliness is to be achieved by man. (CSQS 5-607)
King Wuling of Zhao asked his soldiers to adopt Xiongnu’s cavalry dress in order to strengthen military power. The first emperor of Qin burned Confucian classics in order to unify people’s thinking and belief. Wang Fuzhi rejected both and insisted that people should not passively wait for the emergence of a sage in order to realize the Kingly Way. In other words, people should do their best to come closer to their ideal instead of fruitless wait. With this understanding, Wang Fuzhi commended two emperors’ governance close to the Kingly Way. They were the first emperor of Eastern Han, Guangwu 光武 (Liu Xiu 6 BC-57 AD) and the first emperor of Song, Zhao Kuangyin 趙匡胤 (927-976).

Wang Fuzhi regarded Emperor Guangwu as the most skillful one to conquer the world after the Three Dynasties. His argument was based on nothing more than his assumption of Guangwu’s practice of ritual propriety. In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, Emperor Guangwu’s practice of the Confucian Way made him outstanding and undefeatable before his competitors. Wang stated,

Guangwu got victory through his following the Confucian Way when people in the world were occupying territories and fighting each other. Soon after his ascending to the throne, he constructed temples for ancestors and Heaven and offered sacrifices; he established institutions and regulations, implemented rewards and ranks; he nominated worthies such as Fu Zhan 伏湛 and Zhuo Mao 卓茂; he urged Kou Xun 寇恂 to pacify Henei 河内 area, and ordered Feng Yi 馮異 to calm down the Guanzhong 關中 area. All these measures aimed to win people’s support calmly and easily, and did not rush for war and battle. However, those brutal, arrogant, unruly and defiant rebels were all exhausted and then disbanded. (CSQS 10-223)

Here Wang Fuzhi insisted that Guangwu succeeded by the Confucian Way/dao before fighting, and thought all his measures belonged to the Confucian Way. This was nothing more than Wang’s assumption, for what Guangwu did, all other warlords did too. Why didn’t Wang Fuzhi regard them as also following the Confucian Way? Moreover, without strong military power as a support, all these governance would be impractical. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi showed the tendency to look down military power and exaggerated the power of the Confucian Way.

Unscrupulously, Wang Fuzhi eulogized Guangwu to the degree of a marvelous person in pacifying people after conquering the world. His argument was that people were used to
rebellion in chaotic times and would not be willing to farm their field after enjoying the expediency of robbery. He thus looked Guangwu’s disbanding soldiers and making the world orderly as a miracle. After he criticized Ban Gu 班固 (32-92) and Xun Yue 荀悦 (148-209) who did not record Guangwu’s strategy to pacify the world in their historical records of Han Dynasty, he proposed his own explanation, and said,

Having no choice, we can imagine its outline through investigating the extant writings. It should be nominating Fu Zhan and Zhuo Mao and encouraging humane and steady officials to regulate rebellious people’s unruly qi and make it soft. Then they would be indolent and return to safety. When they returned home, ordinary people would not look down them because of previous hatred; officials would be willing to direct them to comply with regulations. Gradually their unruly qi/vital force would be extinguished. In this way, millions of people’s quick temper and unruly qi was restrained easily by one thought—tolerance. (CSQS 10-226)

In Wang’s understanding, in order to pacify the rebellious soldiers, Guangwu appointed worthy and humane officials and governors to treat the soldiers kindly and educate common people not to discriminate them. Then the soldiers would be willing to return their farming works and forget rebellion. Based on this idea, Wang Fuzhi elevated Guangwu to the level of the sagely kings, King Tang of Shang and King Wu of Zhou, and said,

Perhaps, only Guangwu’s governance would be seen as closer to the kingly governance of Shang and Zhou. When rebels and bandits were rampant, he promoted the Confucian Way and practiced rituals, nominated worthies and loved people, so he silently eliminated people’s unruly vital force/qi during a chaotic time, rebellious soldiers becoming obedient without the need of pacification. (CSQS 10-431)

Regrettably, Wang Fuzhi again simplified the problem. While true that people could be pacified through tolerance and education, yet the main reason should be the fact that no one would be willing to become rebellious soldier and live in uncertainty, but be ready to enjoy a peaceful life. After the world was put in order from chaos, most people would prefer the chance to live peacefully, so several rebellious leaders would get no support and could do nothing. This had been proven many a time in history, but ironically it was not the necessary outcome of Confucian
measures. Wang Fuzhi raised Chen Sheng 陳勝 (?-208 BC) and Shi Le 石勒 (274-333) as the examples that people’s unruly vital force and behavior were not easy to pacify, but neglected the actual situations that they were in. Chen Sheng lived at the verge of death when he failed to meet the deadline of arrival at the frontier; while Shi Le witnessed the chaotic state of Jin Dynasty and was fighting for his own life. In other words, if they had had other alternatives, they would not have rebelled. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi often tailored materials to fit his own partial view regardless of other probable explanations.

The second best for Wang Fuzhi was Zhao Kuangyin, the founder of Song Dynasty. Wang Fuzhi explained that Zhao Kuangyin achieved good governance because of his fear. According to historical record, Zhao Kuangyin as a low-rank general did not have a good reputation and was not powerful before he was pushed to usurp the throne from a child emperor of the late Zhou Dynasty (951-960). The reason for his success lay in other generals’ fear of being killed after they witnessed previous bloody competition for the throne. Perhaps other powerful generals just planned to make him a puppet emperor because of his mediocre ability. However, to their surprise, he entrapped them and snatched those generals’ military power at a feast with a promise that they could enjoy their glory, honor and riches and exempt from punishment forever in the Song Dynasty. With this diplomacy, he consolidated his power, but never got complete confidence, so he did his best to toady people in the world through practicing humane policies on the one hand, and never trusted military generals, thus weakened national defense and ruined the Song when Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) invaded on the other hand. This explained why Wang Fuzhi praised Zhao Kuangyin’s humane governance at one place, but severely criticized him as selfish and suspicious and led to Central China being conquered by Jin people first, and then the whole China being conquered by Mongols. Apparently Wang Fuzhi did not see the inalienability between these two aspects, but blindly praised his humane governance resulted from fear. Worse was that Wang Fuzhi regarded Zhao Kuangyin’s toady measures to people as humane governance and did not realize that they were just small and near-sighted tricks in governing state. Anyway, this was the unavoidable consequence when Wang Fuzhi tailored everything in order to advertising Confucian governance regardless of the historical fact. Let’s turn to Wang Fuzhi’s eulogy of Zhao Kuangyin.

Political power not being great, he dared not to coerce people far away; prestige not being outstanding, he dared not to kill generals and ministers who had made accomplishments;
knowledge not being broad, he dared not to look down on Confucian scholars; beneficence not being wide, he dared not to drive officials and people with stringent laws. Fear led to prudence, prudence to thrift, thrift to benevolence, benevolence to kindness, kindness to elegance/civility. As a result, that unruly and aggressive ethos since Guangqi 光启 period of Tang diminished, weakened, and disappeared unnoticeably. Great is Zhao! (CSQS 11-21)

This description showed that Zhao Kuangyin’s mediocrity helped him accomplish humane governance unexpectedly. But Wang Fuzhi did not realize that Zhao’s measures achieved only temporary peace while buried seed for long term disasters. Because of Zhao’s fear and mediocrity, he tolerated the people while suspected and took away power from military generals, and thus exposed the empire to the invasion of Khitan and Tibetans, and finally his descendents were captured by the Jurchen. What a shame!

Regarding concrete measures, Wang Fuzhi numerated Zhao Kuangyin’s commandments to later Song emperors and regarded them a manifestation of sagely virtue. These commandments were: securing Chai 柴 family (the royal family of Later Zhou) from whom he usurped the throne; not killing scholars and officials; not raising tax upon arable field. In Wang Fuzhi’s interpretation, all these commandments showed that the first Song emperor disciplined himself rather than urged others to comply, meeting the Confucian doctrine that a ruler should rectify himself before rectifying the people. He stated,

Good governance consists in the fact that the ruler acts humanely, so people will be moved and cheaters and slanderers will have no chance to play their tricks. The ruler maintains simple and thrifty, so people will be comfortable and rich, and corrupted officials will not be able to bribe and spoil. The first Song emperor used loyalty and humanity to raise his predecessor’s descendents, used lenience and tolerance to cultivate upright ethos among scholars, and used restraint and moderation to develop people’s sustenance. He carried out these measures by himself rather than asked others to do so…Therefore, we cannot but call it a great virtue. (CSQS 11-23)

Yes, the Song emperor treated the scholars and the people humanely. But Wang Fuzhi should have realized also that the Song officials were more corrupted than the Tang’s. It was in the Song that the scholars became more hypocritical and pedantic; and it was also in the Song that the
factional struggle reached its zenith and the national affairs were sacrificed for their sake. The so-called noblemen, such as Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086), Su Dongpo 苏東坡 (1037-1101) and Cheng Yi 程颐 (1033-1107), all participated in factional struggle regardless of national loss. One might wonder what was the use of such scholars’ upright ethos or qi? Based on these, how could Wang Fuzhi claim that Zhao Kuangyin achieved humane governance?

5.4 The Limit of the Kingly Way

5.4.1 Transforming the People according to Their Talents

With acknowledgement of the existence of incorrigible persons and the difficulty of transformation, Wang Fuzhi, unlike Mencius, set up a limit that education and transformation could reach. He did not believe it true that farmers gave up field boundaries, passengers stepped aside to let others pass first, and no one picked lost things on road, etc., as recorded in the Mencius. In his regard, it was impossible for the ignorant farmers to behave perfectly according to rituals after a period of sagely transformation. The most likely outcome should be no more than the fact that men were honest and women were simple. He argued,

How could the sagely transformation be expected to the people in the world? Yao had a misbehaved son; Shun had a disrespectful younger brother; the Duke of Zhou had rebellious elder brothers; Confucius had an incorrigible student. [They lived so close to the sages and were not transformed yet.] Regarding those ignorant people in the wildness, is it reasonable that they would abide by the right manners on road? (CSQS 10-169-170)

This implied that the sages could not have transformed some wicked people living close to themselves and brought them to good manners. It was impossible for them to bring common people in the world to comply with rituals and ceremonies perfectly. Therefore, the sages’ transformation should have a limit, that is, it only brought the people to be simple and honest, not as civil and elegant as the sages and noblemen.

Then Wang Fuzhi explained the meaning of sagely transformation as treating each person according to his nature rather than bringing him up to the level of nobleman. Wang stated,
The way of noblemen [in transforming the people] is as the way that Heaven and earth produce the myriad things, letting them rest in their lots according to their talents/zhì 質.

This is called the fulfillment of the nature of human beings and things. (CSQS 10-170)

Following this interpretation, Wang Fuzhi adopted Daoist ideas in educating the people. He insisted that sages just transformed each person according to his essence/talent, just as rain drops was held by each plant according to its receptive ability. The sage would not strive to improve all people up to the level of worthy because it was impossible to do so. What he did was to demand more of the worthy but tolerate the untalented so that the worthy would be more devoted to self-cultivation and good governance while the unworthy would not worsen their wickedness. But this did not mean that the wicked could behave freely without respect to rituals and laws. The sage or noblemen would establish a feasible standard and ask the people to follow. If one had the ability to follow but deliberately betray it, one would be punished. Thus Wang Fuzhi summarized,

Therefore, [the noblemen] just educate the people with the rituals and practice of drinking, shooting and reading, show them posted regulations, direct them to filial piety, fraternal love and husbandry, then they will get rid of their bad habit and custom and accomplish what the ignorant and low people are able to do. This is the highest degree of the noblemen’s teaching. (CSQS 7-136)

This passage showed that Wang Fuzhi supplemented education of rituals with laws and regulations. Thus, Wang Fuzhi partly denied his eulogy of the sage’s virtue transformation or the magic power of rituals and music. Moreover, when he suggested that the nobleman’s education just accomplished what the ignorant and low people were able to do, he still followed the Daoist method to transform others according to their nature.

Based on his Daoist interpretation of sagely transformation, Wang Fuzhi condemned the so-called virtue transformation in Han Dynasty as hypocrisy. In his explanation, virtue was what one experienced and achieved personally and could not be used as a tool to transform others. If a virtuous person really influenced others, it was because others found his virtue and emulated him in their accordance; just as Heaven ran its principle and vital force/qi and the myriad things followed them spontaneously. At this point, Wang Fuzhi made a distinction between education
and transformation. The former was similar to administrative measures, while the latter was just an unperceivable influence. In order to reach the latter, the ruler should rectify himself and become a virtuous model, but the crucial factor here was that he was fully sincere in his virtuous behaviors. It was sincerity that transformed other people.

5.4.2 Transforming the People through Knowing Their Likes and Dislikes

When regulating feelings with nature, the ruler moderated his own likes and dislikes in order to reach a fair mind and match heavenly principle. That was the approach to reach inner sageliness. However, in order to carry out the Kingly Way, the ruler had to know the people’s like and dislike.

In Wang Fuzhi’s eyes, what people like and dislike was nothing but their living sustenance. If a ruler could help them get this desire fulfilled, he would win the people. Wang said,

> People’s mind is nothing but likes and dislikes. To win the people, the ruler should help collect what they desire and do not do what they dislike. What people desire is nothing but their living sustenance. To collect it, the ruler should extend his desire and let everyone get fulfilled. What people dislike is nothing but their suffering of hunger, cold and homelessness. Not to do it, the ruler should manifest his dislike of the suffering and do not let it happen to the people. Thus, to get the people mind so as to win people and the world, the way is very simple. It depends on the ruler’s humanity, nothing else. (CSQS 8-440)

Here Wang Fuzhi required a ruler to secure the people’s living sustenance and prevent them from hunger, cold and homelessness. If he did this, he would share the people’s likes and dislikes and win the people. Once the people secured their sustenance and property, they would have stable mind and be immune from the seduction of unhealthy fashion and music. Wang Fuzhi thus concluded,

> Therefore, a good way to regulate mind is to rest it through expanding living space; a good way to govern people is to pacify them through improving their living sustenance. When people have sustenance to rely upon, they will not pity each other but stabilize their mind. Then when someone brings lascivious women and plays unhealthy music in front of them,
they will look at them as the leftover meat after having been satisfied, how can their feelings overflow? (CSQS 3-351)

This showed that a healthy custom depended on the stability of the people’s mind and feelings which in turn relied upon the sufficiency of sustenance. When people enjoyed their lives and maintained a stable mind, they would develop stable likes and dislikes and would not be easily deviated from healthy customs. Only when people could not satisfy their desires and feelings did they sigh, complain and indulge in near-sighted pleasure, and cause custom degenerative.

However, Wang Fuzhi rejected that the ruler blindly followed the people’s likes and dislikes, but suggested him to discern their true like and dislike with his mind. Wang argued,

What people desire to obtain and use is their like. The nobleman measures it in mind and finds it to be the common like, then he happily carries it out on behalf of the people. What people desire to abandon and forget is their dislike. The nobleman measures it in mind and knows it to be the common dislike, then he hurriedly gets rid of it on their behalf. (CSQS 7-89)

Here, the crucial point was that the nobleman considered the public likes and dislikes with his mind and found them as common likes and dislikes. Only when the common likes and dislikes were executed, could the nobleman win and transform the people. Otherwise, being busy in providing the people’s unreasonable demands, a ruler would fail in achieving good governance.

5.4.3 Heaven Is to Common People as Truth Is to Popular Views

When explaining why a ruler could transform the people through discerning and satisfying their likes and dislikes, Wang Fuzhi presented a cosmological explanation. That is, Heaven and common people were originally one. Heaven manifested its principle in color and sound, so people could see and hear; Heaven endowed people with its spirit through the transformation of qi/vital force, so people gave rise to their intelligence. Thus, people’s likes and dislikes, praise and complaint, as derivatives from perception and intelligence, all were the embodiment of heavenly principle. He stated,
Heaven does not have specific body. It just uses spiritual transformation as its body. Yet, common people’s seeing and hearing, praise and complaint are all heavenly spirit. So the unanimity of people’s mind is where principle/\(\text{li}\) lies, and thus also Heaven lies, and will be echoed by fortune and misfortune. (CSQS 12-71)

Here, Wang Fuzhi identified common people’s unanimous mind as heavenly principle because both Heaven and people’s perception and intelligence were based on heavenly spirit. Therefore, if a ruler wanted to unite Heaven, he must know common people’s thinking and govern the people according to people’s sentiment, for what the people see and hear indicated his success and failure in governance and also expressed Heaven’s approval and disapproval, i.e., the Mandate of Heaven. In this way, it was right to say, “Heaven sees according to what the people see; Heaven hears according to what the people hear.’’

However, Wang Fuzhi did not think that what people saw and heard always manifested heavenly principle. This discordance was caused by people’s selfishness and calculating mind. In Wang Fuzhi’s explanation, before the Spring-Autumn Period, common people were simple, honest and pure, so what they perceived and evaluated represented what Heaven favored or disfavored. Since the Spring-Autumn Period, people’s seeing and hearing was misled and thus became discordant with heavenly principle. Then why could the people have been misled and who did that? Wang Fuzhi’s answer resorted to their ignorance and near-sightedness.

According to Wang Fuzhi, although the people received heavenly principle and spirit to give rise to their perception and intelligence, they were ignorant of them but just followed them unconsciously. For this reason, they were susceptible to the influence of improper sounds and colors, deviation from their endowed intelligence and spirit, and thus were degraded to the level of animals by the corrupted and befuddled social atmosphere. Then they would lose their proper seeing and hearing, forget great virtue and revenge small blame, and fall into corrupted custom. At this point, the unanimity between Heaven and common people disappeared, and the public consensus or opinion became unreliable. Wang Fuzhi sighed with regret,

Mencius said, “Winning common people’s support, one is eligible to be the Son of Heaven.” That might be true at the end of the Three Dynasties when the sage’s teaching were prevailing, the people were simple, and the upright way had not been crooked. As to later dynasties, the sage’s teaching declined and custom corrupted; profit became people’s
main concern; no scholar could resist the bribe of high rank; no ordinary individual could avoid the trap of profit. How could common people be reliable? (CSQS 10-809)

Here, Wang Fuzhi indicated that common people in later dynasties had sacrificed righteousness and honesty for the sake of profit and rank, so their support or opposition could not stand for truth or heavenly principle any more. Therefore, the saying, “Having won the people’s heart, one would be eligible for the Son of Heaven,” could not be applicable to later dynasties because the so-called unity of Heaven and common people was destroyed.

Once the people took profit and rank as their main concern and discarded righteousness and honesty, they would indulge in or be eclipsed by near-sighted interests but neglected long-term benefit. Their opinion would not match heavenly principle even though it had the appearance of common like and dislike. At this time, it was the wise governors or noblemen who planned long-term welfare for the people rather than passively listened to their request. For example, when Zi Chan 子產 (?-522 BC) attempted to reform the well-field system and disciplined the people with ritual propriety, they were so angry that they wanted him to be killed. However, after they enjoyed the benefits of his reforms several years later, they praised him and feared losing him.

Likewise, at the end of North Song Dynasty, when Li Gang 李綱 (1083-1140) rejected to move the Capital elsewhere and swore to defend it with his life, the people in the capital acclaimed and supported him. However, was it true that all of them would defend the Capital with their lives? What they were concerned with was only the loss of their estate and property after moving the capital. Based on this, Wang Fuzhi condemned,

In later dynasties, the opinion or view of common people was the origin of chaos. If you give them food in the morning, they praise you immediately; if you strip their clothes in the evening, they curse you without delay. Small kindness and grudges can cause their praise and curse easily and mislead them from their former way. If they can get profit immediately, they will choose it and ignore the pending disaster accompanying it. If a ruler restrains their desires openly, but plans their welfare tacitly, they will chase after desires and abandon welfare. (CSQS 10-810)

Wang Fuzhi truly found some truth about common people, i.e., their near-sightedness, credulousness and ignorance. But this could not lead to the conclusion that common people’s
views were the source of great turmoil. These characteristics could only prove that common people were simple and easy to be manipulated by politicians. Moreover, because their views were near-sighted and they were ignorant and credulous, they could not cause big troubles for society unless they were manipulated by politicians or rebellious leaders. Then it would not be surprised that with bribes and lure, they crowded the capital to support Wang Mang in Han Dynasty, and endorsed Wu Zetian to change dynastic title to Zhou in Tang Dynasty.

Based on the above arguments, Wang Fuzhi asked, if common people were so susceptible for lure and bribe at the cost of justice and conscience, how could it be true that a person was eligible to be the Son of Heaven when winning the common people? How could one say that popular opinion was common likes and dislikes and the standard of success and failure of governance?

Now that common people’s views were not trustworthy, what to do with their praise and complaint? Wang Fuzhi proposed his doctrine, i.e., to establish proper norms through mutual support and examination/zhanchuan 轅轉 between Heaven and common people. He said,

To show heavenly evidence with the people and to govern the people according to Heaven, one thus is impartial and harmonious with fairness. But one still should maintain this balance cautiously. On the one hand, one can extend to the branch and say, “Heaven sees and hears according as the people see and hear”, so as to reach the end of Confucian Way/dao’s manifestation. On the other hand, one can trace to the origin and say, “the people hear and see according as Heaven hears and sees”, so as to ascertain the existence of principle. These two aspects share the same goal but have different applications. Proceeding and unraveling amidst them, dao is found or established. For the ruler not caring for the people, showing him Heaven through people’s likes and dislikes, nothing is more fearful than the people. For a ruler not being able to know the people, showing him the people according to Heaven, he has to know the people’s sincerity and insincerity clearly and uses them cautiously. (CSQS 2-327)

This quotation required that a ruler jointly use Heaven (principle) and the common people (popular views) to decide the truth and falsity of people’s likes and dislikes. Using principle to measure people’s views, the ruler saw their truth and falsity; this was called, “investigating
people’s seeing and hearing with Heaven.” Using people’s views to substantiate principle, the ruler found that people’s likes and dislikes manifested principle. This was called, “seeing Heaven through people’s views.” Through this reciprocal examination, one would avoid being misled by people’s near-sighted like and dislike and govern the state well.

In practice, Wang Fuzhi proposed Shun and Confucius’ method—finding the mean through considering both ends carefully. (CSQS 7-116) However, it was easier to say than done. For low-intelligence people, more options would only lead them to confusion. It was high-intelligence people who could decide things through balancing many factors. Anyway, this method of balancing two ends could be a good illustration of Wang’s view to establish proper norms through mutual support and examination between Heaven and common people.

After this mutual support and examination being completed, the ruler would be able to discern whether people’s complaint and praise were proper or improper, and then dealt with them with a proper measure. This was manifested in Wang’s following remarks.

Regarding people’s love and complaint arising from their selfish concern, they go against heavenly principle through submitting to physical pleasure and profit, like the impropriety of severe frigidity and excessive summer rain. There is no principle or due measure in their love and complaint, so the noblemen disregard them. He may put them into exile or execute them, shuns neither their complaints nor seeks their praises, for although the ruler should not seek his own selfish interest, neither should he cater to the people’s selfish desires. (CSQS 12-71)

Pushing further, Wang Fuzhi supported the view that a ruler should correct custom and get rid of popular views according to the founded measure and standard. It was only through reforming popular opinions and custom that healthy customs were established. After healthy customs were established, the people would have proper likes and dislikes, praise and complaint, and thus a prosperous and peaceful world was achieved. Undoubtedly, this founded measure or standard should be ritual propriety.
5.5 Three Universal Distinctions in the World

Based on his gender and racial bias, Wang Fuzhi proposed to maintain three universal distinctions if a ruler wanted to govern the world well. They were: Chinese ruled central China while barbarians stayed in the peripheral frontier; noblemen were appointed in officialdom while petty persons were banished; men managed external matters while women took care of family affairs. (CSQS 11-182) To abide by these three distinctions well, the crucial measure was that a ruler clearly distinguished righteousness from profit and embraced righteousness always.

5.5.1 Controlling Petty Persons with Righteousness and Rituals

Wang Fuzhi followed Confucius and Mencius to distinguish noblemen from petty persons. In the Analects, noblemen referred to scholars, officials and royal families, while petty persons referred to either common people or immoral individuals. For example, Fan Chi 樊迟 was condemned as a petty person by Confucius because he was concerned himself only with farming instead of rituals and music. (Analects 13.4) But when Confucius claimed, “The nobleman is conversant with righteousness while the petty person is conversant with profits” (Analects 4.16, James Legge’s translation), he was distinguishing righteousness from profits with a moral standard. Wang Fuzhi inherited both aspects.

In Wang’s opinion, different concerns between noblemen and petty persons led to different life attitudes and consequences upon custom. Noblemen aimed for righteousness so they would promote public welfare and bring the people to cherish life and virtue, and their unselfish mind made them always peaceful and happy; petty persons pursued profits, so they would corrupt custom and lead the people to be selfish, and their selfish concern caused them to worry about gain and loss unceasingly. Much worse was that petty persons would form cliques and factions to get their selfish interests satisfied and turn the world into chaos. This was why Wang Fuzhi condemned petty persons who would bring humiliation and misery to the people. (CSQS 5-461)

Then Wang Fuzhi proposed to distinguish noblemen from petty persons on the basis of the distinction between righteousness and profit, and admonished not being misled by petty persons’ monopoly and selfishness. He argued,
With regard to the distinction between justice and evil, it is predicated on the mind’s selfishness and unselfishness. The distinction between selfishness and unselfishness depends on which of righteousness and profit one is seeking. If a ruler is blind to this, but condemns only petty person’s monopoly and stinginess, he will not be able to know clearly the truth that nobleman practices humanity while petty person increases evil, and thus lead people in the world to rush into the camp of petty persons. (CSQS 7-300)

Here, Wang Fuzhi traced the distinction between noblemen and petty persons to the different concerns of righteousness and profit. In order to eliminate or transform petty persons, a ruler should always promote righteousness and not be misled by petty persons’ unfavorable behaviors. When righteousness prevailed, petty persons would become noblemen too.

Based on this standpoint, Wang Fuzhi supported to maintain the distinction between nobleman and petty person, and sighed with regret the collapse of rank system in the Spring-Autumn Period. In his arguments, after the collapse, an ordinary person (petty person) would have been able to procure glory and wealth with tongue and brush, elevating thereby from slave to governor. Then all noblemen became no difference from petty persons while all petty persons could become noblemen. When this situation became worse, for their selfish interests, petty persons would support barbarians such as Jurchen and Mongol as their masters and destroyed Chinese civilization completely. Thus, he lamented,

Alas, noblemen are to petty persons as China is to barbarians. Their distinctions are natural, not man-made. If these distinctions can be destroyed, then nothing could be exempted from destruction. (CSQS 10-566)

Here, Wang went to the extreme as regarding the distinction between noblemen and petty persons (common people) as natural and predestined. To avoid chaos, this distinction must be maintained forever. Then one might ask Wang Fuzhi, “Where did noblemen arise? Shun, the legendary emperor was born from a wicked father; while Yao, the sagely emperor, gave birth to a wicked son. Then how could a clear line be drawn between noblemen and petty persons?” Moreover, Wang Fuzhi once claimed that before the legendary emperor Xuan Yuan’s time, Chinese people were not different from barbarians; before the legendary emperor Tai Hao’s time,
time, Chinese people were not different from birds and beasts. (CSQS 12-467) Then his fixed distinction between noblemen and petty persons would put himself into paradox.

Nevertheless, let’s follow Wang Fuzhi’s way of thinking and see what conclusion he would draw. Based on his distinction between noblemen and petty persons (common people), he disagreed to elevate petty persons or ordinary people to noblemen. In his explanation, although that looked appealing for beautifying custom, it would finally degrade noblemen into petty persons and lead to the loss of the Confucian Way. So he recommended noblemen to keep a distance from petty persons and not to give them chance to disturb the court or bureaucracy.

Of course, the best way to deal with petty persons was to transform them with virtues. To achieve this, noblemen should maintain resolute and impartial, interact with them according to ritual propriety. They should do the just only, reward petty persons what they were eligible for, but did not stimulate them with name and power. After petty persons demonstrated their intentions, the nobleman would analyze them, purifying their excessive elements and curbing their potential harms. As a result, the petty persons were transformed unnoticeably, and disasters or conflicts were avoided.

If it was impossible to transform petty persons, the nobleman should keep his own principle, not flowing with the tide; but he would not show them his contempt either. Then petty persons would not be able to fathom the nobleman’s strategy and so dared not to act fearlessly and cause big troubles. (CSQS 1-200) In other words, the nobleman should maintain himself faultlessly, magnanimously and always righteously, and leave no chance for petty person’s infringement. Obviously Wang Fuzhi fell into naivety again. The success of this strategy presupposed that petty persons still had conscience and followed principle, but the reality was always that petty persons became wicked because they abandoned principle and pursued interests regardless of the call of their conscience. Just as Wang Fuzhi admitted that the sagely king established laws to correct those who could not be transformed with education, petty persons belonged to those incorrigible, how could the nobleman avoid their infringement through behaving righteously?
5.5.2 Allotting Petty Persons Proper Places and not Defying them

As Wang Fuzhi claimed, the virtue of yin belonged to petty persons, women and barbarians in human beings, and was profit and desires in human mind. This meant that petty persons were natural creatures in the world and could not be eliminated. The option remaining was how to accommodate them and prevent them from making trouble. Wang Fuzhi realized this and proposed to allot them a proper place and preventing them from mixing and competing with noblemen. He argued,

As the Great Ultimate has two poles, there must be yin along with yang in Heaven, softness along with firmness on earth, petty persons along with noblemen in human world, and barbarians along with Chinese. It is only through mixing and making them compete with each other that big troubles arise. If yin supports yang, softness sustains firmness, petty persons support noblemen, and barbarians defend China, then yin satisfy with their kinds and place, and yang stay in their proper place too. Responding but not mixing with each other, yin will not disturb yang despite their prosperity. (CSQS 1-368)

Here, Wang Fuzhi justified the existence of petty persons ontologically, but insisted that petty persons supported noblemen and were satisfied with their own lot, just as earth supported Heaven and was satisfied to rest below. If this order were maintained, petty persons would not cause troubles even though they prospered. To elucidate this idea, Wang Fuzhi chose Hexagram Ji Ji 既濟 as an instance and said,

Man and woman concord with each other. Nobleman and petty person support each other…The principle of Hexagram Jiji is suitable. It gives yin position two and lets it maintain its integrity. For if yin stays in its position, then its power will not be stripped. (CSQS 1-968)

Wang’s meaning was that if petty persons were willing to stay in their positions, they should enjoy power correspondingly; just as wives stayed home and enjoyed her power to govern the family. In this way, Wang Fuzhi believed petty persons could be pacified. But this was only a theoretical assumption from the hexagrams, and Wang did not show much insight on how to assign petty persons proper places in the politics.
Pushing further, Wang Fuzhi recommended that yang should offer yin its own places if necessary. He praised the way of Hexagram Tai 泰 to achieve harmony and prosperity through offering yin the most respectable position five, giving yin honor but maintaining the court orderly. He argued,

So it is necessary of the principle of Hexagram Tai 泰 which abdicates the position five to yin. This is because yang will not strip the fame of yin when winning yin’s support. (CSQS 1-968)

This meant that if yin firmly supported yang and petty persons loyally supported noblemen, noblemen should award them high positions and fame and win their loyalty.

Moreover, Wang Fuzhi insisted, if yin and yang, noblemen and petty persons each got their proper places and stayed in their groups, they would not conflict with each other even though they mixed. Taking Hexagram Jie 解 as an instance, yin occupied positions one, three and five while yang occupied positions two and four. Yin and yang mixed and stayed improper places; however, the result was harmonious instead of antagonistic. Wang Fuzhi explained,

Jie is to solve the mess. Its four middle strokes /yao 戌 do not stay in the proper yin and yang positions, but mix with each other, and create thereby suspicion between yin and yang. To solve the problem of suspicion, let yin and yang each go to their kinds and trust each other. Noblemen and petty persons each fulfill their desires, and will not compete with each other despite their mixing. (CSQS 1-331)

In Wang’s understanding, although yin and yang did not stay their proper positions, yin and yin responded to each other while yang and yang were echoed too. Yin and yang each got their kind and thus avoided conflict despite their mixing improperly. But this was only Wang Fuzhi’s partial interpretation. One might argue that conflict would arise just because yin and yang each stayed in their kind. For example, if the court was full of petty persons while noblemen were driven out of offices, this situation was also that yin and yang each gathered to their kinds. Would Wang Fuzhi think it harmonious?

Very soon Wang Fuzhi denied his above assumption when analyzing Hexagram Da Guo 大過. In this diagram, yang occupied positions 2, 3, 4, 5 while yin stayed on 1, 6. This matched Wang
Fuzhi and other Confucians’ principle that noblemen stayed in court while petty persons were exiled. But he said this would cause great disasters, for noblemen should not purify petty persons from the court completely. He argued,

Positions are honorable to human beings. Same kind is sought by people sharing similar vital force. Choosing the right positions and staying in power, gathering their kinds and enjoying being together, banishing dissidents to remote barbarian places, not being affected by their sweet words or harmed by their plots, isn’t this the happiest time under Heaven! But it is called Big Error/Daguo. (CSQS 1-895)

Wang Fuzhi’s argument was that noblemen or yang should give petty persons some places to stay or to communicate with them. If they were put into exile completely, they would become furious and take their revenge of noblemen. Apparently Wang Fuzhi was more skillful in pure talk than paying attention to coherency and reality. First, this idea contradicted with the Confucian ideal that filled the court with noblemen and put petty persons in exile to the frontier, just as Shun had done. Second, it also contradicted with Wang Fuzhi’s method of dealing with petty persons, that is, noblemen just followed righteousness and rituals and paid no attention to petty persons. In other words, Wang Fuzhi thought noblemen should play a fair game with petty persons and give them opportunities, so as to avoid their troubles, but did not realize that this was the very way to give them the chance to make troubles.

Wang Fuzhi might have realized the danger to accept petty persons to the court, so he made some modification to suggest restraining petty persons through giving them a proper place. He said,

To pacify women and petty persons, restrain them in a proper place. To deal with barbarians, limit them to a lower place and thereby pacify them. If the ruler leaves them unruly outside, and stirs their anger by banishing, they will become the origin of trouble and danger certainly. (CSQS 1-354-355)

These sentences showed that Wang Fuzhi feared of petty persons’ revenge if they were put into exile instead of being accommodated. Wang Fuzhi might get some support from his readings on the factional struggle in the Song Dynasty which petty persons revenged severely once they returned from their exile. However, Wang Fuzhi did not realize that without being put into exile,
petty persons would always occupy important positions and cause more destructions. With regard to a feasible solution, Wang Fuzhi showed feet of clay. His only suggestion was to ask noblemen to act unselfishly and not to compete with and defy petty persons.

Then, a question arose, how to punish petty persons in terms of their evil and troubles? Wang Fuzhi suggested punishing them according to their crimes and making them accept penalty without complaint. Wang Fuzhi thought that petty persons would cordially accept penalty without complaint if they were punished properly. However, one might argue, petty persons were petty because they were greedy and did not follow the principles. This implied that they would not think being punished properly even though noblemen thought so. How could it be true that evil persons were punished properly without complaint?

Moreover, in Wang Fuzhi’s prescription, to punish petty persons according to their committed crimes, noblemen should comply with ritual propriety and avoid using tricks or traps. Otherwise, petty persons were more skillful in fabricating and applying tricks and cheating, then noblemen would inevitably fail into competing with them and thus lead to factional struggle. He summarized,

> Therefore when noblemen punish petty persons, they stop at the point their crimes deserve, and do not use power or strategy. Otherwise, leave them temporarily and wait for their extinction naturally. If noblemen maintain themselves free from faults, leave success and failure to natural process and lot, without gain but free from faults, without putting the world in order but causing no disasters, there will be sufficient room for them to maintain the right way. (CSQS 11-101)

How bright and practical were Wang Fuzhi’s words, “leave them temporarily and wait for their extinction naturally. If noblemen maintain themselves free from faults, leave success and failure to natural process and lot.” These were his method to deal with petty persons and evil ministers. These showed Wang Fuzhi’s pedantry and pure talk. His strategy gives readers the impression that he eschewed problems with Daoist non-action or letting things alone. However, a reader might ask Wang Fuzhi how a state or court would be put in order if petty persons were not put into exile or eliminated? At this point, Wang Fuzhi’s pure talk unconsciously worsened the popular condemnation on the pedantry and impracticability of Neo-Confucian scholarship.
5.5.3 The Way to Interact with Women

Wang Fuzhi strictly abided by Confucian principle that man as master was responsible for external affairs while woman as cooperator took care of family issues. He regarded this relationship as natural and eternal as that Heaven was above and earth below. Therefore, although a woman was wise, she must listen to her stupid husband and comply with the eternal and natural law. Wang argued,

Man occupies the right place outside and woman stays her place at home. After getting married, she listens to her husband and then her son after her husband dies. This is the right way for woman. For even the master is mediocre, he nevertheless is better than a clever woman. (CSQS 11-107)

On the contrary, if women did not follow their proper way but became masters of family or state, they would lead to chaos and collapse. He specified,

Once the Son of Heaven is controlled by the queen’s family, the empire will collapse. This is proved in King Ping of Zhou’s 周平王 case. Once a duke is so, the dukedom will decline. This is the case of Duke Zhuang of Lu 魯莊公. Once an ordinary man is controlled by his wife, his family will be chaotic. This is testified by today’s families. (CSQS 5-140)

Then Wang Fuzhi analyzed the question why women should not be master by referring to the characteristics of yin and yang. He argued,

When interacting, to follow blindly; when demanding, not to stop at due measure; this is the nature of yin. Yin comes happily, demands without end. If yang does not satisfy its desire, yin will hate, go away with complaint and infringe yang later. Then yang will be in strait. (CSQS 1-880)

These sentences indicated that women as yin were insatiable and blind in nature and thus would cause chaos if they were in their own way. Men as yang should beware of this nature and avoid their infringement. To achieve this, men should let women exert their functions and abilities, but not be controlled by them. In other words, men should maintain the dominance to control and use women for their purpose. Wang clearly stated,
To use their abilities, men know they can be vehicles/tools. Not to submit to them, men control and dominate them just as one links fish together. Then the duty that common people support monarch is stable; the situation that men govern women is smooth. Common people supporting monarch, the ruler alone stands above the people and does not feel lonely. Men governing women, feelings and desires will be moderated by rituals and righteousness and chaos will stop automatically. (CSQS 1-800)

This passage required men to use women and dominate them. If this were done, the ruler would be able to put the state in order, and the husband would be able to control women’s desires in due measure and prevent chaos in advance. Otherwise, if one let women be master and ruler, it would not be different to let petty persons govern noblemen or barbarians rule the Chinese.

Based on the above arguments, Wang Fuzhi claimed that both state and family relied upon setting right the man-woman relationship. With regard to governing a state, Wang Fuzhi said, “the sagely king took correcting custom and distinguishing man from woman, outer affairs from inner affairs as the prime concern of governance.” (CSQS 10-195) With regard to regulating the household, Wang Fuzhi expressed his view through commenting on Hexagram Jiaren 家人, and argued,

Yin and yang each get its place in this hexagram, but the sage only says that it is beneficial for woman to be chaste and praises Stroke Two and Stroke Four. Why? The sage knows clearly that the change of human world and the way to regulate a family depend upon woman’s chastity. Yang is harmonious and resolute in action, without the possibility to become unchaste originally. However, after yin enters, usurps yang’s place and drives yang to act, yang will become unchaste and follow yin’s evil. (CSQS 1-313)

This meant that to regulate a family, if women or wives were chaste or fair-minded, the family would be easily harmonious and orderly. The reason of family conflicts often resulted from women’s evil intention and manipulation. Therefore, if women stayed in their obedient position, no family would become disharmonious. This was why Wang Fuzhi proposed obedience as women’s prime virtue.

Applying this principle to real life, Wang Fuzhi indicated that without a woman’s slandering other family members and goading her husband, parents, sons and brothers seldom did not love
sincerely or help each other. But after a woman disturbed the family relations, some men would commit evils, went against filial piety and fraternal love and degraded themselves into the level of beasts. But they rarely awakened and realized that their evils originated from woman’s goading and misleading. Therefore, in order to govern the state and regulate the family, the cardinal principle should never be deviated. That is, using yang to govern yin, using men to control women.

5.5.4 Chinese and Barbarians

Wang Fuzhi was a strong racist when dealing with other ethnic groups. He followed Chinese tradition to regard Han Chinese as civilized while all other peoples as barbarians. His standard to distinguish the civilized from the barbarian was the compliance with ritual propriety. If a people accepted and complied with it, they would be regarded civilized and Chinese. If they discarded it, they would be condemned as barbarians even though they might be Chinese previously. For example, in the Spring-Autumn Period, the people of Qi and Ju were condemned as barbarians after they discarded the Zhou rituals although they were the previous sages’ descendents. On the contrary, the kings of Wu and Chu were praised when they followed Chinese rituals although they were barbarians previously. Based on this, Wang Fuzhi concluded,

Ritual propriety is what human beings stand on alone, birds are blind to it definitely, and barbarians unquestionably do not know it and want to get rid of it. (CSQS 5-146)

He further specified,

The reason he detests barbarians is that they do not respect the relationships of monarch-minister and father-son. Thus it is for the sake of the great relationships to distinguish Chinese from barbarians, rather than for the threat of barbarians to discard these great relationships. (CSQS 5-334)

These quotations indicate that for Wang Fuzhi, ritual propriety was the standard to distinguish human beings from birds and barbarians. (Wang Fuzhi sometimes identified barbarians as birds.) An important content of ritual propriety was to follow the monarch-minister and father-son
relationships set up by Confucianism. If these relationships were abandoned, a civilized people would degrade itself to barbarians.

However, Wang Fuzhi did not present a convincing argument why barbarians did not respect rituals or have their ritual propriety. He admitted that barbarians had humanity and wisdom but flatly denied them having ritual propriety and righteousness. As he stated,

Barbarians’ humanity is broader than bird’s, and their wisdom is more penetrating than bird’s. However, it is only because they do not practice righteousness and ritual propriety, they are not superior to birds. Thus their way is called barbarian. (CSQS 5-145)

These sentences acknowledged that barbarians as human beings also had humanity and wisdom, but denied them having righteousness and ritual propriety. That is, barbarians did not know to extend their humanity and use their wisdom properly, so they did not know righteousness and ritual propriety and were inferior to the Chinese. However, these arguments were questionable. According to Wang Fuzhi, humanity gave rise to righteousness and ritual propriety. If barbarians had humanity, they should also be able to establish righteousness and ritual propriety accordingly. How could Wang Fuzhi deny them not knowing righteousness and ritual propriety?

Wang Fuzhi might have realized the extremity of his remarks, so he softened his attack on them and acknowledged that barbarians could make pretence to practice righteousness. Nevertheless, he assumed that they finally would discard ritual propriety for the sake of profit and achievement and thus could not be regarded as civilized. At this point, he relied upon ritual propriety or Confucian cultural institutions as the sole standard to distinguish Chinese from barbarians. Thus, in order to save Chinese from degrading into barbarians, the most important measure was to establish and promote ritual propriety. Once ritual propriety was restored, China would be immune from barbarian conquest. Otherwise, even if the Chinese drove away the barbarians; they would attempt to invade and conquer China again. Based on his bitter experience of the Manchurian conquest, he thus criticized the Ming founders who did not establish and promote ritual propriety after they drove away the Mongols, and therefore left the chance for the Manchurian invasion. He said,

The negligence of ritual propriety results in the disasters barbarian invasion. In order to save China from barbarian invasion, nothing is more urgent than restoring ritual propriety.
If a ruler can make an achievement to drive barbarians away, but his way is not able to promote ritual propriety, the driven barbarians will come back later. Alas, this is why Liu Ji 劉基, Song Lian 宋濂, Tao An 陶安 and Zhan Tong 詹同 (all are the Ming founders) are inferior to Guan Zhong 管仲 in their achievement, and are more insignificant in comparison with the Duke of Zhou. (CSQS 5-146)

Here Wang Fuzhi took the restoration of ritual propriety as the final solution to the barbarian invasion, but he did not explain how ritual propriety could be the final solution to drive barbarian away. From his arguments proposed elsewhere, he presumed that if the people followed ritual propriety, they would avoid interacting with barbarians and leave them no chance to spy and invade China. However, it was sad that the Ming founders did not realize this and thus could not prevent the Manchurian invasion in advance. From this argument, it was evident that Wang Fuzhi proposed a separation policy between Chinese people and barbarians. Then, he justified the necessity of separation from the perspective of geography and climate, and said,

Barbarians and Chinese live in different places. This difference leads to their disparity in *qi*/vital force. The different *qi* causes their different habits which make them different in both knowledge and practice. Yet barbarians also have their superior and inferior. However, it is the difference in geography and climate that barbarians cannot mix with Chinese people. Otherwise, human principle/relationship will be destroyed, and Chinese people will become withered and suffer barbarian’s devour. Hence, it is natural to prevent barbarians in advance, maintain human principle and protect Chinese life. (CSQS 10-502)

In this quotation, Wang Fuzhi provided a very far-fetched argument. He separated Chinese from barbarians on the basis of geography and climate, and presumed that people’s migration would cause the destruction of human relationships, and again claimed that this was its destiny. Then Wang assumed that the ancient Chinese kings had separated Chinese from barbarians through delimiting geographical area and heavenly map, and thus the separation policy should be maintained and complied with for thousand generations.

Perhaps this destined geographical demarcation was suitable only for Wang Fuzhi’s imagination. For other Chinese, they travelled from Manchuria to Vietnam and experienced different topography and climates but did not lose ritual principles and human relationships. How could Wang’s argument stand for itself? Understandably, he was cursing Mongolians and Manchurians
and assumed that the Yan mountains 燕山 separated Central China from Mongolia and Manchuria and thus differentiated the Chinese from the Mongolians and the Manchurians. But Yan Mountains were much lower than Taihang mountains 太行山, why did Wang Fuzhi not assume that Shanxi 山西 people were barbarians and different from other Chinese? At this point, it was clear that Wang Fuzhi’s reason gave way to his emotion.

In practice, first, Wang Fuzhi suggested that Chinese people should prevent themselves from being transformed by barbarian custom through the forbiddance of their language and dress in China. In doing this, barbarian custom would not be able to disturb the mind of petty persons and licentious rulers, and thus the Chinese could maintain an orderly and civilized custom through the compliance of ritual propriety. Otherwise, after some Chinese were transformed, they would respect barbarian leaders as masters and destroy Chinese civilization completely. For example, Wang Fuzhi blamed Emperor Wu of Han who settled down the captivated Huns in Central China and offered the chance for them to turn China into chaos between the 4th -6th centuries. (CSQS 5-391) Hence Wang Fuzhi used the slogan in the Spring-Autumn Annals, “the sagely king protects the Chinese, while driving away the barbarians”, and insisted that the sages always kept in mind the exclusion of barbarians from China. But in the same book, the sage also promoted that if barbarians accepted Chinese rituals and ceremonies, they would be regarded as Chinese. How could Wang Fuzhi partly use the sage’s words to support his own prejudice? Moreover, in the long history of China, many barbarians were not driven away, but were assimilated to become Chinese. Then Wang Fuzhi’s criticism upon Emperor Wu of Han lost its soundness too.

Second, Wang Fuzhi warned Chinese rulers not to use barbarians to procure profit so as to avoid potential danger. He ascribed the ruin of the Northern and Southern Song to its using Jurchen to destroy Khitan and using Mongols to destroy Jurchen. Here, Wang Fuzhi continued his separation policy and ascribed the fall of the Song Dynasty to its using barbarians. This assumption was without ground too, for the Song collapsed mainly because the emperors did not trust their generals and made the empire vulnerable to barbarian invasion as Wang Fuzhi also found. In other words, without strengthening its military and defense, even though the Song closed its door to the Jurchen and Mongol, it still could not have escaped the fate of being conquered.
Wang Fuzhi then proposed his method to prevent barbarian disturbance and invasion. First, the superior way was to pacify their weak tribes and restrain their strong ones, using beneficence to get their support and using power to restrain their rebellion. Second, if China was not powerful enough to control them, the ruler should strengthen forts, train soldiers and sharpen weapons so as to prevent their raids. The worst way was to encourage their fight and merger in order to procure nearsighted interests, for the Chinese ruler did not realize that once they became stronger, they would consider how to conquer China. For these reasons, Wang Fuzhi required that a ruler pay attention to barbarian activities and did his best to restrain them in a manageable scope.

In short, considering the fact that the barbarians used profit to mislead Chinese rulers and then attack China, the Chinese ruler should have a mind not to procure profit but always practice righteousness, leaving no chance for a takeover, for if one was distanced from profit, then the potential dangers would be avoided. So Wang Fuzhi concluded,

Two general embankments under Heaven are the distinctions between China and barbarians, noblemen and petty persons…In summary, both depend on one distinction. This very distinction is the difference between righteousness and profit. (CSQS 10-502-503)

With this consideration, Wang Fuzhi strongly urged the forbiddance of profit-seeking merchants. In his eyes, it was merchants who attracted barbarians to China for the sake of profit, and thus destroyed the distinction between Chinese and barbarians.

Based on his persistent effort to keep the distinction between the Chinese and the barbarians, it was a surprising to see that Wang Fuzhi supported the transformation of southern barbarians into Chinese. For instance, he praised Zhang Dun (1035-1105) who expanded China into the southwest and converted the Miao minorities into Chinese. In order to avoid contradiction with his doctrine that the king did not regulate barbarians, Wang made a distinction among barbarians according to geography. That is, the barbarians in China proper should be assimilated while those outside should be driven away. (CSQS 11-174) In other words, the southern barbarians were in China proper and should be transformed, while the northern barbarians were not and should be driven away. This showed his prejudice toward northern barbarians or
nomadic tribes because of his hatred toward the Manchurians. Thus, Wang Fuzhi’s remarks showed the way of thinking of defeatism.

5.5.5 The Distinction between Righteousness and Profits

As aforesaid, ontologically, the three general distinctions could be summarized as the distinction between *yin* and *yang*; morally, they were essentially the distinction between righteousness and profits. Hence, the distinction between righteousness and profits became the crucial approach to preserve the three general distinctions. Then Wang Fuzhi went to the Confucian classics to get support and assumed that Confucius already abided by this idea. He said,

> Alas, what kind of mind did Confucius have? What kind of Way did he abide by? What he discerned to the utmost were the difference between righteousness and profit, impartiality and selfishness; what he defended strictly was the rank between king and ministers, China and barbarians. What he demonstrated in affairs and concentrated in mind were righteousness and humanity. (CSQS 8-520-521)

With Confucius as his support, Wang Fuzhi went on taking the distinction of righteousness and profit as the prime standard for moral, political and cultural discernment. From moral aspect, a person should strictly abide by righteousness instead of profit in order to become a worthy and transcend the vulgar masses. Wang argued,

> Isn’t it distant between the worthy and the wicked? But the primary divergence starts from their concern on righteousness or profit. Profit aims to get wealthy; righteousness is the normal principle of the world, yet other people cannot comply with it. If one complies with it, one will transcend the vulgar masses. (CSQS 7-894)

Here, Wang Fuzhi indicated the distinction between the worthy and the wicked originally started from a person’s choice. If one chose righteousness, one would not only avoid wickedness but also excel over ordinary people. However, this did not mean that one should not pursue profit. It just showed a person that righteousness was lofty than profits and could make a person moral and elegant.
From social aspect, the distinction of righteousness and profit was critical to the transformation of customs and the education of the people. Wang stated,

The Way of nobleman will govern a state if carried out, and educate students and later generations if being preserved. To govern a state, a nobleman will accept a good position and undertake his duty; to teach later generations, he will carry out the Way of human beings and correct human relationships. But the most important in doing these is the distinction of righteousness and profit. (CSQS 11-312)

This showed that a nobleman would promote righteousness prior to profit in governing the state and educating the people. Then Wang Fuzhi further explained,

Righteousness is the essence of honor; profit is the root of shame. To save people’s mind from corruption in a declining time, nothing is more crucial than their distinction. Thus although it is said that nothing is more important than filial piety and fraternal love, if one cherishes profit but looks lightly upon family affection, what is the value of his words and behavior if he abandons his parents and relatives? (CSQS 7-755)

This passage disclosed why profit should not be prior to righteousness. To beautify custom, the crucial measure was to cultivate people’s sense of honor and shame. But the sense of honor and shame was based on the distinction of righteousness and profit. If one valued profit more than love and humanity, one’s words and behavior in filial piety and fraternal love would become meaningless, let alone the sense of shame and honor. For this reason, the ruler should not put the pursuit of profit before righteousness. If he needed to improve public welfare, he should do it under the regulation of righteousness. (Shen 1992)

From cultural aspect, the distinction between righteousness and profit differentiated the Chinese from the barbarian, the civilized from the uncivilized. It was that barbarians sought for profits that made them inferior to the Chinese. Wang Fuzhi elaborated on this point,

Barbarians lived in the place valuing profit, and grew in the ethos pursuing profit. What their fathers and brothers infused, what their muscle and skin were good at, what their mind and desires aimed at, what their will targeted and their qi or energy carried out, and what their spirit and mind concerned, all were nothing but profit. Thus they could not be
transformed and brought to the realm of Chinese noblemen. For this reason, although they were also human beings, they should live in a different place from the Chinese, just as noblemen distinguished their kind from petty persons. These distinctions must be strictly preserved. (CSQS 10-503)

In Wang Fuzhi’s understanding, barbarians knew nothing but profit, so they could not understand Chinese culture and rituals, and thus should be looked down upon by the Chinese.

Based on the above distinctions, Wang Fuzhi again advocated Dong Zhongshu’s 董仲舒 (179-104 BC) doctrine, carrying out righteousness without any concern about profit, and stated,

Righteousness and profit cannot be compromised. A person satisfying with righteousness will forget profit, while a person pursuing profit will take distance from righteousness. (CSQS 7-658)

Undoubtedly, Wang Fuzhi exaggerated and fixed the distinction between righteousness and profit. Righteousness as the due measure of humanity could not exist beyond profit, for humanity must manifest as beneficence and welfare to others. If humanity and righteousness were nothing but good will, they would be worthless. In fact, righteousness took profit as its basis and was the proper fulfillment of common profit. This was the true meaning of Mencius’ words, “Your Majesty does not need to mention profit, for there are humanity and righteousness too.” (Mencius 1A.1) In other words, Mencius thought humanity and righteousness were the common profit through fulfilling people’s basic needs, and there was no strict distinction between them as later Confucians assumed, let alone the distinction between Chinese people and barbarian. Therefore, it was unfounded that Wang Fuzhi distinguished Chinese people from barbarian on the basis of the distinction between righteousness and profits.

As Wang Fuzhi regarded righteousness as the innate ability of human mind, he also took the peace of mind as its standard, and stated,

Truth and falsity have no definite boundary, but their main distinction lies in righteousness and profit. Righteousness is the master of truth; profit is the origin of falsity. Righteousness

38 In 5.3.2, he criticized the very Dong’s view.
does not depend on external things or situation, but on the peace of one’s mind/conscience.

(CSQS 8-249)

Here, Wang Fuzhi used normative statements to distinguish truth from falsity, and turned factual statements into normative judgments. He went so far as to claim that all truth and falsity were determined by one’s conscience. Then there would be no objective truth or falsity, and all value and judgments would become subjective statements. At this point, Wang Fuzhi planned to establish the authority of humanity and righteousness over profit and practice of profit, but did not realize that thereby he destroyed the objectivity of humanity and righteousness and thus stepped on the old routine that Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge traveled.

Wang Fuzhi also realized that the resort of righteousness to conscience solely would make morality a subjective matter and lead to no moral standard, so he again proposed the balance between the mind and external situations.

To locate righteousness, it is better to examine it in the peacefulness of one’s mind rather than the order or disorder of the world; and it is more feasible to measure it with what the world expects rather than with what one likes or dislikes. (CSQS 7-402)

The so-called righteousness, in a broad sense, is to consider the feasibility through balancing self and other, large and small, constancy and change. Then one will achieve the state that one has no regret in matters and no unhappiness in feelings. (CSQS 7-382)

These passages showed that one should consider two poles in finding righteousness: one’s mind and the external situation. Although one should pay attention to the peacefulness of one’s mind, one must balance it with what the world expected. If a person sought peace of mind but was indifferent to the suffering of the world, this peace of mind would be irresponsible rather than righteous.

Then, Wang Fuzhi tried to compromise righteousness with profit through subsuming profit under righteousness. In his regard, righteousness did not aim at profit, but would result in long-term profit automatically. For example, if a ruler behaved and governed the state according to righteousness, the people would support him. As a result, he benefited from righteousness and could rule the state longer and more peacefully. Wang argued,
Righteousness and profit aim toward different directions, but can unite indeed from the point of the universality of heavenly principle. Righteousness makes one’s action smoothly. Once everything is done properly, one can extend it to the world. There will be no disadvantage anyway. (CSQS 7-382)

This meant that righteousness led to things being properly done and thus obtained profit. Therefore righteousness could be compatible with profit, but one should unite them according to heavenly principle.

As heavenly principle manifested as humanity and righteousness, so in specific, the unity of righteousness and profit depended on the use of righteousness to measure and judge profit. For instance, Wang stated,

Using righteousness to measure profit, using principle to guide desire, heavenly principle will run through human desires. When heavenly principle prevails, sounds, color, goods and profit all reach their due measure consequentially. (CSQS 1-355)

From Wang’s suggestion to regulate profit with righteousness, it was evident that he ranked righteousness higher than profit. Professor Vincent Shen insightfully found this through analyzing Mencius’ discussion on righteousness and profit. In Shen’s regard, Mencius asked people to choose the higher value if possible. Through choosing the higher value, the lower value would be easy to be accomplished. (Shen 1992) On the contrary, if a person did not use righteousness to guide profit but regarded profit as prime concern, he would abandon their parents or betray their masters for the sake of profits. The consequence would result in the conflicts among families and the collapse of the state. For the same reason, Wang Fuzhi followed Mencius and insisted that a scholar would rather abandon the chance to become an official than compromise his doctrine of humanity and righteousness with profit.

In order to maintain the distinction between righteousness and profit or to guide profit pursuit with righteousness, it was necessary to know righteousness clearly. This was called being proficient in righteousness. To achieve it, one should not only match with principles found in human affairs, but also substantiate external principles with one’s conscience. So Wang Fuzhi again confronted the dialectical relation between innate knowledge and ritual propriety. In order to keep a balance between them, he used innate knowledge as the last voice to determine
righteousness and ritual propriety and avoided the fixed principle in Zhu Xi’s discourse, but in turn he resorted to ritual propriety to prevent the subjective tendency of Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge.
Chapter 6 Petty and Impure Confucians and Heresies: The Obstacles to the Kingly Way

When explaining why the Kingly Way was not achieved and custom became corrupt, Wang Fuzhi blamed three kinds of people. The most destructive were petty Confucians who were petty persons but learned and misused Confucianism; the second were heresies, such as the Legalists, Daoists and Buddhists; and the less harmful were those Confucian scholars who could not understand or propagate the Confucian Classics correctly, i.e., impure Confucians.

First, Wang Fuzhi made a comparison between heresies and impure Confucians, saying:

The so-called heresies refer to those who misinterpret the cardinal principle of Heaven and earth, betray the constitutions of previous kings, break up the subtle meaning of the Six Classics, and thus falsify the content of mind and nature and destroy the constant principle. They are not those who make some errors in words, exegesis, measures and history, and thus insist their different views because of their prejudice and shallow knowledge. (CSQS 10-279-280)

From this definition, heresies were those scholars who went completely against Confucianism, while impure Confucians referred to pedantic and shallow Confucians who could not interpret the Confucian classics correctly due to their shallowness and prejudice. Obviously, from Wang’s standpoint, heresies caused more harm to custom and acted as bigger obstacles to the realization of the Kingly Way and Confucian practice. Therefore, Wang followed Mencius to criticize heretical scholars.

However, Wang Fuzhi thought petty Confucians were the most destructive to custom and Confucianism. Petty Confucians sought after profits in the name of Confucian practice, and were inferior to heretical scholars who looked down upon the pursuit of profit without principle. In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, heretical scholars just sought truth in darkness and remoteness and behaved eccentrically, but they were unselfish in desires. He explained,

With regard to those who seek for the concealed and behave eccentrically, guess and arrange heavenly principle artificially, they have deliberate intentions but no selfish desires.
Undoubtedly, they detest petty persons who do not follow the Way. They are Zhuangzi, Liezi, Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming, etc. Petty persons are those who indulge in worldly views and material interests, but have powers. In contrast, those seeking for the concealed and behaving eccentrically are heretic. Those not reaching due measure are just Confucians who have faults. These three kinds of people are deeply different just as Heaven and the abyss are. (CSQS 6-479)

Now that heretical scholars had deliberative desire but no selfish desire and looked down on petty persons, they certainly were their superior. However, because they sought for truth in remoteness and did not behave according to Confucianism, they were again inferior to the pedantic and impure Confucian scholars.

In the following, in order to facilitate our discussion, we will proceed to discuss petty and impure Confucians first, and then analyze Wang Fuzhi’s criticism on the heresies.

6.1 Petty Confucian Scholars

In Wang Fuzhi’s eyes, the most destructive to custom and the Kingly Way were petty Confucian scholars, i.e., petty persons who misused Confucianism as an instrument for profit. Different from petty persons, petty Confucians shamelessly regarded themselves as noblemen; unlike heretical scholars, they saw themselves as representatives of Confucianism. Actually, they were inferior to both of them because petty persons still had a sense of truth and falsity and heretical scholars still had a sense of shame and honor, but petty Confucians abandoned it for the sake of profit. For this reason, Wang Fuzhi claimed that those whom noblemen should detest most were nothing but petty Confucians. He described,

With regard to petty Confucians, they choose Confucianism in order to be petty persons. They find it convenient and profitable to take Confucianism as a profession, so they just play music in the spring and recite text in the summer, and assume that they are carrying out the way of previous kings. Actually, with regard to the essence of playing music and reciting, they never mind knowing whatsoever. Before the rise of a sagacious king or a good governor, people have to regard them as Confucians for they are known as the practitioners of Confucianism. (CSQS 13-644)
Here, Wang Fuzhi pointed out the fact that Confucianism was taken as a tool to pursue the profits of petty persons. Through taking Confucianism as a profession rather than as self-cultivation, petty persons took the name of Confucians and received salary from the society without scruple. Actually, they knew nothing about the spirit of Confucianism but corrupted custom and Confucian practice only. However, due to their takeover of the name of Confucian scholars, they took advantage of all Confucian doctrines to defend their selfish interest and shameful practice. If a ruler punished them with law, they would shirk it with the excuse that a scholar would rather accept death than humiliation. If a ruler dismissed them with the Confucian Way, they would defend themselves by claiming that they were promoting the true Confucianism and fighting against heretical thinkers. As a result, petty Confucians gave society a wrong impression that all Confucian scholars pursued profit regardless of righteousness, and were looked down by heretical scholars. Why? It was because heretical scholars would feel shameful of what petty Confucians did. Wang Fuzhi argued,

The starting points of heresy have not reached the degree of abandoning father and monarch. But noblemen fear that their consequence [will cause people to forget father and monarch] and thus condemn them as birds and beasts. In contrast, petty persons assume the name of Confucian scholars, use odes, documents, rites and music as resources of profits and advantages. Despite being stubborn, abject, cruel and merciless and abandoning father and monarch without scruple publicly, they still brag to the world that they are defending the Confucian Way. Their detestability and contemptibility are far more than what heresy deserves. Therefore it is said, do not be petty Confucians. Petty Confucians are whom heretical scholars look down. (CSQS 10-687)

This passage explained Confucius’s word, “Do not be petty Confucians.” The most contemptible aspect of petty Confucians was their shamelessness and hypocrisy, i.e., they pretended to defend the Confucian Way but actually were using it to procure their selfish interests. In comparison, heretical scholars still had the sense of shame and honor. Therefore, they were the most contemptible.

Wang Fuzhi also called petty Confucians as vulgar Confucians. He stated,

Among those who disturb human mind, corrupt custom, and cause disasters such as usurpation and regicide, thieves and brigands, and danger and ruin, none is more
destructive than vulgar Confucians. Vulgar Confucians take salary-seeking bumpkin as their teacher, and aim at profit in both their learning and teaching. Then they firmly plant profit in their mind and forget who are their father and monarch. This is what heretical scholars despise. (CSQS 10-630)

From Wang’s description of vulgar Confucians, they were not different from petty Confucians in that they both pursued their profits and forgot their parents and monarch in the name of practicing Confucianism.

In order to show that heretical scholars had their principle and were superior to petty Confucians, besides Zhuangzi, Liezi, Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming as mentioned previously, Wang Fuzhi raised a Buddhist believer He Yin 何胤 (446-531) as an example and praised his compliance with Confucian principles of respect and loyalty to the emperor. Wang said,

Such as He Yin, he already believed in Buddhism and disturbed the Confucian Way. Wang Jingze 王敬則 (435-498) wished him to rebel together but dared not to call him; Emperor Wu of Liang 梁武帝 asked him to join him in his attempt of usurpation but failed at the end. He was still firm in matters of honor. (CSQS 10-630)

He Yin practiced Buddhism but still abided by Confucian principle—the loyalty and respect of minister to the emperor, so he could have saved himself from rebellion and usurpation. This was far better than those Confucian scholars such as Feng Dao 馮道 (882-954) who participated in the usurpation in order to get high salary and rank. For this reason, Wang Fuzhi expressed his rare tolerance toward heretical scholars such as He Yin. He followed Mencius and compared heretical scholars as lost pigs which should be accepted once they came back, for their original mind for self-improvement could be directed to the right course although their learning were heretical. In contrast, petty Confucians were caged tigers. The only solution was to drive them away. Then, how to drive them away? Wang Fuzhi went back to the strict distinction between righteousness and profit. If all scholars complied with this distinction strictly and educated later generations, then more noblemen and true Confucians would arise. Undoubtedly, this in turn required people to follow ritual propriety and moderate their profit with righteousness, that we had discussed in previous chapters.
6.2 Han-Tang Impure Confucians

Wang Fuzhi criticized Confucian scholars after Han Dynasty adulterating Confucianism with various elements from other schools, and thus failing to understand the essence of Confucianism. In the early period, there were Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 who merged Confucianism with Yin-yang School and introduced Heaven-human interaction, and Jiao Yanshou 焦延壽 and Jing Fang 京房 (77-37 BC) who interpreted the Book of Changes as a pure fortune-telling manual. In later period, there were Tang Confucians such as Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824) who misinterpreted humanity with universal love and fought against Buddhism from the point of profit, and Song Confucians such as Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086) and Bao Zheng 包拯 (999-1062) degraded the Kingly Way into legalist penalty and thereby deviated from Confucianism. From the perspective of passing down Confucian tradition, Wang Fuzhi acknowledged these scholars’ contribution; but from their adulteration of Confucianism with misinterpretations and heretical elements, Wang Fuzhi blamed them as the media of Buddhism and Legalism.

According to Wang Fuzhi, the mixture of Confucianism with Yin-yang School led people to misunderstand spirit and ghost and paved the way for the spread of Buddhism and Religious Daoism. Spirit and ghost were two functions of the transformation of qi or vital force. Spirit represented the growth of a new thing while ghost its decay. It was spirit that kept a person alive, and ghost that reunited him with the universe after death. However, the Zuo Tradition of the Spring-Autumn Annals described a ghost as a spiritual power able to take revenge of human beings. For example, it recorded that Du Bo 杜伯 was transformed into a ghost and shot King Xuan of Zhou (827-781 BC); Shen Sheng 申生 sued his brother Yi Wu 夷吾 in heavenly court after his death, and Duke Jing of Jin 晉景公 dreamed ferocious ghosts attacking him before death. As a result, Buddhism used these stories as its media to spread its doctrine of retribution. Wang Fuzhi sighed,

Using equality to love people in the world, it will lead to using equality to harm the people. Using retribution to frighten the timid and weak away from the assumed inexistent evil, it will also offer the cruel and ferocious people inconvincible evidence to restrain from evil. Before Buddhism adopts popular views and harms humanity and righteousness, the Zuo Tradition already opened the way. (CSQS 5-554)
When it came to the Han Dynasty, the doctrine of spirit and ghost was transformed into prophecy and fortune-telling, and was used to convince ordinary people of the credibility of the Confucian Way. For example, Wang Fuzhi insisted, Emperor Wu of Han desired longevity. Er Kuan, a Confucian minister, together with witches and necromancers, falsely assumed the legitimacy and beneficial return of worshipping Mountain Tai, and thus degraded Confucianism to the level of religious Daoism. At this point, Wang Fuzhi compared the prophecy of Han Confucianism with the White Lotus Society of the Ming; the former misinterpreted Confucianism as fortunetelling while the latter misused Buddhism to cause trouble. Tracing the origin, the hybrid Han Confucians should be blamed.

After he accused early Confucians of misinterpreting Confucianism, Wang started criticizing Song Confucians who turned Confucian governance into legalist measures. According to Wang Fuzhi, at the beginning of the Song Dynasty, government was not particular or harsh in administration and officials were more at ease in their governance. As a result, ordinary people lived peacefully and officials maintained their sense of honor and shame. After Xining period (1068-1077), government tried to strengthen administration with legalist measures, causing chaos in the empire. This was manifested in his following remarks.

Legalist measure as a strategy in governance was started by Yan Ying, completed by Mo Di, spread by Shen Buhai and Han Fei, and reached its zenith in the tyrannical Qin Dynasty. Hybrid Confucians learned from them, so for five hundred years since the Xining period (1068-1077), people in the world had become more and more degenerative and harsh. The lenient and peaceful custom of early Song had gone forever.

However, Wang Fuzhi did not see through the causal relation between peace in early Song and chaos in middle Song, for it was the loose governance and temporary peace that had led to the chaos later. It was historically unfounded that Wang Fuzhi ascribed chaos to the legalist governance, and thus criticized Song Confucians of applying legalist measures in governance in the name of Confucian Way. Moreover, Wang Fuzhi did not trace the cause of cruelty and harsh governance to Neo-Confucianism, while he simply ascribed it to Legalism. It also contradicted with his own principle that one should trace the proximate cause rather than the remote cause.
when explaining the rise of an event.\textsuperscript{39} In short, Wang still lived in the dream of Neo-Confucian utopia and did not realize its inherent evil, i.e., Song Confucians required ordinary and ignorant people to live up with the unreachable standard, such as extinguishing one’s selfish desires and complying with ritual propriety to the degree that one felt as tense as walking on the thin ice or at the verge of an abyss. When they could not achieve that, they punished them with legalist measures in the name of beautifying custom. This was why Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724-1777) decried later, “If one dies because of breaking law, other people will pity him. But if he dies because of breaking Neo-Confucian principles, no one can pity him.” (Dai 1978: 7) Therefore, Wang Fuzhi just used Legalism as the scapegoat when he misunderstood the misgovernance of Neo-Confucians as legalist measures.

6.2.1 Criticism on Han-Tang Interpretation of Confucian Classics

Wang Fuzhi first attacked previous Confucians who misinterpreted the Book of Changes. After Jiao Yanshou 焦延寿 and Jing Fang 京房 interpreted it as a fortune telling manual, later scholars added in the Five Elements and the division between prenatal vital force/xiantian zhi qi 先天之氣 and postnatal vital force/houtian zhi qi 后天之氣. Especially the division between prenatal and postnatal qi exerted great influence on the exegetical tradition of the Book of Changes and had been inherited by Shao Yong 卞雍 (1011-1077), a Song Confucian expert on this book. Although Wang Fuzhi tacitly accepted the distinction between prenatal and postnatal qi in his discussion of transforming physical embodiment/bianhua qizhi 變化氣質 and believed the feasibility of transforming physical embodiment through choice of food and drink, he did not endorse applying this distinction to cosmic qi/vital force. He contended,

The Book of Changes states that, “[The sage] acts before Heaven takes initiative, Heaven does not go against him; he acts after Heaven gives sign, he will follow heavenly timeliness.” This refers to the sage’s virtue and achievement, but does not mean that Heaven has the order of precedence. Heaven is pure, without interruption, and shows no

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{39} For example, when Wang Fuzhi criticized Mohism of abandoning one’s own parents while taking Heaven and earth as one’s true origin, he endorsed the idea that one should put the proximate cause (one’s parents) prior to the remote origin (Heaven and earth). (CSQS6-974-975)
\end{footnotesize}
difference in terms of the rise of things. How can it have the order of precedence? (CSQS 12-436)

In this passage, Wang Fuzhi proposed his unconventional interpretation of the words, “before Heaven/\textit{xiantian} 先天” and “after Heaven/\textit{houtian} 後天”, and insisted that they referred to the time that the sage undertook affairs rather than the sequence of prenatal and postnatal qi that human beings received. In Wang’s regard, Heaven just endowed its qi to human beings constantly and the qi endowed has no essential difference before and after human birth. Hence, he disagreed with the fortune-tellers’ interpretation that a person’s fortune and misfortune could be predicted through analyzing his prenatal and postnatal qi.

According to Wang’s explanation, the fortune-tellers classified as prenatal the qi of Heaven and earth that formed the shapes of human beings and things originally; while regarded as postnatal the qi that living creatures absorbed from water, fire, earth and grain after birth. Thus, they proposed the doctrine that “postnatal qi succeeded prenatal qi.” (CSQS 12-435) This distinction was accepted by Shao Yong who insisted that what Heaven and earth naturally produced was prenatal while what things developed by themselves was postnatal. Then Wang Fuzhi criticized, with this distinction, Shao Yong inclined to develop in details the prenatal physical embodiment and natural process but ignored human efforts. When Shao’s thoughts were misused, they became the direction of magicians’ guess and prediction. Therefore, to stop the fortune-tellers and magicians’ activities, Wang Fuzhi criticized the absurdity of the distinction between the prenatal and postnatal qi.

Despite the reasonableness of Wang Fuzhi’s interpretation of the sentences in the \textit{Book of Changes}, his criticism of the division of prenatal and postnatal qi was unfounded. First, he himself also accepted this division when talking about the transformation of bodily temperament. Second, this division did not exclude human effort at all. For example, Chinese medicine proposed exercise and prudent choice of food could lead to a good health, just as Wang Fuzhi’s idea, the later coming qi would be able to transform the original bodily temperament received at birth. Hence, Wang showed more the tendency to find fault with Shao Yong than sympathetically understand his doctrine.
Second to the *Book of Changes*, Wang Fuzhi criticized Du Fu 杜甫 (712-770) of corrupting the tradition of poetry. According to Wang, poetry expressed human will, but Du Fu degraded it into expressing human desires. Following Confucius, Wang Fuzhi insisted that poetry be used to issue human feelings in due measure, so it expressed happiness without becoming excessive, and complaint without becoming grieved. To achieve this, one should use nature and principle to regulate feelings and avoid indulgence. Thus, the teaching of poetry would direct people to purity and uprightness and wash away their stubbornness and abjection, and even prevent petty persons from losing the sense of honor and shame. However, when it came to Du Fu, as Wang Fuzhi accused, Du Fu used poetry to express his unfulfilled desires:

With regard to the insufficiency of goods and property, the shortage of food and lodging, the dissatisfaction of wife and concubine’s service, the discontent of gain through begging, one writes them in verses, sings them, develops them into compositions, describes his thirstiness for gold and silk, imagines the state after getting drunk and satisfied, and shamelessly forgets other people’s contempt. Only Du Fu meets this kind. (CSQS3-326)

Following this criticism, Wang Fuzhi insisted that Du Fu’s misuse of poetry had been inherited by Han Yu and Meng Jiao 孟郊 (751-814) and thus led the extinction of poetry in the world. However, if one has some knowledge of Du Fu, one will disagree with Wang Fuzhi and think his criticism unfounded and improper. Wang Fuzhi used his harsh and cold-blood heavenly principle to repress any free or liberal expression of feelings except paying respect to ritual propriety, as a result, he could not tolerate a bit deviation from the so-called moral-principle-regulated feelings and emotions. He naively thought this strict compliance with Confucian principle would lead to a healthy and harmonious issuance of human feelings, but forgot that it could only suffocate the liveliness of human life and society. Just as Heaven was a combination of *qi* and principle, human beings were also the combinations of emotions and reason. To value reason above emotions could only destroy human beings and make them unhealthy. This was why Chinese people had become more and more degenerative and weaker since the rise of Neo-Confucianism.

Wang Fuzhi’s evidence came from one of Du’s poem, *To present twenty two lines to Left Prime Minister Wei* 奉贈韋左丞丈二十二韻. In this poem, Du Fu described his unfortunate failure in civil examinations and thus expressed complaint upon Confucianism in the opening lines: Rich family’s sons never died in hunger, but Confucian hat always ruined a youth’s future.
死，儒冠多誤身. The reason was that, being a Confucian student had forced Du Fu to stay in the capital for civil examination for thirteen years through begging rich people’s charity, but still ended with failure. So it was natural for him to express disappointment and frustration when all his efforts ended in futile. In such a situation, only a non-human being might maintain indifference or detachment. In contrast, when Confucius found no ruler in China accepted his Way, he wished leaving for overseas. It was also Confucius’ emotional complaint, but Wang Fuzhi regarded it as the expression of the sage’s proficiency in righteousness. From this aspect, we can see, Wang Fuzhi applied double standard to Du Fu and Confucius, and had turned Confucianism into a fundamentalist doctrine, and thus extinguished its vitality.

Wang Fuzhi’s other accusations on Du Fu were also baseless. He claimed that Du Fu worried the future of the state with eyebrow/expression instead of mind, and thought that Du Fu just imitated Qu Yuan 屈原 and Shentu Di 申屠狄 in gesture but did not understand their loyalty to their countries. Thus Wang said he doubted the truthfulness of Du Fu’s worry. Wang Fuzhi’s standard was that a true worry should worry with mind instead of with sound. But could Wang Fuzhi meet this standard? If Wang Fuzhi truly followed it, why had he written so many poems to express his suffering? Why hadn’t he just acted to accomplish his goal and thus removed his worry? Again, even Confucius would not be able to meet Wang Fuzhi’s standard, for Confucius sighed loudly when his favorite disciples Yan Hui 顏回 died and Bainiu 伯牛 infected an incurable disease.

6.3 Song-Ming Hybrid Confucians: Cheng-Zhu School

It is easy to find evidence that Wang Fuzhi respected and followed Cheng Yi 程颐 and Zhu Xi 朱熹, but that happened only when they advocated Confucianism in accordance with his interpretations. When they diverged from his view, Wang Fuzhi relentlessly criticized them. To some extent, his criticism targeted almost all important propositions in the Cheng-Zhu School, including Cheng’s doctrine of heavenly principle and human nature, Zhu’s doctrines on mind, overcoming selfishness, obtaining knowledge and investigating things, knowledge prior to action and Zhu’s interpretation of the Doctrine of the Mean/Zhong Yong 中庸. In terms of the range and severity of his criticism, Wang Fuzhi seemed ready to overthrow the system of the Cheng-Zhu School and replace it with a new system.
6.3.1 Criticism on Cheng Yi’s Doctrines of Nature and Heavenly Principle

First, in Wang Fuzhi’s regard, Cheng Yi regarded the biological ability of perception and movement as nature and thus thought that human nature could be the same as the nature of other animals and plants. Wang said,

As for Master Cheng’s words that a horse follows a horse’s nature and an ox follows an ox’s nature, his view of nature is already despicable. It cannot be said that those things do not have nature, but now that there is a distinction between the nature of horse and that of ox, can one conclude that there is not different principle [nature] in human beings from them just because all things receive their endowments from the same origin—Heaven? Master Cheng here apparently adopts Master Gao’s 告子 doctrine—that one is born with is what we call nature, i.e., regarding perception and movement as nature and so horse and ox each have their own ways. (CSQS 6-456)

Here, Wang Fuzhi hastily drew a conclusion that Cheng Yi took biological ability such as perception and movement as human nature and implied that Cheng thought human nature was the same as a horse and ox’s nature. But even from Wang’s quotation of Cheng’s word, “a horse
follows a horse’s nature and an ox follows an ox’s nature”, one could not conclude that Cheng Yi thought that all creatures shared the same nature or principle, for apparently Cheng Yi did not think horse and ox shared the same nature. Therefore, Wang’s accusation went nowhere when he argued, “can one conclude that there is not different principle [nature] in human beings from ox and horse just because all things receive their endowments from the same origin—Heaven?”

Then one might wonder why Wang Fuzhi accused Cheng Yi of regarding perception and movement as nature? This was due to Wang’s different conception of nature from Cheng. Cheng supposed the existence of two natures—the nature of heavenly endowment and the nature of physical embodiment. The former referred to heavenly principle, while the latter biological abilities such as perception and movement. Wang insisted nature as principle only. It was the principle of life, the principle of perception and movement, and that of food and sex. This principle existed in human mind only and thus distinguished animals that had only perception and movement. (CSQS 8-676) Based on this, it was understandable that he criticized Cheng Yi who took perception and movement as nature. However, Wang Fuzhi also admitted that perception and movement could be called nature too, but insisted one should not forget the innate ability endowed from Heaven (principle). At this point, it was evident that he tacitly accepted Cheng’s two-nature theory, and thus his criticism was nothing but finding fault with others without paying attention to the consistency of his own arguments.

With this accusation, Wang Fuzhi presented his doctrine of human nature—one origin but many manifestations/yiben wanshu 一本萬殊. He insisted what Heaven endowed applied to both human beings and other things, but it was only human beings who could consciously fulfill their own nature and turn it into the Way of human beings, so the Way of human being was the standard to distinguish human beings from animals. He stated,

Birds and beasts are those having no Way; weed and trees are those having no nature; only heavenly endowment is what things can share with human beings because Heaven uses its mindless and undifferentiated ability to endow it according to each thing’s natural bent. (CSQS 12-112)

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40 Therefore, when Gao Zi regards food and sex as nature, no one can deny that. The problem is that apart from this, Gao Zi does not know there is innate ability from the heavenly mandate. (CSQS 12-128)
These sentences echoed to his words, “can one conclude that there is not different principle [nature] in human beings from them just because all things receive their endowments from the same origin—Heaven?” In other words, although all creatures were born from Heaven, birds and beasts could not understand the principle of life and thus did not know their own nature. Man could, and thus established the Way of human beings.

After accusing Cheng Yi of taking perception and movement as human nature, Wang Fuzhi went on to attack his two-nature theory---the nature of heavenly endowment and the nature of physical embodiment. Wang stated,

Master Cheng divided nature into two sections. Considering the existence and origin of human evil, he ascribed it to physical embodiment. (CSQS 6-959)

Here “two sections” referred to the two natures. According to Cheng Yi, the nature of heavenly embodiment was purely heavenly principle and thus perfectly good, while the nature of physical embodiment was the function of physical body and therefore susceptible of evil. This was why Wang Fuzhi said Cheng ascribed the origin of evil to physical embodiment. When explaining how physical embodiment caused evil, Wang Fuzhi assumed that Cheng Yi thought as follows,

When physical embodiment is formed, it gives rise to evil in its demarcation and preference. For demarcation and preference result in limit, and limit leads to partiality, and partiality to evil. (CSQS 6-960)

Compared with the undifferentiated qi, physical shape or body had its limit and demarcation. This limit led to insufficiency and thus evil. Hence, the nature of physical embodiment was responsible for the arising of evil in Cheng Yi’s theory. However, Wang Fuzhi denied this assumption that physical embodiment led to evil, but embraced Mencius’ idea, “bodily shape is identical with heavenly nature.” (see 4.4.1)

Wang Fuzhi thought both nature and physical embodiment were from Heaven and thus were good. Evil arose only when human body interacted with external things improperly, and had nothing to do with the partiality of physical embodiment. In other words, evil arose because human mind did not control or regulate desires properly. In this way, Wang Fuzhi blamed human mind more than physical embodiment for the rise of evil. However, a reader might argue with
Wang Fuzhi that the clarity and intelligence of human mind were determined by physical embodiment too. If physical embodiment was partial and insufficient, it would also affect the choice of human mind and thus cause evil. Wang Fuzhi might not be able to rejoin it.

Second, based on his qi-monism, Wang Fuzhi rejected Cheng Yi’s statement that principle can exist independently, “Heaven is principle only”. He contended,

When discussing mind, nature, Heaven and principle, one must base them on qi/vital force. Without qi, all of them are inexistent. (CSQS 6-1109)

Then he clarified that Heaven was qi first instead of principle by explaining Zhang Zai’s statement, “From the Great Void arises the name of Heaven”.

As to “from the Great Void comes the name of Heaven”, it refers to the qi that is independent of transformation. The qi independent of transformation is only qi. Therefore, Heaven is named on the basis of qi; the Way or principle is named on the basis of Heaven’s transformation. It is impossible to discuss Heaven beyond qi. (CSQS 6-1109)

This passage insisted that Heaven formerly was nothing but qi, while principle was only the rule of qi or of heavenly transformation. Therefore, Heaven could not be identified with principle. However, when Wang Fuzhi claimed the existence of the qi independent of transformation, he committed the mistake to assume that there was such a moment that qi existed but did not transform, so it had no principle. This would weaken his qi-monism seriously.

After stating Heaven was qi, Wang Fuzhi started criticizing Cheng Yi,

Master Cheng said “Heaven is principle”. Now that he used principle to describe Heaven, he undoubtedly regarded Heaven as principle. Using principle to define Heaven, he should have realized that Heaven cannot be named apart from qi indeed. Then with the premise that principle is the principle of qi, can the statement “Heaven is principle” be valid. Otherwise, not based principle on qi, it is unsuitable to regard Heaven as principle. Why? Heaven is the accumulation of qi. Using principle to define Heaven can be established through tracing the origin of principle, that is, “Heaven is the source of principle”. Then truly is it that all principles are from Heaven. But if one claims, “Heaven is a principle”, it is still unsuitable. (CSQS 6-1109-1110)
In this passage, Wang Fuzhi first stated that Heaven was the accumulation of *qi*, then principle could be the principle of *qi* only, and finally it was improper to claim Heaven as principle without any respect to *qi*. However, Cheng Yi might indicate that the “Heaven” did not refer to natural Heaven as the accumulation of *qi*, but to the sense and atmosphere of justice in human society. Then Wang Fuzhi would miss the target of his criticism.

6.3.2 Criticism on Zhu Xi’s Doctrine of Sudden Awakening

In order to draw a clear line between Confucianism and Buddhism, Wang Fuzhi was hypersensitive to any idea or method associated with Buddhism and spared no energy to criticize it. This was demonstrated in his criticism of Zhu Xi’s doctrine of sudden awakening when commenting on Confucius’ word “grasping the highest principle through learning up from the basic/下學而上達”. Wang stated,

> Only in the basic learning lies the effort to sageliness, for with the highest principle one will not be able to exert effort….However, Master Zhu also had the words “suddenly penetrating the highest principle”, this is what I demur. If he set up a time as the demarcation of ignorance and enlightenment, he already fell into the old ruts of Buddhist thinking. Master Zhu also claimed “once suddenly seeing the light” in his appendix to the Great Learning. To say “once” seemed to be too fast. Master Zhu might have experienced such a moment in his life, but this experience could not be applied to general learning.

(CSQS 6-811)

This passage aimed at sudden awakening and denied it as a feasible method of learning. One reason for this was that Wang doubted the existence of sudden awakening; the other reason was that in his regard, this method belonged to Chan Buddhism and its use would corrupt the purity of Confucianism. However, Wang Fuzhi seemed not to realize that his method, “Only in the basic learning lies the effort to sageliness, for grasping the highest principle, one will not be able to exert effort,” also tacitly accepted the existence of sudden enlightenment at a time. If there were not such a time of comprehensive grasp or enlightenment, the study of the basic would be without end, and there would be no achievement, “for with grasping the highest principle one will not be able to exert effort.” Obviously, “one will not be able to exert effort” implied that on the higher level, one would be able to comply with ritual property or reason spontaneously, just
as Confucius said, “at seventy I could follow my heart’s desire without transgressing moral principles.” (Analects 2.4, Wing-Tsit Chan’s translation)

Wang Fuzhi also realized that he must make a distinction between Zhu Xi’s sudden awakening and Confucius’ grasp of the highest principle through up from learning the basic when he attempted to criticize Zhu Xi. So Wang proposed a gradual studying method but did not specify the time to grasp the highest principle. He said,

> The sage reflected and cultivated himself, and then reached the level to unite with Heaven. Each of his steps was substantial, just as water continued marching on after filling full of a pit. (CSQS 6-812)

It goes without saying that Wang’s approach was unclear. If the sage united himself with Heaven through self-cultivation and self-reflection, there must be a process and time from “not being united with Heaven” to “being united with Heaven”. Sudden enlightenment must be the leap or jump over there. If the sage’s learning was like the march of water, then the sage would always stay on the level of studying the basic, how could he be united with Heaven? Taking Confucius’ learning as example, Confucius started learning at fifteen, but had no perplexities or doubts about world affairs only at forty. From learning to no doubt, Confucius must also have a leap or sudden awakening, and how could Wang Fuzhi deny it? Nevertheless, Wang’s aim here was to justify his gradual approach and reject sudden awakening even during the process of learning. This became evident when he commented on the Hexagram Jian 渐 in the Book of Changes. He stated,

> Gradual transformation is the best way of learning and teaching. How could it be that a student will become the sage’s disciple with an enlightenment of a sentence; a ruler will change custom to good with an instant transformation. This is what heretical teaching of sudden awakening misleads the people and deceives the world. (CSQS 1-427)

In this quotation, Wang Fuzhi openly praised gradual learning while condemned sudden awakening on the basis that it was impossible that a student would become a worthy person through understanding the meaning of a sentence or a ruler would transform the people through an instant humane activity. However, Wang Fuzhi should not go so far as to deny the existence
of sudden awakening in the process of gradual learning. Otherwise, no one would be able to reach sageliness through learning.

After having identified Wang Fuzhi’s attitude toward gradual learning and sudden awakening, let’s look at his criticism through misinterpreting Zhu Xi’s words.

“Sudden awakening/huoran guantong 豁然贯通” cannot be predicted or reached in a definite time indeed. When Zhu Xi says “to achieve it someday/yidan 一旦”, it shows he already knows the time. Although Zhu Xi thinks he knows the time of sudden awakening, I am afraid that “the awakening at this date” may not meet the right course/principle.

“Learning from the basic, then/er 而 grasping the highest principle”, Confucius uttered the word “then/er 而” smoothly and leisurely. When Zhu Xi says “someday/yidan 一旦” and “sudden/huoran 忽然”, he has the sign of extreme difficulty and extreme fastness which cannot be called “reaching the highest point/da 達”, just as the release from hanging by foot cannot. “Suddenly reaching the highest point” separates itself from “learning the basic”, then after reaching the highest point, Zhu thinks that one will not need to do anything. This is just the Buddhist approach that a brick becomes useless after it knocks a door open. (CSQS 6-812)

In this passage, Wang Fuzhi claimed that Zhu Xi’s sudden awakening was different from Confucius’ “reaching the highest point up from learning the basic”, but he did not provide any convincing argument. First, he assumed that Zhu Xi knew the exact time of enlightenment when Zhu said, “Sudden awakening/huoran guantong 豁然贯通”. This obviously was a false accusation. Zhu Xi just said one would get enlightenment or comprehensive understanding if one persistently studied, just as we said “once a person dies”, we never know what date he would die. Second, Wang’s distinction between “then/er 而” and “someday/yidan 一旦” and “sudden/huruan 忽然” would convince nobody either. For both Confucius and Zhu Xi, these words shared the same meaning, i.e. one would grasp the highest principle through constantly learning the basic. There was no difference between leisure and smooth on the one side, and the extreme difficulty and fastness on the other. Third, Wang committed false accusation, too, when he insisted that Zhu Xi divided “reaching the highest point” from “learning the basic”, and so it was ungrounded that he compared Zhu Xi’s sudden enlightenment to Buddhist method—knocking a door open.
with a brick and then throwing the brick away. On the contrary, Zhu Xi never alluded that one would have nothing to do after awakening through gradual learning.

Therefore, the only conclusion was that Wang Fuzhi stubbornly defended his gradual learning and transformation regardless of going against facts and forging false accusations. Moreover, when Confucius said reaching the highest point through learning the basic, it was evident that he implied a leap in learning after one became very proficient in the basic. Wang Fuzhi claimed himself as Zhang Zai’s disciple, but his gradual learning and transformation did not match Zhang Zai’s idea either. Zhang Zai proposed the realization of sageliness through practicing ritual propriety, but he also emphasized the sudden transformation/hua after one became very familiar with it. Furthermore, gradual and sudden learning processes were the natural process in the universe. Women’s pregnancy was gradual, but both becoming pregnant and giving birth to a child are sudden; plants grow gradually but blossom suddenly; human beings age gradually but die suddenly. Therefore, at this point, Wang Fuzhi showed more willfulness than insight in his criticism of sudden awakening.

Based on his doctrine of gradual learning and transformation, Wang Fuzhi regarded the learning and practice of ritual propriety as an endless process. Even the sage had to be cautious of his behavior every moment. Instead of regarding Confucius’ behavior in the Xiangdang chapter of the Analects as a spontaneous demonstration of proficiency in ritual propriety, he insisted that Confucius did them deliberately. Therefore he rejected to regard the sage as the unmistakable model or being able to do everything perfectly after having reached sageliness. He argued,

The sage was just practical and cautious in his activities. He was proficient in righteousness, and familiar with humanity. In practice, he also needed effort and deliberation. (CSQS 6-743)

Then he warned students not to regard the sage as doing everything spontaneously and effortlessly, and thus differentiated Confucian sage from the Buddha in Buddhism. (CSQS 6-743)
6.3.3 Criticizing Zhu Xi’s Views of the *Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Book of Changes*

Different from Zhu Xi who regarded the Mean/zhongyong 中庸 as personal insight and virtue, Wang Fuzhi thought it as the highest principle for self-cultivation and kingly governance. Wang stated,

The name of zhongyong was founded because it was what the sage used to succeed from Heaven and govern the world, practice above while achieve order below, establish the highest principle and make the people follow. “The highest point/principle” was zhong/centrality; while the establishment and endowment of centrality was yong/application. (CSQS 6-449)

This meant zhongyong was the principle that the sage cultivated self and governed the people. Zhong was the highest principle while yong was to establish and apply this principle to everyday situations. With this definition, Wang Fuzhi interpreted the meaning of zhongyong as the application of centrality/yong zhong 用中. (CSQS 6-455) So he disagreed with Zhu Xi who explained zhong as fair and independent and yong as common or ordinary. Wang argued,

Regarding to the meaning of yong, it means utility in the dictionary Shuowen 说文. When it appears in the Book of Documents, it also means utility. Before Master Zhu, no one had explained it as ordinary…Master Zhu insisted yong’s meaning as ordinary, and even claimed King Tang of Shang and King Wu of Zhou’s dethronement as ordinary matters. It is fine to regard their attack and dethronement as fair and just, but if they are regarded as common and not abnormal, what under Heaven will be regarded as abnormal then? (CSQS 6-452)

Wang Fuzhi could be said to hit the nail on the head. Zhu Xi’s explanation was unconvincing and unfounded. Based on this, Wang concluded, “Therefore it is evident that zhongyong means the use of centrality.” (CSQS 6-453)

With this interpretation, Wang saw the relation between centrality and application as that of substance and function. As substance prevailed in its function, there was no way to separate
zhong/centrality from yong/its application. For this reason, he criticized Zhu Xi who saw the zhong in “timeliness/shizhong 時中” as function instead of substance.

Thus, it is fine that he (Zhu Xi) considered the zhong in “centrality and harmony/zhonghe 中和” as substance only; but it is not plausible that he regarded the zhong in “timeliness/shizhong 時中” as function solely….the zhong of timeliness is not function only. Zhong is substance; when using it timely, it then becomes function. (CSQS 6-450)

This meant the zhong in timeliness was substance, too. In other words, all functions embodied substance—centrality, so they could be called zhong/centrality, too. As the harmony after being expressed/yifa zhi he 已發之和 was the state that human feelings met with due measure in the expressions, it thus already embodied centrality/zhong 中, so Wang Fuzhi called it the centrality after expression/yifa zhi zhong 已發之中. Hence, it could be concluded that Wang Fuzhi regarded centrality as the principle of due measure, while harmony as the expressive embodiment of this principle.

Based on this idea, Wang criticized Zhu Xi who regarded the centrality after issuance (harmony) as function only and degraded Zhongyong to the level that one got a matter properly done. Wang stated,

When Master Zhu regarded “centrality after issuance” as function, and defined it as “neither excess nor insufficiency”, he would call a person having “no excess or insufficiency” after he say one of the person’s behaviors in due measure. Then zhongyong became a descriptive word for actual behaviors, and would not be a perfect way anymore. As a consequence, everyone in the world, even those mediocre, would be eligible for the title of zhongyong if one of his behavior reached due measure. Then Zhu would not be able to explain why Confucius said, for a long time few people had been able to follow it; and a person could tramp on a bare, naked knife, but might not attain zhongyong. (CSQS 6-451)

In this passage, Wang assumed that Zhu Xi took zhongyong as the due measure of human behavior. As a result, even a mediocre person could realize zhongyong sometimes. Then he used Confucius’ words in the Doctrine of the Mean to prove Zhu’s interpretation wrong. For
Confucius thought few people reached zhongyong, and a person might not meet zhongyong even though he was courageous to tread on a sharp blade.

However, Wang’s criticism was only partly true. First, the centrality after issuance (harmony) referred to the state when one expressed one’s feelings properly. It could be said that a due measure or centrality ran through the properly-expressed feelings, but the properly-expressed feelings was firstly the concrete harmonious state instead of centrality (principle). Wang would turn zhongyong into an abstract idea if he overemphasized zhongyong as principle and perfect way and separated it from concrete activities. Second, Confucius’ words could not be used to prove Zhu Xi wrong, but only prove him right. “Few people had been able to follow it (zhongyong) a long time” meant that few people could express their feelings in due measures longer or take proper expression as their daily practice; however, it did not meant that people never express their feelings in due measure. In other words, even people expressed their feelings properly from time to time but did not develop it as a habit, they could be said to meet zhongyong too. When Confucius said, “a person could tread on a sharp blade, but might not meet zhongyong”, it meant that zhongyong as due measure was different from courage. It did not mean that zhongyong was lofty and unreachable as high mountain peaks. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi’s attack was not sufficiently convincing here.

To explain the reason why he criticized Zhu Xi, the first was that he regarded the mean as the perfect principle for self-cultivation and kingly governance but Zhu Xi thought it as an attained virtue. So Zhu Xi looked at the mean as a common virtue but Wang Fuzhi regarded it as a sacred principle. The second was that Zhu Xi might not really understand the Doctrine of the Mean, so he did not know how to explain away the apparent unreasonableness when he claimed attacking and dethroning a king was also a common event. He also disclosed his shortage of wit in understanding zhongyong in his dialogues with his students. In Classified Conversations of Master Zhu /zhuzi yulei 朱子語類, he told his students not to study zhongyong first, but put it last. He did not explain what zhongyong was either. From Wang Fuzhi’s criticism, it was evident that Wang Fuzhi provided us with a coherent explanation based on his doctrine of human nature. That is, zhong was the perfect principle—human nature and heavenly principle endowed in human mind. A person should follow and use this principle to cultivate himself and govern the state and thus avoid the misleading and aimless investigation of things. In this way, zhongyong
became the cradle, outline and core of Confucianism. Other Confucian classics were only its
evidence and applications. Therefore to put it as the last disclosed only Zhu Xi’s ignorance.

Also, Wang Fuzhi criticized Zhu Xi not knowing the Book of Changes as the manifestation of
the Way but regarding it as a divination manual solely. He argued,

> Confucius compiled the Book of Changes, used it to express the principles that fortune and
> misfortune resulted from gain and loss, and things and events were determined by nature
> and fate. Through the strokes, images and divination, the Way under Heaven was exposed.

(CSQS 1-652)

This passage showed that Wang regarded the Book of Changes as a manual to express the Way
under Heaven which helped people to act properly rather than a pure divination book.
Undoubtedly, the Way under Heaven was the Confucian principles related to Heaven, nature and
mind, etc. This idea became clear in the following passage.

Master Zhu’s learning inherited from Cheng Yi who abandoned the discovered principle in
the Book of Changes by Wang Bi (226-249) and others and focused on the divination
function only. He thought that Confucius’ discussions on Heaven, man, nature, virtue,
seeking for incipient sign, being proficient in righteousness, promoting virtues and
broadening achievements, all were not the original purpose when the Legendary Emperor
Fu Xi 伏羲 and King Wen of Zhou established the hexagrams. Thus he regarded the Book
of Changes as a divination manual only, and was not proper for scholars to research and
Teach. His extreme opinion was to compare this book as the art discussed in Huo Zhu Lin
火珠林 and Gua Ying 卦影. In this aspect, his views were the same as those scholars in the
Han Dynasty. He did not care about his contradiction with Confucius’ words in the
Appendices that the Book of Changes aimed to investigate principle and fulfill human
nature. (CSQS 1-653)

This passage could be said to hit on Zhu Xi’s weakness. The Appendices of the Book of Changes/
繫辭 truly explored many metaphysical issues such as Heaven, nature, virtue, and practical
wisdom such as how to grasp opportunity, find the right point and achieve great feats. These
were more than what a divination book could deal with. Truly, prophecy was the original
purpose that Fu Xi 伏羲 and King Wen of Zhou used these hexagrams, but later generations used it both to prophesize and explain the meaning and origin of human life and natural world. This was why Wang Fuzhi did not agree with Zhu Xi to regard the book as purely a divination manual. In this passage, *Huo Zhu Lin* 火珠林 and *Gua Ying* 卦影 were seen probably as two divination manuals developed from the *Book of Changes*. Wang Bi was a scholar in the Three Kingdom Period and wrote an excellent and influential exegesis on the *Book of Changes*, but he emphasized more on reason and principles exposed in the hexagrams. By contrast, the scholars in the Han Dynasty paid more attention on the function of divination. This explained why Wang Fuzhi accused Zhu Xi of following Han scholars’ step.

Undoubtedly, the most severe accusation was that Zhu Xi went against Confucius. This would likely condemn Zhu as a heresy to some extent. This was also verified in Wang Fuzhi’s criticism on Zhu’s interpretation of the sentence, “tracing the origin and returning to the end, the mechanism of life and death is known” in the *Book of Changes*. Based on this sentence, Wang Fuzhi and his master Zhang Zai 張載 (1020-1077) developed the doctrine of *qi*-transformation, and insisted that all things were nothing but the gathering and dispersing of a mass of *qi*. (Actually this idea was from Zhuangzi.) If one knew that the mass of *qi* forming one’s body never perished regardless of one’s life and death, one would not be fear of death any more. However, what made Wang angry was that Zhu Xi criticized this idea as a great circle of life and death and embraced the idea that death meant extinction. So Wang rejoined,

Master Zhu criticized Zhang Zai’s idea as a great circle of birth and death based on Zhang Zai’s words that *qi* gathered and then dispersed, dispersed and then gathered again. But I suspected that Master Zhu’s idea was close to the Buddhist concept of extinction and different from the sage’s word. (CSQS 12-21)

Here, both Zhu Xi and Wang Fuzhi accused their opponents of being close to Buddhist ideas. Actually, both were partly right, while Wang Fuzhi’s accusation seemed more convincing. Truly Buddhism had the idea of the circle of life and death, but this idea became nothing when Buddhism regarded all things as illusory. Being illusory was nothing but extinction. However, Zhu Xi embraced the idea that things were created from nothing and became nothing after death. The superior principle would produce more new *qi* and material after the old ones extinguished.
He thus viewed death as extinction. This was why Wang Fuzhi accused Zhu’s idea of being close to the Buddhist idea of extinction and contradicted with the sage’s words.

Then one might argue, both good and bad people shared the same death and the same dispersion of *qi*, how could Wang Fuzhi persuade people to be moral? Here Wang Fuzhi connected moral and moderate behaviors with the cultivation of harmonious *qi*, and introduced the evaluation of later generations. That is, if one lived a moderate life, one would cultivate one’s *qi* harmoniously and peacefully. When one was alive, one would be respected by other people; after one died, one’s harmonious *qi* would benefit later people and be appreciated by them. Then one would live forever in the human world, just as the sages, the Duke of Zhou and Confucius, were remembered by later generations for ten thousand years.

### 6.3.4 Criticism on Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming’s Doctrines of Knowledge and Action

Based on his doctrine of the co-establishment of Qian乾 and Kun坤 in the *Book of Changes*, Wang Fuzhi developed his doctrine of knowledge and ability/action. In the *Appendices*, Qian was said to have the ability to know while Kun the ability to act. Since Qian and Kun cooperated with each other to give rise to the myriad things, the ability to know and the ability to do together formed the universal Way and made great achievements. For this reason, Wang Fuzhi rejected the distinction of priority and posterity between the ability to know and the ability to do—knowledge and action. He argued,

> As the sole Qian cannot be the start of the universe, it is necessary to build Qian and Kun together as the great principle. Thus knowledge and ability work together to complete virtues and make achievements. How could it be sufficient to conjecture the boundary of the Way when putting knowledge prior to ability or the reverse? Yet, heretical scholars try to set order of precedence between them, and some Confucian scholars imitate them. I have not seen any insight of theirs. (CSQS 1-989)

Here, Wang Fuzhi justified the inseparability and coincidence of knowledge and action (ability) from the perspective that Qian/yang and Kun/yin co-established the universe. Only when they cooperated together, could the virtues and achievements be accomplished. Based on this idea, he
proposed his doctrine of knowledge and action, i.e. knowledge and action mutually supported and made achievements together. Specifically, he stated,

Only because each of them has its contributions and functions, can they both support each other to work. Based on their mutual support, it is more manifest that they are different. It is the infallible principle that a thing cannot make contributions to its same kind, but must depend on different things to make accomplishment and harmony. Being ignorant of the fact that they each have their functions and contributions and support each other, Wang Yangming thus misled people in the world with his doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action. (CSQS 4-1256)

This passage made a distinction between Wang Fuzhi’s doctrine and Wang Yangming’s doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action. For Wang Fuzhi, knowledge and action were different but mutually supported to make achievements, just as husband and wife cooperated to give birth to children. However, Wang Yangming identified knowledge with action and made no distinction between them. For example, Wang Yangming said, “Now I propose the unity of knowledge and action in order to show people that the rise of their intention is not different from action.” (Wang 2001: 374) Hence Wang Fuzhi criticized him to subsume action under knowledge and thus rely on knowledge only. In Wang Fuzhi’s eyes, since Wang Yangming subsumed action under knowledge, his disciples identified knowledge as action, and all of them stayed in the realm of knowledge about rituals and manners but did not practice. Therefore, their promotion of Confucianism would become pure talk. He criticized,

I see thoroughly through the doctrine of unity of knowledge and action that Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139-1193), Yang Jian 楊簡 (1141-1226) and Wang Yangming proposed. They did not think knowledge posterior to action, but the knowledge they called is not true knowledge and so their action is not true action. Knowledge is not true knowledge, but may still be called knowledge for they might understand something ambiguously. Action is not true action, and then it will definitely not be action, for they regarded knowledge as action. Taking knowledge as action is identical to taking non-action as action. Then they will not put their mind and body in carrying out the human relationships and the principles of things even though they might have some obscure knowledge. (CSQS 2-312)
Wang Fuzhi thought, when Wang Yangming took knowledge as action, he would not get personal experience through practicing human relationships and principle of things. Without practice, knowledge could not be regarded as true knowledge, so the unity of knowledge and action became nothing but an excuse of laziness. The consequence would be that his disciples did not have true Confucian virtues and thus corrupted custom, leading people not to have loyalty and shame and finally the ruin of the Ming Empire. This was why Wang Fuzhi condemned them as a huge flood and ferocious beasts and deemed that Wang Yangming caused the ruin of the Ming Dynasty just as “Lu Jiuyuan’s rise led to the collapse of the Song Dynasty.” (CSQS 12-371) Moreover, Wang Fuzhi also indicated that the knowledge Wang Yangming assumed was not true knowledge from the perspective that Wang Yangming took intention as knowledge and action. As is known, intention was not equal to knowledge; from intention to action, there was a long distance. Therefore, neither knowledge nor action Wang Yangming assumed were true.

After having criticized Lu Jiuyuan, Yang Jian and Wang Yangming, Wang Fuzhi turned to Zhu Xi or the Cheng-Zhu School and disclosed their mistakes in contending Lu Jiuyuan and Yang Jian’s view of knowledge and action. Wang stated,

In order to fight against Lu Jiuyuan and Yang Jian’s doctrine that knowledge was one with action, and neither knowledge was prior to action nor action posterior to knowledge, some Song Confucians proposed the doctrine of “knowledge prior to action” and gave them a clear order. In this way, they imprisoned students in knowledge and led them to lose the support of practice. It was evident that this proposal deviated from the sage’s Way. (CSQS 2-311)

On the outside, to refute the view that knowledge and action were one, the best way was to distinguish a sequence between them, and knowledge prior to action seemed perfect. But the problem was how much knowledge one should obtain before one acted? If this problem were not well solved, students would easily fall into the accumulation of knowledge while they postponed practice to a later time. As a result, the same consequence would result, i.e. students had little practice or personal experience of human relationships and principles of things. Then the Song Confucians’ attack on Lu and Yang became futile. Wang Fuzhi’s following remarks made this idea more clearly. He said,
As to those who had no general principle of filial piety, fraternal love, prudence and trust, or did not practice it earnestly despite some superficial knowledge, they were absorbed in the change and compilation of chapters and sentences, and the image and rules of objects and dress. They, such as Zhu Xi’s disciples, counted words and recorded lines, but had no satisfactory performance in their choice of good and bad, treatment of gain and loss and distinction of righteousness and profit. They only leave heretical scholars the weakness of criticism. Alas, was its harm trivial that putting action posterior to knowledge misled students? Fearing of the difficulty of practice, taking advantage of the easiness of knowledge, and so using knowledge as a resort, Zhu Xi’s disciples’ failure reached the same destiny as Lu Jiuyuan and Yang Jian’s followers even if they chose different approaches. (CSQS 2-313)

This passage clearly pointed out the shortcoming of the doctrine that knowledge was prior to action in Confucian moral cultivation. It led students to indulge in book learning and exegesis only and not to have true practice of the learned knowledge. It more likely served as an excuse for lazy people to avoid practice. As a result, Zhu’s doctrine had the same negative consequence as Lu, Yang and Wang’s doctrine, i.e. students did not have Confucian virtues through practice, and led custom to become hypocritical and corrupt. From this aspect, Wang Fuzhi blamed both Cheng-Zhu School and Wang Yangming School for the ruin of the Ming Empire.

In short, Wang Fuzhi insisted that pursuing knowledge and practice should be done together, using one to enhance the other, while practice was more important than knowledge. Knowledge served practice while practice tested the truth of knowledge. Without practice, one might have knowledge, but it might not be true; after practice, its truth or falsity would be manifest. Thus, Wang Fuzhi claimed that practice/action could subsume knowledge, but not the reverse. If a scholar aimed to promote Confucianism, he should never depart from practice for knowledge. In application, Wang Fuzhi discussed the relation between investigating things [action] and pursuing knowledge [knowledge]. He said,

Broadly studying images and numbers, testing them with evidence of ancient and present times, and trying to match principles, this is investigating things. Vacuous mind giving rise to wisdom, thinking to find the subtlety, this is pursuing knowledge. Without pursuing knowledge, students do not know how to limit the scope of things to investigate and lose
their ambition in researching on things. Without investigating things, knowledge has no application and will fall into heresy. (CSQS 2-312-313)

This passage discussed the interdependence between investigating things (action) and seeking for knowledge (knowledge). Through investigating things, one put into practice the knowledge one obtained; through seeking for knowledge, one maintained the right direction when investigating things. This idea corresponded to Wang’s view that knowledge and ability cooperated to make achievement and accomplish virtues.

6.4 Song-Ming Hybrid Confucians: Lu-Wang School

Wang Fuzhi classified Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming as heresies based on the similarity between their doctrine of innate knowledge and the sudden awakening of Chan Buddhism (CSQS 6-479). However, since as later scholars still regarded them as Neo-Confucians, we took them as hybrid Confucians instead of heresies.

With regard to Lu Jiuyuan, Wang Yangming and their disciples, Wang Fuzhi condemned them more than fairly and patiently analyzed their ideas. He blamed their teachings to have corrupted social custom and led to the collapse of the Ming Dynasty.

Wang Yangming’s thought was first passed down to Wang Ji 王畿 (1498-1583), and then to Li Zhi 李贄 (1527-1602). After the wide spreading of such unscrupulous teaching, the common people lost their sense of shame and honor, bandits and thieves rose up, and China was conquered by the Manchurians. All were because people were lazy in practicing ethical relationships and investigating things but sought for achievement without effort. As a result, they did not hesitate to ignore their father and monarch, or care to prevent their hair and skin from harm. When Lu Zijing (Lu Jiuyuan) spread his doctrine, it caused the Song collapsed. The spread of Wang Yangming’s thought shared the same evil effect. (CSQS 12-371)

In this passage, it apparently was Wang Fuzhi’s exaggeration that Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming should be responsible for the ruin of the Song and the Ming. Truly, the negative consequence of their doctrines of innate knowledge caused scholars to misunderstand conscience
as selfish desires and thus to be lazy in abiding by ritual propriety or moral norms and lose loyalty and shame. But Wang Fuzhi should understand how far-reaching a doctrine could influence the people if even Confucius himself had not been able to transform the small Lu State. Moreover, the collapse of a dynasty had many causes, especially the corrupt governance, how could Wang Fuzhi take morality or custom as the prime cause? Obviously, Wang Fuzhi emphasized too much the role of morality and custom in political events, could not see the critical roles of other factors, and neither be able to step out of his dream of sagely king’s governance and beautification of custom.

Generally speaking, Wang Fuzhi attacked Lu-Wang School from three aspects, i.e., promoting Chan Buddhism in the name of Confucianism, regarding mind as principle, and identifying knowledge as action. However, all three pertained to the doctrine of innate knowledge.

Wang Fuzhi traced the rise of the doctrine of innate knowledge and acknowledged it as a correction of the pedantic book-learning of Zhu Xi’s disciples, while he insisted that its destruction was worse than what it aimed to correct. Wang Fuzhi stated,

[After Zhu Xi’s disciples indulged in book learning.] Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章 (1428-1500) rose to criticize them. Then it led to Wang Yangming’s heretical doctrine that besmeared the sage and advocated Buddhism in the appearance of Confucianism. As a result, penalty-disfigured people and eunuchs vied for accepting it so as to justify their wanton thoughts through claiming that there was neither goodness nor badness, and principle and events penetrated mutually without gap. Then its evil effects spread and complete. The reason was that Wang Yangming did not hold on to the proper way and thus corrected Zhu’s disciples’ mistake improperly. (CSQS 12-10-11)

These sentences indicated that Chen Xianzhang and Wang Yangming aimed to correct the pedantic book learning trend of their time, but Wang Yangming went so far to regard “Buddhist thought” as Confucianism. This “Buddhist thought” was Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge that advocated the substance of mind was neither good nor bad. Because Buddhist concepts of emptiness and mind were also beyond good and bad, Wang Fuzhi thus accused Wang Yangming of promoting Buddhism in the name of Confucianism. If the substance of mind was beyond good and bad, it would be difficult to persuade people to do goodness and avoid
badness. For this reason, those criminals and eunuchs were happy to use Wang Yangming’s doctrine to exculpate themselves from their crimes and evil behaviors. As a result, the spread of Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge led to the corruption of custom. This explained why Wang Fuzhi insisted nature as goodness endowed from Heaven and the substance of mind.

Specifically, Wang Fuzhi thought Wang Yangming mainly adulterated Confucianism with Chan Buddhist thoughts. He said,

> When Wang Yangming proposed his doctrine, he just selected some words from the sage’s words, analyzed their subtle meanings, adulterated them with Chan Buddhism, and reached the highest point of recklessness. (CSQS 12-489)

That is, Wang Yangming selected some sentences of Confucian classics, interpreted them with Chan Buddhist thoughts and compiled his book, *Chuan Xi Lu* 傳習錄. Moreover, Wang Fuzhi confirmed his accusation with the story that Wang Yangming imitated Chan master Hongren 弘忍 (601-675) to perform the ceremony of passing down the Way to his disciples at Tian Quan 天泉 Bridge. Wang Fuzhi said,

> With regard to the event that Wang Yangming passed down the Way to Wang Longxi 王龍溪 (1498-1583) and Qian Xushan 錢紹山 (1496-1574) at Tianquan Bridge, it imitated the story about Hui Neng 慧能 (638-713) and Shen Xiu 神秀 (606-706). Its four sentences beginning with “the substance of mind is beyond good and evil” were the new version of the four sentences beginning with “Body is like Bodhi tree”. (CSQS 12-488)

If the story of Tianquan Bridge was true, it would be plausible that Wang Yangming imitated the Chan master to pass down his teachings, for a person emulated others only when he admired them.

After demonstrating the Buddhist characteristic of Wang Yangming’s doctrine, Wang Fuzhi started his criticism. Echoing Zhang Zai’s criticism that under the influence of Buddhism, 41

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41 Wang Fuzhi might make a mistake in quotation here. From his meaning demonstrated in the context, he should have planned to match Hui Neng’s word, “Bodhi originally is not a tree”, with Wang Yangming’s sentence, “The substance of mind is beyond good and bad”.

students did not practice rituals or learn the Confucian classics but wished to achieve sageliness effortlessly, Wang Fuzhi confirmed,

In recent times, Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge was just like this: what it took as its sole essence was Buddhist doctrine that transcended words, thoughts and action, completely rose above worldly affairs and did not hold any idea or opinion. (CSQS 12-370)

This meant that Wang Yangming used Chan Buddhist practice as Confucian practice, and thus his doctrine of innate knowledge was not the mind of commiseration or conscience in the sense of Confucianism. To some degree, Wang Fuzhi’s criticism was right, for Wang Yangming asked students to act according to their innate knowledge instead of moral norms and ritual propriety, but again regarded innate knowledge beyond goodness and evil. Then he turned moral practice into mysterious experience similar to that of Buddhist sudden awakening. Wang Fuzhi aimed to correct this misleading practice, so he was sensitive to those ideas related to sudden awakening. This explained why he criticized Zhu Xi’s sudden awakening in investigating things with spare no energy.

In analyzing their doctrine of innate knowledge, Wang Fuzhi first indicated that Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming subsumed action under knowledge and were lazy in their practice of Confucian ritual propriety. This has been discussed already in 6.3.4. Here we elucidate Wang Fuzhi’s criticism from the relationship of knowledge and ability/能. In explaining the innate knowledge/良知 and innate ability/良能 in the Mencius, Wang Fuzhi maintained the unity of knowledge and ability based on his doctrine of the co-establishment of Qian and Kun, knowledge and ability. He contended,

Heaven and earth use spiritual transformation as virtue, not solely depending on their vacuous and clear bodies; the sage uses fulfilling human duties and completing things as his Way, not just relying on his intelligent and vacuous enlightenment. Therefore, knowledge is innate but without practice, it will be equal to not-knowing. In recent times, Wang Yangming’s teaching ignored ability but focused on knowledge solely, thus it was no surprising that he fell into heresy. (CSQS 12-120-121)

This passage showed that action and ability were the prime approaches to achieve virtue and fulfill human relationships. Having knowledge but being short of ability, one’s knowledge was
no better than ignorance. It was to emphasize innate knowledge but ignore ability that led Wang Yangming to be heretical. According to Wang Yangming, if a person realized his innate knowledge, without Confucian rituals training, he would know the due measure of his behavior and be able to practice all Confucian rituals and ceremonies perfectly. As a result, he turned Confucian practice into subjective whim without any standard, everyone could claim himself having realized sageliness if he thought he had found innate knowledge in his mind. Thus, evil and lazy persons mistook innate knowledge as desires and took advantage of Wang Yangming’s doctrines to justify their evildoing and negligence. This was why Wang Yangming aimed to correct the pedantry of Cheng-Zhu School, while still failed in extinguishing the embankment of morality.

When explaining the purpose that Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming proposed the doctrine of innate knowledge, Wang Fuzhi assumed them to expect the realization of sageliness in a fast way. He explained,

The fault that one desires to succeed quickly originates from the narrow range of one’s experience and knowledge. Being narrow in experience and knowledge, one will think that one can take a short cut to grasp the principles under Heaven and the learning of sages and worthies quickly, making advance daily. Lu Jiuyuan (1139-1193) and Yang Jian (1141-1226) used this method to attract students. Their doctrines look lofty, but actually are very humble and coarse. (CSQS 12-480)

In this quotation, Wang Fuzhi further traced their hastiness to their shallowness or narrow range of experience and knowledge. Because there were many lazy people in the world who desired to obtain success without effort, so Lu Jiuyuan and Yang Jian’s doctrine of innate knowledge or the unity of knowledge and action became popular. But they did not realize the spread of their doctrine could only destroy morality and custom.

Based on the assumption that every person had innate knowledge and could act according to Confucian ritual propriety spontaneously once one was self-awakened, Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming proposed their doctrine that mind was principle, i.e., mind was innate knowledge. In this way, they focused primarily on the moral aspect of human mind and did not pay much attention to its cognitive aspect. But Wang Fuzhi disagreed with this idea because he divided human mind into two layers—the mind of the Way and the mind of man, and insisted that one
should use the mind of man to seek the mind of Way, and used the mind of the Way to direct the mind of man. In Wang Fuzhi’s understanding, the mind of the Way (nature) could be regarded as principle, but the mind of man was just a cognitive organ and should not be regarded as principle. (See 4.2.1)

Then Wang Fuzhi started refuting the statement, “mind is principle” from the perspective of cosmology and argued,

> From the aspect of origin, Heaven creates things through transformation, and produces mind through following principle. From the aspect of end, human beings receive endowment from Heaven, and mind contains principle. Principle gives rise to mind, so it is not suitable to say that mind is principle, forsaking human efforts and listening to Heaven passively. Mind contains principle, so it is not suitable again to say that mind is principle. If mind is not principle and thus does not contain principle, it can still survive by relying on five organs and body. (CSQS 6-1112)

Here Wang Fuzhi first indicated that mind could not be identical with principle because it was produced by principle. Second, it was not possible either because mind contained principle, just as a cup contained water. These arguments could be said to refute Wang Yangming’s view very well. However, as we discussed in 4.2.1, Wang Fuzhi still could not avoid the inconsistency between his claim that nature (principle) was inherent to mind, and his claim that mind could not know its inherent principle spontaneously and could exist after the loss of principle.

From Wang Fuzhi’s remarks, it was evident that he had not realized that the mind in the doctrine, “mind is principle” referred to the mind of the Way or nature. If he did, his proposal of using cognitive mind to seek for the mind of the Way while using the latter to direct the former would be unnecessary, for that was just Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming’s unspoken premise. Then Wang Fuzhi’s criticism would become invalid. For on the one hand, Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming would not be so stupid as being unable to know that human mind had its cognitive part. What they were concerned was that once a person found his innate knowledge and established it as prime principle and guide, one would be able to use his cognition and act properly. Thus this idea had no major difference from Wang Fuzhi’s proposal. On the other hand, Wang Fuzhi might deliberately avoid acknowledging the mind in “mind is principle” as nature or the mind of the Way in order to undertake his criticism. Otherwise, if he acknowledged
it, he had to stop not only this criticism but also others—his criticisms of Wang Yangming’s view on mind and nature.

First, instead of admitting the mind in Wang Yangming’s discourse as the mind of the Way or nature, Wang Fuzhi accused Wang Yangming of taking the cognitive mind as mind and thus following Buddhism to claim that the substance of mind was beyond good and evil. (CSQS2-260)

Then he criticized Wang Yangming not understanding human nature but regarding it as nothingness. He said,

After finding no origin or resort of the myriad things, Buddhism claims that nature is emptiness originally; Heaven and earth are illusions; things and ethical principles arise from human opinions; and there is not either principle or qi in places where human beings cannot perceive. In recent times, Wang Yangming made this the basis of his doctrine, which demonstrated only his shallow knowledge. (CSQS 12-25)

This indicated that Buddhism thought nature as nothingness or emptiness, and Wang Yangming followed it, too. Based on nature as nothingness or emptiness, it would be logical to draw the conclusion that the substance of mind or nature was beyond good and evil. Wang Fuzhi continued,

When discussing human nature, one forsakes the innate pattern and principle in mind, but seeks it in the area beyond good and evil and regards it as the resort of mind. Isn’t that artificial? (CSQS 12-423)

Here Wang Fuzhi criticized Wang Yangming who regarded the realm beyond evil and good as the resort of mind, and thus abandoned the Confucian doctrine of good nature, and fell into heresy.

Finally, Wang Fuzhi proposed the way to fight against Lu-Wang School. He followed Zhang Zai in dividing mind into nature and perception, and insisted that human beings should use perception to fulfill nature and use nature to direct perception. In this way, one would be able to keep the right course in education—the establishment of the basic first as Lu Jiuyuan proposed on the one hand, and not to abandon learning after knowing one’s nature—improving oneself
through investigating things on the other. Then one would be able to avoid the shortcomings brought by both Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming’s approaches in self-cultivation. (CSQS 12-12-13) This explained why Wang Fuzhi praised Zhang Zai’s learning as the orthodox doctrine he was striving for.

6.5 The Overall Criticism of Heresy

Wang Fuzhi regarded all schools and thoughts that differed from Confucianism as heresies, especially Daoism, Buddhism, Legalism and Catholicism. Despite Wang Fuzhi’s appraisal of heretical scholars’ adherence to their principles in contrast to petty Confucian’s having no principle, he still regarded the criticism of heresies as the duty of scholars and the foundation of the Kingly Way. This is because heretical doctrines were the short or expedient way that petty persons took advantage of. For example, based on Zhuangzi’s “leaving a thing as it is/yuyong 寓庸 ”, Hu Guang 胡廣 (1369-1418) presented his distorted interpretation of “the Mean/zhongyong”. Based on Zhuangzi’s “perfect happiness/zhile 至樂”, Feng Dao 馮道 proposed his vulgar concept, eternal happiness/changle 常樂. (CSQS 1-1113) Therefore, in order to beautify custom and correct the human mind, it was necessary to criticize heresies and convert them into Confucian orthodox.

Based on his definition of heresy (see the introduction to Chapter 6), Wang Fuzhi classified all the rest of the schools and doctrines except Confucianism as heretical. Among them, he criticized Legalism mainly from the point of governance, while he attacked others from the corruption of custom and human mind with their incorrect understanding of Heaven, mind and nature. In general, his criticism could be summarized from three aspects.

First, Wang Fuzhi criticized heretical thinkers to have discarded the function of human mind and passively listening to fate. He stated,

The reason that heresy becomes so is: heretical thinkers also know that mind is the master to respond external things and thus value it; however after they find the value of the mind, they try to secure mind beyond gain and loss, truth and falsity, leaving the changes of gain and loss, truth and falsity to natural lot and not interacting with them. Then their mind becomes an irresponsible and ignorant one. (CSQS 8-181)
This was a comment on Gaozi, Zhuangzi and Buddhism who advocated transcending human distinction of truth and falsity and living a natural or detached life. Because Confucianism abided by strict distinction of goodness and badness, Wang Fuzhi undoubtedly could not endorse their view. Moreover, according to Wang Fuzhi, human beings lived in real world and had to interact with things and other people, truth and falsity, gain and loss would be inevitable. It was impossible to avoid them through maintaining a detached mind. In order to deal with them properly, one must discern truth from falsity, gain from loss and actively interact with external things prudently.

In Wang’s regard, because heretical thinkers did not engage their mind to seek for principles of things and understand Heaven, what they held as true might not be true, and thus would be misleading for people in the world. On the contrary, Confucian scholars would judge the loss and gain under Heaven through making the mind correct and ideas sincere, and discern truth and falsity through investigating things and extending knowledge. Therefore, what they obtained and held true met heavenly principle and was true knowledge. For this reason, Wang Fuzhi concluded,

Thus heretical thinkers may pretend discussing on the mind, but they definitely may not pretend discussing on the truth. To obtain truth, one must make persistent efforts. No suspicion, so no fear. The principle to gain truth is very easy to understand; the effort to get it is very difficult; and the effect of effort comes very slow. Heretical thinkers desire quick outcome and fear persistent effort, this is why they are not able to grasp truth. (CSQS 8-202)

This passage simplified heretical scholars’ attitude toward knowledge. It insisted that they feared constant effort in the search for process. This could be verified with Zhuangzi’s attitude toward knowledge and Chan masters’ “abandonment of books and sutras”. But this generalization could not be applied to other heretical scholars or schools. For example, Mozi was diligent in seeking knowledge and putting it into practice. Buddhist monks of Vinaya School/lùzōng 律宗 also sought knowledge with spare no energy.

Second, Wang Fuzhi criticized heretical thinkers from the aspect of their influence on social custom and human mind. In his eyes, heretical doctrines were like the voice of birds, able to
disturb human mind and nature and degrade human beings into the level of birds and beasts. This was why Mencius took the criticism of Mozi 墨子 and Yang Zhu 楊朱 as duty in order to protect human relationships. Wang Fuzhi explained,

Yang Zhu thought that everyone cared for himself only, fulfilled his desires through living together but actually not caring for each other, then nothing would be able to disturb his peace. This means that there may not be monarch under Heaven, and it is more peaceful without a monarch. Mozi thought that human beings were all originated from Heaven, were originally one and thus should not separate from each other; then one must love them all equally; and the degradation of love and kindness all arose from selfish fondness of one’s own body. This means that human beings are not born from their parents. There is no father originally in the world, and one should regard his father as a false sign, then one will know the great root or origin (Heaven). These doctrines base their subtlety on Heaven and nature, manifest with the appearance of humanity and righteousness. But from their consequence of no father or monarch, they are nothing more than the voice of birds and beasts. Don’t you see that birds and beasts do not know where they were from and do not have monarch or superior? Yang Zhu and Mo Di led all intelligent people to the way of birds and beasts, their harm will be greater than what words can describe. (CSQS 8-394)

Here, Wang Fuzhi condemned both Yang Zhu’s doctrine of selfishness and Mozi’s doctrine of universal love as the way of birds and beasts, insisted that the consequences of their thoughts would lead people not to value monarch and father, while the respect for monarch and father were the symbols distinguishing human beings from other animals. However, Wang Fuzhi criticized them from the logical consequences of their doctrines rather than from their real social influence. From this point of view, Wang Fuzhi obviously exaggerated the negative consequences of Yang Zhu and Mozi’s doctrines. In fact, Yang Zhu’s doctrine would not necessarily lead to the elimination of monarch or the superior, for example, modern individualism did not wipe out social ranks. Mozi’s universal love would not cause people to disrespect their fathers and love others, for no one could transcend the principle to extend love from close people to distant ones. Anyway, Wang’s criticism showed his sensitivity toward those doctrines that threatened the basic Confucian human relationships such as monarch-subject and father-son.
**Third.** Wang Fuzhi analyzed the absurdity of heretical doctrines from their understanding of Heaven, Way and nature.

Heaven gives birth to all things through their parents. Therefore, with regard to the birth of a child, he should respect and love his parents first, and then extend them to Heaven. If he forsakes his parents and loves Heaven directly, Wang Fuzhi assumed, he would fall into barbarism, knowing only Heaven but not taking care of their parents. At this point, besides Mohism, Wang Fuzhi condemned Catholic father Matteo Ricci too because Ricci respected Heaven as Lord, was intimate with God and forgot his parents. (CSQS 1-1015) However, if a person did take care of his parents but forgot Heaven as his remote origin, he would be like birds that knew their direct parents only.

In addition, from the different aspects that Heaven and earth were emulated, Wang Fuzhi classified Buddhism, Mohism and Daoism. Heaven and earth demonstrated as Qian and Kun in their functions. Qian represented vigor and resolution, while Kun obedience and passivity. The right way was to emulate Heaven’s resolution for self-cultivation and earth’s tolerance for governance, but heretical thinkers did differently. Wang stated,

> Buddhists and Mohists propose universal charity, and are resolute to benefit things and do not know leisure and rest, so they do not know how to emulate Qian; Zhuangzi and Liezi adopt following trends and situations, passively remain rest and are not able to be resolute, so they do not know how to emulate Kun. (CSQS 1-697)

Mohists and Buddhists promoted universal love at the sacrifice of their own lives and interests. This behavior was resolute. But because they did not discern feasible cases from infeasible ones, their love was blind, just as the sunshine casts its rays without distinction. However, Wang assumed that Qian also had its knowledge to make distinctions, so he did not think the Mohists were good at emulating Qian. Daoists advocated following natural process without deliberation; and this matched Kun’s obedience. However, Kun had its ability to undertake things and events. This was what Daoists neglected. Therefore, in Wang Fuzhi’s regard, all three tried to emulate Heaven and earth, but failed. It was only Confucianism that could emulate them perfectly through promoting knowledge and ability, resolution and obedience.
Then Wang Fuzhi traced the origin of their improper emulations to their misunderstanding of Heaven. According to Wang Fuzhi, when discussing Heaven, one must respect Heaven as the origin, while taking human beings as its final concern, for Heaven manifested itself in human affairs. But Buddhism and Daoism forsook human affairs, sought Heaven in remote and profound places, and proposed nothingness and emptiness as its substance. Therefore, they fell into the snare of disregarding human relationships and welfare although they proposed universal love or tolerance of things. Wang Fuzhi elaborated on this in saying,

Therefore, when [Daoists and Buddhists] describe Heaven as inactive and beyond imagination, it is another version of King Zhou of Shang’s negligence of sacrifices to Heaven and ancestors. Both are the same in terms of the negligence of heavenly manifestation while seeking for it in remoteness. When [Daoists and Buddhists] propose stopping interaction with people until death or lodging under a tree, it is another version of King Zhou’s making his palace and terrace magnificent. Both are the same in terms of the ignorance of human welfare while seeking for temporary peace for themselves. (CSQS 2-383)

Daoists regarded Heaven as taking no action and therefore recommended people to live in a life of self-sustenance and not to interact with each other; Buddhists thought Heaven existing beyond imagination and proposed to live a simple life. But both of them discarded human welfare and human duties to respect Heaven. Therefore their behavior was not different from the tyrant King Zhou of Shang’s negligence of sacrifices and people’s need. From Wang’s anthropocentric point of view, a doctrine should aim to improve human welfare and thank Heaven’s beneficence, but both Daosim and Buddhism failed to do so. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi condemned them as disorderly imitating Heaven.

In Wang Fuzhi’s eyes, when the sage emulated Heaven’s care-free state, he did not worry about his own gain or loss of external things, but about his own virtue. When he purified his mind, he removed selfishness and absurdity, but still kept his sincerity and fairness. In contrast, heretical scholars removed all of them together and achieved an absolute worriless mind. As a result, they despised on humanity and righteousness and proposed a primitive world in which everything lived by their biological instinct. Wang Fuzhi stated,
Those heretical scholars imitate Heaven randomly and desire to remove worry about their own virtues altogether, and claim, “If one corrects the people with humanity and righteousness, then humanity and righteousness will be stolen in the end. Thus in order to stop theft, the only way is to remove sageliness and abandon wisdom.” How absurd this claim is! (CSQS 2-310)

Here, Wang was attacking Laozi and Zhuangzi. Laozi and Zhuangzi saw the fact that people would turn moral virtues into instruments for procuring profit, and advocated non-action as the governing method and rejected to show people sageliness and wisdom, just as Heaven governed all things without showing any sign of knowledge or humanity. However, Wang Fuzhi promoted to govern people with humanity and righteousness, so he criticized them as emulating Heaven blindly, for he thought Heaven demonstrated knowledge and humanity through its process of production and reproduction.

In relation to Wang’s criticism of their misunderstanding of Heaven, he indicated that heretical scholars did not understand the Way and nature in a right way either. He stated,

I suspect the doctrines of the Way/dao people discussed in the world. They elevate the sage’s way to the level of heavenly transformation, regard Heaven’s humanity as human’s, degrade human beings to the level of birds and beasts and cannot establish heavenly endowment in human beings. I become more suspicious of their doctrines on nature. They identify the nature of things as heavenly endowment, and think following the nature of things as abiding by the way of things. Then they are blind to their own nature and go against Heaven. (CSQS 13-677-678)

For example, Mozi elevated the sage’s Way to heavenly transformation, so he mistook Heaven’s indiscriminating love as his universal love. Daoist did the same, but degraded human beings to the level of other creatures and thus ignored the uniqueness of human nature. Gaozi and Zhuangzi all thought the endowment of things became the nature of things, so following the natural process of things would accomplish their way. But in this way, they forgot what human beings should do was to follow human nature. Because they did not make a distinction between human nature and thing’s nature, they mistook following the nature of things as uniting with Heaven, but did not realize that it actually went against heavenly endowment. Why? As aforesaid, Wang Fuzhi insisted that man and other things differ not only in their endowments but
also in their ways on the one hand, and asked to distinguish the Way of man from the Way of Heaven on the other.

In the following, we will analyze Wang Fuzhi’s criticism on Buddhism, Daoism and other heretical schools.

### 6.6 Criticism on Buddhism

Among heretical doctrines, Wang Fuzhi condemned Buddhism in a severest manner and regarded Buddhists as petty persons because they assumed themselves superior and looked down on Heaven, proposed preposterous doctrines to destroy custom and human mind and degraded human beings into birds and beasts. However, due to the complexity and deception of their arguments, it was very hard to bring Buddhism down without knowing the factors that cause its prevalence and the weapon to attack it. Keeping this in mind, Wang Fuzhi analyzed its introduction, its various doctrines and then proposed the approaches to check the spread of Buddhism.

#### 6.6.1. The Introduction and Prevalence of Buddhism in China

In Wang Fuzhi’s view, when a foreign doctrine entered an indigenous culture, it must introduce itself through some similar features of that culture understandable to local people. When Buddhism entered China, it not only depended on similar terms and concepts of Daoism to elucidate its doctrines, but also transplanted its doctrines to witchcraft and Mohism. For example, Buddhism depended on Mohism to advocate its undifferentiated love and cremation for they both valued nature and despised body. However, Wang Fuzhi thought the roles of Daoism and shamanism were more critical crucial factors.

According to Wang Fuzhi’s view, shamanism acted as a medium for the introduction of Buddhist retribution. In the Zuo Tradition of the Spring-Autumn Annals, there were many tales describing the revenge of spiritual powers, acting as the forerunners of Buddhist retribution. (see 6.2) Based on these stories, Wang Fuzhi concluded,
If there had not been the condition for Buddhism in China, how could Indian barbarian words have entered Confucian classic-trained Chinese ears and changed their will? Buddhism uses stop-killing as its teaching, but does not establish rank and authority or distinguish importance from triviality. It obscures the infallible pattern in human mind and urges people to do things beyond their ability. It fears that people will not listen to it, so frightens them with retribution. How could frightening be sufficient to make people follow? …However, stop-killing is similar to humanity. To stop killing with the belief of retribution is similar to mandatory teaching. Buddhism in this way has flooded in China for thousand years, and seems inalienable to Chinese culture even in noblemen’s view. (CSQS 5-553)

This passage indicated the similarity between the ghost/spirit stories in the *Zuo Tradition* and Buddhist teaching of retribution. The ghost story aimed to frighten people from doing evil through proposing that the victim’s ghost would take revenge. The retribution proposed the same idea through claiming that an evil-doer would be degraded into lower creatures in the next life. In this way, Buddhism was introduced to China and spread for thousand years. Obviously, Wang Fuzhi simplified the function of Buddhist belief of retribution. Especially in chaotic time, a good belief of retribution became the sole hope for common people in suffering. That was why Buddhism spread fast in the chaotic time of North and South Dynasties.

However, Wang claimed, the most favorable condition for the introduction and spreading of Buddhism in China was Daoism and its derivative, Dark Learning/xuanxue. When Emperor Wu of Liang 梁武帝萧衍 (464-549) was indulged in Buddhism, his counselors, Tao Hongjing 陶弘景 (456-536) and He Jingrong 何敬容 (?-549) did not attack Buddhism, on the contrary, they criticized Laozi and Zhuangzi. Tao and He’s behaviors perplexed many scholars but Wang Fuzhi insisted that they knew how to curb Buddhism. Wang Fuzhi argued,

Since Jin Dynasty, Buddhists Zhi Dun 支遁 (214-366), Dao Sheng 道生 (355-434), Seng Zhao 僧肇 (384-414) and the like all decorated and introduced Buddhism with Zhuangzi’s ideas, so it had been a long time that Laozi and Zhuangzi’s ideas merged with Buddhism. I ever read Heir Apparent Zhaoming’s 昭明太子 (蕭統 501-531) interpretation of Buddhist genuine truth and worldly truth, and found that he completely interpreted Buddhist
doctrines with Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249) and He Yan’s 何晏 (?-249) thought. Once the Daoist concept of void and other mysterious doctrines perish, Buddhism will not be able to prevail. Tao and He’s approach is the way to remove the root of Buddhism. (CSQS 10-651)

Here Wang Fuzhi insisted that Buddhist monks spread their doctrines with the support of Zhuangzi’s thought, especially the Dark Learning in the Jin Dynasty. Just as to stop the running of a cart, one should remove its wheel; Wang Fuzhi thought, to stop the spreading of Buddhism, the best way was to stop the spreading of Dark Learning first. This was why he supported Tao Hongjing and He Jingrong’s criticism of Dark Learning.

In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, in contrast to Buddhist activities, such as constructing pagodas, reciting magic formula, etc., the merger of Buddhism and Daoism made Buddhism more destructive. With the support of Daoism, Buddhism dared to defy Confucianism and propagated doctrines that destroyed loyalty and filial piety and broke up uprightness. As a result, Buddhist believers regarded shame and honor as fetters and shackles, monarch and father as trivial grass, in order to justify and indulge in their unrestrained desires and evil behaviors. All these negative consequences arose from Zhuangzi’s derivatives (Dark Learning) and got practiced in Buddhism. This explained why he classified Daoism together with Buddhism and Legalism as the three pests in Chinese culture.

In his explanation of the spread of Buddhism, Wang Fuzhi also pointed out the crucial roles of Buddhist doctrines of removing one’s guilt through realizing the concepts of emptiness and retribution. For those usurpers and barbarian rulers, they did not have adequate merits and wisdom, could not explain how they became noble and rich, and hoped to pacify their uneasiness of usurpation and guilt, so they embraced Buddhist retribution to explain their nobility and richness and to remove their guilt through Buddhist concept of emptiness. Therefore, based on Buddhist concept of emptiness, all evil wrongdoings would be purified and the wrongdoers be completely redeemed. Emperor Wu of Liang believed Buddhism for this sake, and all other rulers and evildoers did so too. Wang sighed with regret,

Alas! Buddhism has brought troubles to the world and spread the four seas for thousand years. The reason that people rush toward it madly is just because it accepts evildoers in the world and transforms them into sages immediately….Buddha exists in prostitute house and
bar; evils already filling full of room, one can eliminate them with one idea without feeling shame. (CSQS 10-639)

This explained why Buddhism spread fast in the North and South Dynasties. At that time, there were many usurpers who needed to pacify their uneasiness and purify their guilt. Specifically, Buddhist doctrine of emptiness and delusion would wipe out the distinction between good and evil, life and death and thus exculpate the guilty sense of criminals. Below, common people were looking forward to a better life through retribution. Therefore, the superior practiced and the common people followed, Buddhism became the main stream of Chinese culture. As a result, with the support of rulers who believed in Buddhism, Buddhist monks were highly respected when alive and were given honorable posthumous titles after death. They also used royal power to seize famous mountains and places to construct temples and accepted vagabonds and criminals to avoid taxes. This again attracted people to rush toward Buddhism like a galloping horse.

Then, how to curb the spreading of Buddhism? Wang Fuzhi first proposed to practice Confucian ritual propriety and ethical relationships and strictly abide by the distinction between righteousness and profit. In Wang’s regard, for those Buddhist believers who expected good fortune by retribution, it would be futile to dissuade them by claiming that retribution did not work, because they would rather believe it than deny it in order to be lucky and avoid misfortune. Therefore, both Fan Zhen 范縝 (450-515) and Han Yu could not defeat their Buddhist opponents or sway the public when they refuted Buddhism from the perspective of profit. However, Wang Fuzhi did not prescribe how to defeat with righteousness and ritual propriety in detail.

From the perspective of administrative measures, Wang Fuzhi embraced the approach of gradual restraint, and did not think that Emperor Wu of Tang 唐武宗 (814-846) could have eliminated Buddhism once and for all even though he had lived longer. He explained,

Why? [Emperor Wu of Tang] wished to correct thousand-year-corrupt practice in one day, and fight against the belief of the deluded and crazy crowd in the world with one emperor and one prime minister, and eliminate it [Buddhism] completely. This is just as Gun 鯀 wished to stop a flood with a dam and could not be successful at the end. (CSQS 10-1008)
By contrast, Wang Fuzhi appreciated Emperor Shi of the Later Zhou’s 周世宗 (921-959) method that gradually restrained the prevalence of Buddhism. Emperor Shi of Zhou forbade unofficial temples and unregistered monks and nuns, while maintaining the official and registered ones. Wang Fuzhi praised,

In this way, the force of Buddhism was restrained; the numbers of temples and monks were limited. The heads of monks would be low-spirited in loneliness and coldness, lose their pride, and die out and disband gradually. Then the government settled down petty persons with light taxes and penalty, educated noblemen through elucidating Confucian way and righteousness. In one hundred years, Buddhism would die out as ice melts and duckweed disband. Eliminating it hastily will stimulate it to rise up; restraining it gradually will make it perish. This is a good strategy for victory. It was only through gradual approach that Yu controlled overwhelming flood. (CSQS 10-1165)

Apparently, Wang Fuzhi simplified the problem and ignored the economic factor that made Buddhism survive. Through advocating its doctrines of retribution, Buddhist monks received a lot of donations from the society. With the accumulation of these tax-free donations, temples became more and more wealthy, attracted more and more people and began to affect national tax income and administration. This was why emperors had to eliminate Buddhism from time to time. Thus, Wang Fuzhi’s measure could not shake the foundation of Buddhism a bit, let alone eliminating it. Moreover, his analogy of Buddhism to huge flood was improper too. Huge flood was mindless and could be directed to its channel, but some Buddhist monks would still take chances for making profit and avoiding taxes.

Wang Fuzhi showed more naivety when he proposed to look at Buddhism as witchcraft in order to stop its spread. He stated,

If a ruler wants to forbid Buddhism, what is the necessity to punish it seriously? Since the start of human society, there have been witches among the people. Witches differ in their witchcraft but are nothing but witches. Previous kings had to let them exist. What Buddhists move people in the world is nothing but retribution of life and death, bless and disaster, which is also a kind of witchcraft. Among them, the clever mix Buddhism with Zhuangzi and Liezi’s doctrines and plagiarize the meaning of mind and nature, and
compete with the Confucian Way, but they do not see the Confucian Way clearly and are misled by Buddhism. Nevertheless, this kind of believers is fewer than one-thousandth. However, fighting Buddhism with the Confucian Way, the success of the Confucian Way cannot be guaranteed in a corrupted society. But looking at Buddhism as witchcraft, people in the world prefer witchcraft to Buddhism. Then witchcraft and Buddhism will tie. Now that Buddhism is looked as witchcraft, and people regard it as witchcraft. Then in a city of ten-thousand people, how many witches are there? Moreover, people never love witches as they love their parents; and witches are also ordinary people. In this way, Buddhism will be doomed. (CSQS 10-1008-1009)

This was nothing more than Wang Fuzhi’s whim. First, Buddhism was not but superior to witchcraft, and could not be defamed through renaming it. Second, Buddhist monks and temples had organized institutions and theories, and could not be destroyed with a naïve naming either. Moreover, with the attraction of donations, it would be very difficult to force monks and nuns to return to the society. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi’s measures showed nothing but his pedantic skill.

6.6.2 Criticizing the Buddhist Doctrine of Interdependent Causation

From the standpoint of qi-monism, Wang Fuzhi criticized Buddhist concepts of being/you 有, nonbeing/wu 無 and emptiness/kong 空. However, it seemed that he understood Buddhist emptiness as nothingness and did not distinguish it clearly from nonbeing/wu. For example, he said,

Buddhism regards emptiness as tagathatha/rulaizang 如來藏, and thinks that there is nothing in the Great Void originally. It is qi/vital force that arises from illusion and gives rise to evils, and blocks the tagathata. (CSQS 12-83)

This quotation shows that Wang Fuzhi understood emptiness as nothingness or nonbeing. Regarding Buddhist concept of nonbeing, Wang Fuzhi insisted that Buddhists naively regarded what they could not perceive as nothingness. They found no origin or destination of things, so they thought that Heaven and earth were illusory, things and human relations were arising from opinions, and there was no principle or qi in unperceivable place. As a result, they regarded forms and body as illusory but Buddha nature as true, although Buddha nature itself was
nothingness or emptiness. Thus, on the one hand, Buddhists annihilated the six existential forms—collective and individual, same and difference, completion and destruction, and made them mutually penetrating and accommodating, so as to establish emptiness as the essence of their doctrines. On the other hand, in order to explain the existence of things, they proposed the doctrine of interdependent causation and made equal of truth and illusion. Finally, in order to achieve emptiness or nirvana, they abandoned interdependent causation again and entered an indescribable realm. Wang Fuzhi criticized,

So Buddhists claim, “[the ultimate truth] is neither cause nor conditions, neither harmony nor unity, neither self-achieved nor natural, but likes dream and illusory….” With regard to their ideas, they regard truth as false and falsity as true. Therefore at the end, they discard their bodies in order to distinguish purity from dirt; they regard existent things as illusory, so they take death as joy. They regard life as illusory, so they take eliminating human relations as clean. It is not surprising that they destroy human relations and demolish heavenly virtue. (CSQS 1-885)

Wang Fuzhi was right to point out that Buddhism wiped out the distinction between truth and falsity and strived for emptiness or illusion. He further inferred that this view would lead to their fondness of death as well as their detesting of body and abandonment of human relationships. Therefore they stood as the strongest enemy of Confucianism.

In order to refute Buddhism, Wang Fuzhi first explained what human perception could not understand was not illusory. Human experience or perception was limited just as a dog from tropical area would not recognize but bark toward snow. Therefore it was not right that Buddhists regarded the Great Void as nothingness. Second, Wang Fuzhi justified the existence of things from the perspective of empiricism. He said,

What human beings can depend on is existent; what is most common is life; all are true and cannot be called illusory. Why are they so? As a human being, unlike ants climbing tree, one must live on earth; unlike earthworms staying in tunnels, one must live in empty rooms; unlike snow-worms in Sichuan snow-mountains needing no warmth, one must depend on fire; unlike rats in a volcano needing no water, one must drink water. One also needs grain to stop hunger and water to slake thirst. Otherwise, one must not be a human being. (CSQS 1-887)
Here, Wang Fuzhi listed all materials that human beings needed for survival to fight against Buddhist emptiness. However, concrete objects or experience could not defeat a general plausible theory. Moreover, as Wang Fuzhi criticized Buddhists as thinking the universe as illusory based on their limited experience, Buddhists might refute well that Wang Fuzhi’s limited experience could not prove these things truly existent either. Nevertheless, Wang Fuzhi did not realize the inconsistency of his argument, but moved forward to attack Buddhist doctrine of interdependent causation. In his regard, Buddhists did not know that life and death resulted from the gathering and dispersing of qi in the Great Harmony, but insisted that all things arose and perished depending on the arising and stopping of human mind, and elaborated it with twelve interdependent causations. He criticized,

Heavenly endowment is the yin-yang of the Great Harmony, accomplishes all transformations through advancing and retreating. When qi reaches, spirit reaches too; when spirit reaches, principle will be there. Buddhists claim, “with the rise of mind, all forms arise; with the stop of mind, all forms perish. To what they cannot see or hear, they call them nothingness. Heaven and earth do not rise or perish indeed, but they use their opinion to make them rise and perish. How foolish they are!” (CSQS 12-153)

In this passage, Wang Fuzhi used his qi-monism to attack Buddhist theory of interdependent causation. Wang Fuzhi believed that qi was real and thus its derivatives principle and spirit were both real. Therefore, it was not true that Buddhists thought that the rise and stop of mind determined the rise and fall of all dharma. However, Buddhists might argue that Wang Fuzhi just assumed the existence of qi but could not prove it truly existent. Then his conclusions and criticism were not different from Buddhist belief, and therefore could not defeat Buddhism. The fact that Wang Fuzhi took the existence of qi as belief was demonstrated in the following quotation. Wang stated,

Noblemen know that they get goodness from the same origin (Heaven), but goodness and badness from many branches (all things), and believe that both cases are the necessary outcome of yin-yang transformation. Belief without suspicion, even badness like dust or foam arises in unexpected circumstance, noblemen will be tranquil and not be astonished about their arising, but use it to investigate principles of things. As for mountains, woods,
tile and brick, all are useful for human life, how can one bear to regard them as dirt? (CSQS 1-1090-1091)

In this quotation, Wang Fuzhi criticized Buddhists who regarded goodness and badness as pure opinions, looked down on the present world as dirt and sought for emptiness. In contrast, he took the existence of goodness and badness as his belief. With this belief, he would be able to deal with the unexpected occurrences. However, how could one belief defeat another?

Wang Fuzhi also indicated that Buddhists confused perception with the thing perceived, and criticized the absurdity of their view that things arose and perished along with the mind. This was shown in his distinction between human ability/neng 能 with external things/suo 所. He argued,

There are mountains in Yue 越, but it cannot be said that there are no mountains there because I have not arrived there and seen them. It cannot be said either that my arriving and seeing them is identical with the mountains there. Just because my mind arises, things in the world arise; just because my mind stops, things in the world perish. Based on this, one (Buddhist) draws his realm, holds his foundation, and insists that the three worlds depend on the mind only and the mind is the world, all dharma and forms are perception and perception is dharma. Alas, who says that Confucians are like this! (CSQS 2-378)

Wang Fuzhi used the relation between seeing a mountain and the mountain itself to disclose the absurdity of Buddhist view that all things arose and perish in term of mind. Through distinguishing human ability (perception) from external things, Wang Fuzhi defended the existence of natural world and the necessity for human beings to investigate things.

6.6.3 Criticizing the Buddhist Doctrine of Life and Death

Although Confucius focused himself on human beings and life instead of ghosts and death when educating his disciples, it became necessary for Wang Fuzhi to elucidate the relation between life and death when Buddhism was spreading on the basis of the cycle of life and death and retribution. Because human beings instinctively sought for profit and avoided harm, they hoped a good afterlife despite their suffering in this world. Although people still alive could never ascertain the existence of afterlife, they nevertheless took it as an option to avoid feeling
desperate in front of death. Thus Buddhism prevailed with its promise of a good afterlife in term of accumulation of good deeds and retribution. For this reason, in order to fight against Buddhism, Confucianism must provide a reasonable explanation of life and death. This was what Wang Fuzhi strove for.

Based on his understanding of the transformation of qi in the Zhaungzi and the Book of Changes, Wang Fuzhi proposed his doctrine of life and death. In his understanding, the duty of human beings was to improve the purity and harmony of cosmic qi and decrease conflicts in the world through cultivating mind and practicing ritual propriety. Although the qi everyone received at birth was different in purity, he could improve its purity through moral cultivation. Then when alive, one could improve the purity of cosmic qi and the harmony of society through compliance with Confucian principles; after death, his cultivated qi would add no bad elements to the universe and make his contribution to the maintenance of the Great Harmony. From this aspect, Wang Fuzhi still followed Confucius’ emphasis on life, but adding to the idea that moral cultivation would make death meaningful and beneficial to the world.

Compared with Zhuangzi’s doctrine, “all things under Heaven come from the transformation of one mass of qi”, Wang Fuzhi added moral value and avoided Zhuangzi’s making equal of goodness and badness, and thus he disagreed with Zhuangzi’s claim that there was no difference between the sage Boyi’s 伯夷 and the bandit Daozhi’s 盗跖 death, for Boyi added harmonious and pure qi while Daozhi added evil and infectious qi to the universe. Compared with Buddhist cycle of life and death, Wang Fuzhi denied the existence of afterlife, replaced it with the disintegration of body and soul, but insisted that one’s qi would affect the cosmic qi both when alive and after death.

He also admitted that the disintegrated qi would gather again in the future to form a new person or creature, but the new creature was not the deceased person’s rebirth or afterlife. That is, it was not that a person died here and would be born there. He argued that, after death, a person’s qi might be dispersed and allotted to several newborns; or several persons’ qi might gather in one newborn. Dispersion and gathering all depended on situation and principle and were unpredictable. He contended,
Provided a person must die here and be born there, his soul and body seek for each other again after they disperse in the rise and fall of qi, then they must be out of order and get lost in the process. (CSQS 1-1045)

Moreover, Wang Fuzhi denied the existence of ghost that common people believed. He indicated ghosts and spirits were just the retreating and stretching function of qi respectively. Within the one qi, what had retreated was ghost; what was growing was spirit. (CSQS 12-434) When a person was born, he received more qi but lost less, so his qi stretched more than retreated, and spirit/shen 神 was stronger than ghost/gui 鬼. When he was old, he received less but lost more, so his qi retreated more than stretched, and then ghost was stronger than spirit. When he died, his qi would retreat to the universe completely after being disintegrated. That was ghost only. So Wang Fuzhi argued,

Human life, starting from waxing to waning, has to decrease into ghost; ghost, residing waning in waxing, has to grow into man. Without knowing that human life must become ghost, one will crave for life and detest death; without knowing that ghost must become human life, one will desire death and dislike life. (CSQS 1-959)

In this passage, Wang Fuzhi placed man opposite to ghost and spirit. Actually, “ghost and spirit” referred to ghost only in the context, for spirit as the expansion of qi was identical with life instead of death. It was ghost or the dwindling of qi that was identical with death. In Wang’s opinion, if a person understood the alteration between human life and ghost as a natural process, one would not be partial toward either life or death. That is, Wang Fuzhi wanted to discourage people from believing the Buddhist doctrine of retribution through showing them that there was no ghost or afterlife at all in the popular sense and thus no punishment of evil behaviors and reward of good deeds by the ghosts. This was confirmed by his following comments.

When people are not able to get things done or get rid of troubles, they can do nothing but resort to unknown supernatural forces. This is the case that common people cry for Heaven in straits. Therefore, the doctrine of retribution is just the helpless words that Buddhists cut their beard and remove their eyebrows, and popular people, joyful and angry unpredictably, like to hear. (CSQS 5-235)
This passage indicated that Buddhists advocated retribution to pacify the helpless men or women who could not make a good living and wanted to find an explanation. With this explanation, Wang Fuzhi originally purported to disprove Buddhist doctrine of retribution. However, he did not realize that this was the very reason of the spreading of Buddhism. For ordinary people, what they were concerned about was not the state that afterlife was only the dispersed qi, but how to drive off their fear and helplessness in front of misery and death. It was the psychological condolence Buddhism provided rather than Wang’s theoretical explanation of life and death that they cared for. Regrettably, Wang Fuzhi could not provide any solution for the psychological need of common people, therefore his attack on Buddhism failed from the scratch too.

6.7 Criticism of Daoism

Wang Fuzhi shed much venom on Daoism both generally and specifically. In order to facilitate our elucidation, we divide it into three parts. First, we analyze his criticism on Daoism in general; Second, we investigate his attack on Laozi, and third, his attack on Zhuangzi.

6.7.1 Wang’s Overall Criticism of Daoism

In general, Wang Fuzhi criticized Daoism from three aspects. On the ontological level, he made a false accusation that Laozi and Zhuangzi regarded the unperceivable as nothingness. To do this, he misinterpreted nonbeing/wu in the Laozi as nothingness, (CSQS 12-272-273) but ignored the fact that wu referred to the unnamable wholeness of the universe there. He also assumed falsely that Laozi and Zhuangzi separated dao/Way from yin and yang. In regard to the relation between Heaven and man, he criticized Daoist passivity in following natural process and ignorance of human effort.

On the methodical level, Wang Fuzhi insisted that Laozi and Zhuangzi used tricks, especially the technique of remaining weak and in the rear in order to get strong and in the front, and showing carefree in order to avoid other’s envy. He said,

I thus know what was in Laozi and Zhuangzi’s mind. When they said their minds were unperturbed/yutai, they actually could not be unperturbed, but pretended to be at ease
and showed unfathomable depth to others; when they said they wiped out other’s envy/ling ren zhi yi ye xiao 令人之意也消, they actually could not wipe it out, but depended on the fact that other did not know them and did not give rise to envy…. In short, the dao/ Way they called was nothing but being humble/lou 陋 although they bragged it as subtle and expansive. Being not in power, they showed humble in order to avoid other’s competition; being in power, they depended on their humbleness or undesirable appearance as an unexpected and fast way to take advantage of others. (CSQS 5-552-553)

In this text, Wang Fuzhi cited two of Zhuangzi’s ideas, yutai and ling ren zhi yi ye xiao, but misinterpreted them. When Zhuangzi mentioned the unperturbed state of one’s mind, he was talking about the tranquility one reached through transcending life and death, gain and loss. It had nothing to do with showing others one’s unfathomable depth through pretending being delightful. When Zhuangzi wrote “ling ren zhi yi ye xiao”, it meant “making others feel not coerced” by following their own nature or will, but had nothing to do with eliminating others’ envy. The dao here referred to the strategy of Daoism and was criticized as being humble or not-appealable in order to avoid other’s envy by Wang Fuzhi. This showed that Wang Fuzhi did not understand the broadness of mind that Laozi and Zhuangzi achieved through non-competition and humbleness; on the contrary, he distorted their “dao” as a tool to pursue their profit.

On the level of consequence, first, Wang Fuzhi accused Daoism of being the medium for the introduction and spread of Buddhism. Second, he indicated that Daoism had degenerated into Daoist religion that sought for immortal life and advocated superstition. Third, he criticized Daoism for leading scholars and officials to becoming irresponsible and corrupting custom, such as his comments on the officials’ indifference to the regicide in the Southern Qi Dynasty (479-502). He said,

Only those that did not strive for goodness or badness, maintained indifference to themselves and the world, but lived at ease as water flows freely, then they were truly inhumane, just as a corpse could not be affected with joy and sadness. This art was advocated by Laozi, Zhuangzi and Yang Zhu, and promoted unrestrainedly by Wang Yan 王衍 (256-311), Xie Kun 謝鲲 (280-323) and the like since Cao Wei and the Jin dynasty. It destroyed people’s mind of loyalty and filial piety, abandoned the distinction of goodness and badness, claimed name and righteousness as superficial adornment, truth and falsity as
natural process, and none of them had relation with oneself. Being indifferent to themselves, they lost themselves; being indifferent to the world, they lost their counterpart. When this doctrine spread under Heaven, there developed an ethos/custom that was immune from knife-penetrating and fire-burning. Then the emperor could be assassinated, the nation could be ruined, and people could be trampled like mud and ashes. Despite the disintegration of state and the dispersion of people, they maintained leisurely and carefree, led the people of the whole world to inhumanity, and caused disasters worse than huge flood and fierce animals. (CSQS 10-613-614)

Here, Wang Fuzhi criticized the irresponsible ethos initiated by Wang Yan and Xie Kun’s pure talk, and then traced its remote and theoretical source—Daoist doctrine. In his regard, the detached mind-state of Daoism led people indifferent to both the affairs of themselves and the state, especially the regicide and ruin of the dynasty. Specifically, he interpreted Zhuangzi’s “following the middle/yuan du 縁督” as not striving sincerely for either goodness or badness; he understood Laozi’s “maintaining the female/shou ci 守雌” as shirking from responsibilities. Although Wang Fuzhi could understand them in this way, he exaggerated their significance in the collapse of the Western Jin (265-316) and later dynasties, for the collapse of the Western Jin was mainly resulted from the competition and fighting among princes and warlords. Wang Fuzhi could not say that these princes and warlords were Daoist believers, too.

6.7.2 Criticism of Laozi’s Doctrine as Trickery

Wang Fuzhi’s criticism of the Laozi covered more than 20 chapters of that text. He falsely accused Laozi of being crafty and tricky in dealing with others. Besides, he also misinterpreted Laozi’s concept of nonbeing/wu 無 as nothingness as discussed previously. In the following, we will focus on how Wang Fuzhi attacked Laozi as trickery through misinterpreting the latter’s words.

Generally, Wang Fuzhi seldom appreciated Laozi’s ideas while he did his best to find fault unfairly. Although he acknowledged Laozi’s thought, “It is the Way of Heaven that one withdraws as soon as one’s work has been done” (Laozi: 9, Wing-tsit Chan’s translation) when he criticized Ma Yuan’s 馬援 (14 BC-49 AD) insatiable desire in military affairs, he soon
rejected it when he criticized Xie An 謝安 (320-385) who retreated after the success of Feishui 肥水 Battle and did not care about state affairs any more. In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, a minister should arrange the court and state orderly before his retreat, just as Heaven passed down original vital force/yuan qi 元氣 and made preparation for future things before it changed seasons. But Laozi could not see this, and Xie An, a follower of Laozi, could not either. As a result, Xie An did not plan long-term stability for the Jin Court, and could not prevent later rebellions and usurpations. Obviously, Wang Fuzhi was too demanding upon Xie An. As a minister, Xie An was impossible to set the corrupt court in order. It might be because he could not stop the corruption that he decided to retreat. To some degree, Xie An might already predict the later rebellions and usurpations, but he could not do anything about them.

Besides, Wang Fuzhi also admitted that the application of Laozi’s thought in politics had made good governance in early Han Dynasty and acknowledged that Huang-Lao Daoism matched the Way of Heaven partially (CSQS 10-117), but in most cases, Wang Fuzhi shed more venom on Laozi and criticized him not knowing the Way of Heaven but using his surmise to serve for his tricks. For example, although Wang Fuzhi admitted that Laozi knew the incipient sign of Heaven or yin-yang movement, which was also a part of the dao, he again criticized Laozi not knowing the Way/dao but concerning himself only with trick or strategy. Wang said,

Laozi grasps strategy to control the interaction of yin and yang, but does not know that he can do nothing to them. Relying on strategy, he can conjecture the fissure/sign of qi’s waxing and waning, and fulfill his will through using it. However, he already betrays the general principle of yin-yang movement, and can do nothing to them. Moreover, he thinks he knows heavenly transformation and steals its reserve and so that he can accomplish everything under Heaven; this is as a child regards himself powerful through using a stalk to beat the brave people such as Meng Ben and Xia Yu. Following Laozi’s way, one will be deceived and lose his principle, thus becoming crazy and restless. (CSQS 10-136)

Wang Fuzhi clarified three points in this text. Laozi used strategy to control the movement of yin and yang but ended in futile. Laozi could grasp the incipient sign of timeliness and fulfill his ambition, but betrayed the general principle of yin-yang interaction. Laozi thought he knew the principle of heavenly transformation, but his knowledge was false and misleading. Through analyzing Wang Fuzhi’s remarks, it was evident that Wang Fuzhi was uttering contradictory
words. If Laozi could grasp the incipient sign and fulfill his ambition, he must not go against the general principle of yin-yang movement. Moreover, the fact of having grasped the incipient sign would lead him to achieve everything under Heaven. It was ungrounded to say that Laozi’s dao was misleading and self-assumed.

Laozi’s main themes were maintaining weak and soft, staying behind and tolerating others with a broad and unprejudiced mind. But Wang Fuzhi viewed it as low as cheating and maneuvering. In order to defend his own prejudice, Wang Fuzhi ever dared to deny Confucius’ praise of Meng Zhifan 孟之反, Laozi’s follower in the Analects. At a battle, Meng Zhifan brought up the rear and was praised for his modesty by Confucius. But Wang Fuzhi picked faults with Meng Zhifan and said,

But Meng Zhifan’s behavior just has such an empty appearance, even if he may achieve great virtue and accomplishments, his practice is far from enough. (CSQS 6-680)

One might ask Wang Fuzhi, what Meng Zhifan would be insufficient of if he could achieve great virtue through following Laozi’s way? Wang Fuzhi did not answer this question, while he went on to attack Laozi. He said,

Not only Meng Zhifan, but also his master Laozi is wrong in general principle. With regard to their capacity of “great virtue seems inadequate, complexion looks foolish,” Confucius could not deny their goodness. But as for what they keep in mind and practice, it is vacuous and lacks content. Moreover, they offer superficially but take underhandedly, adopt the same mechanism that a clever merchant stores his goods for good price, so they cannot get rid of the faults that selfish desires work secretly when heavenly principle becomes blocked. (CSQS 6-681)

In this passage, Wang Fuzhi still did not explain why Laozi and Meng Zhifan were lacking in content despite their great virtue and achievement and Confucius’ praise. Wang just said that Laozi was wrong in general principle but did not explain the reason either. Then he abruptly changed topics to attack Laozi as tricky and selfish. In fact, the method of giving in order to obtain had been accepted by both Confucianism and Daoism. According to Wang’s interpretation, when Confucius said, “one established others in order to establish oneself,” it could be called trickiness too. However, Wang Fuzhi would call this as reciprocity/shu 恕. Thus,
it was apparent that Wang Fuzhi adopted a double standard to attack Laozi, and therefore his criticism could be seen as biased and unfounded.

Wang Fuzhi continued condemning Laozi’s method of giving in order to obtain. In order to justify his criticism, he misinterpreted Laozi’s broad-mindedness and detachment from worldly pursuit as a strategy to gain personal interest. Wang said,

Being able to abstain from advantages, but not being able to tolerate disadvantages, a person thus forsakes advantages in order to avoid disadvantages. This is the strategy to get rid of disadvantages through keeping away from advantages. The name is there, but the reality here, this is the way to gain reality through abandoning name. Laozi’s teaching ends in tricks and cheating, his intention and practice contradicting, without sincerity while aiming to control the life and death of things, nothing more than this. (CSQS 2-404)

These false accusations looks somewhat ridiculous, for Wang Fuzhi also advocated avoiding harm through keeping away from profits in his distinction between righteousness and profit, Chinese and barbarian. When Laozi asked people to abandon name and profit, he aimed to persuade them to know the root and not get lost in the pursuit of external things. He never troubled his mind on the evaluative distinction between advantages and disadvantages or name and reality. Moreover, Wang Fuzhi had no foundation when he criticized Laozi as his intention contradicted with his practice, let alone his criticism of Laozi’s doctrine ending in cheating and trick.

Denying Laozi’s tolerance and broad-mindedness, Wang Fuzhi naively thought he knew the right way for tolerance and accommodation. He said,

Being truly tolerant, one will not pursue profit nor avoid disadvantage. Being truly magnanimous, one will not compete for fame or reality. Being truly having principle in mind, one knows that all dangers and suffering in the world are one’s fate; one knows that all harshness and cruelty of things can be overcome with Confucian Way. Then one will become unperturbed in front of inflicting muscle and skin and killing one’s wife and children; one will not be threatened in front of being wronged and pillaged…This is those who sustain the world and achieve great virtue with Confucian Way. (CSQS 2-404)
Compared with Laozi’s views toward advantages and disadvantages, name and reality, Wang Fuzhi tried to feature his own ideas in emphasizing that he did not avoid harm, or compete for reality. But the question was when and where Laozi advocated the pursuit of reality? Moreover, both Laozi and Zhuangzi proposed to comply with fate and transcending the suffering of the world through seeing life as a temporary stage of yin-yang transformation; how could they put their mind on the worldly competition? Due to their following the natural process and keeping away from world competition, they would automatically avoid harms from human world and thus be able to fulfill their natural life-span, how could there arise the killing of wife and children and the inflicting of skin and muscle? On the contrary, Wang Fuzhi stuck to Confucian principle and made a distinction between goodness and badness which would lead to human competition and harms. With this distinction, Wang Fuzhi must compete for name and advantages. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi was unable to defeat Daoism with his Confucian principle, for Confucian principle was anthropocentric and concerned only with the benefit of human beings, while Daoist principle is concerned with the harmony of the universe and the fulfillment of nature of all things. Therefore, when Wang Fuzhi attacked Daoism, he was the child who, as he described, used a stalk to beat a strongman and thought himself powerful, but was not aware of his own ignorance and wildness.

6.7.3 Criticism of Laozi’s Attaining Vacuity and Maintaining Tranquility

Wang Fuzhi misinterpreted Laozi’s vacuity/xu 虛 in two aspects. On the ontological level, he assumed that Laozi regarded vacuity as the substance or origin of all things based on Laozi’s words, “Between Heaven and earth, it looks like a bellows. While vacuous, it is never exhausted; while active, it produces even more.” (Laozi: 5, Wing-tsit Chan’s translation) In fact, Laozi used the function of bellows as a metaphor for the process of Heaven’s productivity, but definitely did not regard bellows as vacuity; just as the uterus has a vacuous space to nourish and bear a child, it is not totally vacuous. Moreover, in both bellows and uterus, something entered there first and then was given off. They were just the place for production and transformation, and things were not produced from vacuity or nothingness at all. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi’s criticism can be questioned when he said,
Laozi regards the earth as a bellows that produces wind when active. This means that vacuity can produce things from nothingness, and changes unendingly. But without the agitation of qi, there is nothing. So its productivity has a limit. Moreover, who keeps moving the bellows to produce qi? (CSQS 12-24)

First, Laozi never had such ideas that things were produced from nothingness or vacuity was nothingness. When he said things were produced from wu/unnamable 无, “wu” referred to the undifferentiated and unnamable wholeness of the universe, not nothingness. Second, Laozi thought all things were originated from the transformation of qi naturally, and did not need a creator or driver to produce. This idea was also incorporated by Zhang Zai and Wang Fuzhi into their qi-monism. Therefore, when Wang Fuzhi questioned Laozi the existence of a creator to move the bellows to produce qi, he should ask whether there should be a creator in his qi-monism.

On the methodical level, Laozi used the vacuity of mind as the best way to grasp the principle of things and the Way/dao, so he urged students, “to attain complete vacuity; maintain steadfast tranquility. All things come into being, and I see thereby their return. All things flourish, while each one returns to its root.” (Laozi: 16, Wing-tsit Chan’s translation) Together with his word, “the reverse is the movement of dao”, one would understand dao if one could perceive the return of things to their root through maintaining a void and tranquil mind. Otherwise, with an occupied mind, one would be driven by things and go nowhere, let alone grasp dao or the principles of things. When we checked other pre-Qin texts, we found that a vacuous and tranquil mind had been regarded as the premise of understanding and perception unanimously. Xunzi proposed “vacuity, oneness and tranquility of mind/xu yi er jing 虚一而静” in order to grasp the Confucian dao; Mencius also proposed “nothing is better than less desire in cultivating mind.” The Great Learning proposed “only after one become tranquil and steadfast can one think properly.” However, Wang Fuzhi mistakenly interpreted Laozi’s vacuity and tranquility as a dead and empty state of vacuity. He said,

However, heretical thinkers take the body of Heaven and earth as their mind. When they find it immensely vacuous and quiet like a lifeless lump, they call it naturalness/ziran 自然, vacuity and tranquility, constant silent halo, and great round mirror, and thus take the mind
of Heaven and earth as a body that listlessly loses everything and has no intelligence, and want to emulate it. (CSQS 2-228)

Here, Wang Fuzhi falsely assumed that Laozi or Daoists took the vacuous and silent space as naturalness and tranquility, and thus wanted to be as a dead and senseless object through emulating it. Actually, what Laozi emulated Heaven was its accommodation and naturalness. It had nothing to do with the vacuity and deadness of Heaven and earth. Moreover, when Laozi advocated the vacuity and tranquility of mind, he was asking students to get rid of the disturbance from desires and external things in the process of seeking for dao. For example, Laozi said, “to seek for dao, one should diminish day after day.” (Laozi: 48) What was diminished was human desires. After a person got a pure mind, one would be able to unite with dao. This approach was also adopted by Wang Fuzhi in his doctrine of rectifying mind. It was ironic that he attacked Laozi’s using it here.

More unscrupulous was that Wang Fuzhi used Laozi’s concept to attack the very person. When Wang commented on Hexagram Xian 咸, he stated,

Vacuity is what noblemen use to accept others. Noblemen are full of content in themselves, but vacuous when receiving others, so they are skillful in using vacuity and content. If making one’s mind vacuous, without exhausting the content of one’s mind, one will be insincere and have no content in his mind, how can one receive the world! Laozi and Zhuangzi are so deceitful in their understanding of the Book of Changes. (CSQS 1-716)

Laozi and Zhuangzi used vacuity/xu as a mind-state to accommodate others and perceive Dao. This mind-state had nothing to do with “insincerity” as Wang criticized. When Wang Fuzhi insisted that Confucian noblemen had content in mind but responded to others with vacuity, he was talking about the fact that they filled their mind with Confucian principles but still received others with a vacuous mind. However, Wang Fuzhi would fall into self-contradiction, because with Confucian principle in mind, one already used the principle as a standard to evaluate others and could not be called vacuous any more. In this way, Wang Fuzhi could only receive what met his standard, let alone the whole world. Moreover, vacuity of mind meant having no prejudice or standard; with standard in mind, the vacuity Wang Fuzhi valued would not be true vacuity. On the contrary, Zhuangzi’s “enlightenment arises in empty chamber/xushi sheng bai 虚室生白”
and “forgetting-in-sitting/zuowang 坐忘” were truly vacuous, for one could only see clearly a thing when one was without prejudice or fixed standard. How could Wang Fuzhi accuse them of not understanding the vacuity in the *Book of Changes*?

Not only with vacuity, Wang Fuzhi also misunderstood Laozi’s words, “The valley spirit never dies and is called the subtle and profound female. The gate of the subtle and profound female is called the root of Heaven and earth.” (Laozi: 6, Wing-tsit Chan’s translation) Wang Fuzhi regarded this as describing the response of the valley spirit to other things; but he did not realize that Laozi used it to elucidate the production of all things in the universe. Wang Fuzhi said,

> Laozi regards the valley spirit as the marvelous gate of things. He just makes his mind vacuous according to its capacity, and waits for the response of things, so he cannot understand a lot of principles under Heaven, just as valley cannot echo distantly. (CSQS 12-73)

In these quotations, Wang Fuzhi misunderstood Laozi’s spirit of valley as echo, but did not realize that Laozi was making an analogy to the production of Heaven and earth. In Laozi’s view, the space between Heaven and earth looked like a valley, from where all things were produced; just like a valley gave out water unceasingly. Wang Fuzhi used his knowledge of echo to explain Laozi’s words, betraying his ignorance only.

Furthermore, Wang Fuzhi wrongly assumed that Laozi and Zhuangzi valued tranquility while eliminated activity. His argument ran as the following:

> The value of tranquility consists in this, when the activity of mind reaches to the utmost, and falls into partiality and forgets the wholeness, it is better to stop its activity so as to avoid its deviation. But, how can activity be stopped forever! Provided activity was stopped forever, at the state of dry wood and dead ashes, mind lost all of its activity. Such a state that one loses mind and maintains body is what Zhuang Zhou called “no better than being dead.” But Zhuang Zhou did not know that he already fell into it. (CSQS 1-228)

Wang Fuzhi’s accusation went to the extreme point. First, Zhuangzi did not promote being as dead as dry wood and ashes, as demonstrated in his rejection of “the death of mind/xinsi 心死” and his criticism of Shen Dao’s 慎到 dao/Way as dead person’s principle. Second, Zhuangzi’s
metaphor of dry wood and dead ashes describes the tranquility of mind for grasping *dao* and does not mean that one really becomes dry wood and dead ashes. Just as tranquil water could reflect things, a tranquil mind is easier to grasp principles and *dao*.

Pushing further, Wang Fuzhi assumed that Laozi and Zhuangzi valued tranquility because they thought that activity would bring disaster. He supposed that Laozi and Zhuangzi realized that fortune and misfortune arose from activity, so they valued tranquility in order to avoid misfortune at the sacrifice of good fortune, and proposed “body is the origin of disasters.” Here is his argument,

[A dead lump of dirt has no fortune or misfortune.] When a person dies, he will share the same character of a dead lump of dirt. No activity, and thus fortune and misfortune are totally eliminated. Then one will attain complete vacuity and steadfast tranquility, and rest there forever….The reason that they are in fear of fortune and misfortune, unluckiness/*hui*晦 and difficulty/*lin*吝, is their fear of death. Fear of misfortune reaches the degree of death, fear of *hui* and *lin* approaches the verge of death because of their severe apprehension. Then they truly become the companions of death. (CSQS 1-1032-1033)

Truly, Laozi and Zhuangzi advised students to be aware of dangers and disasters, but they did not become so fearful before death. A glimpse of the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* would tell readers how frank and carefree Laozi and Zhuangzi faced the coming of death. That they advised students to avoid disasters and dangers was because one should fulfill his nature or natural lifespan, and should not harm it because of disasters incurred by human desires. Therefore although Zhuangzi talked so much about the methods to avoid death, he finally proposed to transcend death and life, and just did what was natural. Therefore, it is without ground that Wang Fuzhi criticized them to be the companions of death.

6.7.4 Criticism of Zhuangzi’s Survival in Difficult Times as Unrighteous

In the preface of his *Penetrating the Meaning of the Zhuangzi/Zhuangzi Tong* 莊子通, Wang Fuzhi acknowledged Zhuangzi’s method of survival as an efficient way in difficult times, but he still insisted it as inadequate, so he wrote the book to reform the *Zhuangzi* and tried to make it
match the Way of noblemen (Confucianism). Then what was Zhuangzi’s method, and what was its insufficiency in Wang Fuzhi’s view?

In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, from the perspective of dealing with other people and external things, Zhuangzi’s method of survival was to let things be as they were and maintain detached from worldly affairs. In this way, one would not be involved in social affairs and thus would be able to avoid danger. Wang explained,

Toward the unpredictability of popular trends, accepting what people accept, denying what people deny, with no comment but leaving them as they are, this is the art of making equal of things. When having no choice, one can temporarily use it as a method of survival in a time of social chaos. (CSQS 3-471)

Wang Fuzhi followed Zhuangzi to acknowledge that words or comments were the origin of troubles, and thus valued Zhuangzi’s making non-distinction of rightness and wrongness in social affairs as a feasible method of survival. This appreciation of Zhuangzi’s thought was very likely resulted from Wang’s personal experience in the chaotic transitional period from the Ming to the Qing, for as a Ming loyalist, any evaluation or criticism of present society might be reported as rebellious against the new dynasty and get him into serious trouble. However, Wang Fuzhi still tried to distinguish himself from Zhuangzi for he criticized Zhuangzi as irresponsible and lacking in humane concern. Thus he continued,

Without losing the mind to seek for brightness/ming 明, one can adopt to stay in the dark.

Without bearing forsaking the attempt to bring the world to order, one can get away from human beings and cherish his loneliness. (CSQS 3-471)

These sentences showed, in order to avoid troubles and harm, Zhuangzi stayed in the dark place and cherished his detachment by abandoning social responsibility. In contrast, Wang Fuzhi took staying in the dark place and cherishing detachment as a temporary survival method in order to carry out his goal in the future—to seek for a proper time to restore the world into order.

From the perspective of disciplining oneself, Wang Fuzhi also adopted Daoist methods in order to survive, i.e. showing a stupid and dissolute appearance, and roaming between ability and inability. He stated,
[In a chaotic time,] when one has no place to retire, one should keep as quiet as a fool, as simple as a dissolute. Being a letterman, besides mountains and streams, clouds and birds, his topic does not touch present political affairs; his social circle does not include troublemakers. This is close to what Zhuangzi calls to stay between ability and inability. (CSQS 10-618)

Here, Wang Fuzhi showed appreciation of Zhuangzi’s method of staying between ability and inability. According to his own experience, being capable, he was asked to join the rebellious peasant army by Zhang Xianzhong 張獻忠 first, and again was required to write the ascending throne letter for the traitor Wu Sangui 吳三桂 later. However, if he was incapable, he would not be able to support himself and his family. Hence, Wang might have understood well that the fruit trees got themselves harmed because of their fruits, and the mute goose got itself killed because of being unable to cry in the Zhuangzi. Nevertheless, Wang Fuzhi did not want to emulate Zhuangzi’s dissolution and carefree life-style, but insisted a Confucian way, i.e. “one should add it (Daoist methods) with self-cultivation, and maintain it with uprightness and discipline.” (CSQS 10-618) In other words, Wang Fuzhi tried to add Confucian moral principles to Zhuangzi’s method of survival.

Now the question was the feasibility to add Confucian moral principles to Zhuangzi’s method of survival. As is known, Confucian principles maintained the distinction between goodness and badness. If one showed uprightness and discipline to troublesome persons, one could only make them more angry and destructive. This was why those so-called Confucian noblemen tried to persuade the emperors and other troublemakers to be moral, but always worsened the situations. Just as Zhuangzi indicated, it was dangerous to regard oneself as morally superior and tell others what they ought to do. Thus, it was evident that Zhuangzi realized clearly the limit or the bad consequence of Confucian moral teaching, and so he proposed the alternative options in Chapter Renjian Shi 人間世. Ridiculously, Wang Fuzhi was blind to what Zhuangzi aimed to correct while he used the latter to correct Zhuangzi.

Now, let’s look at Wang Fuzhi’s criticism on Zhuangzi. His criticism was nothing but that Zhuangzi abandoned social responsibility, indulged in personal pleasures and carefree life. This was shown in Wang’s following remarks.
The great man practices duty and righteousness to fulfill human relationships. Shallow scholars abandon human affairs because of worry and apprehension. These already existed in ancient times....Regarding those who made their bodies like dirt or wood, their mind like ash or dry wood, spoke boundless words, adopted the art that exempted turtle and ox from being used in divination and sacrifice, enjoyed in zither, wine, woods and streams immoderately, shrieked from difficulty and bragged themselves having no interaction, this was why Pi Yi 披衣 and Nie Que 齧缺 were not mentioned by Confucius. (CSQS 1-860)

In this quotation, Pi Yi and Nie Que were two Daoist sages in the Zhuangzi. But Wang Fuzhi condemned them as shallow scholars/qushi 曲士. They were shallow because they abandoned social duties due to their fear and worry of getting hurt. They retreated to the woods and springs and enjoyed their carefree life. On the contrary, Confucian noblemen or the great men would practice righteousness and duties and harmonize human relationships. Therefore, in Wang Fuzhi’s regard, Zhuangzi and his kind did not fulfill the meaning of human life although they survived well. Based on this idea, Wang Fuzhi started his attack on Zhuangzi. First, Wang Fuzhi criticized that Zhuangzi feared social dangers and difficulties too much to appreciate human life. He said,

Zhuang Zhou compared raising tiger to serving a tyrant in Chapter Renjian Shi, admonished being cautious in behavior and appearance, as vigilant and fearful as walking in the range of the skillful archer Yi’s 矢 arrow. Truly so is it. But I do not agree with him. Zhuang Zhou’s analogy shows that he was excessively fearful and fell into the companion of death. (CSQS 10-545)

Truly Zhuangzi compared a tyrant to tiger and asked the ministers to be cautious in dealing with him. However, it was wrong to conclude from this comparison that Zhuangzi was excessively fearful and became the partner of death. In Chapter Renjian Shi, Zhuangzi continued to propose “the fasting of the mind/xinzhai 心齋” which transcended any deliberation on life and death and maintained an empty mind. Wang Fuzhi should not have disregarded this and tailor Zhuangzi’s words to fit his criticism. Being self-assuming, Wang Fuzhi insisted that Zhuangzi was too particular about the external world and did not know how to deal with it through self-discipline. For Wang Fuzhi, self-discipline meant that one loyally devoted to the virtues of respect and faith. Wang stated,
To be constant in respect and faith, one will walk leisurely in the road of life and death. One keeps fearful in mind but appears peaceful outside. There was no gap between these two originally. Then one already keeps distant from the tyrant. (CSQS 10-545)

Obviously, Wang Fuzhi’s proposal was self-contradictory in practice. If one strictly complied with respect and faith to the tyrant, one could ignore the threat of death. But with this principle in mind and virtuous behaviors outside, the tyrant would be angered because of being humiliated and certainly would kill him. Moreover, if one had fear in mind, one would not be able to maintain peaceful on the face. This was why Wei Zusi’s respect and timidity got himself killed by Helian Bobo in the Northern Dynasties. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi was fond of presenting different views but seldom realized their inconsistency and pedantry in the political world.

Unscrupulously, Wang Fuzhi continued laughing at Zhuangzi’s method of survival as impracticable and harmful. He stated,

Zhuang Zhou thought he was skillful in interacting with evil persons. He proposed the methods such as dealing with fierce tiger, behaving like a baby, comparing human world as within the inescapable range of Yi’s arrow, and insisting that a true man will not be drowned even though the huge flood reaches the sky. When a coward hears these, he will lose his principle. When a wild person hears them, he will fall into more disasters. The only reason is that these methods lead one to lose oneself, and give too much weight to external things. (CSQS 10-677)

Here, Wang Fuzhi accused Zhuangzi of losing himself and letting external things determine the natural process. That is, Zhuangzi concerned too much about the external things and forgot his own capability of controlling and guiding the process. Zhuangzi could not maintain calmness when in crisis and danger. Was this true?

In truth, Zhuangzi’s methods could be divided into two levels. The first level was to deal with danger and crisis in real life. Thus one should be cautious about dangers at every moment, and this was why he compared the human world as within the dangerous range of Yi’s arrow. When dealing with cruel and evil persons, one should not only have one’s principle but also behave according to the situation. On the contrary, if one foolishly abided by Confucian principles
without respect to situation, one could only incur harm and death unwisely. Therefore, adapting oneself to situation and external things should not be identified with losing oneself and putting the weight completely on external things. The second level was to transcend danger and crisis through uniting with the Way/dao and discarding life and death. At this level, one would be able to avoid drowning oneself even though the flood reached the sky, for one already looked at life and death as one. Understanding Zhuangzi’s standpoint, it would be obvious that Wang Fuzhi used Zhuangzi’s second level to attack the first level when Wang Fuzhi proposed to leave life and death to fate.

It should be noticed that Zhuangzi’s transcending life and death was the outcome of his perception of the dao or the wholeness of the universe, and was different from listening to fate. If Zhuangzi recommended listening to fate passively, he would not criticize “the death of mind” and Shen Dao’s dao as a dead person’s principle. In contrast, when Wang Fuzhi proposed leaving life and death to fate, he truly showed a fatalist mind-state and came close to the death of mind although he advocated disciplining himself with Confucian principles. In conclusion, Wang Fuzhi’s criticism showed nothing but his ignorance of Zhuangzi.

Actually, Wang Fuzhi used leaving life and death to fate as his method of survival and his defense of Confucian moral practice. He called it “just acting in my original way/ suwei er xing 素位而行.” He compared interacting with tyrants or powerful evil persons without losing his principle as “stepping on tiger’s tail without getting oneself bitten” in the Book of Changes. He contended,

With regard to stepping on a tiger’s tail, now that one has stepped on it, one will look it as an ordinary case even though it is a tiger’s tail. (CSQS 1-849)

Then he laughed at Zhuangzi, and insisted that Zhuangzi dared not to step on a tiger’s tail but would flee away.42 Zhuangzi might reply, “Yes, I will look on stepping on a tiger’s tail as an ordinary case and deal with it fearlessly after I have stepped on it, but the problem is why I should step on it if I can avoid it.” Wang Fuzhi might argue speciously, “I need to practice moral

42 For example, Zhuangzi advocated staying away from fame and punishment and securing one’s life through following the middle path in Chapter Yang Shengzhu 養生主.
principles and cannot bend them because of fear.” Yes. To practice moral principle aimed to improve ethical relations and the quality of life. If one could practice moral principles without the need to defy a tyrant or powerful evil men, why should one demonstrate the bravado under the threat of one’s life? In this aspect, Wang Fuzhi could not help falling into obstinacy and pedantry.

After criticizing Zhuangzi’s method of survival, Wang Fuzhi started attacking Zhuangzi’s purpose to maintain life. In his understanding, Zhuangzi lost the meaning of life in order to survive because Zhuangzi abandoned the duty and function a human being should undertake. First, Wang Fuzhi compared human talent as the beautiful feather of a male pheasant. Because of the beautiful feather, the male pheasant exposed itself to hunters once it crowed. Likewise, a talented person would incur trouble for himself once he showed his ability in public. Then how to avoid the hunters and trouble? Wang Fuzhi assumed that Zhuangzi would recommend not being a pheasant or talented person because Zhuangzi proposed to abandon one’s uniqueness while emulating the superior’s behavior. He said,

The ruler/tyrant behaves like a baby; I also behave alike and thus avoid persecution. But not only the ruler is like a baby, I will also become no different from a baby, how can I avoid the disaster of becoming a baby? (CSQS 3-322)

Wang Fuzhi meant that Zhuangzi’s method of emulation could avoid being persecuted, but resulted in the loss of one’s self or uniqueness. Losing one’s self or uniqueness was the same as being persecuted. Therefore, it was better to display one’s talent and uniqueness. Apparently, Wang Fuzhi mistook emulation with identification. The ruler behaved like a baby and I also behaved so, this does not mean that I was identified with the baby.

Nevertheless, Wang Fuzhi proposed the display of beautiful feathers and talent as the meaning of human life. He said,

Having colorful feathers but not showing off, I already lost the colorful feathers; being able to crow but keeping quiet, how can I become nobleman without crowing? (CSQS 3-322)
This meant that one should show one’s ability and beautiful feathers in order to realize their functions. Otherwise, the meaning of life would be lost. From the perspective of Confucian duty, this view was right.

Wang Fuzhi further elucidated this view that the meaning of life was to exert one’s ability. He compared human life to an arrow. Just as an arrow’s function was to shoot birds, the meaning of human life was to serve human society and promote human relationships. Therefore, one should not fear of death and failure when undertaking duties; just as one should not fear of missing the target and wasting the arrow when shooting the prey. He argued,

To catch a pheasant, an arrow is used….To shoot, one will lose the arrow; but not to shoot, one will lose it too. Although one does not lose it because of not shooting, yet not shooting is identical with losing (for it loses its function already). Shooting the arrow, one does not care for its loss. Targeting the pheasant, one does not expect to catch it necessarily. Then the sage truly has the arrow and the pheasant….Those fearing being used as an ox in sacrifice or as a turtle in divination, they think they keep the arrow through not shooting. But without shooting, the arrow does not match its name; and the name “arrow” does not correspond to its function. What they keep will not be arrow any more, what is the necessity to keep it? (CSQS 1-961-962)

This passage disclosed the meaning of life as fulfilling duties. To be a person, the essential task was to fulfill his duties. If he did not fulfill his duty, he would not be a true human. Just like an arrow was a true arrow after fulfilling its function in the shooting. This analogy seemed convincing, but the problem was that one should not shoot his arrow aimlessly and untimely. In addition, when Zhuangzi kept away from being appointed as an official and compared himself as a turtle in the dirt or a calf in the wildness, he had known clearly the chaos and danger in the state of Chu and so refused its king’s invitation. This was a response to a special case and could not be interpreted as a permanent rejection of becoming official. Moreover, Zhuangzi’s acceptance of the position as a small park guardian also showed that he truly undertook his duty. Thus, Wang Fuzhi should not use a special case to criticize a person in general.
6.7.5 Criticizing Zhuangzi’s Concept of Free Excursion/\textit{xiaoyao} 逍遥

Wang Fuzhi’s criticism on Zhuangzi’s concept of free excursion could be summarized in two aspects—fearing of difficulties and shunning from responsibility.

Based on his interpretation that Zhuangzi regarded human society as dangerous as the range of Yi’s arrow, Wang Fuzhi insisted that Zhuangzi tried to keep distant from human affairs in order to secure his life and freedom. He stated,

Zhuangzi discussed free excursion/\textit{xiaoyao} 逍遥游 once he opened his mouth. It was understandable that he looked at official rank and salary as useless. In the end, he just avoided fame and penalty, and reached the highest realm that he lost his ego listlessly. (CSQS 6-701)

When Zhuang Zhou talked about free excursion, he would enjoy it if the situation permitted. Without being harmed, he went his way freely, and did not mind that elm and 
\textit{fang} tree were small while the dark sea was big. (CSQS 2-390)

In these quotations, Wang Fuzhi first accused Zhuangzi of looking down on social institutions and achieving the realm of losing ego in order to avoid penalty and fame. Then he criticized Zhuangzi who had no distinction of things but just enjoyed himself without respect to the situation. As a result, he concluded that Zhuangzi did not grasp the meaning or due measure but shrank from social duties.

In the end, the teachings of Buddhism and Daoism are all insufficient and cannot pass over the mean. Even though they listlessly lose their egos, wander lively and freely, face the stone wall for nine years and have no place to rest the mind, they all shrink from duties and hide in laziness, ignore a lot of unsolved social affairs. (CSQS 6-794)

On the contrary, Wang Fuzhi proposed that one should satisfy with his social status and fulfill his duties and accept what one ought to have. That is, if wealth and high rank were unrighteous, one should not accept them; but if they were righteous, one should enjoy them. In this way, he differentiated himself from Zhuangzi’s no desire and rejection of wealth and nobility. He argued,
If only no desire and so no gain, no gain and so no loss, one thus becomes happy, then it would be easier for the poor and low people to achieve happiness than the rich and noble ones. Finally, one will be like Wang Ni 王倪, Zhi Fu 支父 and the like in the Zhuangzi to avoid the proper wealth and rank as quick as possible. Here is the highest point of Confucianism, and also the clear line between Confucianism and heresies. (CSQS 6-701-702)

As aforesaid, Zhuangzi proposed the cultivation and perseverance of life not because of fear but because of not confronting risk and dangers unwisely. If the royal court was the dangerous place and ranks brought forth dangers, why should one risk life for them? To behave as a Confucian, such as Wang Fuzhi, who unwisely entered a court and left when life was threatened, it should not be regarded as wise, let alone Wang Fuzhi’s beautified excuse that he did so for the sake of the preservation of Confucian principles. From Zhuangzi’s point of view, if one could not change the situation, one just stayed outside and enjoyed one’s life. Why should one incur penalty and fame unwisely? In addition, Zhuangzi’s free excursion referred to the highest realm of open-mindedness. Zhuangzi used big bird/Peng’s 愛鵬 flying to the South to serve as a metaphor of this realm, and showed his favor of the big bird and disfavor of the cicada. Thus, it was Wang Fuzhi’s misunderstanding when he criticized Zhuangzi as having no idea or distinction between an elm (small) and the dark sea (big). Furthermore, it was wrong too that Wang Fuzhi accused Zhuangzi of rejecting proper wealth and rank. What Zhuangzi rejected were improper wealth and rank, and he never rejected proper wealth and rank. This became evident that Zhuangzi supported himself as a guardian of a state park and Shan Juan 善卷 rejected King Tang of Shang’s invitation after Shang seized the throne from King Jie of Xia. For this reason, Wang Fuzhi was unfounded when he assumed that Wang Ni, Nie Que, Zizhou Zhifu [characters in the Zhuangzi] took delight in poverty and inferiority but detested wealth and nobility.

Pushing further, Wang Fuzhi assumed that Zhuangzi was insincere and selfish when talking about free excursion. Wang Fuzhi defined insincerity from the aspect of one’s motive or calculating mind for selfish interests. Then he applied this definition to Zhuangzi’s free excursion. Although he admitted that Zhuangzi had no desire, he insisted that Zhuangzi’s no-desire be insincere and selfish because Zhuangzi shrank from duties and difficulties in order to secure his carefree life. He argued,
Although Zhuangzi’s descriptions of free excursion were so delightful and carefree, free and easy, they could not go beyond one word—calculation. He shrank once there were difficulties, and regarded human society as the range of Yi’s arrow, so his metaphor was not different from the Buddhist metaphor of the human world as a burning house. He did not regard big bird/eng as free, and neither were the quail/small bird free. He did not set his hand on tasks of military, agriculture, music and rituals nor enjoy in the spring wind and Yi River 沂水, and regarded this inaction as not attaching to external things. (CSQS 6-764)

In Wang Fuzhi’s accusation, in order to avoid danger, Zhuangzi declined all social works and enjoyment, and achieved a free mind. One would doubt whether Wang Fuzhi truly understood Zhuangzi’s free excursion. According to Zhuangzi, if one reached the realm of free excursion, just as the spiritual person could make things immune from diseases and crops ripened timely by following the nature of things, what was the need to put mind on governance with humanity and righteousness? Zhuangzi found that social disasters arose from too much human interference on natural process and human life, so he rejected the so-called humane measures that Confucians cherished. Wang Fuzhi attacked Zhuangzi’s universal concern from the point of his anthropocentric concern, just as a well-frog doubted the immense sea a sea-turtle saw. Moreover, Wang Fuzhi’s undertaking social responsibility aimed to correct injustice just as a person took care of his health after being ill but did not know preventing ill or maintain a good health in advance. Thus it was not correct for him to assume that Zhuangzi shrank from social responsibility in order to seek for a carefree mind and a safe life.

6.8 Criticism on Legalism

Wang Fuzhi mainly criticized legalism from the aspect of governance. He insisted that its harshness and strict discipline could only destroy good custom generated by humanity and righteousness and make common people more hypocritical and officials more corrupt. Obviously, Wang Fuzhi simplified the question from his Confucian bias, for legalists governed the people with laws and would not make demands of the people unendingly, so their harshness had a limit. In contrast, Confucians disciplined the people with rituals and moral motive and were more susceptible of demanding people excessively due to the lack of a specific standard, so
their governance had the tendency of harshness and cruelty. The harshness and cruelty of Confucian governance were manifested in the factional struggles of the Song and Ming Confucians, and also were verified by Wang Fuzhi’s unfairly picking fault in others as discussed in this chapter. In the following, we will analyze Wang Fuzhi’s criticisms of legalist measures from the perspectives of corrupting custom and people’s mind.

Wang Fuzhi first blamed legalist measures to the corruption of good custom. He supported this view with the bad consequence generated by Wang Anshi’s reform and governance with laws. In his regard, at the beginning of Song Dynasty, the governance was very good, but it was destroyed by later officials who ruled with legalist measures. Then he concluded that good governance could not be achieved by legalist measures. He stated,

At the beginning of Song, administration was loose and officials were free and contented. …The government led the people to enjoy leisure and pleasure, and did not worry about the degeneration of custom, and thus it seemed to be a harmful practice to good governance. However, for the period of five consecutive emperors in more than one hundred years, the people lived a quiet and contented life; the law was uniform; the officials kept upright, and there were no rebellions from the areas of woods and lakes. After the period of Xining (1068-1077), the government was busy in administration and implemented supervisory regulations, and then the people in the empire were disturbed and bandits and rebels rose in groups. Hence, if a ruler pacifies the empire, satisfies the people’s need and fulfills it, he should know that the doctrine of names and laws/刑名 is not competent to achieve it. This is an evident truth. (CSQS 11-92-93)

Xining period was the time of Wang Anshi’s reform and governance with new laws. Wang Fuzhi thus implicitly attacked Wang Anshi as governing the people with legalist measures and destroying the extant good custom.

However, Wang Fuzhi’s arguments were specious and self-contradictory. First, Wang Fuzhi praised Wang Anshi as a Confucian scholar who promoted the testing of students with the Confucian classics. (CSQS 12-489) Thus Wang Anshi was not a representative of Legalism although he reformed old institutions and governed the people with new laws. So it was improper that Wang Fuzhi used Legalism as the scapegoat of his criticism on Wang Anshi’s reform. In
other words, for the destruction of custom, one should not blame legalists but Confucian scholars. Wang Fuzhi might argue that he was criticizing legalist measures Wang Anshi adopted, but this argument lacked persuasive power, for there was not a clear-cut distinction between legalist measures and Confucian measures in governance. For example, Confucius killed Shao Zhengmao 少正卯 when he was a judge. It could be considered a legalist measure too. Second, in order to incriminate legalists, Wang Fuzhi altered historical narratives to support his conclusion that legalist measures were not competent for, but destructive to good governance and custom. He claimed that there were no disturbance, bandits and rebellions before 1068 and ascribed their rise to Wang Anshi’s reform. In fact, in 993, Wang Xiaobo 王小波 and Li Shun 李順 already rebelled against the heavy tax of the Song government, how could Wang Fuzhi ignore it in order to justify his prejudice?

In fact, Wang Fuzhi was not clear as to how the Song got the empire orderly in the beginning and how the chaos and rebellions rose later. The temporary peace and order at the beginning of the Song Dynasty was resulted from the emperors’ non-interference measures and the people’s expectation of a peaceful life after long period of chaos and battles. This was the reason that in the early Song it did not need much administration and the officials could have been idle and carefree. It could be classified as Huang Lao Daoism, but could not be regarded as Confucian governance. But after 1068 AD, people forgot the bitterness of previous chaos and concerned more with the inequality of wealth and the harshness of governance, this was why Wang Anshi’s reform was necessary to respond to the new situation.

Generally, Wang Fuzhi blamed the cruelty and harshness of legalist penalty but denied its great virtues. He accused Legalism of destroying humanity and righteousness, but did not explain how. He took the First Emperor of Qin Dynasty 秦始皇 (259-210 BC), Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220), Wu Zetian 武則天 (624-705) and Yang Jian 楊堅 (541-604) as rulers who adopted Legalism, and claimed that their adoption of Legalism was the reason why their dynasties had a short life. But, this accusation again contradicted with historical facts. All these rulers governed very well and made their empires very strong when they were alive. How could Wang Fuzhi blame them for the collapse of their empires at their descendant’s hands? Following this logic of remote cause, he should blame Emperor Yuan of Han’s 漢元帝 (75-33 BC) belief of Confucianism for the
collapse of Western Han, and condemn Emperor Tai of Tang 唐太宗 (599-649) for the Li family’s loss of the throne to Wu Zetian.

Now let’s look at how Wang Fuzhi described the harshness of legalist measures. He stated,

Legalism specifies a standard for people in the world and regulates them with authority. But people are not in fear of death. When a ruler threatens them with death, they will become even more fearless. Then in order to submit the disobedient people, he will give rise to ruthless measures, delights in the disobedient people’s heart-broken miseries, and show off his competence. If a ruler requires ordinary people to follow the nobleman’s cautious discipline, they will not be competent indeed. If a ruler restricts noblemen from petty person’s stupidity, laziness and inconsiderateness, they may commit them unconsciously. Using small misdemeanors in private chambers and kitchens to accuse one of disobeying names and righteousness, it can stain him with dirt/defame. Using the mistakes in chess and play to discipline people’s behavior in spare time, it can only obstruct their proper issuance of feelings. After punishing them lightly but without making them obedient, the ruler becomes angry and claims, “These unruly people think their crimes are not worthy of the death penalty and thus do not follow my order. I will let them suffer deeply in muscle and skin, more miserable than death, and then my order will prevail.” (CSQS 11-323)

These sentences could be regarded as Wang Fuzhi’s accusation of legalist measures. The main theme was that legalists were harsh, demanding and delighted in the law-breakers’ pain and misery in order to make laws implemented. However, Wang Fuzhi misplaced the harsh governance of Neo-Confucian scholar-officials on the legalists, because his description was more suitable for the Neo-Confucian governance in the Song and Ming Dynasties.

Neo-Confucian officials governed the people with their moral sense instead of specific rules. When they detested someone and condemned him immorally, they would neglect totally his good points and try to incriminate him even though he followed social rule and law well. When they found people did not listen to them, they would become angry and complain that people’s mind became degenerative, started their cruel revenge and tried to force the people to behave morally. Because they did not have specific standards for people’s behavior, they demanded
without end. The unending demand was verified in the Song Dynasty when Neo-Confucian scholars condemned a person with great principle for a trivial misdemeanor and found faults with others in their private lives. For example, Cheng Yi 程頤 criticized the nine-year old emperor, Song Zhezong’s 宋哲宗 breaking a willow branch in the spring and accused him of harming the harmonious qi of Heaven and earth. Song Confucians slandered Wang Anshi of not taking a bath and was extremely dirty just because they hated Wang Anshi’s reforms. 43

By contrast, when legalist officials governed the people, they followed specific rules and seldom went beyond them. In this way, the officials would have no chance to find small faults in others and punish them beyond the standard. The people would also not need to be in fear of officials if they knew they did not infringe on them. As a result, when an emperor ruled the empire with specific laws, the empire generally was in order and peace, and thus strong. Regrettably, Wang Fuzhi’s bias prevented him from seeing this.

Wang Fuzhi’s second critique of Legalism was that legalist administration caused people to be more hypocritical and officials to be more corrupt. He argued,

Using laws to punish corrupted officials, corruption becomes more prevalent. The emperor then can win only officials’ complaints above, and worsen ordinary people’s suffering of being exploited. It is evident that laws are not reliable. (CSQS 10-1012)

This showed he did not believe that penalty and law could prevent corruption, but only incur officials’ hatred and people’s poverty. His explanation was that the more detailed laws were, the more power bureaucratic clerks would have, and the more corrupt the officials would become. He stated,

The more detailed laws are, the more powerful governmental clerks become. The more the death penalty, the more prevalent bribe becomes....To sentence one death penalty, and to judge another small infringement, even the prescription of laws reaches tiny affairs, clerks

43 Wang Fuzhi also found that the Neo-Confucian officials were harsh and particular in governance but speciously argued that they were unconsciously affected by legalists. His explanation was that the Neo-Confucian noblemen disciplined themselves strictly and then disciplined the common people with the same standard and thus unconsciously adopted legalist measures. (CSQS 11-323)
can manipulate them easily. They will deliberately let a criminal be at large, or extend the scope of arrest of a crime, and hide the real criminal through cooperation between the superior and the inferior. (CSQS 10-74-75)

In this quotation, Wang Fuzhi thought that laws would give governmental clerks more power and facilitate their bribe and corruption. Apparently, Wang Fuzhi misplaced the faults of administrative system generated by power on laws and thus was unfair to laws. A simple refutation to Wang Fuzhi was how could an emperor not grant power to clerks and avoid their corruption and manipulation completely? Wang Fuzhi complained that the detailed laws and regulations led to more corruption and cheating, however, could any government avoid corruption and cheating without law or only with few laws? Actually, Wang Fuzhi naively thought so. He said,

Loose laws lead to good compliance, and simple regulations lead to the peace of the state. A fish is so huge that it can swallow a boat, but the meshes of net allow it to escape. Then it dares not to touch fishing dam and basket again. Why? Laws are established by one king, and clerks cannot change them. (CSQS 10-75)

According to Wang Fuzhi’s logic, if laws were simple and loose, they would be easy to follow and understand, so clerks would not be able to distort them. For criminals, because of the existence of laws, they would be in fear of infringing on them although they had luckily escaped for their previous crimes. Perhaps, everyone would think this was Wang Fuzhi’s naïve imagination. On the contrary, loose and simple laws could only provide criminals more space to avoid being caught and punished. They still needed clerks to interpret and implement. How could it avoid clerks’ misinterpretation and manipulation?

The impracticability of Wang Fuzhi’s proposal to fight against corruption became more manifest when he compared fighting against corrupt officials as preventing a tiger’s attack and proposed ignoring them without punishment. In the period of Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), at the area of Jiu Jiang 九江 along the Yangtze River, there were a lot of tigers that attacked human beings. When Governor Zong Jun 宗均 arrived there, he asked people to remove the trap and snare, stopped people’s competition with tigers for space, and then tigers attacked the people less. In
his analogy, Wang Fuzhi advocated treating corrupted officials and wicked people similarly. He stated,

Applying to governance, I will say, laws, regulations and upright officials are not able to stop wicked transactions. The only way is to look wicked persons as chicken and pigs, and then they will become discouraged. This is the way to stop tricky measures in governing the people and then the people will stop their tricky ones too. With laws and regulations, legalist officials compete with wicked persons and surely will fail. With their morality, upright officials do not fear wicked persons but will be entrapped by them. The only reason is that they have something to depend on, so they think that wicked persons are easy to be checked. Maintaining general principles, ignoring detailed regulations, the shysters and cunning clerks will not appear in court. How can they harm my people? (CSQS 10-256)

These words showed Wang Fuzhi’s measure was nothing but to shrink from the problem while he brag that he already solved it, just as an ostrich hides its head in the sand and thinks the danger has gone away. Zong Jun’s avoidance of tiger attacks was just a story and could not be regarded as true. No one would believe that tigers would not attack human beings if human beings did not compete with them. With regard to Wang Fuzhi’s application, if a ruler looked at wicked persons as chickens and pigs and paid no attention to their trickery, he could only encourage them to behave more openly and evil and make more troubles. If upright and administrative officials stopped using laws and morality to punish wicked persons because they were not successful, then wicked persons would think themselves as the ruler of the city and the countryside and do more evils. In fact, Wang Fuzhi here unconsciously was using Huang-Lao Daoist idea of non-interference in governance, but did not know how it worked and therefore fell into inconsistency.

When explaining why people had preferred legalist rule to Confucian governance in history, Wang Fuzhi ascribed it to people’s preference of leisure and idleness. He stated,

Why have Shen Buhai 申不害 (420-337 BC) and Shang Yang’s 商鞅 (395-338 BC) doctrines been not perished until now? Upright and righteous people such as Zhuge Liang 諸葛亮 (181-234) adopted them; knowledgeable and open-minded people such as Wang
Anshi 王安石 inherited their gist. There is no other reason, for their doctrines are the art leading one rest long time after undertaking them once. (CSQS 10-72)

Undoubtedly, Wang Fuzhi simplified the issue. To govern with laws was never easier than to govern with rituals and music. People preferred legalist governance because laws could give the people specific code of conduct and bring the state to order more easily. After much practices in the governance, people had realized the impracticability and idealism of Confucian kingly governance and left it only to the ideal realm. It had nothing to do with Wang Fuzhi’s explanation that “governing with laws, the ruler rests idly while the people are harassed; governing with the Confucian Way, the ruler gets exhausted while the people are idle.” (CSQS 10-72) Moreover, Confucians fabricated a good prospective of kingly governance based on their assumption that human beings preferred morality and humanity to selfish desires, and thus forced the people to practice. Thus on the low level, they dared not to face the reality that most people put their selfish interests prior to public welfare or morality, and thus their moral teachings affected nothing on the people but led them to become hypocritical; on the high level, they misled officials and governors to adopt wrong administrative measures and thus led the state to become more chaotic. After the state being chaotic, they still shamelessly blamed officials not to implement their Confucian doctrines earnestly and correctly.

Based on his assumption that legalist governance resulted from people’s preference to leisure and idleness, Wang Fuzhi criticized Legalism together with Daoism and Buddhism and insisted that they corresponded and supported each other. He said,

“There are three great heretical schools since ancient times to now: Daoism, Buddhism and Legalism. They are different in bringing forth disasters, but they give rise to each other interdependently, and merge at the end. (CSQS 10-651)

Then he explained,

The teaching of Buddhism and Daoism will inevitably lead to the adoption of legalist laws. …Why? When emptiness and silence reached their zenith, one will abandon all active approaches, but dispose of state affairs with legalist regulations, demand the people to follow them and keep oneself free, and then one does not need to take care of worldly affairs and gets calm rest. The ruler adopts legalist measures, then the people will choose
Buddhism and Daosim. Therefore, Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525-1582) harassed the people with legalist regulations. In response, Wang Ji 王畿 (1498-1583) and Li Zhi 李贽 (1527-1602) who spread their doctrines broader without scruple. Why? When the people stand still so fearful as not to dare to move their feet, they will retreat to emptiness and obscurity and avoid mistake and guilt. When punishment is severe and the people complain their rulers, they will take advantage of the doctrines that recommend betraying their ruler and parents and the doctrine of no mind that one will eliminate guilt if having no mind. Then they will think that even the betrayal of their parents and nation will not hurt their innocent nature of nothingness. (CSQS 10-653)

This could be regarded as a conclusive explanation of the question why Wang Fuzhi criticized Buddhism, Daoism and Legalism without sparing any energy. His connection of the three apparently was out of his fabrication, but nevertheless it had some insight. Truly, the non-action and non-interference of Daoism and Buddhism would lead to a legalist governance with laws and power, but the over-interference of Confucianism could also encourage legalist measures from another aspect, for Confucian officials were particular to the implementation of Confucian rules and were subjective to their ideal and goals, and were tending more easily toward demanding more of the people. Wang Fuzhi also acknowledged this consequence when he criticized Song Confucianism. With regard to the presumption that legalist governance led to the prevailing of Daoism and Buddhism, it might not be true. The spread of Wang Ji and Li Zhi’s doctrines was a reaction to the pedantry and fetter of the Cheng-Zhu School, and should not be explained solely from the administrative aspect. If Wang Fuzhi insisted explaining it from administrative perspective, he should blame the misgovernance generated by the incompetent and corrupt scholars and officials of the Cheng-Zhu School. In short, Wang Fuzhi’s criticism of legalism was more biased than convincing.

6.9 Wang Fuzhi’s View of Catholicism and Western Astronomy

In Wang Fuzhi’s time, the Jesuits had entered China and spread Catholicism and Western science for nearly one hundred years. Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) was well-known among Chinese intellectuals together with his introduction of Catholicism and Western astronomy. According to Matteo Ricci’s biography, he lectured in Yuelu Academy 岳麓書院 in Changsha, where Wang
Fuzhi later gave lectures. Moreover, Wang Fuzhi kept in close contact with Fang Yizhi, who learned and wrote a lot about Western science, so it was very likely that Wang Fuzhi learned Western astronomy and the calendar from him. In fact, when Wang Fuzhi commented on Fang Yizhi’s physical experiment and investigation/zhice 質測, he showed his appreciation of scientific knowledge and method. Wang once said,

The physical experiments (zhice) of Fang Yizhi and his son are truly a joint pursuit of learning and thinking. To investigate things, it is to find their principles through studying them, so only physical experiments can be regarded as having achieved it. (CSQS 12-637)

Wang Fuzhi’s comment on the eclipse of the sun also showed that he already accepted the explanation of the eclipse that Western astronomy presented. Upon this, he was able to see differently from and criticize Chinese traditional astronomy. For example, in 535 BC, there happened an eclipse of the sun in State Lu. An official Shi Wenbo 士文伯 warned the duke,

The duke did not govern the state well, and neither appointed good officials, so he incurred the punishment of Heaven—the disasters of the sun and the moon. (CSQS 5-587)

This kind of explanation had been taken for granted for more than 2000 years and was used to restrain the king or emperor’s whims. However, Wang Fuzhi saw it differently. He criticized,

Alas, this is the explanation that ancient people provided when they did not have adequate knowledge, established a principle and imposed it on Heaven, but could not investigate the principle through studying Heaven. Provided at the time the calendar were well developed, the alternation of the full moon and the absence of moon could be predicted exactly, and the speed of the sun and moon is calculated without mistake, a child would know Wenbo’s absurdity. How dare he speak it in front of the duke and let it be recorded by scribes? …The sun’s course and the moon’s course may intersect, so they can meet and eclipse each other. Now that they can meet and eclipse each other, the eclipse of the sun or moon will be certain. (CSQS 5-587)

Wang Fuzhi’s knowledge of the intersection of the sun’s course and the moon’s might come from Chinese astronomers Zu Chongzhi 祖沖之 (429-500) and Guo Shoujing 郭守敬 (1213-1316), but more likely from Western astronomy via Fang Yizhi. From this aspect, it could be
said that Wang Fuzhi was open to the Western calendar and astronomy. But, with his ethnocentrism, he did not accredit his debt to them; instead, he did his best to criticize them.

First, Wang Fuzhi accused Matteo Ricci of plagiarizing Zhang Zai’s doctrine of planetary motions. According to Zhang Zai, Heaven moved eastward in reference to the north polestar. However, if a planet moved slowly, it appeared moving westward to the terrestrial observer. Wang Fuzhi also admitted that westerners found that the seven luminaries (the sun, moon and the five planets) were away from the earth at different distances and moved eastward at different speeds through their observation with a telescope. But Wang Fuzhi assumed that westerners incorporated Zhang Zai’s idea with their observations, and then proposed their theory of planetary motions after they came to China and learned it. Then he claimed, what western barbarians were worthy to learn from was only their technique of distance measurement, and the rest of their theory was all plagiarized from Chinese scientific remnants and had no viable general principle.

Second, Wang Fuzhi did not accept that the earth was spherical; on the contrary, he accused Matteo Ricci of fabricating it through plagiarizing Chinese Celestial Sphere Theory/ 浑天说. The Celestial Sphere Theory stated Heaven enfolded earth as the albumen of an egg enfolded the yolk. Wang then falsely assumed,

When Matteo Ricci came to China and heard this theory, he fixed on its literary meaning and failed to understand its meaning beyond the words. He accordingly said the shape of earth was actually like a ball, and proceeded to adorn it with his cleverness. He converted it into an image of the Globe. (CSQS 12-459)

Finally, Wang Fuzhi insisted that the western calendar was inferior to the Chinese calendar. He did not appreciate the exactness and precision of the western calendar; on the contrary, he criticized them as unpractical. He said the measure of daytime should take the rise and fall of the sun as standard, and did not need to find the exact hours. He did not think that the western calendar could predict eclipses as exact as Guo Shoujing’s Chinese calendar, although it was more exact on finding the dates of the full moon and the absence of moon. Apparently he fell into self-contradiction. If Guo Shoujing’s calendar was not as exact as the western calendar, how could it predict the eclipses more exactly? If all people just followed the rise and fall of the sun
to measure time, what was the need that Chinese recorded the time at night? Wang Fuzhi’s ethnocentrism and narrow-mindedness could only lead to his unsympathetic understanding of Western science and philosophy.

In addition, Wang Fuzhi also criticized Catholicism of having two origins—Heaven and parents, when it regarded Heaven as Heavenly Lord. According to Wang Fuzhi, although Heaven produced a person, it must do that through his/her parents, so parents were the epitome of Heaven. To serve and love parents would automatically lead to the love and service of Heaven. But this did not mean that a person forgot Heaven as his remote origin. It was through the close origin to reach the remote origin. Therefore, he commented on Matteo Ricci, “Western barbarian Matteo Ricci worshipped Heaven as Heavenly Lord, and dared to go close to God and abandon parents without scruple. He was nothing but barbarian although he decorated his belief with dexterity.” (CSQS 1-1015)

In short, when Wang Fuzhi evaluated Catholicism and Western astronomy, he displayed both his own psychological state and his ethnocentrism, and thereby could not acknowledge the merits of Western astronomy or understand Catholicism sympathetically. From the perspective of his psychological state, he was full of hatred toward the Manchurian whom he regarded as foreigners, and extended his hostility toward westerners. From the perspective of his ethnocentrism, he stood for the traditional Chinese way of thinking that Chinese civilization was superior to all other civilizations and it was impossible that other civilizations or people could propose advanced theory, such as the explanation of the eclipse of the sun. When other people truly invented some advanced instruments, such as telescope and clock, Wang Fuzhi denied them simply as impractical in order to defend his superiority complex. Therefore, his evaluation was full of self-contradiction and showed more his narrow-mindedness than insight.
Chapter 7 Evaluation and Perspective: Wang Fuzhi’s Place in Chinese Intellectual History

Living in a time of radical crisis and feeling being humiliated by the collapse of the Ming and the Manchurian conquest, Wang Fuzhi at pains explored the approximate cause of the crisis and ascribed it to the irresponsibility, selfishness and corruption of Ming officialdom. When tracing further, he blamed the degenerative custom which resulted from the pedantry and misleading interpretation of the Confucian classics and the prevalence of heretical doctrines. As a result, he was determined to establish a true orthodox Confucianism through reinterpreting the Confucian classics and criticizing the misinterpretation of Neo-Confucianism and the misleading heretical schools. To do this, he chose to develop Zhang Zai’s qi monism in order to avoid Zhu Xi’s li-qi dualism and its derivative ideas, such as preserving heavenly principle through eliminating human desires, and fight against the Buddhist concept of emptiness and self-cultivation method—eliminating desires for the sake of emptiness. Instead, he proposed gradual accumulation of knowledge and experience and denied Zhu Xi’s doctrine of sudden enlightenment through accumulation in order to draw a clear line from the sudden enlightenment of Chan Buddhism.

He insisted on seeing human nature as the principle of life and humanity, and criticized other Confucian scholars and heretical schools for not knowing nature but regarding it as the mechanism or function of life and thus mixing human nature with animal nature. He explained the superiority of human nature through claiming that human beings received the most harmonious and finest qi in the universe or the Great Harmony and thus should be the master of the world and assist Heaven with human intelligence and effort. From this aspect, he did not agree with Daoist passive compliance with the Way of Heaven, while he believed that human beings could make the universe more harmonious through moderating their desires and action. To achieve this, human beings should abide by Confucian ritual propriety to regulate their feelings and desires. To follow Confucian ritual propriety became the crucial approach to beautify custom and improve cosmic harmony. If the ruler did this, he would achieve the Kingly Way; if an ordinary person did this, he would make himself peaceful and glorified. At the end, if harmony prevailed in the society and universe, and the people had good customs, there would not be conflicts, let alone the collapse of the empire or the invasion of barbarians. This was the
blueprint Wang Fuzhi’s provided for later Chinese with his forty-years of persistent work in the poor and lonely mountains. In the following, we will analyze its originality and insufficiency.

7.1 The Originality of Wang Fuzhi’s System

Compared with previous Confucian scholars and his peers, Wang Fuzhi could be regarded as having built the most comprehensive Confucian system, from cosmology, human nature to humane governance, and tried to present solutions and remedies for the political and cultural problems of his time. His originality lay in his connecting moral cultivation with Great Harmony and the Kingly Way and thus making Confucianism more consistent.

On the cosmological level, Wang Fuzhi proposed the Great Harmony as the substance of Heaven and human society. It was through preserving the Great Harmony that all natural and social disasters would be eliminated and prevented. The Great Harmony was the proper blend of yin and yang, so Wang Fuzhi rejected Buddhist emptiness/kong and Daoist nonbeing/wu as he misinterpreted them as complete void or nothingness. In order to justify the substantial character of the universe, he embraced the doctrine of the coexistence of Qian (Heaven, yang) and Kun (earth, yin) and claimed that there was no such a moment that the Great Ultimate/taiji existed solely and then produced yang through action and yin through rest, which aimed to overthrow Zhou Dunyi’s cosmological doctrine. He further criticized Zhu Xi’s li-qi dualism and claimed that principle/li was only the principle of qi, and challenged the basic proposition of the Cheng-Zhu School, “Heaven is principle”.

It goes without saying that Wang’s concern was to cultivate harmonious qi, preserve the Great Harmony and assist Heaven. The reason that man could eliminate disasters through preserving the Great Harmony was that the Great Harmony prevailed in all things and became humanity and human nature in human bodies. As ritual propriety, humanity and righteousness were regarded as the manifestation of human nature, so man could cultivate his own harmonious qi and contribute his part to the preservation of the Great Harmony through moral practice. In this way, Wang Fuzhi’s connected moral cultivation with assisting Heaven and elevated the meaning of human life to a cosmological level.
Two questions arise at this point. Now that Heaven was the Great Harmony and human beings had received their harmonious qi from Heaven, what caused the emergence of disharmonious or impure qi? How could human beings be able to cultivate and maintain their harmonious qi? As Wang Fuzhi made equal disharmony and badness, these questions were important for understanding not only the assistance of Heaven but also the arising of badness in the universe and human society.

To explain this, Wang Fuzhi proposed his theory, the Way of Heaven or endowment was greater than goodness and gave rise to goodness, while goodness was greater than human nature and gave rise to human nature. The Way of Heaven was the interaction of yin and yang or the transformation of qi; Goodness/shan 善 was the proper blending of yin and yang, and human nature was the endowment of this proper blend in human body. Hence, as the proper blending or proportion of yin and yang, goodness was smaller than the Way/dao that included both proper and improper blending. It was the medium between dao/Heaven and human nature and appeared in the process that Heaven produced living things.

Based on the role of goodness/shan 善, Wang Fuzhi proposed his first ontological explanation of the emergence of badness. If one inherited goodness or the proper blending of yin-yang, one’s nature was good; otherwise, one’s nature was not good. He said,

The qi that human beings gather is good, so the completed human nature is good. The qi that dogs and ox gather is not good, so their nature thus completed is not good either. (CSQS 6-1054)

To continue the proper yin-yang blending, there comes goodness. To discontinue it, there comes not-goodness. Heaven never discontinues, so its goodness is inexhaustible. Human beings may discontinue, so badness arises. (CSQS 1-1008)

From these two quotations, Wang Fuzhi first explained the absence of goodness in dogs’ nature resulted from their inheritance of disharmonious qi, while he insisted that human nature was good because human beings always received good qi. Second, to explain why human nature had badness, he then ascribed to human beings instead of Heaven. That is, badness arose from human discontinuance. In this way, he made human beings as the scapegoat for the emergence of badness in human nature.
However, one might ask, as there were some persons who were born evil, how could Wang Fuzhi ascribe the arising of badness to human beings solely? In replying to this question, Wang acceded that badness actually arose from yin-yang interaction or the transformation of goodness. In other words, he acquiesced that some people were born to be evil or with an evil nature. However, he arbitrarily claimed these cases were rare. This is shown in his second ontological explanation of the emergence of badness—badness arose from the transformation process of goodness/shan 善.

Wang Fuzhi indicated that goodness/shan took four virtues—humanity, righteousness, ritual propriety and wisdom as its substance, and three abilities—wisdom, humanity and courage as its function. When human nature completed, it solidified the four virtues as its substance and used the abilities as its function. It was in the process of using wisdom, humanity and courage that badness arose. He explained,

The substance of goodness/shan has four, humanity, righteousness, ritual propriety and wisdom. They are inherited from such heavenly virtues as initiation/yuan 元, efficiency/heng 亨, advantage/li 利 and rightness/zhen 貞 and give rise to human use. The function of goodness/shan has three, wisdom/zhi 智, humanity/ren 仁 and courage/yong 勇. They arise from the incipient sign of the four virtues and give rise to human activity. (CSQS 5-598)

More specifically, wisdom, humanity and courage were what put the four virtues into practice. But in the process, they might go astray and become weak and therefore could not undertake their duty, so they depended on human feelings and talents to make it up. As a result, they betrayed the four virtues and fell into badness. Wang Fuzhi elaborated,

The substance gives rise to function but the function overflows the substance. Then it does not use its original substance but takes other thing (feeling and talent) as substance. Then how can it say that the arising of badness is not from human nature? (CSQS 5-598)

44 Obviously Wang Fuzhi fell into contradiction when he assumed function could overflow its substance and took other thing as its substance.
Hence, Wang Fuzhi concluded that human nature was not only the completion of goodness/shan but also the opening of the incipient sign of badness. However, Wang Fuzhi arbitrarily claimed that the cases of innate badness were very few, and insisted that badness mainly was incurred by human behaviors, including human interaction with external things and habit. This showed that he tried to exculpate Heaven and justify the legitimacy of moral cultivation.

With regard to how to cultivate harmonious qi or preserve the Great Harmony, Wang Fuzhi proposed two approaches. The first was to transform physical embodiment through complying with ritual propriety; the second was to cultivate or fulfill human nature. This brings us to his doctrine on human nature and morality.

As for transforming physical embodiment with habit, Wang Fuzhi indicated that although human beings received the best harmonious qi from the Great Harmony, different persons still differed in their qi and physical embodiment despite their common share of the same principle of life. Therefore, it was human beings’ duty to improve the purity and harmony of their qi and physical embodiment through self-cultivation. In doing this, one should be careful of choosing his food, habitat and concentrate on good behavior with resolution and persistence, then one would finally change his old physical embodiment and elevate to a new stage of personality development. Wang Fuzhi took it an example that Shun transformed his wicked and stubborn father through his persistent effort. With Shun’s persistence, his father was transformed to be a good person at the end. However, the crucial measure was to develop a good habit through complying with ritual propriety.

As for cultivating human nature, it was connected to the transformation of physical embodiment, for nature as the principle of qi could not exist beyond qi or physical embodiment. Since Heaven kept unceasingly its endowment upon human beings, the nature and qi of human beings kept on changing too. Therefore, human nature could be changed naturally through heavenly endowment and culturally through human efforts, especially the development of a good habit.

In practice, the development of good habit to assist Heaven lay mainly in regulating one’s feelings and desires with nature on the one hand, and devotedly practicing filial piety and fraternal love on the other, for filial piety and fraternal love were the starting point of humanity and human nature.
Human nature as humanity and the principle of life was the basis and criterion of all activities of self-cultivation. This unique role human nature played distinguished Wang Fuzhi’s theory of moral cultivation not only from other Confucians but also served as a critical weapon toward heretical schools. Because nature was innate, it meant that human beings had their principle of life from birth, and thus the first task for self-cultivation was to know and abide by this principle. This principle showed itself in filial piety, fraternal love and moral conscience naturally and could be enhanced through complying with ritual propriety. Thus, Wang Fuzhi, without explicitly recognizing it, accepted Lu Jiuyuan’s idea—to establish the great principle before moral cultivation and learning. Understandably, he showed disfavor toward Zhu Xi’s idea of investigating the principles of things in order to find nature or the principle of life. In Wang Fuzhi’s regard, without knowing the principle of life or nature and using it as a guide, Zhu Xi’s disciples turned investigating things into pedantic book learning and played with things without clear purpose. Actually, investigating things and book learning were just means to verify and make manifest the innate principle of life.

Based on the unity of principle and qi in qi-monism, Wang Fuzhi insisted the unity of nature and body/desires. Thus he disliked the division of nature and body/desires that led to eliminating desires for the sake of fulfilling nature and preserving heavenly principle. On the contrary, nature must manifest itself in the proper realization of desires and feelings. There was never such a spiritual realm posited in Confucianism that principle existed only without desires. Therefore, desires could not be repressed, let alone eliminated, but should be fulfilled properly with principle as due measure. Otherwise, without principle as criterion, one would not know what should be preserved and what should be repressed, and thus fall into the Buddhist spiritual realm of dry wood and cold cliff through eliminating all desires.

Corresponding to preserving the principle of life or nature before investigating things and eliminating desires, Wang Fuzhi put correcting mind before making one’s ideas sincere, for mind was predictable and unselfish but ideas were unpredictable and selfish when arising from interaction with external things. He further divided mind into two layers, the mind of dao/Way and the mind of man. The former was nature while the latter was perception and feelings, so one should always use the former as master to guide and control the latter. Therefore, the mind in “fully unfolding one’s mind”, “preserving one’s mind” and “pursuing the lost mind” all referred to the mind of dao/Way, nature or humanity rather than the mind of man or perception.
Correcting mind was to use the mind of dao/Way to guide the mind of man. In contrast, Buddhists and some Confucian scholars regarded mind as perception solely and tried to preserve it. Then what they preserved would be no different from the mind that sought for the fulfillment of desires and biological instincts. Apparently, Wang Fuzhi wanted to use this bifurcated structure of mind to incorporate both Zhu Xi’s emphasis on ritual propriety and Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge, while avoid their shortcomings. In other words, Wang Fuzhi assumed he avoided the subjectivity of Wang Yangming’s doctrine of innate knowledge through emphasizing the pursuit of the mind of dao/Way (nature) with the mind of man (perception) and acknowledging the objectivity of moral rules. He again avoided the shortcoming of confusing moral principle with physical principle in Zhu Xi’s doctrine of investigating the principle of things. However, Wang Fuzhi could not explain why the mind of man (perception) could not understand or know its own principle—the mind of dao/Way (nature), now that they were in the relation of substance and function.

Wang Fuzhi also identified the relation of the mind of dao/Way (nature) and the mind of man (perception) as the relation between nature and feelings. According to his descriptions, feelings and nature should both arise from yin-yang interaction. Nature as the principle of qi should be the principle of feelings too. It was nature that depended on feelings, not the reverse, just as principle was the principle of qi and depends upon qi. Following this logic, Wang Fuzhi would have to acknowledge the reality that feelings were the master and substance of nature and nature was just the principle of feelings. Consequently, he had to agree with Gaozi’s doctrine—life was nature/sheng zhi wei xing 生之為性, and stopped his criticism of other’s regarding feelings as nature. In this way, it would bring to the collapse of Wang Fuzhi’s whole system based on nature as the master of feelings and desires. In order to avoid this embarrass, Wang Fuzhi showed ambiguity in dealing with the relation between nature and feelings. On the one hand, he claimed that feelings did not arise from nature; on the other, he again stated that nature gave rise to feelings. Moreover, in order to avoid apparent inconsistency, he did not call nature as the principle of feelings, but called it the substance of yin-yang interaction, which was contradictory with his cosmological statement that nature was the principle of qi. He dared not call feelings as

45 Feeling is originally the mechanism of yin-yang interaction; nature is the substance of yin-yang. (CSQS 6-1066) Feeling is the mechanism of yin-yang, gathering in nature and rendering service for nature.”(CSQS 1-889)
the activity of yin-yang interaction but called it the incipient sign or mechanism of yin-yang interaction, and tried to cover his inconsistency through deliberate use of confusing words. In fact, feelings and desires were the true manifestation of yin-yang interaction, and nature was their principle, just as seeing was the true action of eyes and its proper use was the principle of eyes. But Wang Fuzhi and all Neo-Confucians deliberately distorted the relation between feelings and nature in order to justify nature as the origin and principle of Confucian moral principles, and thus none of their doctrines could shed off the repressive character on human vitality and provide a satisfactory solution for the development of healthy personality.

On the political level, for Wang Fuzhi, the assistance of Heaven and moral cultivation finally served for the harmony and order of human society, for human welfare was the prime concern of his system. This humane concern or anthropocentrism was reflected in his descriptions of Heaven, investigation of things and the fulfillment of the nature of things on the one hand, and in his doctrine that inner sageliness would lead finally to outer kingliness on the other.

In his description of Heaven, he specified it as the heaven that spirit and transformation reached and drew a distinction between Heaven of man/ren zhi tian 人之天 and Heaven of Heaven/tian zhi tian 天之天. Similarly, regarding the investigation of things and the fulfillment of the nature of things, he limited the things investigated to those things only relevant to human welfare. He stated,

“Fulfilling the nature of things” in the Doctrine of the Mean suggests only that one knows clearly and disposes properly those things related to human welfare, makes them serve human beings if they can serve, and prevents them from disturbing human beings if they can not. With regard to the lonely goose in remote place and tiny weed on the riverside, they do not serve nor disturb human beings. Thus, we should draw a clear line from them and not allow them to invade and lose the focus on human relationships. (CSQS 6-977)

With regard to his doctrine that inner sageliness gave rise to outer kingliness, it was more evident that it concerned only the harmony and welfare of human society, which formed the main body of his theory of humane governance. From inner sageliness to outer kingliness, Wang Fuzhi sometimes followed previous Confucians to describe it as a magic process. (CSQS 8-842-843) However, in most places, Wang Fuzhi insisted that there were several stages to go through
before putting the world in order and transforming the people. When talking about humane governance, he did not think that a humane mind or intention would be sufficient to carry it out, but added strategy and art/shu, such as lessening taxes and securing the people’s sustenance. When interpreting the process from self-cultivation to putting the world in order in the Great Learning, he denied that after one finished cultivating oneself, one would automatically be able to put the world in order.

Moreover, different from his predecessors who naively thought that the sagely transformation would turn the people into worthies or sages, Wang Fuzhi limited the scope of sagely transformation and teachings to making everyone content with his own position and not cause troubles. Then Wang Fuzhi explained the meaning of sagely transformation as treating each person or thing according to his own nature rather than bringing him to the level of noblemen.

Correspondingly, Confucian education of people also had its limit, i.e., beautifying custom and decreasing the evils of the stupid to the most. Wang said,

Therefore, [the noblemen] just educate the people with the rituals and practice of drinking, shooting and reading, show them posted regulations, direct them to filial piety, fraternal love and husbandry, then they will get rid of their bad habit and custom and accomplish what the ignorant and low people are able to do. This is the highest degree of the noblemen’s education. (CSQS 7-136)

From the above discussions, it is seen that Wang Fuzhi made Confucian teaching and transformation more practical and consistent.

Apart from his requirement that a ruler should be a moral paradigm to the people, Wang Fuzhi avoided the Confucian tradition of valuing virtues while devaluing achievements since Dong Zhongshu advocated. More specifically, he indicated that if a ruler wanted to bring the world in order in a chaotic time and thus establish virtues to the world, he must depend on military force and administrative achievements. Therefore, he supported King Xuan of Qi to expand his state, for a big and powerful country was the prerequisite of kingly governance. He further supported this idea by indicating the fact that, although King Tang of Shang and King Wen of Zhou started from small states, they conquered the whole country through annexing
neighboring territory and states at the beginning. Otherwise, if a country was small, its existence would be difficult, let alone carrying out kingly governance.

With good custom and a powerful empire, it could be said that Kingly Way would be accomplished. But Wang Fuzhi admonished the ruler to be careful of troubles arising internally and externally. For this reason, he suggested the ruler to expel petty persons and lobbyists in order to maintain the court order and the officialdom clean; he insisted restraining merchants and pacifying barbarians, controlling women and forbidding heretical doctrines in order to maintain good custom and peace. The principle to do all of these was to maintain the strict distinction between righteousness and profit, for it was the concern of profit that disturbed human mind, and led to the invasion of barbarians.

7.2 The Inconsistencies in Wang Fuzhi’s System

Although Wang Fuzhi tried to make his Confucian system comprehensive, consistent and practical, he nevertheless met some unsolvable problems and caused some others with his re-interpretations. The former referred to the transition from descriptive statement in cosmology to normative statements in moral theory; the latter included, for example, his arbitrary choice of human nature as the substance of yin-yang interaction while feelings as its mechanism. In the following, we would analyze his inconsistencies from the aspects of cosmology, morality and kingly governance.

In cosmology, Wang Fuzhi had to explain why Heaven was regarded as humane from the aspect of its creation and sustenance of the myriad things, but not regarded as inhumane or neutral from the aspect of its destruction of the myriad things. This showed in his ambiguous description of Heaven. On the one hand, he followed Zhuangzi and Xunzi to regard Heaven as the Great Void or the ongoing transformation of qi, impartial and impersonal. On the other hand, he also insisted that Heaven was good, humane and even had its own intention and choice, such as the choice of King Wen of Zhou and Zhao Kuangyin of Song to save the world from chaos. Although Wang admitted that the characteristics of Heaven such as humanity and righteousness were human imposition and he also accepted that Heaven did not share the sage’s worry, he nevertheless insisted that Heaven was the whole body of humanity, and humanity was the mind or core of Heaven in order to provide a cosmological justification of the existence of Confucian virtues and
morality. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi faced an unjustified transition from descriptive statement to normative statement, which was a naturalistic fallacy G. E. Moore claimed\textsuperscript{46}. This transition was impossible except with arbitrary imposition.

With regard to that humanity or the Great Harmony was endowed in human beings and became their nature, Wang Fuzhi had to explain why human nature was necessarily good in most cases now that he accepted too that badness arose from the mechanism of yin-yang interaction and the transformation of goodness in the process of the completion of nature. To solve this problem, he imposed human preference or value on cosmological process in order to defend that human nature was good. Moreover, regarding the transformation of physical embodiment, Wang Fuzhi failed to indicate the degree or limit of transformation. That is, he did not explain why it was not possible for human beings to be transformed into dogs and pigs or the reverse based on his presumption that the qi in the human body kept exchanging with the qi in the universe both naturally and culturally. Furthermore, Wang claimed that human beings were the most intelligent species and had received the most harmonious qi in the universe; however, he did not tell us why and how human beings could do that based on the impersonal and mindless universal transformation?

With regard to the assistance of Heaven through human efforts, Wang Fuzhi had to answer the question how he could ascertain that human behavior could assist but not destroy heavenly harmony if he admitted that humanity and righteousness were resulted from human imposition on Heaven. It was particularly on this point that Daoism rejected human intervention in heavenly process, such as shown in the saying, “Do not use human action to destroy Heaven; do not use deliberation to betray heavenly destiny” in the Zhuangzi. Wang Fuzhi might reply that he followed the doctrine that “Heaven produces the myriad things but does not share the sage’s worry” and emphasized human concern and welfare. If so, Wang Fuzhi’s attempt to use cosmology to justify Confucian morality was futile, for he imposed on Heaven a constructed reality that did not exist naturally. From this aspect, his doctrine of assisting Heaven with Confucian moral practice was not more consistent than the Daoist idea of assistance of Heaven by following the natural process.

\textsuperscript{46} G.E. Moore, \textit{Principia Ethica}, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1929, p. xiii
Human nature was the demarcation line in the transition from Heaven to human beings, from cosmology to humanity. But Wang Fuzhi’s description of human nature was ambiguous. On the one hand, human nature was the goodness human beings had received from Heaven while goodness was the harmonious and subtle yin-yang mixture, therefore, human nature should be harmonious and subtle qi—the substance of yin-yang interaction. On the other hand, human nature was humanity, the principle of life. As a result, Wang Fuzhi seemed to regard nature as both qi and principle and showed inconsistency. Especially when Wang insisted on nature as the substance of yin-yang interaction but feelings as the mechanism of yin-yang interaction in order to secure the dominant role of nature toward feelings, he inevitably contradicted with his qi-monism in which qi determined or dominated principle/li. In short, Wang Fuzhi’s division of nature and feelings, the mind of dao/Way and the mind of man went against the unity of principle and qi, heavenly nature and body, and substance and function.

Moreover, Wang Fuzhi needed more time on the relation between nature and ritual propriety. He insisted that nature as innate knowledge had the final voice whether a behavior met righteousness or ritual propriety. In other words, if one felt peaceful in conscience when doing something, this action was righteous and met ritual propriety. But, he again asked people to comply with ritual propriety dedicatedly, and it was through dedicated practice of ritual propriety that one accomplished humanity and fulfilled one’s nature. Then, what was the relation between nature/conscience and ritual propriety? At this point, Wang Fuzhi proposed “finding the subtle meaning/jingyi精义 of righteousness and ritual propriety”, which connected ritual propriety to time and situation. As a result, righteousness would not be the peace of mind only but it depended also on timeliness and situations, and ritual propriety would not be the simple manifestation of righteousness but it should keep changing according to time and situations. Then, Wang Fuzhi’s criticism on Gaozi’s doctrine, “righteousness is outside of mind” and his endorsement of Mencius’ doctrine “righteousness is innate” would be severely weakened. This showed that Wang Fuzhi had not yet found a satisfactory answer for the relation between nature and normative rules, or that between righteousness and changing situations.

Wang Fuzhi’s ambiguity in the relation between nature and feelings also led to his obscurity in his idea of wisdom. He divided mind into the mind of dao/Way [nature] and the mind of man [feeling and perception], but regarded the mind of dao/Way as the crucial factor leading a person
to become wise. Specifically, if one followed the mind of *dao/Way* and practiced ritual propriety, he would become wise in the end. As he described King Xuan of Qi in the *Mencius*,

To the same Kingly Way ... Yi Yin 伊尹 told it to King Tang of Shang, and Tang achieved the Kingly Way; Lu Wang 吕望 told it to King Wen of Zhou, and King Wen rose up. I (Mencius) told it to King Xuan of Qi, but he could not understand anyway. Tang maintained attentive every day; King Wen felt cautious at every moment. What they depended on was not their innate intelligence, but their mind and will. How couldn’t King Xuan of Qi be another Tang or Wen? How could those dissuaders be able to block his intelligence? He forgot his mind and will although he had them. It was evident that intelligence should not be blamed for the failure of King Xuan’s behavior. Therefore the stupid cannot be changed because they do not try to change, so they remain stupid for the whole life. (CSQS 8-718)

In this passage, Wang Fuzhi first indicated that King Xuan could undertake the Kingly Way if he determined to do so with a strong will, so the realization of the Kingly Way depended on one’s will and mind more than on one’s intelligence. Then Wang claimed that without a strong will or mind, one would stay inferior and stupid forever. Truly, with a strong mind or will, one could increase one’s knowledge and become wiser. However, Wang Fuzhi must admit that whether one might develop a strong will or mind to undertake something also depended on one’s intelligence and *qi*. Therefore, King Xuan of Qi could not carry out the Kingly Way while King Tang and King Wen could, just because the latter had superior intelligence and knew what to choose. Moreover, it was more proper to explain that those stupid could not change themselves from the aspect of their low intelligence than that of their weak will, for it was low intelligence that caused low understanding ability and thus not knowing what to choose. Then why did Wang Fuzhi emphasize the role of will but devalue the intelligence?

More questionable was Wang Fuzhi’s description of thinking/思. He made a distinction between thinking/思 and sensation/感. He insisted that the arising of compassion in ordinary people was sensation when they saw a baby crawling near the verge of a well, for their mind followed what they saw and did not act on its own behalf. In contrast, noblemen would always consider humanity whether they saw the baby in danger or not, and thus was truly thinking/思. As a result, Wang Fuzhi concluded,
Unmoved by external things and events, but maintaining one’s pattern and order naturally is called thinking/si. (CSQS 6-1093)

In this way, Wang put thinking on the side of humanity and nature, turned it into an utter internal intelligent process and stripped its proper function through interacting with situations. That is, only thinking humanity and nature was called thinking/si. He elaborated on this,

In the realm without seeing or hearing, there is only principle, without events originally. Without events, one can think principle indeed. This is the sole and unique function of mind. Nowadays, people cannot use their mind on metaphysical objects, so they do not know the original role of thinking, but must depend on their ears and eyes to complete their thinking. Therefore I said previously that all people in the world did not know their mind, and neither know how to think. (CSQS 6-1093)

Here, Wang Fuzhi insisted the genuine thinking was to think of human nature or principle. If a person thought on concrete objects and experience obtained through the ears and eyes, his thinking would not be true. In this way, Wang Fuzhi separated human nature and principle from human body and concrete objects and thereby would ruin his doctrines of the unity of principle and qi and heavenly nature and bodily shape. The reason that Wang Fuzhi reached this point was that he wanted to establish the superiority of nature over perception and desires. This was confirmed by his insistence that one should guide one’s seeing and hearing with one’s thinking/si. He argued,

Only by using thinking to command eyes and ears, then when one interacts with external things, it is what one should do; when one is eclipsed, it will not influence his knowledge of nearby things. Therefore it says, “The mind of dao/Way is the master, and the mind of man always listens to its command.” (CSQS 6-1093)

This quotation shows that Wang Fuzhi unblushingly regarded “thinking/si” as the mind of dao/Way. It was using the mind of dao/Way to order one’s bodily interaction with external things. In this way, one could think properly. Obviously, following Wang Fuzhi’s prescription, a human being would become a strange creature, for he had to think before taking a step, ponder before having a glance. Hence, Wang Fuzhi’s moral fundamentalism finally drove human beings to be puppets.
In order to justify the superiority of human nature, Wang Fuzhi divided virtues into the virtues obtained from nature/性之德 and virtues obtained from compliance with dao/行道之德, and insisted it was only through accomplishing the former that one could become a sage. In doing so, he turned moral cultivation into a realm where finding and fulfilling one’s nature was crucial while grasping and complying with external rules and ritual propriety was secondary. Then, he unconsciously endorsed what Wang Yangming’s disciple Wang Gen 王艮 (1483-1541) is proposed that one could become a sage if one behaved according to his innate knowledge. Hence, Wang Fuzhi could not differ himself from Wang Yangming School, but had to accept their standpoints that innate knowledge decided everything and one could become a sage even though one did not know a word or Confucian ritual propriety. From this aspect, his syncretism of Cheng-Zhu School and Lu-Wang School was unsuccessful, but showed more tacit acceptance of Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming’s doctrine although he openly criticized them.

Undoubtedly, Wang Fuzhi’s discussions on cosmology and moral cultivation finally served for the realization of the Kingly Way. It was through the Kingly Way that universal harmony and inner sageliness benefited human society and prevented the rise of conflicts and disorder. From the aspect of universal harmony, Wang Fuzhi believed that the growth of universal harmonious qi would lead to the birth of more people with good physical embodiment and thus there would be less evil people. But heavenly transformation was unpredictable and it might turn harmonious qi into disharmonious, just as a clear sky might suddenly produce stormy weather, how could man be certain that with the addition of harmonious qi, Heaven would necessarily produce more good people? In this way, Wang Fuzhi fell into what he criticized—using the principle human beings thought right to impose on Heaven. Moreover, Wang Fuzhi also had the idea that humanity and righteousness and other characteristics were human imposition on Heaven. If so, harmony and disharmony were also human imposition; how could Wang Fuzhi insist that Heaven was the Great Harmony and would produce more good persons with harmonious qi?

From the aspect of moral transformation, Wang Fuzhi believed that inner sageliness would bring forth outer kingliness certainly as described in 5.1.3. However, when he limited the degree of transformation to making good people better and evil people contented with their lot and became less harmful, he gave up Confucius’ doctrine of transformation—cultivating people’s moral consciousness so as to avoid rebellious behavior; instead he endorsed the governance that
prevented people from bad behavior while ignored their sense of honor and shame. Moreover, when he interpreted Confucius’ ideal, “in regard to the aged, [they] give them rest; in regard to peers/friends, show them sincerity; in regard to the young, treat them tenderly;” (Analects: 5.25, James Legge’s translation) he limited the aged, the young and the friends to those with whom one interacted or had relation, and thus reduced Confucius’ ideal to a goody-goody’s practice in a village. Here are Wang’s arguments.

Not mentioning that the aged and the young in Confucius’ words do not refer to all such people in the world, it is only those aged and young who interact with me, then I can give them rest and treat them tenderly…. In regard to the strangers, although they know my name and interact with me, they are no more than strangers. To a stranger, it is natural that I should not treat him with my advice and humane way and believe him sincerely as a baby crane responds to the mother crane’s cry. Therefore, to people in the world, if they are not my friends, it is enough for me not to cheat or entrap them. (CSQS 6-660)

In this quotation, Wang Fuzhi made a clear distinction between the treatment with relatives and friends and that with strangers. This could be an application of his doctrine of differentiated love. In doing this, he changed Confucius’ ideal to a practicable degree, however, it also made it nothing more than an ordinary person’ social ethics. The so-called moral transformation or outer kingliness turned into nothing but a village ethics. Wang Fuzhi’s mistake lay in his misinterpretation of the scope of the aged, young and friends and his narrow-mindedness. In fact, the old, young and friends referred to all people in the world. Confucius wished that people in the world would give the aged rest, treat friends sincerely and love the young tenderly. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi’s understanding of the sagely transformation was quite narrow and he failed to connect inner sageliness to outer kingliness.

Moreover, Wang Fuzhi took the transformation of people with the ruler’s virtue as the essence of the Kingly Way, but he fell into contradiction in discussing the feasibility of transformation. On the one hand, he thought that human beings were the most intelligent creature, had innate humanity and righteousness in their mind and were able to become sages and worthies through learning and self-cultivation. On the other hand, he again condemned ordinary people as beasts and birds knowing only food and sex and they were beyond transformation. He even claimed that noblemen and petty persons were different in their substance or physical components/qi.
Noblemen and petty persons are born from different seeds. Different seeds mean their different substance. Different substance leads to different habits and practice. Different habits and practice causes what they know and act upon are completely different. (CSQS 10-502)

If noblemen and petty persons were totally different in substance, then the sagely Yu 尧 should not have been born from the stupid Gun 鯀, and the sagely Shun 舜 and Yao 堯 should not have had their stupid sons, Dan Zhu 丹朱 and Shang Jun 商均 respectively. Moreover, it would be impossible to transform people into good or moral persons through education. Then Wang Fuzhi would have to abandon moral or virtue transformation because it did not work. On the contrary, he had to endorse legalist governance in order to put the world in order, for those petty persons were beyond transformation with virtue and education, the only way left was to force them to submit themselves to law.

The cause of Wang Fuzhi’s inconsistency was that he departed from the standpoint that qi was the master and substance of principle but valued nature or the mind of dao/Way as the master of feelings, desires and perception. Then he used nature or moral principle to classify noblemen, ordinary people and petty persons, and thus reached the conclusion that they were different in substance or qi that led to their different morality. But Wang Fuzhi dared not to claim that their different substance or seeds would lead to different nature. Otherwise, he would destroy his Confucian system which was based on the proposition that human beings shared the same nature superior to other creatures.

In implementing the Kingly Way, Wang Fuzhi gave the emperor a prime role. He required that the emperor be humane, unselfish and virtuous and insisted that unselfishness and respect were the crucial factors for the success of a kingly governance. King Tang of Shang and King Wen of Zhou were all unselfish and concerned only with the benefit of the people. But Wang Fuzhi again restricted the overthrowing of a tyrant or incompetent emperor and condemned it as against ritual propriety. His solution was to wait until the death of the tyrant and the coming of a sagely king. But he did not answer the question: provided no one could overthrow a tyrant or incompetent emperor, how could a sagely king ascend the throne? Failing to reply to this question, Wang Fuzhi fell into contradiction—becoming inhumane in the name of promoting humane governance.
7.3 The Problems in Wang Fuzhi’s Methodology and Interpretation

Among the problems in Wang Fuzhi’s methodology, two are most conspicuous. The first is that he tried to show the uniqueness of his system and his difference from others so much that he did not honor historical facts, context and common sense. For this reason, Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠 (1738-1801) pointed out that Wang Fuzhi still continued the Ming scholars’ habit of starting something new just in order to be different. (CSQS 16-540) Wang Kaiyun 王闓運 (1833-1916) decried, “when Chuanshan 船山 commented on historical events and figures, he deliberately favored what others disliked, disfavored what others liked, and assumed himself as unique and innovative.” (CSQS 16-666)

The second was that he tailored materials and facts to fit his opinions and prejudices and then used the tailored facts or false assumption to attack others. This has been indicated by many scholars, such as Zhang Shizhao 章士釗 (1881-1973), Zhao Liewen 趙烈文 (1832-1894), Sun Baoxua 孫寶瑄 (1874-1924), Lin Yu 林紆 (1852-1924), etc. Lin Yu described the characteristic of Wang Fuzhi’s historical writings with the following words, “After Wang Chuanshan’s Du Tongjian Lun 讀通鑒論 and Song Lun 宋論 emerged, ancient people were cut and bruised all over their bodies….The so-called great Confucian scholar Wang Chuanshan, at the early Qing Dynasty, often charged ancient people unfairly.” (CSQS 16-910)

The first weakness of Wang Fuzhi was demonstrated in the epilogue of Du Tongjian Lun where Wang Fuzhi declared the standard he used to evaluate historical events. He said,

So in this book, with regard to the apparent merits and evils that historians have given definite evaluations, I have omitted so as to avoid redundancy. However, I will trace the causes making them so, discern the factors making them not completely so. To those merits, I discern their superiority and inferiority; to those evils, I find their different degree of harm. Putting them in their original time and situations, judging the doers’ intention, and inferring the consequences of their behaviors, this is why I am different from Hu Zhitang 胡致堂 (1098-1156) and other historians. (CSQS 10-1177-1178)

On the outside, Wang Fuzhi seemed to acknowledge the generally recognized evaluation of historical figures. In fact, through investigating the causes of historical events and reevaluating
their goodness and evil, he aimed to overthrow the generally recognized view and show his uniqueness and difference from others. As a result, he was ready to go against common sense and historical facts to present his specious arguments. For example, regarding the historical events that Liu Bang (256-195 BC) deprived Han Xin’s military power two times when Han Xin achieved overwhelming successes north of the Yellow River, the popular view was that Liu Bang was in fear of Han Xin becoming too powerful and the risk of betraying him. But Wang Fuzhi saw this matter differently. He argued,

Han Xin overcame State Wei 魏 and destroyed State Dai 代 but Liu Bang deprived his military authority. With Zhang Er 張耳, Han Xin overcame State Zhao, and Liu Bang deprived his commanding power again. What made Han Xin submissive without any resistance and not rebellious? Here lay Liu Bang’s superiority to ordinary people. What with which Liu Bang controlled Han Xin was bravery/qi (勇)气, but not bravery only. His management, deprivation and grant must have something that made Han Xin obey sincerely. What Liu Bang won Han Xin was affection, but not affection only. Liu Bang did not trust others partially or accept slanders, and could express his mind to Han Xin. Liu Bang showed Han Xin everything he did. Han Xin thus believed that he would be trusted by Liu Bang whether the commander’s power was at hand or not. Therefore, Han Xin saw it no difference that troops belonged to him or to Liu Bang. (CSQS 10-81)

Wang Fuzhi’s explanation was that Liu Bang was totally frank to Han Xin and thus won his trust. Then Han Xin did not mind whether the troops belonged to him or Liu Bang. However, Wang Fuzhi had to answer the question why Liu Bang took away the military authority from Han Xin right after Han Xin got great victories if Liu Bang was truly frank to and unsuspicious of him. As a commander, Liu Bang knew clearly that his withdrawal of Han’s military authority would harm the morale of his troops and generals. Of course, no commander would be willing to discourage the morale of his troops. Hence, the only probable explanation was that Liu Bang suspected or was in fear of Han Xin. Actually, according to historical records, Liu Bang’s suspicion became obvious after Han Xin conquered State Qi 齊 temporarily. At that time, truly Liu Bang was not happy about Han Xin’s request, but pretentiously appointed him as the true King of State Qi, because Liu Bang realized that Han Xin’s betrayal would lead the Han Empire into complete collapse. Of course, Han Xin also
realized early that Liu Bang would not tolerate his existence in the future, so he tried to be the King of State Qi in order to secure himself a safe place. Therefore, Wang Fuzhi’s explanation was worthy of nothing but a historical distortion. However, it demonstrated that Wang Fuzhi tried to make a difference of himself regardless of historical facts.

In order to justify his view that Han Xin dared not to rebel, Wang Fuzhi unblushingly neglected the historical facts and situations and proposed that Han Xin would not be able to defend the attack of Liu Bang’s troop. Wang Fuzhi insisted that once Han Xin rebelled, Liu Bang’s other generals would besiege and destroy him. This could only show Wang Fuzhi’s ignorance of historical details, for once Han Xin betrayed Liu Bang, he would be able to unite with Xiang Yu 项羽 (232-202 BC) to fight against Liu Bang. Then Liu Bang would have to defend attacks from two sides, how could Liu Bang besiege Han Xin without worry about Xiang Yu’s attack from the rear? Moreover, once Han Xin betrayed Liu Bang, other Liu’s powerful generals would likely betray him too or changed their loyalty according to situations. Then whether Liu Bang could survive would be a question.

There were many similar cases in Wang Fuzhi’s comments on historical events. Regarding the dukes’ rebellion in the period of Emperor Jing of Han 漢景帝, Wang Fuzhi accused Jia Yi 賈誼 (200-168 BC) and Chao Cuo 晁錯 (200-154 BC) of worsening the situation and not knowing that dukedom/feudal system would disappear soon. Regarding Yue Fei’s 岳飛 (1103-1142) death, he blamed Yue Fei instead of the emperor’s suspicion and Qin Hui’s 秦桧 (1090-1155) persecution, etc. If a reader compared Wang’s comments with historical facts, he/she would find lots of unacceptable and even absurd explanations in Wang Fuzhi’s writings. This explains why Zhang Shizhao sighed, “Chuanshan was a pedantic scholar, liked to propose dazzling remarks, but often ignored the historical facts and situations.” (CSQS 16-837)

Now let’s see some examples of Wang Fuzhi’s distorted or “unique” interpretations of Confucian classics. Like the epilogue in Du Tongjian Lun, he wrote a prologue in his interpretations of the Spring-Autumn Annals and aimed at Hu Anguo’s 胡安國 (1074-1138) Interpretation of the Spring-Autumn Annals/chunqiu zhuán 春秋傳. He criticized Hu Anguo to have too many immoderately emotional and suspicious ideas in his interpretations. From the aspect of immoderate emotion, he accused Hu Anguo of causing Wang Anshi’s obstinacy in
reform in disregard of heavenly warnings and popular criticism. From the aspect of suspicion, he accused Hu Anguo of having led the Song emperor to kill Yue Fei in order to secure royal power and prevent the seizure of powerful generals.

Undoubtedly, these accusations are unfounded. First, Wang Anshi died in 1086 while Hu Anguo was born in 1074. When Wang Anshi started his reform in 1068, Hu Anguo was not born yet. How could Hu have influenced Wang Anshi? Second, Hu Anguo could not prevent his thoughts from being misinterpreted after his death, just as Confucius could not prevent Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BC) from interpreting his thoughts with the ideas of the Yin-yang School. Therefore Hu should not be blamed for the death of Yue Fei. Obviously, when Wang Fuzhi wrote his comment on the Spring-Autumn Annals, he tried to overthrow Hu’s authority. Therefore he showed much prejudice toward Hu on the basis of his narrow-mindedness. For this reason, the compiler of Siku Quanshu 四庫全書 commented on Wang Fuzhi’s Chunqiu Jia Shuo 春秋家說 with the following words:

Although he was right in many places when attacking Hu Anguo’s interpretations, he nevertheless liked to make too broad views and did not care its suitability. His shortcomings thus are equal to Hu’s. (CSQS 5-377)

In Shi Guang Zhuan 詩廣傳, Wang Fuzhi ignored the historical background of Guan Zhong’s 管仲 proposal that “the fullness of barn leads to people’s knowledge of rituals and etiquettes; the sufficiency of food and clothes leads to people’s sense of honor and shame”, while he bluntly condemned Guan Zhong to use the branch to seek for the root, or the profit to seek for morality. (CSQS3-394) In his Interpretation of the Book of Documents/Shangshu yinyi 尚書引義, Wang Fuzhi assumed that from the Yellow Emperor to Emperor Shun, the throne was always abdicated to the Prime Minister, and regarded the top officials in Xia and Shang dynasties as prime ministers. The appointment of prime minister then was like the establishment of Heir Apparent in later dynasties. It was from King Wen of Zhou that the position of prime minister was removed. (CSQS2-244) All these interpretations were nothing but his unfounded assumptions.

The second problem was that Wang Fuzhi tailored material and facts to fit his opinions and prejudices and then used the tailored facts to attack others’ views. In the Analects, The most obvious example was his interpretation of “In teaching there should be no distinction of
classes/you jiao wulei 有教無類” (CSQS6-838) and his criticism of Zi Zhang 子張 (CSQS 6-879). In order to criticize Zi Zhang’s words, “When a man holds fast to virtue, but without seeking to extend it, believes in right principles, but without firm sincerity”, (Analects: 19.2, James Legge’s translation) Wang Fuzhi misinterpreted “holding fast to virtue and extending it” as “using one virtue to expand another virtue.”

Virtue [virtue from practice] is what is obtained by one’s mind. Taking what one obtains and extending it, one will have a virtue here, and a virtue there. (CSQS 6-878)

This comment was truly confusing. Wang Fuzhi did not explain how it came to the case that there was a virtue here and a virtue there. However, his purpose was clear, i.e. to reject the probability of extending virtue. However, this rejection contradicted with his insistence that one should cultivate virtue in order to understand the sagely Way in his commentary on the Doctrine of the Mean. He said,

In Chapter 27, it says that noblemen solidify the sagely Way through cultivating virtues for the sagely Way is originally solidified with the sagely virtue. In Chapter 30, it says that the sage unites the Way of Heaven with the sagely virtue too, for what makes Heaven great depends on heavenly virtue. (CSQS 6-569)

Obviously, if one could not extend his virtue, one would not be able to grasp the sagely Way or unite with the Way of Heaven. Therefore, a conclusion is, either Zi Zhang’s proposal was right, or Wang was self-contradictory.

In his reading of the Mencius, Wang Fuzhi interpreted “reality/qing 情” as feelings and emotions in order to justify his doctrine that nature was good but feelings were the source of evil. Mencius said, “In terms of the reality of nature, nature can be good. This is what I call nature good.” (Mencius: 6A.6) Mencius meant that the real potential of nature could be good, but did not exclude that nature could be bad. But Wang Fuzhi completely interpreted “reality/qing” as feelings and claimed,

As for feelings, they sometime can lead to badness, when one does not follow the due measure of heavenly rule and lets joy, anger, sadness and pleasure to issue freely….As for feelings that can be good, it is because they are penetrated and issued by nature. Thus I can
infer nature from feelings and believe that nature has its goodness truly and acts as the basis and standard to govern feelings. Therefore I say nature is good. (CSQS 8-698)

Here, Wang Fuzhi regarded qing as feelings and the manifestation of human nature’s goodness. He took human nature as the natural rule of feelings, and again insisted on using human nature to guide feelings. This undoubtedly caused inconsistency in his arguments, now that human nature was the natural rule of feelings, what was the necessity to regulate feelings with it? For instance, no one would need to regulate one’s eyes with the principle of eyes deliberately.

Wang Fuzhi’s method of tailoring material to fit his view also led to his static view of things although he proposed evolutionary views in human nature or history. For example, he proposed a method to discern whether a minister was loyal or wicked—to see whether he could adhere to his original standpoints. In application, he criticized Emperor Wu of Han who could not have found Zhufu Yan’s 主父偃 (?-126 BC) craftiness. Wang’s arguments were like these: at the beginning when Zhufu Yan wrote to the emperor, he criticized Meng Tian 蒙恬 (?-210 BC), a general of Qin expanded China through attacking the Huns; but after he became high official in the court, he persuaded the emperor to annex and defend the territory Meng Tian got from the Huns. Then Wang concluded,

For the same person and the same matter, after several years, there are such self-contradictory views toward Meng Tian’s attack and the territory Meng got. From this aspect, it is not hard to find whether a person is wicked or cheating. (CSQS 10-133)

Obviously, Wang Fuzhi commented Zhufu Yan with his subjective and static view, and thus could not understand the historical event well. Wang’s subjective and static view was resulted from both his narrow-mindedness and his lack of any experience as a high official. During Wang Fuzhi’s life, except for a few days his service as a remonstrator in the Yongli court, he mainly was a juren 舉人 and never participated in any real administration. To some degree, he was no more than a scholar-landlord in the countryside. Thus he could not truly understand the ministers’ concern in the imperial court and thus his comments was nothing but his own unfounded assumption. Generally, it was understandable that an ordinary person or student saw a matter differently from a high official, just as a person at the foot of a mountain saw the scenery different from a person on the top. As a student, one did not need coordinate various factors and
thus could favor one view without regard to other factors, just as Zhufu Yan wrote to the emperor at the beginning. But as a high official, one would consider more factors and saw the same matter more completely, how could he stick to his old and wrong idea and not to adopt new idea? This explained why Zhufu Yan later supported the defense of the territory. Moreover, everyone kept changing one’s views toward the same issue or matter from childhood to old age, how could Wang Fuzhi forbid others to change their views? For this reason, Wang Kaiyun criticized, “Wang Fuzhi’s discourses on history are very detestable, I wonder why people nowadays appreciate them.” (CSQS 16-673)

In summary, the problems in Wang Fuzhi’s criticism and interpretations can be classified as three kinds. 1. To attack a thinker based on partial or selected evidence regardless of the whole context and background, such as Laozi’s bellows metaphor; 2. To propose ideas and criticize others due to his own ignorance, such as Daoist concept of wu and Buddhist concept of emptiness/kong; 3. To accuse others of what they did not have based on his prejudice and bias, as shown in his criticism on Guan Zhong.

7.4 Conclusion: an Overall Evaluation of Wang Fuzhi’s Interpretation and Critique of Confucian Classics and History in a Time of Crisis

Being a Ming loyalist with a strong hatred toward the Manchurian Dynasty, Wang Fuzhi passed his life as a hermit in the mountains of western Hunan province. His recluse life gave him plentiful time to ponder the causes of the collapse of the Ming and the conquest of the Manchurian and thus to construct his hermeneutics of crisis—a synthetic and comprehensive system of Confucianism and Chinese history dealing with various political and intellectual problems of his time. However, his recluse life, ethnocentrism and Confucian education again worked as obstacles and prevented him from a sympathetic understanding of others and led him to be narrow-minded and prejudicial when he commented on other people and cultures. In the following, from the perspective of hermeneutics, especially, from Professor Vincent Shen’s three stages of hermeneutics—exegesis, understanding and critique, we will evaluate Wang Fuzhi and indicate his success and failure in term of his hermeneutics of crisis—the synthetic and comprehensive system of Confucianism and Chinese history.
Based on his understanding of the different branches of hermeneutics, such as ontological, methodological and critical hermeneutics, Professor Vincent Shen proposes three stages of hermeneutic operation: explanation, understanding and critique. In Professor Shen’s view, explanation purports to disclose the structure of a system of signs and thus discover the meaning and reference of the system. Understanding aims to grasp the world of meaningfulness the system of signs discloses and its relevance to the writer’s existential situation. Critique involves a process of reflection attempting to expose the unconscious individual and collective emotions/desires and social value/relationship incorporated in the production of the system of signs. Critique is such a reflection that will render these emotions/desires and values/relationship from the level of individual and collective unconsciousness to the level of consciousness and thereby be released from their determination. (Shen: 1988) After these three stages, a reader will be able to grasp the meaning of a system of signs, such as a text, or even a group of written works, both understandingly and critically.

With these three steps in mind, I will examine Wang Fuzhi’s interpretation of Confucian classics and Chinese history at the time of cultural crisis. From the perspective of exegesis, Wang Fuzhi generally could respect the original meaning of Confucian classics, as shown in many of his exegetical works/baishu 稗疏, although sometimes he also gave strained and farfetched interpretations, as the compiler of Si Ku Quan Shu indicated. (CSQS2-227; CSQS3-288) However, with regard to the interpretation of historical events, Wang Fuzhi often did not respect the historical texts. One example, among many others, is his misinterpretation of Guan Zhong’s word (see 7.3); another example is his unfounded modification of the original text in the History of Later Han/houhanshu 後漢書. As Lin Yu 林纾 (1852-1924) indicated, Wang Fuzhi changed the saying, “the loyal minister is not selfish; while the selfish minister is not loyal 忠臣不私, 私臣不忠” in the History of Later Han into “the loyal minister is not cooperative, while the cooperative minister is not loyal 忠臣不和, 和臣不忠”. (CSQS 16-910)

To answer the question why Wang Fuzhi misinterpreted Guan Zhong’s words and changed the text in the History of the Later Han, we come to the second stage of hermeneutics--understanding. Wang’s bold behaviors showed both his self-confidence in his understanding and evaluation of others as well as his narrow-mindedness and self-opinionated thinking. To some degree, from his ambitious mission of initiating a breakthrough for an original reinterpretation of
the *Six Classics* and presenting a solution for all problems generated in the crisis of his time, he assumed himself much higher and wiser than most historical figures except for the Duke of Zhou and Confucius. In other words, he implicitly thought himself as a sage parallel to Confucius and the Duke of Zhou and thus was entitled to give the last words in praising and criticizing other people. Therefore, he looked down others and could not take patience to stand in others’ shoes to understand their words and activities, even to the extent of changing other’s words in order to fit or justify his own assumptions. As a result, Wang Fuzhi got the reputation of abusing historical figures without respect to their true situations and facts that happened at a long temporal distance. 47

When we further explore the causes of Wang Fuzhi’s unsympathetic understanding and evaluation of historical figures and his farfetched interpretation of Confucian classics, we may get an answer from his life-experience, education background and his ideal values. Wang Fuzhi admitted in his Jiashi Jielu 家世節錄 (*Excerpt of my family genealogy*), “he did not restrain himself much and often committed speech errors when he was young”. (CSQS16-152) This shows that Wang Fuzhi had an impetuous temperament and thus would criticize other people carelessly and irresponsibly. After he grew up, the helplessness and hardship during the national crisis worsened this impetuous temperament. When an outlet through giving comments to historical figures was available, it turned out to be uncontrollable abuses and unsympathetic criticism of others.

Wang’s Confucian education and ideal values also provided a platform for him to criticize others without ground. Being a dedicated Confucian scholar, he used Confucian principle to evaluate historical figures and thus could not hold his hard criticism when he found others had a slight deviation from it, as shown in his criticism of Du Fu and Han Yu (see 6.2.1). He also envisioned Confucianism as the orthodox doctrine and criticized all the rest schools and doctrines as heretical without taking patience to understand them. His fundamentalist attitude toward Confucianism also led to his Sino-ethnocentrism, and thus he could not tolerate or acknowledge other culture’s merits, such as shown in his denigration of Matteo Ricci’s astronomy (see 6.9).

47 This view is held by Zhang Shizhao (CSQS16-837), Lin Yu (CSQS16-910), Wang Kaiyun (CSQS16-666), Cai Shansi (CSQS16-1243), etc.
Moreover, as Wang Fuzhi assumed his mission to make a breakthrough on the interpretation of the *Six Classics*, he implicitly regarded himself as a superman or a sage parallel to Confucius and the Duke of Zhou. With this attitude, he became bolder and irresponsible when criticizing others, while showing more narrow-mindedness in his comments, to the extent that he believed he found the truth and had the final voice on everything. To some degree, he also implicitly showed some criticism toward Confucius, such as when he reinterpreted Confucius’ words, “in regard to the aged, [they] give them rest; in regard to peers/friends, show them sincerity; in regard to the young, treat them tenderly;” (see 7.2) and his criticism of Zi Zhang, because Zi Zhang’s words was uttered by Confucius too. (see 7.3)

After the above analysis, it would be easy to understand why many scholars bitterly criticized Wang Fuzhi in the later Qing and the Republic of China. For instances, Wang Kaiyun commented, “Wang Fuzhi’s historical comments just support what others dislike, and devalue what others like, and show his uniqueness and originality. Wang Fuzhi was imprisoned in the shallow and mean learning since Song and Yuan Dynasties, and took it as the sagely Way. Thus, he was eligible to be the master composing prescribed eight-paragraph essay for civil examination, but ineligible for an original writer.”(CSQS16-666) Likewise, Zhang Shizhao said, Wang Fuzhi still inherited the mean habit of shouting and the bias of the Ming scholars. Although Wang retired from society and did not take part in the government, he still liked to guess the cause of rise and fall of dynasties, and demanded excessively those he intended to blame. Wang Fuzhi was nothing more than a leader of those pedantic Confucian scholars. (CSQS16-837)

However, Wang Fuzhi's narrow-mindedness and bias in his interpretation of Confucian classics and historical events could not eclipse the merits of his solutions for problems generated in the crisis he encountered. One of his merits is his reflection on the monarchy and his proposition that the monarch should be unselfish to the throne and should concern with the people’s welfare only. Although he could not reach the idea that Huang Zongxi proposed to limit the monarch’s power with the Royal Academy, he nevertheless found the evil of dictatorship or absolute monarchy and advocated the thought of sustaining the people’s livelihood. Following a Confucian formula, he requested the emperors to implement the Kingly Way and cultivate the Great Harmony through their self-cultivation.
Pertaining to his solution to the problems generated by the political crisis of his time, he traced their causes to the corruption of social custom and the negative consequences of the misleading doctrines. Apart from criticizing heretical doctrines and schools, he painstakingly corrected previous Confucian doctrines and interpretations and tried to establish a comprehensive Confucian system and purify people’s mind both on the cosmological level and on moral level. Based on his qi-monism, he justified the unity of principle and qi, body and nature and rejected quiet-sitting/jingzuo 靜坐, and thus released his students from the shackle and the misleading influences of the Cheng-Zhu School, and provided people a healthier attitude toward human life. His theory of the mutual support of knowledge and action and his emphasis on habit and practice constituted a valuable attempt to correct the shortcoming of Wang Yangming School and also pointed out a right way for later generations in their moral cultivation. In order to avoid misleading effects in the accumulation of knowledge and the investigation of things, he insisted that human nature had the innate principle of life that acted as a standard to guide one’s thinking and behavior, and thus everyone could cultivate and correct himself from his childhood because of this innate knowledge. In addition, he also did his best to explain why human beings were the most intelligent among all beings and should be the master of the universe and could assist Heaven to maintain the Great Harmony and supply what Heaven did not provide. In short, from the Great Harmony to humanity (human nature) to the Kingly Way, Wang Fuzhi presented a comprehensive solution to the problems generated by the crisis of his time and served as an invaluable reference for later generations. Especially, his requirement that everyone should cultivate his/her harmonious qi so as to make the universe harmonious had indeed elevated Gu Yanwu’s slogan “The rise and fall of the world is everyone’s duty” to the height of cosmological level.

Another merit of Wang is his criticism toward other scholars and schools. Using humanity and responsibility for human beings as the standard, he often uttered insightful and sparkling remarks in his criticism and pointed out the reason why heretical doctrines and schools misled human mind, degenerated custom and led to the collapse of the Ming. For example, through Zhuangzi’s free excursion/xiaoyao 逍遙, he found Zhuangzi’s irresponsibility toward social affairs; through Wang Yangming’s saying, “the substance of the mind is beyond good and evil” and Buddhist doctrine, “no-mind will lead to the extinction of one’s evil”, he saw their negative and destructive impact on social custom and justice. He also showed much insight when he criticized
the universal love that Mohism and Catholicism proposed, and insisted on the Confucian truism that one should engage in the process of extending one’s love from one’s parents to Heaven and earth.

When it comes to Confucian scholars, Wang Fuzhi had well pointed out their success and failure, merits and shortcoming. For example, he pointed out the insufficiency of Fan Zhen and Han Yu’s arguments when they fought against Buddhism. He also warned later people not to follow some Neo-Confucians to interpret Confucian classics with Buddhist method and thought. In order to correct the abstract concept of heavenly principle/\textit{tianli} 天理 of Cheng-Zhu School, he challenged its doctrine, “Heaven is principle” and resettled the principle into human mind and claimed it as human nature or innate knowledge. In order to avoid the subjective self-enclosure of Wang Yangming School, he proposed the bifurcated structure of the mind—the mind of the Way/\textit{daoxin} and the mind of man/\textit{renxin}, and insisted on regulating the mind of man with the mind of the Way, and thus set up an embankment for human desires and feelings.

However, due to the limit of his knowledge and experience, Wang Fuzhi inevitably committed some mistakes when reinterpreting Confucian classics and evaluating other people and schools and thus failed to present a plausible solution for the problems generated by the crisis. For example, he misinterpreted Mencius’ words, “if a king does not behave well, ministers from the royal family have right to dethrone him.”(\textit{Mencius 5.18}) He insisted that the ruler Mencius suggested to be replaced referred only to dukes, not to a king or an emperor. He elaborated his theory that when dethroning a duke, the ministers from the duke’s family would inform the king and other dukes and did that after getting their agreement. With regard to a king or an emperor, no one dared to replace him. However, if the king or emperor misbehaved, what to do? His solution was to wait until the king or emperor perished by himself. (CSQS6-1136) At this point, Wang Fuzhi tended to become a merciless supporter of dictatorship and to give up his humane concern. Again, troubled by his ethnocentrism, he did his best to denigrate other peoples as barbarians and looked down on them as no better than birds and beasts, and thus could not provide a practicable solution for the harmonious coexistence of different peoples and take his patience to understand and acknowledge other people or culture’s merits. Without communication but self-isolated separation as Wang Fuzhi hoped, his doctrine could only strengthen the blind superiority complex of Chinese people and thus failed to deal with the issue of foreigners’ invasion. Paradoxically, Wang Fuzhi originally proposed separation policy
between Han Chinese and nomadic tribes (especially the Manchurians) in the north in order to maintain the superiority complex of Han Chinese. After the Manchurians conquered China, they inherited the superiority complex of Han Chinese and applied separation policy to westerners, and incurred the humiliation of Chinese and the invasion of foreign people. If Wang Fuzhi’s spirit still hovered over China by 1840, Wang Fuzhi might have to reflect on the efficiency and feasibility of his proposal.

Despite Wang Fuzhi’s voluminous works, being a Ming loyalist with strong hatred toward the Manchurian Dynasty, he passed his life as a hermit in the mountains of western Hunan province. His recluse life gave him plentiful time to write but also acted as a barrier for the circulation of his writings. During Wang’s life time, his writings only circulated among his relatives and students, seldom were known to outside world and thus exerted little social and cultural influence. In 1866, Zeng Guofan collected and published Wang Fuzhi’s writings and named them as *Chuanshan Yishu* 船山遺書. Since then, Wang Fuzhi's hermeneutics and critique started to exert greater influence upon Chinese intellectuals.

It goes without saying that Wang Fuzhi's wildness in reinterpreting Confucian classics and evaluating historical figures incurred many criticisms after his works were published. But he also won Hu Shi’s acclaim 胡适 (1891-1962). For his purpose to initiate the new cultural movement in the early 20th century, Hu Shi compared Wang Fuzhi to Nietzsche, and insisted that Wang Fuzhi urged people to become superior men.(CSQS 16-892) Moreover, Wang Fuzhi's separatist policy also attracted the attention of Zhang Binglin’s 章炳麟 (1869-1936), a fundamental anti-Manchurian. Zhang used Wang Fuzhi's idea to support his anti-Manchurian activity and claimed, “In the late Qing, it was Wang Fuzhi’s doctrine that stood remarkably to agitate the coward and bigoted people and achieved the restoration of Han Chinese rule.” (CSQS 16-441)

If a reader asks what role Wang Fuzhi's doctrine and interpretation could play for today? We can point out that Wang Fuzhi's reconstruction of Confucianism and his solutions to political and cultural crisis still serve as a good reference for the reconstruction of Chinese culture in the 21st century. As is known, since 1840, Chinese people have been running through a process of changes from cultural self-confidence to cultural self-doubting and self-abandonment, and now, to the reconstruction of traditional culture in the context of global culture. For example, China’s government is now proposing the establishment of a harmonious society/ hexie shehui 和谐社會,
which can be regarded as an echo to the Confucian ideal of harmony articulated by Wang Fuzhi’s proposal of the maintenance of the Great Harmony, as harmony is the pivotal concept running through Wang Fuzhi’s political, moral and cosmological arguments. From this perspective, it is obvious that Wang Fuzhi’s doctrine and interpretation could still supply us with a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and society from his positive philosophical insights.
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