

Studying Wang Yangming

**Studying Wang
Yangming: History of
a Sinological Field**

GEORGE L. ISRAEL

Studying Wang Yangming: History of a Sinological Field

George L. Israel

ISBN: 9798786631297

Published by Kindle Direct Publishing, 2022

© 2022, George L. Israel

Cover Image: A statue of Wang Yangming located in Chongyi
County, Jiangxi Province, China

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: The Official and Moralist—Early Writings, 1600–1916	5
Chapter 2: The Inspirational Idealist—Translation and Scholarship, 1914–1950	21
Chapter 3: Transformation of the Wang Yangming Scholarship, 1950–1980	59
Chapter 4: A Rising Volume of Varied Publications— The Academic Historical Setting, 1980-2020	93
Chapter 5: Biographical and Historical Studies of Wang Yangming and his Followers	115
The Early Ming Background.....	115
Three Articles on Wang Yangming’s Life and Legacy.....	118
Wang Yangming’s Political Career and Military Campaigns: Further Reflections	124
Contemporary Criticism of Wang Yangming	130
The First-Generation Followers of Wang Yangming	137
The Fate of the Wang Yangming School in Qing China	156
Conclusion.....	164
Chapter 6: Religious Studies of Wang Yangming	165
Comparative Religious Studies Scholarship to the 1990s.....	166
Wang Yangming and Christianity.....	186
Wang Yangming and Buddhism.....	192
Conclusion.....	199

Chapter 7: Philosophical and Comparative Studies of Wang Yangming	201
<i>Liangzhi</i> and <i>Wanwu yiti</i>	204
<i>Zhi xing heyi</i>	215
Other Comparative Research on Wang Yangming.....	222
Modern New Confucianism and the Contemporary Meaning of Wang Yangming.....	230
Conclusion.....	241
Epilogue	243
Reference Works	245
Index	269

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book began as a series of articles. An earlier version of Chapters 1 and 2 appeared together as one article in “Discovering Wang Yangming: Scholarship in Europe and North America, 1600-1950,” *Monumenta Serica* 66, no. 2 (Nov. 2018): 357-389. An earlier version of Chapter 3 appeared in “The Transformation of the Wang Yangming Scholarship in the West,” *Asian Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (Apr. 2018): 135-156.

I am grateful for all the support and assistance I have received while completing this book. The librarians at Middle Georgia State University have been fabulously resourceful in locating publications not readily available online. In this regard, I would especially like to thank Elizabeth Ruff. For her conscientious copy-editing, I would like to thank Kelley Land. I feel fortunate to have found someone who is so capable and responsive here in my hometown. Scholars writing in this field, such as Dr. David Bartosch and Dr. Barend Noordam, have provided encouragement and helped me grapple with German- and Dutch-language scholarship. I would also like to thank Dr. Wu Wennan, Dr. Du Yongtao, Dr. Wang Yu, Dr. Dong Ping, and Dr. Qian Ming for their feedback and assistance. Most importantly, for her unflagging support and patience, I would especially like to thank my wife Thiha Hoang.

INTRODUCTION

This study provides a history of writing about the eminent Ming dynasty (1368–1644) scholar-official Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) and his followers in sixteenth-century China. Wang Yangming is widely regarded as one of the most influential Confucian philosophers in Chinese history. With respect to his influence and contribution, he is often ranked alongside Confucius and Mencius (Mengzi), who played central roles in forging the tradition during the Eastern Zhou dynasty, as well as Zhu Xi, the Song dynasty (1130–1200) architect of the School of Principle (*lixue* 理學), or what is known in the English language as Neo-Confucianism. Furthermore, with respect to the history of the Ming dynasty, Wang has been the subject of much scholarship not only for his contribution to Chinese philosophy but also because of his rich career as a scholar-official, his military writings and campaigns, and his literary achievements.

To get a sense of the scope of this literature, consider the recent ten-volume *Wang Yangming yanjiu wenxian suoyin quanbian* 王陽明研究文獻索引全編 (Complete catalogue of Wang Yangming research publications). The project's goal was to produce a bibliography of all scholarship published about Wang Yangming between the sixteenth century and 2018. After separately listing 518 Chinese-language works designated as classics, the first two volumes provide a bibliography of Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and English publications, categorizing them by language and format (primarily books and articles) and arranging entries chronologically. For example, the compilers listed 775 Chinese-language books, 553 Japanese books, 218 Korean books, and 11 English books; for articles, there are 3590 in Chinese, 888 in Japanese, 1075 in Korean, and 92 in English. Scholarship in other European languages was not included.

Most of this scholarship does indeed have Wang Yangming as the subject. The topics of a certain percent, however, include his followers or individuals influenced by his philosophy in China or East Asia, albeit far from inclusively. Clearly, this comprises a vast amount of writing, and several different approaches can help bring it into view synoptically in a concise book. One might, for example, write a brief overview of the history of the school of Wang Yangming in East Asia, introducing his life and thought, documenting individuals in China, Japan, and Korea who declared themselves disciples or wrote of his impact on them, and providing a bibliographical apparatus identifying major scholarship on the various followers, schools, ideas, and influences. That would be a worthy undertaking, but even a bare outline would

surely require a lengthy compendium in several volumes. Alternatively, one might arrange the scholarship in an overtly philosophical way, classifying it according to concepts, arguments, or types of knowledge. Such an approach would likewise be valuable but also surely selective its own right, as well as amounting to a lengthy project.

The angle I have chosen is to write a concise historical survey of one component of this literature—English-language publications predating 2020. I have done so in the hopes that a study of this scholarship can open a window on a broader Western literature (here defined simply as English, French, and German) and, further out on the horizon, the Chinese and Japanese scholarship that informed it. Conceived as such, this study imposes certain limits on the subject material. It does not, for example, wade into the history of writing about followers of or individuals influenced by Wang Yangming in Japan, Korea, or, more generally, modern East Asia.¹

As for the sixteenth-century School of Mind (*xinxue* 心學, also translated as Learning of Mind), which is a branch of the School of Principle, I have stayed with the lineage professing adherence to Wang’s teachings and to his first-generation followers, meaning individuals he personally instructed and who formally declared themselves disciples. Naturally, the literature itself has decided which among those disciples became the subject of scholarly inquiry. Consequently, late-Ming literati who foregrounded Wang Yangming’s role in their intellectual development or Ruist (Confucian) philosophizing are not included. For example, Li Zhi (1527–1602), about whom there is a substantial scholarship, is not included.² Indeed, those publications alone might lend themselves to a similarly conceived monograph, because Wang Yangmingism (here defined as the movement inspired by Wang) has been associated with much-discussed late-Ming cultural trends and changing conceptions of self, as having provided intellectual resources for an early modern period in Chinese history.³

The organization of the book is, I hope, straightforward. The first four chapters provide a chronological survey of this literature, breaking it down into four periods: 1600 to 1916 (Chapter 1), 1914 to 1950 (Chapter 2), 1950 to 1980 (Chapter 3), and 1980 to 2020 (Chapter 4). In each, attention is paid to historical factors that shaped the publication of this scholarship as well as

¹ As a starting point for the literature on Korean Wang Yangmingism, see So-yi Chung, “Korean Yangming Learning,” and Edward Chung, *Great Synthesis of Wang Yangming*. For scholarship on Wang Yangmingism in Japan, see Ogyū Shigehiro, “Construction,” and Steben, “Nakae Tōju.”

² For a recent review, see Wu Wennan, “Li Zhi,” 75–88.

³ See, for example, the collection of articles in Handler-Spitz, *The Objectionable Li Zhi*. For the early modern, see Chow, *Publishing, Culture, and Power*.

its basic content. Since most publications date to the last period, the remaining three chapters further organize it topically: historical studies (Chapter 5), religious studies (Chapter 6), and philosophical or comparative philosophical studies (Chapter 7). In these chapters, the literature is also subdivided by common themes or topics.

Lastly, here at the outset I would like to explain in brief the origins of the project. In 2014, I visited China for the purpose of conducting research on the history of Wang Yangming scholarship since the 1980s (after Reform and Opening).⁴ One institution central to the publication of related research was the Zhejiang Academy of Social Sciences, and I had the opportunity to spend some time there. One scholar, Dr. Qian Ming, who had been writing in this area since the 1980s, proposed that I write a review of the Western-language literature, something similar to what Wing-tsit Chan had written in “Wang Yangming: Western Studies and an Annotated Bibliography,” which was published in 1972 in *Philosophy East and West*.⁵ At first, I did not think of it as a topic for a book-length study, as opposed to journal articles, but over time it became evident that the subject matter was amenable to a monograph. This book has resulted from my research and is intended as a concise “state of the field” overview of a literature that extends from the seventeenth century to 2020. In the epilogue, I will say a few words about the most recent developments.

⁴ For this research, see Israel, “Renaissance of Wang Yangming Studies.”

⁵ For other literature on this subject, see Wu Wennan, “Yangming xue zai Meiguo.”

CHAPTER 1:

The Official and Moralist—Early Writings, 1600–1916

In a review of the Protestant missionary Frederick Goodrich Henke's *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*, published in the *International Journal of Ethics* in 1917, Kai-Lok Yen states, "In this volume, English students of philosophy are introduced for the first time to one of the most influential Chinese thinkers. It is doubtful whether they knew him in even the most indirect way before the appearance of Dr. Henke's presentation of his work."¹ Indeed, Henke's English translation (published in 1916) of the first volume in Shi Bangyao's 施邦曜 (1585–1644) *Yangming xiansheng jiyao* 陽明先生集要 (Collected essential [writings] of Sir Yangming) was an important turning point in the study of the Ming philosopher. Prior, his work had received little attention in Europe and North America. In his annotated bibliography, Wing-tsit Chan listed only two earlier publications.² In fact, if the parameters of the search are defined as scholarly articles and monographs, Chan's list is not incorrect. But if those parameters are broadened to include other types of literature published prior to 1916, then we find that Wang Yangming was by no means entirely absent from scholarly work.

That might come as a surprise to those familiar with the history of European sinology. It is well known that from the late sixteenth century, when Jesuit missionaries first began to translate and introduce Chinese philosophy, up to the second half of the twentieth century, during which the entire history and full range of Chinese thought became available in the West, Song and Ming Confucian philosophy received far less attention than ancient Chinese philosophy.³ But here too a distinction must be drawn, because whereas some Song dynasty *Daoxue* 道學 (School of the Way) philosophers were discussed by the Jesuits, Ming philosophy, especially as developed by Wang Yangming and his followers, was largely neglected.⁴ In the literature on Confucianism in Chinese history predating Henke's translation, the development of this tradition is

¹ Kai-Lok Yen, "Review of *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*," 24.

² Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions*, 82–87.

³ Cui Yujun, *Chen Rongjie*, 51–52.

⁴ For the period under discussion, Song dynasty *Daoxue* primarily refers narrowly to Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤, Cheng Hao 程顥, Cheng Yi 程頤, and Zhu Xi 朱熹.

typically characterized as having waned after the classical period and having entirely ceased after the Song dynasty.

Even as late as the early 1900s, when the first English-language introductions to the history and characteristics of Chinese philosophy were published, Wang Yangming and his followers were not included. In the “Introduction” to his *A Brief History of Early Chinese Philosophy*, which was published in 1914, D. T. Suzuki (Suzuki Daisetsu 鈴木大拙, 1870–1966) offers a brief historical overview. Concerning the “re-awakening of Chinese philosophy during the Song Dynasty,” he judges that “this period of Chinese renaissance did not bring out any new philosophical problems outside of the narrow path already beaten by the earlier Confucians.”⁵ In fact, Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) is mentioned only in endnotes. As for Ming developments, Suzuki does speak positively of Wang Yangming as “a great moral and intellectual character”:

He was a worthy heir to the thoughts that stimulated and rejuvenated the Chinese mind at the time of the Song renaissance. Though he was not an independent thinker in the sense of being a non-Confucian, he was original enough to find a new path to the confirmation and realization of the old time-honored doctrines. After the passing of this luminary, the Chinese intellectual heavens were once more overcast with clouds, and from his time until the present day nothing significant or deserving special mention has ever stirred Chinese serenity.⁶

However, because D. T. Suzuki believed that the most important Chinese philosophy was to be found in Daoism, Buddhism, and pre-Qin Confucianism, his exposition did not include discussion of Song and Ming developments, hence the name of his book.

In *The Three Religions of China: Lectures Delivered at Oxford*, Methodist minister, missionary, and sinologist William Soothill (1861–1935) follows a similar pattern in his presentation of the history of Confucianism, albeit with some differences. In his lecture on “Confucius and His School,” Soothill states that after Confucius’s and Mencius’s time, three great schools of commentators arose—one each during the Han, Song, and Qing dynasties.⁷ His exposition then focuses on Confucius, Mencius, and Zhu Xi. Even here, however, although he gives extended treatment to Confucius and Mencius, Soothill has little to say about Zhu Xi, noting that “extremely little of his work has been translated into English, nor has it ever been thoroughly studied by

⁵ D. T. Suzuki, *Brief History*, 6.

⁶ D. T. Suzuki, *Brief History*, 6.

⁷ Soothill, *Three Religions*, 40. These lectures were delivered in 1912.

Europeans.”⁸ Yet he had some sense as to Zhu’s importance, for he notes that “his voluminous commentaries on these [classical] works and his philosophical treatises have been the orthodoxy of China for seven hundred years,” remaining “the authoritative standard for the nation.”⁹

Soothill also mentions the controversy Zhu’s ideas had caused among Western interpreters: “The accusation has been laid against him that he denied the existence of God, and the immortality of the soul. For instance, he describes Heaven as Law, and this definition, together with his prevailing agnosticism, has undoubtedly influenced the minds of many of his fellow countrymen.”¹⁰ Although some of Zhu’s passages suggested to Soothill that “he is by no means either atheistic or agnostic,”¹¹ something meriting further research, he nevertheless came to the tentative conclusion that “it is well to reserve one’s judgment, but there seems some justification for saying that he added nothing to the religious life of his nation, but rather encouraged that kind of agnosticism which is an enemy of research and knowledge.”¹²

Thus, Soothill was generally dismissive of seven hundred years of late imperial China’s orthodoxy, which is hardly surprising given other statements in the book. He concludes the lecture by stating that “as a spiritual force Confucianism is not, and never has been, vital, for it is spiritually pulseless and unemotional, and its tendency towards agnosticism is a fatal barrier to true philosophy, whose very life-breath is research and inquiry, even into that which is unknowable.”¹³

A similar—but more benign—neglect is characteristic of the lectures delivered in 1914 by the British diplomat and sinologist Herbert A. Giles at Dr. Williams’s Library in London. These lectures were among a series of mostly annual Hibbert Lectures funded by the Hibbert Trust, which had been established by the Unitarian Robert Hibbert (1769–1849). Trustees were directed to apply the funds in such a manner as they deemed “most conducive to the spread of Christianity in its most simple and intelligible form, and to the unfettered exercise of the right of private judgment in matters of religion.”¹⁴ Thus, the topics were not only quite diverse and liberal in their coverage of religious traditions around the world but were also given by leading authorities.

⁸ Soothill, *Three Religions*, 42.

⁹ Soothill, *Three Religions*, 41.

¹⁰ Soothill, *Three Religions*, 41.

¹¹ Soothill, *Three Religions*, 41.

¹² Soothill, *Three Religions*, 42.

¹³ Soothill, *Three Religions*, 42.

¹⁴ Murch, *Memoir of Robert Hibbert*, 32–33.

Giles certainly was an apt choice. In 1897, having served for twenty-five years as a British consular officer in China (1867–1893), he was appointed Chair of Chinese at Cambridge University. He produced a large corpus of reference works, language textbooks, translations, and miscellaneous writings about China and is no doubt most recognizable for having developed the Wade-Giles system of Romanization.¹⁵

Yet none of these qualifications seemed to prompt him to give more consideration to late imperial China's Confucian traditions than was the norm for his time, although he does credit Zhu Xi for making important contributions. In his "Preface" to the published lectures, he explained that his goal was "to exhibit, chronologically, the principles and practices adopted by Confucius as a heritage from antiquity and subsequently handed down through twenty-four centuries, with certain modifications, to the present." "Beginning from the pure monotheism of a personal God," Giles explains, "we ultimately reach the substitution of Confucius and of his worship, with the almost total disappearance of a supernatural Power."¹⁶ He also notes that many other traditions, such as Daoism, Buddhism, Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism, "each made its bid for the salvation of the Chinese, with results which it is hoped may be gathered from this volume."¹⁷ Hence, he gave this title to the lectures: "Confucianism and Its Rivals."

The disappearing supernatural is documented in the eighth (and last) of the chronological periods around which Giles's lectures were organized ("1000 AD–1915 AD"), and Zhu Xi was largely responsible for it. Giles found him to be a "remarkable man," the leader of "a school of metaphysicians... which sought for some more precise solution of the riddle of the universe than had so far been deduced from the Confucian canon."¹⁸ Zhu was an encyclopedic scholar "who carried the [Confucian] movement to such purpose that his name has ever since stood easily first among Chinese philosophers of that or of any other age."¹⁹ What is more, "under the hand of Chu Fu Tzu [=Zhu Xi]," Giles wrote, "the idea of a personal God, the supreme ruler of the universe, disappeared for ever. That no proof of the existence of such a Being was forthcoming, was quite enough for his materialistic mind."²⁰ Indeed, Zhu Xi had taken what was in origins a religion and "left it, but for a vital spark, a mere system of ethics."²¹

¹⁵ Aylmer, "Herbert Allen Giles (1845-1935)," 1–7.

¹⁶ Giles, *Confucianism*, v.

¹⁷ Giles, *Confucianism*, v.

¹⁸ Giles, *Confucianism*, 233.

¹⁹ Giles, *Confucianism*, 233.

²⁰ Giles, *Confucianism*, 234–235.

²¹ Giles, *Confucianism*, 236.

Giles did devote a few pages to trying to explain some of Zhu Xi's tenets. But the rest of the lecture was devoted to the history of Judaism, Islam, and Christianity in late imperial China, with Ming-Qing Confucianism merely as background. Of the Ming, Giles states that "the period was favorable to the dominance of Confucianism, which a hundred years later was confronted by Roman Catholic Christianity, under the guidance of some of the most able men ever attracted to China from the West."²² As for the Manchu Qing dynasty, Giles explains that the Kangxi Emperor subordinated religion to politics, and "being wise enough to see that it was absolutely necessary for the masses to have some sort of guidance, he fell back upon Confucianism without God, which, of course, was altogether beyond their reach."²³

In sum, then, Giles found in China's dominant tradition a gradual loss of a divine power that had been present in earliest times and that, during the last millennium, had become little more than a materialistic metaphysics, system of ethics, and ideology shaped by just one philosopher—Zhu Xi. In the spirit of Hibbert's Unitarianism and Yuan Shikai's effort to resurrect Confucianism as a state religion, Giles concluded with his aspirations for China:

Let the Chinese people be encouraged, by the erection of temples and by forms of prayer, to join in the old Unitarian worship of four thousand years ago. Let them transfer to *T'ien* [= *tian* 天], God, discarding the Duality caused by the later introduction of *Shang Ti* [= *shangdi* 上帝], all those thoughts of reverence and gratitude which have been centered so long upon the human, to the neglect of the divine. Their stirring battle-cry would then be, "There is no God but God, and Confucius is His Prophet!"²⁴

Nothing here, of course, speaks to the richness of Song and Ming Confucian philosophy.

Another example is Paul Carus's (1852–1919) *Chinese Philosophy: An Exposition of the Main Characteristic Features of Chinese Thought*, which was published in 1902. Concerning broad trends in the history of Chinese philosophy, Carus states:

Chinese philosophy is as peculiar as the Chinese language and Chinese customs, and it is difficult for Western people to understand its nature or appreciate its paramount influence upon the national character of the Celestial Empire. It shows

²² Giles, *Confucianism*, 246–247.

²³ Giles, *Confucianism*, 250.

²⁴ Giles, *Confucianism*, 265–266.

us a noble beginning and a lame progress; a grand start and dreary stagnation; a promising seed time and a poor harvest. The heroes of thought who laid its foundations were so much admired that none dared to excel them, and thus before the grandeur of the original genius which looms up in the prehistoric age, the philosophy of all later generations is dwarfed into insignificance.²⁵

This short book begins with an extensive discussion of Chinese cosmology, based primarily on the *Yijing* 易經 (Book of Changes) and the “Hong fan” 洪範 (Great Plan) chapter of the *Shujing* 書經 (Book of Documents). Carus presents a Chinese cosmology wherein *yin* 陰 and *yang* 陽 and the eight trigrams evolve out of the Great Ultimate (*taiji* 太極). Using Western philosophical terminology, he saw in this “a decided tendency towards monism,”²⁶ as well as the “the eternal in the transient, the absolute in the relative, the universal in the particular, and rest in motion.”²⁷

Carus continues with a discussion of Zhou Dunyi 周敦頤 (1017–1073) and Zhu Xi, stating that it was Zhou who worked out the monism implied in the unitary principle of the Great Ultimate and Zhu Xi and his school who “systematized and completed the philosophical world-conception of the Chinese.”²⁸ Drawing from the *Taiji tushuo* 太極圖說 (Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate Explained) and *Tong shu* 通書 (Penetrating the Book [of Change]), Carus explains Zhou Dunyi’s cosmology. Drawing on selections from the *Zhuzi quanshu* 朱子全書 (Complete works of Master Zhu), he explicates Zhu Xi’s philosophy of *li* 理 and *qi* 氣. He concludes by asserting that “the monistic school of Cheu-tsz [Zhouzi = Zhou Dunyi] and Chu Hi [=Zhu Xi] are in the history of Chinese thought what Kant is in the Western world.”²⁹ Carus, however, never once refers to a Ming Confucian.

What must be noted here is that Paul Carus did not read Chinese proficiently. He relied on German and English translations and scholarship. For Zhou Dunyi, he consulted Georg von der Gabelentz’s (1840–1893) *Thai-Kih-Thu, des Tscheu-tsi Tafel des Urprinzipes*, a translation of the *Taiji tushuo* with commentary by Zhu Xi,³⁰ as well as Wilhelm Grube’s (1855–1908) translation of the *Tong shu* with commentary by Zhu Xi.³¹ For Zhu Xi, he consulted

²⁵ Carus, *Chinese Philosophy*, 1.

²⁶ Carus, *Chinese Philosophy*, 25.

²⁷ Carus, *Chinese Philosophy*, 27.

²⁸ Carus, *Chinese Philosophy*, 29.

²⁹ Carus, *Chinese Philosophy*, 35.

³⁰ Gabelentz, *Thai-kih-thu*.

³¹ Grube, *Ein Beitrag*.

translated material and expositions available in several English-language works, but primarily Thomas Taylor Meadows's *The Chinese and Their Rebellions*.³² In 1856, Meadows—who interpreted Chinese for the British civil service—had already published an extensive introduction to and exposition of Chinese philosophy, including the metaphysics and cosmology of Zhou Dunyi and Zhu Xi. To do so, Meadows states, he had relied on a 1717 Kangxi edition of the *Xing li da quan* 性理大全 (Great compendium on human nature and principle) and a 1718 edition of the *Zhuzi quanshu*.

Thus, even with the language barrier, Carus could still speak in an informed way about two Song *Daoxue* philosophers. During the nineteenth century, European and American sinologists had some understanding of the importance of Zhu Xi, had translated some of his work, and had written about his life and thought.³³ However, Carus was uninformed about Wang Yangming and his philosophical movement, the likely reason being that both the German- and English-language scholarship he had encountered did not discuss Wang's philosophy and its influence. More examples could be adduced demonstrating the absence of discussion of Wang Yangming in the literature on Chinese philosophy and religion in Europe and the United States in the early twentieth century.

With some notable exceptions, the same situation held true for literature on China dating to the nineteenth century. Much previous scholarship has shown how the unequal treaties brought a new stage in the study of China in the West. A growing number of foreign-service officers and missionaries—especially Protestant missionaries from Great Britain and the United States—spent time living and working in China, while also writing about it.³⁴ Consequently, scholarship on China burgeoned, as did the institutional study of it. This scholarship also dates the foundation of academic sinology to the nineteenth century because universities in Europe and the United States established professorships for the study of China and offered courses about it.

However, although translations and studies of pre-Qin Confucian and Daoist philosophy were produced in abundance, as well as studies and partial translations of Mohist philosophy, other pre-Qin philosophers and military strategists, some Song Confucians, and Wang Yangming and his movement received little attention. Wang is not, for example, discussed in major studies by

³² Meadows, *Chinese and Their Rebellions*, 334–352. Carus also references Williams, *Middle Kingdom*, 550–552, and the entries for Zhu Xi and Zhou Dunyi in Mayers, *Chinese Reader's Manual*, 23–26.

³³ See, for example, Le Gall, *Le philosophe Tchou Hi*.

³⁴ Bays, *New History*, 66–92. For general studies, see Cui Yujun, *Chen Rongjie*, 22–92, and Cayley, *Europe Studies China*.

such scholars as Joseph Edkins (1823–1905), James Legge (1815–1897), J. J. M. de Groot (1854–1921), Edouard Chavannes (1865–1918), and the French savant Guillaume Pauthier (1801–1873), among others. In his *Esquisse d'une histoire de la philosophie chinoise*, for instance, Pauthier speaks at length about the metaphysics and cosmology of Zhou Dunyi and Zhu Xi, but then he claims that after their time no important thinkers appeared.³⁵

This does not mean, however, that Wang Yangming was unknown in the literature. A preliminary search in nineteenth-century English, German, and French scholarship on China yielded a few results.³⁶ Interestingly, some lengthy nineteenth-century histories of China, which are primarily political and military histories of dynasties, mention the 1519 rebellion by the Prince of Ning, Zhu Chenhao (Ning wang Zhu Chenhao 寧王朱宸濠 [d. 1521]), during the reign of the Zhengde 正德 emperor. Both the German Lutheran missionary Karl Gützlaff (1803–1851) and the British author Demetrius Charles Boulger (1853–1928) refer to this event but only indicate that imperial armies energetically suppressed it, without mentioning Wang Yangming's role.³⁷

In his *History of China*, on the other hand, the Irish Protestant missionary John Macgowan (1835–1922) explains that when the rebellion began, a certain Wang Shen was quelling uprisings in Fujian and then led his forces into Jiangxi, battled the prince, and captured him.³⁸ But while Macgowan speaks at some length about the philosophical importance of Zhu Xi during the Song dynasty, he does not say anything about Wang Yangming and his school. Lastly, in *The Middle Kingdom*, in a section with the heading “Opposition of the Literati to Buddhism,” the American missionary and sinologist Samuel Wells Williams (1812–1884) includes a discussion of Wang Yangming's edict remonstrating with the Zhengde emperor over his decision to send an embassy “to India to fetch Buddhist books and priests.” Williams notes that Wang compared Buddhism and Confucianism, “proving to his own satisfaction that the latter contained all the good there was in the former, without its evil and nonsense.”³⁹

Wang Yangming also appears in nineteenth-century biographical dictionaries. The earliest is an entry in the British official and sinologist William

³⁵ Pauthier, *Esquisse d'une histoire*, 66.

³⁶ I have reviewed publications listed in or provided at Cordier, *Bibliotheca sinica*; the website Bibliotheca Sinica 2.0, <http://www.univie.ac.at/Geschichte/China-Bibliographie/blog/>; and the website Chine Ancienne, www.chineancienne.fr/ (accessed July 2, 2018).

³⁷ Gützlaff, *Sketch of Chinese History*, vol. 1, 272; Boulger, *History of China*, 468.

³⁸ Macgowan, *History of China*, 493–494. Wang Shen may refer to Wang Shouren.

³⁹ Williams, *Middle Kingdom*, 227. Williams does not, however, mention the fact that this memorial was never submitted to the Ming court.

Frederick Mayers's *The Chinese Reader's Manual*. An accomplished reader of Chinese, Mayers produced several reference works on China. This manual, he explains, is "a historical and biographical compendium" intended "to be useful in the hands of students of Chinese literature, by elucidating in its First Part many of the personal and historical illusions, and some portion at least of the conventional phraseology, which unite to form one of the chief difficulties of the language."⁴⁰ The bulk of it consists of 974 names of historical, legendary, or mythological persons, alphabetically organized, each with a short biography or explanatory notes.

Regarding "Wang Show-Jen," Mayers writes:

A distinguished public official and celebrated writer. Was governor of several provinces in succession and in this capacity gained high renown through his conduct of military affairs. In 1518, he subdued an insurrection in Jiangxi and in 1527, conducted a campaign against the wild tribes of the mountainous regions of northern Guangxi. Canonized as Wencheng.⁴¹

Herbert Giles's *Chinese Biographical Dictionary* built on Mayers's work. Published in 1898, this dictionary contains 2,579 entries, including one for "Wang Shou-jen" as well as other Ming scholars, such as "Ch'en Hsien-chang" (Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章, 1428–1500). Regarding its purpose, Giles writes,

In 1874 the late Mr. Mayers published a small collection of about eight hundred notices of Chinese statesmen, generals, writers, and others. For many years his work held the field, until at length a feeling arose that something more comprehensive was wanted to meet the slow but sure development of Anglo-Chinese scholarship. Accordingly, in 1891 this dictionary was planned, and has since been carried out, in the hope that it may prove of use to all who are occupied with the language and literature of China, especially to the British Consular official.⁴²

The entry for Wang Yangming is brief—less than one page—but it provides a reasonably objective synopsis of his life and importance as an official and "speculative philosopher."⁴³

More significant is the lengthier discussion of Wang Yangming in Thomas Watters's (1840–1901) *A Guide to the Tablets in a Temple of Confucius*.

⁴⁰ Mayers, *Chinese Reader's Manual*, preface.

⁴¹ Mayers, *Chinese Reader's Manual*, 246.

⁴² Giles, *Chinese Biographical Dictionary*, v.

⁴³ Giles, *Chinese Biographical Dictionary*, 839–840.

From 1863 to 1895, Watters served in consular positions in China and Korea for the British Government; he also published much scholarship on China. His *Guide to the Tablets* provides a thorough introduction to the layout and history of these temples, as well as competent biographies for all individuals for whom tablets were provided. The entry for Wang Yangming is six pages long and can count as the first significant writing in English about his life, thought, and status in Chinese intellectual history. A very capable reader of Chinese, Watters worked directly with primary sources; for Wang Yangming, that was an 1826 edition of the *Wang Yangming xiansheng quanji* 王陽明先生全集 (Complete works of Sir Wang Yangming).⁴⁴

Drawing from the first *juan*, Watters provides a brief, factual biography. He then explains the origins of the edition he was using, also praising Wang Yangming's writing style: "The style of his prose compositions is charming from its clearness and simplicity and his sentences have an easy graceful flow which is all of their own."⁴⁵ Watters proceeds to explain Wang's importance to China's intellectual history—how, for example, he attempted to mediate the ongoing debate among scholars over the relative merits of Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139–1192). He concludes that "Yangming was very courageous in his defense of Lu and succeeded, to use his own figure, in clearing the mud of his philosophical reputation. For this he has gained the lasting gratitude of all liberal and true-minded Confucianists."⁴⁶

Watters also sensitively discusses the meaning of *liangzhi* 良知 in Wang Yangming's philosophy. He suspects that James Legge's translation of this term in the *Mencius* as "intuitive knowledge" is inadequate because "with Yang-ming it has a large and varied use, and it sometimes answers to conscience and sometimes to consciousness, while at other times it is apparently instinct."⁴⁷ Watters also notes that Wang was accused of being a Buddhist and "renouncing allegiance to the Sages" but insists that he "was strictly orthodox and considered that he was only taking the rational and proper interpretation of the words of Confucius and Mencius."⁴⁸ Highlighting his ecumenical thinking, Watters notes as well that Wang was unwilling to reject "touches of goodness and hints of truth" in Buddhism and Daoism merely because they were heterodox traditions. Lastly, he explains that although the editors of the *Wang Yangming xiansheng quanji* fiercely defended Wang against the charge of heresy, Wang's writings "are not much read at present, for Yang-ming

⁴⁴ Watters, *Guide to the Tablets*, 211–216.

⁴⁵ Watters, *Guide to the Tablets*, 214.

⁴⁶ Watters, *Guide to the Tablets*, 214.

⁴⁷ Watters, *Guide to the Tablets*, 215.

⁴⁸ Watters, *Guide to the Tablets*, 215.

criticized Zhu Xi's text and commentary." Watters concludes by comparing Wang Yangming to René Descartes (1596–1650), claiming that "both held that the mind possessed an innate faculty for knowing high truths and taught the great importance of self-dependence."⁴⁹

Insofar as it accurately summarizes Wang Yangming's life and major features of his thought and status in Chinese intellectual history, Watters's encyclopedia-style entry is a notable exception for the nineteenth century. Looking back even further at the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we find similar patterns in the literature on Song and Ming philosophy. Here too, with only a few exceptions, whereas Song dynasty *Daoxue* philosophers and their metaphysics and cosmologies receive some limited attention in the European literature, Ming philosophy is almost entirely absent. Thus, for example, much scholarship has addressed the minor impact of Neo-Confucianism on the Enlightenment, and especially such German philosophers as Christian Wolff (1679–1754) and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz (1694–1778).⁵⁰ But that impact was limited to Song dynasty *Daoxue* moral philosophy as it was presented to them in Jesuit translations and explanations of Chinese philosophical texts.

As David Mungello has pointed out, the Enlightenment philosophers and savants had no direct contact with China and therefore relied on Jesuit manuscripts, published works, and letters. Consequently, knowledge of China during these centuries was refracted through the Jesuit prism.⁵¹ In fact, several features of the Jesuit episode may have lessened the likelihood that Wang Yangming's philosophy would receive close attention. Much scholarship has demonstrated that Jesuit missionaries first encountered Song *Daoxue* philosophers primarily through Zhu Xi's commentaries on classical texts and the *Xing li da quan* (first published in 1415 by the court of the Yongle emperor). These were the principal channels through which the Jesuits learned about later developments in the history of Confucianism and why their discussion of it is almost entirely limited to Zhu Xi and his immediate predecessors. Furthermore, Jesuit missionaries distinguished pre-Qin (ancient) Confucianism from the work of these later Confucians, whom they disparagingly referred to as "Neo-terics" (modern commentators).⁵² They assessed that ancient Confucianism

⁴⁹ Watters, *Guide to the Tablets*, 216.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Mungello, *Leibniz and Confucianism*; Mungello, "Confucianism in the Enlightenment," 99–127; Lundbaek, "Image of Neo-Confucianism," 19–30.

⁵¹ Mungello, "Confucianism in the Enlightenment," 100.

⁵² Mungello, "Confucianism in the Enlightenment," 115. For treatment of Confucian traditions in influential Latin and French texts of the seventeenth and eighteenth century, when the tradition was viewed primarily as a moral and political philosophy and the classical texts received the most attention, see Lundbaek, "Image of Neo-Confucianism," 21–25.

contained the equivalent of a natural theology and admirable moral philosophy, but they believed that Song *Daoxue* thinkers perverted this truer Confucianism, accusing it of materialism and atheism.

The timing for early Jesuit missionary writing about China counts as another factor. The first works on Chinese philosophy and history date to the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the point at which the climate in China for adherents of the school of Wang Yangming was becoming less favorable. Thus, when considering broader factors—historical, textual, philosophical, and religious—it makes sense that Wang Yangming’s work would not have received close attention. Indeed, in a study dating to the 1980s, Knud Lundbaek concluded that “Wang Yang-ming does not figure in seventeenth-century Jesuit printed texts.”⁵³

However, this topic has received more attention in recent years and should continue to bear fruit. That is, even if Wang Yangming was not identified by name in seventeenth-century Jesuit literature, to what extent were his ideas known by Jesuits and alluded to in their writings? Although Wang Yangming’s philosophy fell into disfavor in China during the late Ming and the Qing dynasty, the Jesuits who arrived during the late Ming did interact with followers of the school of Wang Yangming. Yu Liu states that, “although there is no evidence that Ricci was even aware that Neo-Confucianism was divided into the idealist philosophy of Wang Yangming and the rationalist philosophy of Zhu Xi,”⁵⁴ many of the literati sympathetic to him were affiliated with one of the branches of the Wang Yangming school, and Ricci might even have benefited from the doctrinal tolerance spawned by Wang’s ideas. Yu notes that “Ricci apparently did not know it, but his tortuous journey north to Beijing from Guangdong and Jiangxi fortunately took him largely through areas in which Wang Yangming had been most active in his teaching and official career.”⁵⁵ One of those areas was Nanchang, where Zhang Huang 章滄 (1527–1608) befriended and advised Ricci. When Zhang Huang was presiding over the White Deer Grotto Academy, he repeatedly extended invitations to Ricci to come there and discuss philosophy with literati. Ricci also met and held discussions with Li Zhi 李贄 (1527–1602), Zhu Shilu 祝世祿 (1539–1610), Jiao Hong 焦竑 (1540–1620), and Zou Yuanbiao 鄒元標 (1551–1624).

Such interaction suggests that Ricci should have been familiar with elements of Wang Yangming’s philosophy.⁵⁶ Indeed, a recent translation of Matteo Ricci’s *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 (The True Meaning of the Lord of

⁵³ Lundbaek, “Image of Neo-Confucianism,” 28.

⁵⁴ Yu Liu, *Harmonious Disagreement*, 134.

⁵⁵ Yu Liu, *Harmonious Disagreement*, 181–182.

⁵⁶ Huang Wenshu, “Yangming houxue,” 127.

Heaven) demonstrates that he quotes Wang Yangming several times, albeit without identifying him by name.⁵⁷ For this reason, although this text was produced for literati in China, it seems reasonable to suppose that further research in the Jesuit and Spanish archives for texts dating to these periods may reveal discussion of Wang Yangming or scholars belonging to his school of thought.

For the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, when the French Jesuits at the Qing court dominated cultural exchange with China, I have found only two historical works that discuss Wang Yangming. Less important is the *Histoire générale de la Chine, ou annales de cet empire, traduites du Tong-Kien-Kang-Mou* (hereafter *Histoire générale*). This twelve-volume history of China was written by Joseph Anne-Marie de Moyriac de Mailla (1669–1748), one of many French Jesuits who went to China as part of officially sponsored missions that commenced in the 1680s. He arrived in 1701 and served at the court of Qing emperors, remaining in China until his death. He wrote his *Histoire générale* in the 1730s and sent it to France, where it remained unpublished until the 1770s. For a time, it became one of the most important reference works on Chinese history.

Wang Yangming is discussed in the *Histoire générale* only because of his role in suppressing the rebellion by the Prince of Ning.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, de Mailla's account provides the most complete coverage of this event written prior to the twentieth century, including discussion of Wang Yangming's use of stratagem as well as his deliberations with officers concerning occupying Nanchang 南昌 (home to the prince's establishment) and confronting the prince upon his return. Concerning the climactic battle on Lake Poyang (Poyang hu 鄱陽湖), de Mailla wrote that "never was a victory more complete or more decisive."⁵⁹

More notable is Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise* (hereafter *Description*). This four-volume encyclopedic account of China was first published in 1735. Du Halde (1674–1743) was a French Jesuit living in Paris at the very moment French Jesuits and France were at the center of research and writing about China in Europe. While compiling this work, he resided at *La Maison professes de Jesuites*, which was established in 1580 to accommodate Jesuit fathers in a setting that allowed them to investigate and write about the pressing religious and social issues of the day. Du Halde turned his energies to compiling, editing, and publishing material that was coming in from Jesuit missions around the world. The principal

⁵⁷ See Ricci, *True Meaning*, 186–187.

⁵⁸ Moyriac de Mailla, *Histoire Générale*, 294–298.

⁵⁹ Moyriac de Mailla, *Histoire Générale*, 297.

purpose of this work was to advance the mission by furthering cross-cultural inquiry.⁶⁰

Du Halde, however, never went to China; rather, for the *Description*, he compiled information gathered from twenty-seven Jesuit missionaries who went there as members of the French missions. The first volume is devoted to geography and travel but also provides extracts from Chinese texts. The second volume contains six articles about China and extracts from eighteen Chinese texts.⁶¹ One of those texts is a 1538 edition of the *Wang Yangming wenji* 王陽明文集 (Collected writings of Wang Yangming).⁶²

The Jesuit from whom Du Halde received his translations of Wang Yangming's work was Julien-Placide Hervieu (1671–1746). Hervieu went to China as a member of the French China missions and spent the last forty-five years of his life there. He produced numerous translations of Chinese texts and sent them to Paris. It was these texts that Du Halde incorporated into the *Description*. The original French manuscript with this translation of Wang Yangming's work is currently held at the Manuscript Division of the Bibliothèque Nationale de France.⁶³

According to Isabelle Landry-Deron, the reason Hervieu translated these documents and Du Halde chose to include them in his *Description* was the Jesuit interest in Confucian moral philosophy. Indeed, moral philosophy had always been one of the principal vehicles through which Jesuits and the literati were able to generate mutual interest in their respective traditions, and Landry-Deron believes this is what they admired about Wang Yangming's writing. Chinese Christians understood that although he endured severe challenges throughout his life, Wang courageously maintained his integrity, firmly adhering to the morals he espoused. The selection of writings in the *Description* emphasizes Wang Yangming's ethics, including his writing about the importance of reticence in speech, suppressing desires and overcoming the self, adhering to principle, self-examination, correcting mistakes, and the evils of arrogance versus the good that comes from humility. In Wang Yangming's work, the Jesuits found echoes of their own practices of moral and spiritual self-discipline.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Foss, "Jesuit Encyclopedia," 56–60.

⁶¹ Löwendahl, *Sino-Western Relations*, 180–181.

⁶² Du Halde, *Description géographique*, 654–657. For a detailed discussion see Landry-Deron, *La Preuve*, 227–228.

⁶³ The manuscript at the Bibliothèque Nationale de France is identified as Ms. FR. 17240; the Wang Yangming translations are located on 235–242. The record may be found at <http://archive.setmanuscripts.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/cc46915b> (accessed September 20, 2020). A digitalized edition is available at gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b9061534s/f245.item, 472–494 (accessed September 20, 2020).

⁶⁴ Landry-Deron, *La Preuve*, 318–321.

Finally, it should be noted that a collected works of Wang Yangming is listed in the Royal Librarian Étienne Fourmont's 1742 catalogue of the French Royal Library.⁶⁵ "Royal patronage for scholarly enterprise became a tradition in France from the time of Francis I," explains Cécile Leung, and "reached its peak during the reign of Louis XIV."⁶⁶ During his and his successor's reigns, the library acquired collections of Chinese books brought from China by Jesuits. Since Wang Yangming is mentioned in Jean-François Foucquet's (1665–1741) personal list of books,⁶⁷ it is likely that the manuscript was among the collection of 1,845 volumes he brought from China in 1722. From 1727, the library's Chinese books were transferred to Fourmont's home, where he studied the Chinese language and catalogued the books. His first catalogue appeared in 1739. In 1742, he added another publication to this, the *Grammatica Duplex*, "a catalogue of the Chinese books of the Bibliothèque du Roi in which the titles of the books are arranged according to theme and written in Chinese characters."⁶⁸ This is where the Wang Yangming manuscript is listed.

According to Fourmont's bibliographical record, he had in hand two books in sixteen volumes (*juan*). He states:

Properly speaking, it is a philosophical miscellany in short articles, divided into around five hundred of them, in which he freely and critically approaches ancient books and histories. There are some excerpts from the great works of the ancients, and you will find a great deal about the history of those same kings and the life and mores of the most illustrious philosophers, and furthermore, on this or that article of history, which the philosopher either rejected or confirmed based on his judgment. Wang Yangming lived under the rule of the Ming dynasty.⁶⁹

Thus, in theory at least, a reader of Chinese living in Paris would have been able to access it.

In sum, prior to the 1910s, Wang Yangming was not the specific subject of an article or book in Europe and North America. However, his life and philosophy, and even some of his writing, do appear in other types of literature, such as histories, dictionaries, works of an encyclopedic nature, and specialized monographs. The reasons for his inclusion in these works are to be found both in the types of literature and what they aimed to include but also

⁶⁵ Fourmont, *Linguae Sinarum*, 489. For a discussion, see Landry-Deron, *La Preuve*, 227.

⁶⁶ Leung, *Etienne Fourmont*, 129.

⁶⁷ Landry-Deron, *La Preuve*, 227.

⁶⁸ Leung, *Etienne Fourmont*, 139.

⁶⁹ Fourmont, *Linguae Sinarum*, 489.

the historical circumstances under which they were compiled. In general, the most significant obstacle to the discovery of Ming philosophy was intellectual trends in China that began during the late Ming dynasty and continued into the Qing dynasty. Wang Yangming was included in this European literature primarily because of his political career, literary achievements, or inclusion in the Confucian temples. In rare cases, scholars in China fond of his writings brought attention to Wang among Westerners living in their country. That seems to have been the case with Julien-Placide Hervieu and Thomas Watters. In the second decade of the twentieth century, however, these limitations were overcome with the appearance of a substantial translation of Wang Yangming's work and with the publication of more extensive scholarship. This is the topic of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 2:

The Inspirational Idealist— Translation and Scholarship, 1914–1950

In his 1972 bibliography, Wing-tsit Chan states that “studies in the West of the leader of the Neo-Confucian School of Mind began with Frederick Goodrich Henke,” while also pointing out that “very little was written about Wang in Western languages before World War II.”¹ Chan estimated that only four publications had appeared prior to 1940, while no others were published until after 1955.

His assessment was largely correct. So was his conviction that although the quantity was bleak, this scholarship was reasonably academic in nature. In fact, beginning in the 1910s, the study of Wang Yangming entered a new stage in Europe and North America. Books include Frederick Henke’s substantial translation, *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*; the Chinese Jesuit Wang Tch’ang-tche’s (Wang Changzhi 王昌祉, 1899–1959) *La philosophie morale de Wang Yang-ming*; and the Chinese scholar and president of Tsinghua College (1918–1920) Chang Yü-ch’uan’s (Zhang Yuquan 張煜全, 1879–1953) *Wang Shou- jen as a Statesman*.² Articles include Henke’s “Wang Yang-ming: A Chinese Idealist” and “A Study in the Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming”; the Dutch sinologist J. J. L. Duyvendak’s “Een Herleefd Wijsgeer (A resurrected sage)”; and the American Protestant missionary Lyman V. Cady’s “Wang Yang-ming’s Doctrine of Intuitive Knowledge.”³

Surveys of Chinese philosophy by the French Jesuit missionary and sinologist Léon Wiegier (1856–1933),⁴ French historian René Grousset (1885–1952),⁵ German author Ernst Viktor Zenker,⁶ German sinologist and

¹ Wing-tsit Chan, “Wang Yang-ming: Western Studies,” 75.

² The book first appeared as a series of articles published in *Chinese Social and Political Science Review* in 1939 and 1940. See Chang Yü-ch’uan “Wang Shou- jen.”

³ Cady also privately printed a revised and slightly expanded edition of this article, retaining the original text but adding three new sections. The publisher’s name is not indicated, and the book states that the content consisted of two lectures delivered at “the school of Chinese studies, Peiping, Jan. 15th and 17th, 1936.” See Cady, *Wang Yang-ming’s “Intuitive Knowledge.”*

⁴ Wiegier, *Histoire de croyances religieuses*, 663–670. This book was translated into English. See Wiegier, *History of the Religious Beliefs*.

⁵ Grousset, *Histoire de Philosophie orientale*, 355–359.

⁶ Zenker, *Geschichte de chinesischen Philosophie*.

professor at the University of Amsterdam Heinrich Hackmann (1864–1935),⁷ French Jesuit Henri Bernard (1889–1975),⁸ German sinologist and professor at Hamburg University Alfred Forke (1867–1944),⁹ and the Chinese philosopher Fung Yu-lan (Feng Youlan 馮友蘭, 1895–1990)¹⁰ are also of interest because they include, for the first time, accounts of Wang Yangming and some of his followers.

Prior to considering the content of this scholarship, it is important to highlight shared characteristics. First, because these authors made a serious effort to engage with Wang Yangming's philosophy as well as to convey its historical and biographical context, he became the object of serious academic inquiry in the West. Second, because these authors understood his significance and wished to produce scholarly writing about him, they worked as closely as possible with primary sources. Wang Tch'ang-tche and Léon Wieger drew primarily from an edition of the *Wang Wencheng gong quanshu* 王文成公全書 (Complete works of Sir Wang Wencheng). Henke relied on an edition of Shi Bangyao's 施邦曜 (1585–1644) *Yangming xiansheng jiyao* 陽明先生集要 (Collected essential [writings] of Sir Yangming). Also, as he explains in the preface to his book, Henke was assisted by "a Chinese scholar of the old school" as well as three of his associates on the faculty of Nanjing University.¹¹ Forke consulted several Ming and Qing sources, but he primarily cites the *Wang Wencheng gong quanshu* and *Yangming xiansheng ji yao*. Chang Yü-ch'uan frequently cites the *Wang Wencheng gong quanshu* and other standard Ming histories, but he also makes ample use of Henke's *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*. The remaining authors (Grousset, Zenker, Bernard, Hackmann, and Cady) appear to have relied on English and French scholarship listed above.

Third, these authors keenly grasped the influence of Wang Yangming and his school of thought in East Asia. In fact, his importance to Japan's intellectual trends during the late-Meiji period and the revival of interest in him in China at the end of the Qing dynasty and during the early Republican period are the reasons that the above list of authors produced scholarly work about him. Referring to writing about Wang in Japan and China during this time, Chang K'un-chiang (Zhang Kunjiang 張崑將) explains that, "in the history of

⁷ Hackmann, *Chinesische Philosophie*, 356–373.

⁸ Bernard, *Sagesse chinoise*, 82–88.

⁹ Forke, *Geschichte de neueren chinesischen Philosophie*, 380–399.

¹⁰ Fung Yu-lan, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2.

¹¹ Henke, *Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*, xiv. The scholar of the old school is not identified; the associates were three professors: Liu Jingfu 劉敬甫 (or 劉敬父), Alexander Y. Lee (also an American missionary), and a certain Liu Jingpan.

modern East Asia, Yangming learning was reborn in Japan like a phoenix rising from the ashes and then fluttered its way back to China, spurring Chinese intellectuals to see the importance of the spirit of Yangming learning.”¹²

Several scholars have examined Meiji intellectuals who studied and disseminated a version Wang’s life story and his tenets, explaining their differing motives for doing so. They could serve as a native intellectual resource with which to oppose Westernization, as a resource for teaching morality to the nation’s citizens, or as an Asian equivalent to modern notions of people’s rights or religious ideas held by Christians.¹³ For these scholars, this Yangming learning (*Yōmeigaku* 陽明学) should be regarded as a modern construct closely tied to socio-political movements in Meiji Japan, especially the nationalist project of nation-building. Thus, it should be distinguished from Ming China’s Wang Yangming school as well as from how Wang Yangming was appropriated in Japan before the Meiji Restoration.

Oleg Benesch deftly elucidates intellectual currents that led to the dissemination and politicization of *Yōmeigaku* in Japan at this same time, foremost of which was its association with the construction of a discourse on *bushidō* from the 1890s. He believes that “The revival of interest in the teachings of the Neo-Confucian philosopher Wang Yangming (1472–1529) throughout East Asia in the early twentieth century was, to a considerable extent, initiated by Japanese developments and responses to external pressures.”¹⁴ During the Meiji period, he explains, some Japanese intellectuals saw individuals who opposed the Tokugawa Shogunate as followers of or inspired by Wang Yangming. For his opposition to Zhu Xi’s ideas, the political orthodoxy of the Tokugawa state, Wang Yangming was regarded as antiestablishment. This is how he was linked to the restoration and hence viewed as “a force for positive change and national strength.”¹⁵

In the 1890s, Benesch continues, many Japanese intellectuals turned against Westernization even as they felt disdain for a Qing China weakened by internal and external problems. In an “increasingly nationalistic climate,” they sought a uniquely Japanese ethic to buttress national identity and shape citizens’ morality. What they constructed was a *bushidō* discourse strongly

¹² Zhang Kunjiang, *Yangmingxue zai dongya*, 219.

¹³ For Ogyū Shigehiro, see “The Construction of ‘Modern Yōmeigaku’,” an influential analysis originally published in Japanese and translated by Barry D. Steben. Zhang Kunjiang expands on his insights in *Yangmingxue zai dongya*, 219–233. Zhang also provides an appendix with bibliographical listings for seventy-four Japanese monographs pertaining to Wang Yangming published between 1880 and 1943. See also Deng Hong, *Riben de Yangmingxue*, 10–11.

¹⁴ Benesch, “Wang Yangming and *Bushidō*,” 439.

¹⁵ Benesch, “Wang Yangming and *Bushidō*,” 439.

influenced by *Yōmeigaku*. “While it would be an exaggeration to categorically state that *bushidō* equals *Yōmeigaku*,” Benesch states, “the two concepts are impossible to separate in the modern Japanese context, and their thorough and complex interrelation had a profound impact on the history of both ideas in the Japanese context.”¹⁶

Benesch finds that these intellectual traditions shared two fundamental ideas: the infallibility of conscience and the unity of knowledge and action. Consequently, these were the most attractive among Wang Yangming’s many doctrines due to their connection to a “national ideological construct,” and as such they were philosophically articulated, disseminated in popular culture, and used in military and public education. Benesch believes, “Ultimately, the development of *bushidō* can be viewed as a process of appropriation and nativization of Wang Yangming’s thought in the nationalistic environment of Japanese academia and politics in the late nineteenth century.”¹⁷

As Friedrich von Wenckstern’s multivolume *Bibliography of the Japanese Empire* demonstrates, Benesch’s timeline aligns with the first discussions of Wang Yangming in Western-language literature published during the Meiji Era. The first volume, which covers the years 1859 to 1893, includes a list of books categorized under the heading “Religion and Philosophy” and the subheading “Buddhism, Shintoism and other Oriental Religions or Philosophical Systems.” It is here that one would expect to find literature pertaining to Confucianism, but virtually the entirety of the approximately 150 listed publications is devoted to Shintoism, Buddhism, ritual, and folk religion. Four articles touch on Neo-Confucianism as a school of philosophy in Japan, and all were published in the 1893 volume of the *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*.

This society was established in Yokohama in 1872 by a group of British and American diplomats, businessmen, and missionaries living in Japan with the aim of promoting the study of Japan and exchanging information about it. Members held monthly meetings with lectures and printed this annual publication.¹⁸ The Zhu Xi school and its critics in Japan were the topics of papers read and discussions held at meetings convened in Tokyo in 1892. Participants included the American Presbyterian theologian and missionary George William Knox (1853–1912), who was then serving as a professor of ethics at the Imperial University of Japan, and Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 (1855–1944), who was teaching at the same university as a professor of philosophy.

¹⁶ Benesch, “Wang Yangming and *Bushidō*,” 447.

¹⁷ Benesch, “Wang Yangming and *Bushidō*,” 452.

¹⁸ “History of the Asiatic Society of Japan,” *Asiatic Society of Japan*, <https://www.asjapan.org/about.html>.

Indeed, in 1891, Inoue commenced a lecture series titled “Comparative Religion and Eastern Philosophy,” and these would continue through 1897. According to Isomae Jun’ichi, these lectures played an important role in introducing comparative religious studies as a field of scholarly inquiry to Japan and promoting the idea that Eastern religious traditions and philosophy were on par with those of the West.¹⁹ In 1892, however, the bulk of the lecturing was devoted to Buddhism and its Indian roots, because Inoue regarded Buddhism as a philosophy that was scientific in nature and that could serve as the foundation for a unified, ethical religion. Even so, by 1900 he had rejected this approach because he had rather come to see Confucianism as the key to developing an ethical religion and national morality suited to Japan. Consequently, in 1898, at the very moment he was playing a role in organizing the Great Japan Association and disseminating a nationalistic ideology called Japanism, Inoue turned his energies to teaching the history of Japanese philosophy with a focus on Confucianism.²⁰ Following, in 1900, he began to publish his trilogy on Confucianism, starting with his volume on the history of the Wang Yang-ming school in Japan.

The lengthiest paper in the 1893 volume was Knox’s “A Japanese Philosopher,” by whom was meant the Tokugawa Confucian scholar and official Muro Kyūsō 室鳩巢 (1658–1734). Knox believed Muro’s *Sundai Zatsuwa* 駿台雑話 (*Suruga dai* miscellaneous conversations) was indicative of the intellectual climate surrounding Confucian traditions in Edo Japan, and as context for his translation of it he also surveys the Chinese roots of Japanese philosophy, giving brief treatment to Zhu Xi, Wang Yangming, and Wang’s followers in Japan.²¹ The intellectual development of the Japanese, he explains, can be divided into three overlapping periods, each with a distinctive religion and ethics. The first period belongs to a native Shinto, the second to Buddhism, and the last to Chinese philosophy as it was interpreted by scholars of the Song dynasty.²² Concerning those scholars, Knox wrote:

They were no longer satisfied with the earlier unsystematic exposition of Confucian philosophy, but called metaphysics to their aid and transformed the groups of aphorisms and precepts into ontological philosophy. As the schoolmen [of Europe] mingled with the teachings of the prophets and the apostles elements drawn from Grecian and Eastern philosophy, so did the Chinese schoolmen mingle elements drawn

¹⁹ Isomae Jun’ichi, *Religious Discourse*, 86.

²⁰ Isomae Jun’ichi, *Religious Discourse*, 86.

²¹ Knox, “Japanese Philosopher,” 10–15.

²² Knox, “Japanese Philosopher,” 2.

from Buddhism and Taoism in their system based ostensibly on the classics. . . And as the teachings of the schoolmen ruled European thought for centuries and were the medium through which the words of Christ were studied, so were the teachings of the Tei-Shu [=Cheng-Zhu 程朱] school supreme in the East and the medium through which China and Japan studied and accepted the words of the sages.²³

Knox explains that Zhu Xi's commentary became orthodoxy in China, the standard from which no deviation was permitted. He thus provided a simple summary of his cosmological metaphysics: men and animals, vegetables and minerals, arise in being from Heaven and earth, Heaven and earth are produced by evolution from the male and female principle, and these principles are produced by the primordial cause of all existence—the great absolute—which itself evolved out of the absolute nothing. The energy animating the principles and producing the universe is *qi* 氣—the breath of life. This *qi* follows *li* 理, the fixed, inscrutable, and immutable laws, the “general order of the universe.”²⁴

“This is the system which came to Japan in the seventeenth century,” Knox explains, “and won the adherence of all educated men.”²⁵ It did, however, encounter enemies, such as a “revived, purist form of Shinto, intensely anti-Chinese in spirit,” as well as the school of Ōyōmei (Wang Yangming), which was developed “in opposition to the ‘scientific philosophy’ of Shu-shi [=Zhu Xi].”²⁶ No “repeater of past wisdom, nor a commentator,” Knox explains, “he [Wang] sought to find all truth within his own heart.”²⁷ What he discovered was a kind of “idealistic intuitionism” according to which there is no *li*, no law or principle, outside the heart, so he would have none of the distinctions drawn by Zhu Xi. If a man knows his heart, he knows the Way and Heaven, so true knowledge depends on purifying the innate knowledge in the hearts of all men: “make it clear and all is clear.” For Ōyōmei, Knox writes, “we gain nothing from without; all is already within and needs only to be thus studied by obedience.” He also insisted that “to act is to know.”

In conclusion, Knox briefly summarized Wang Yangming's doctrines of *xin* 心 (“heart”), *xin ji li* 心即理 (“there is no *li*, no law or principle, outside the heart”), *liangzhi* 良知 (“innate knowledge”), and *zhi xing heyi* 知行合一 (“to act is to know”), and for those wishing to learn more, he recommended

²³ Knox, “Japanese Philosopher,” 5–6.

²⁴ Knox, “Japanese Philosopher,” 9.

²⁵ Knox, “Japanese Philosopher,” 9.

²⁶ Knox, “Japanese Philosopher,” 9.

²⁷ Knox, “Japanese Philosopher,” 10.

consulting the *Chuan xi lu* (Instructions for Practical Living) and an edition of the *Wang Yangming quanji* (Collected works of Wang Yangming), even though, at that time, these were not available in translation. He also states that he had gathered his information from a lecture Inoue gave on Wang Yangming at Tokyo Imperial University in 1892, making it clear that Inoue was the principal channel through which the Ming Confucian came to his attention.²⁸

The second volume of Wenckstern's *Bibliography* (1910), which covers the years 1894 to 1906, evidences the appearance of the new *bushidō* discourse. The revision to the subheading, "Buddhism, Shintoism, Psychology, Ethics, and other Oriental Religions and Philosophical Systems," reflects in part the addition of a list of eight titles with *bushidō* as their main topic to this now lengthier section, yet it is still largely occupied by Shinto and Buddhism.

Among them, the most widely read book was surely *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. Written by the Japanese Quaker and educator Nitobe Inazō 新渡戸 稲造 (1862–1933), this short book has been reprinted many times—Wenckstern lists several English-language editions published between 1899 and 1906 in Tokyo, Philadelphia, and London, as well as a German translation published in Tokyo. From this book, interested readers will learn that *bushidō* is a code of moral principles—"the *noblesse oblige* of the warrior class"—with origins in several Japanese traditions. Buddhism, Nitobe claims, furnished "a sense of calm trust in fate, a quiet submission to the inevitable, a stoic composure in the sight of danger or calamity, that disdain of life and friendliness with death."²⁹ Shinto offered loyalty to sovereign, reverence for ancestral memory, the God-like purity of the human soul, and the national consciousness of an individual living in a country that is the "sacred abode of the Gods." "The tenets of Shintoism," Nitobe writes, "cover the two predominating features of the emotional life of our race—Patriotism and Loyalty."³⁰

Lastly, Nitobe explains, Confucius and Mencius exercised an immense authority over *bushidō*'s "strictly ethical doctrines," while stressing that bookish knowledge of these sages' classics was not to be prized. Rather, such knowledge becomes meaningful only insofar as it is shown in character and a source of wisdom in practical life. "Thus, knowledge was conceived as identical with its practical application in life," writes Nitobe. Here he saw fit to introduce the Chinese philosopher Wang Yangming, begging the reader for a moment's digression, "inasmuch as some of the noblest types of *bushi*

²⁸ Knox, "Japanese Philosopher," 10.

²⁹ Nitobe, *Bushido*, 9.

³⁰ Nitobe, *Bushido*, 12–13.

were strongly influenced by the teachings of the sage.”³¹ Of Yangming, he writes:

He carried his doctrine of the infallibility of conscience to extreme transcendentalism, attributing to it the faculty to perceive, not only the distinction between right and wrong, but also the nature of psychical facts and physical phenomena. He went as far as, if not farther than, Berkeley and Fichte, in Idealism, denying the existence of things outside of human ken. If his system had all the logical errors charged to Solipsism, it had all the efficacy of strong conviction and its moral import in developing individuality of character and equanimity of temper cannot be gainsaid.³²

For Nitobe, Wang Yangming was exemplary because of his identification of an independent source of moral judgment and his stress on demonstrating ethical commitments in action. Framing discussion of him as a digression no doubt had to do with the fact that Wang’s ideas were largely unknown in Japan during the feudal period and had little influence until the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Ogyū Shigehiro and Oleg Benesch also spell out connections between *Yōmeigaku* in Japan and the Chinese intellectual scene, providing insight into the many figures on both sides of the Sea of Japan and East China Sea advocating for the Ming scholar-official’s ideas. During the late Qing, Japan had become not only a place for Chinese students to study but also a safe haven for activists and rebels. Some took note of the connections Japanese intellectuals and military men had drawn between Wang Yangming’s doctrines, the Meiji Restoration, Japan’s unique success vis-à-vis Western powers, and *bushidō*, and they were hence convinced that his philosophy was also relevant to the goals they sought to achieve back home. For these Chinese students and activists, Benesch writes, “the idea that the Chinese philosophy of Wang Yangming and its modern relative *bushidō* could be responsible for Meiji Japan’s success in modernization was a tempting proposition, and would lead to a general surge of interest in Wang’s teachings throughout East Asia.”³³

One book published in 1911 spoke of that surge. In “Wang Yang-ming: A Chinese Idealist,” Henke specifically cites this book, Paul Reinsch’s *Intellectual and Political Currents of the Far East*, as evidence that Wang Yangming’s ideas were profoundly influencing students in China and Japan.³⁴ Reinsch

³¹ Nitobe, *Bushido*, 15–16.

³² Nitobe, *Bushido*, 16–18.

³³ Benesch, “Wang Yangming and *Bushidō*,” 452.

³⁴ Henke, “Wang Yang-ming: A Chinese Idealist,” 30.

(1869–1923) was an American diplomat who served as an ambassador to China from 1913 to 1919. Concerning Japan, he pointed to “a good deal of pragmatism in the teachings of Oyomei, whose ideas formed the chief intellectual influence in preparing the ground for the Restoration.”³⁵ Of China, he claimed that this normally unassertive country was becoming more nationalistic and militaristic. He linked these developments to a revival of interest in the Ming philosopher:

This philosopher of action had fallen into relative oblivion in China, when, a century ago, the Japanese discovered him and found in his pages the inspiration that carried them far on the way to new national life and strength. His works were at that time, and have been since, read even more intently in Japan than those of Confucius himself, and among his latter-day followers Admiral Togo is cited as a most ardent devotee. His revival in China is more recent, falling within the last decade; but the Chinese found in him what they needed most, inspiration to an active life and to what would be, compared to the former passive attitude, aggressive firmness. His works are no longer studied only by the learned, but they are being multiplied in thousands on thousands of copies and spread over the land, so that every schoolboy is becoming familiar with the old Ming general and philosopher. A certain insight into his ideas is essential to an understanding of the Chinese people. Wang Yangming has suddenly become a modern author in China.³⁶

For this reason, Reinsch devoted five pages to explaining what he believed to be the sources of his appeal. With much admiration, he conjectured that in Wang Yangming’s practical philosophy “lies the secret of his great importance to the present age, when a philosophy of action is called for, and when the Far East is becoming wearied of the crushing weight of authority.”³⁷ He emphasized that Wang stood for “individuality in reasoning,” “trueness to life and one’s self,” and supplementing the life of contemplation with the life of action.³⁸

According to Reinsch, Wang Yangming had emphasized that one cannot say that one knows something without having tested it, and only an inhumane self-deceit says otherwise. As it is the sole universal and rationale principle

³⁵ Reinsch, *Intellectual and Political Currents*, 297–298.

³⁶ Reinsch, *Intellectual and Political Currents*, 132–133.

³⁷ Reinsch, *Intellectual and Political Currents*, 134.

³⁸ Reinsch, *Intellectual and Political Currents*, 138–139.

actualized in the multiplicity of the world, identical with reason itself, a mind free of desire and possessed of its original qualities of brightness finds its true identity with others in feelings of sympathy and compassion, as well as the impetus to action in its own convictions. “It is this part of Wang Yangming’s philosophy,” Reinsch explains, “that has sounded a trumpet call to action; its stirring impulse is being felt by all the far eastern nations. Quietism, renunciation, and other inert modes of thought and temper are abandoned in favor of a more active and aggressive conduct of life.”³⁹ The other reason people in China found Wang Yangming attractive, Reinsch believed, was a spirit of egalitarianism in his doctrines. It was Wang’s conviction that everyone’s mind was the same in its essentials, which leads to a “belief in equality among men.”⁴⁰

Another telling example is Robert Armstrong’s *Light from the East: Studies in Japanese Confucianism*, a book published in 1914, two years prior to Henke’s translation. Armstrong had served as a Methodist missionary in Japan from 1903 to 1910. Between 1912 and 1919, he served as a professor of philosophy and then as dean at Kwansei Gakuin University. He wrote four books and numerous articles about Japanese religion and philosophy. In the preface for *Light from the East*, he says that he wished to “throw light on some of the formative elements of Japanese civilization”—in this case, the history of Japanese Confucianism.⁴¹ But he gave this book the title *Light from the East* because he found that to understand Japanese thought, one needed knowledge of the Korean, Chinese, and Indian background, especially Song and Ming Confucianism. Overall, his goal was to achieve mutual understanding between two cultures that were “neighbors.”⁴²

Light from the East contains major headings, each with several chapters, for early Confucianism, the Zhu Xi school of Confucianism, the Wang Yangming school of Confucianism, the classical school of Confucianism, and what Armstrong calls the “eclectic school.” Part III (“Studies in the O-Yomei School of Confucianism”) counts as the first substantial English-language introduction to Wang Yangming and his Tokugawa and Meiji Period followers.⁴³ In writing this, Armstrong relied heavily on Inoue Tetsujirō’s *Nihon Yōmeigakuha no Tetsugaku* 日本陽明學派之哲學 (The philosophy of the [Wang] Yangming school in Japan) to identify Japan’s Wang Yangming followers and provide diagrams of master-disciple lineages. Indeed, Inoue even penned a preface for this book.

³⁹ Reinsch, *Intellectual and Political Currents*, 138.

⁴⁰ Reinsch, *Intellectual and Political Currents*, 139.

⁴¹ Armstrong, *Light from the East*, vii.

⁴² Armstrong, *Light from the East*, vii.

⁴³ Armstrong, *Light from the East*, 119–195.

It can be noted here that in these Western-language publications, the most frequently cited Japanese sources were written by Inoue Tetsujirō and Takase Takejirō 高瀬武次郎 (1869–1950). Both men were philosophers and educators who promoted the Wang Yangming school in Japan primarily as a tool for the moral education of the nation’s citizens, linking it closely to the fate of their country.

For his biographies of Nakae Tojū and Saigō Takamori, Armstrong also drew on the writer and Christian Uchimura Kanzō’s 内村鑑三 *Representative Men of Japan*. In this English-language publication, Uchimura describes Wang Yangming’s philosophy as “progressive, prospective, and full of promise,”⁴⁴ and claims that in Japanese history “Yang-Ming-ism” “has never produced timid, fearful, conservative and retrogressive people out of us.”⁴⁵ As was common in his time, he identified Saigō as a “Founder of a New Japan” and believed that he was inspired by Wang’s writings.

Regarding Wang, Armstrong first explains the background to his thought in Mengzi’s and Lu Jiuyuan’s philosophies, highlighting the centrality and universality of the “heart [*xin*心],” “Heavenly *ri* [*tian li* 天理],” and “intuitive knowledge [*liangzhi* 良知].”⁴⁶ He then describes essential features of Wang’s philosophy: Men are by nature good and capable of virtue. The source of this goodness is their heart, which is the *li* they have received from Heaven. When a person follows the spontaneous movement of the heart, he does his duty, actualizing the *li*. This movement of the heart is the operation of “intuitive knowledge of good and evil.” It is a man’s duty to clarify this knowledge because lust shall disappear and he will be able to put this knowledge into practice in the world. To reveal this knowledge, a man must engage in quiet meditation and introspection, purify the conscience, and perfect morality.

Armstrong saw in Wang Yangming’s philosophy an eastern pantheism and cosmological idealism. He states that Wang Yangming thought Heaven, the Way, *li*, and the heart were each all-inclusive. Hence, by following the intuitive knowledge and entering the Way, a person arrives at unity—“a revelation of one nature.” But on this point Armstrong was critical: “Yomei’s [= Yangming’s] system, like most pantheistic systems, does not logically provide for evil.”⁴⁷ If all things are one nature, how is the origin of evil to be explained? He also believed that because such a pantheistic philosophy ultimately made individuality an illusion, it must be complemented by monotheism.

⁴⁴ Kanzō Uchimura, *Representative Men*, 9. This was first published in 1894 as *Japan and the Japanese*.

⁴⁵ Kanzō Uchimura, *Representative Men*, 168.

⁴⁶ Armstrong, *Light from the East*, 120. I have retained his translations.

⁴⁷ Armstrong, *Light from the East*, 126.

What should be noted here, however, is that he concludes this chapter with an observation about the courageous individualism of Wang Yangming's followers in Japan: "Many of them were strong, brave men who contributed much to their country and its development. Some of them may be counted among the world's best men."⁴⁸

Consequently, it makes sense that at the very moment many sinologists yet remained unaware of Wang Yangming and his status in the history of the Confucian tradition, authors who began to write about him had a different understanding. Henke wrote that the philosophy of Wang Yangming "is today held in high esteem by the Japanese," while in China "a tide of rising popularity is rapidly bringing it out of obscurity into the forefront."⁴⁹ Duyvendak explains that while Wang Yangming fell into obscurity after the Ming dynasty, his school of thought further developed in Japan, where it had a profound impact. He found it odd that a rich spiritual treasure obtained from China by Japan was now being rediscovered by China in Japan.⁵⁰

As Duyvendak recounts it, when he was at a bookstore in Beijing looking for literature on the contemporary scene in China, a Chinese student whom he did not know recommended a book on Wang Yangming. The student told him that "nowadays everyone reads him," and that this had been the case in China for the last twenty years.⁵¹ Thus, Duyvendak concluded that the time was ripe for publishing an article about Wang.

Léon Wieger, who was staying in Japan while writing his book, saw Wang's reception in China differently:

At present the doctrine of Ōyōmei [Wang Yangming] is the preferred doctrine of the Japanese Confucianists, whether philosophers or educators. It is especially the preferred doctrine of the successors of the samurai, of the brave officers of the Japanese army. I can bear personal witness to this little-known fact. At Tokyo, a group of the most select Japanese scholars questioned me regarding the esteem in which Wang Yangming is now held in China. I had to reply that he is considered somewhat of a heretic, scarcely known, and not read at all. Well, I immediately received this reply: Bah! With us his works are the bedside book of all the officers.⁵²

⁴⁸ Armstrong, *Light from the East*, 126.

⁴⁹ Henke, "Wang Yang-ming: A Chinese Idealist," 19.

⁵⁰ Duyvendak, *China Tegen de Westerkim*, 64.

⁵¹ Duyvendak, *China Tegen de Westerkim*, 65.

⁵² Wieger, *History of the Religious Beliefs*, 703. I have slightly altered the text of the English translation.

Grousset echoed similar themes. He stated that the doctrines of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming had divided the Sino-Japanese world. But whereas China had remained faithful to Zhu Xi because his comprehensive philosophy, objectivity, and scientific character suited Chinese inclinations, Wang Yangming's philosophy appealed to the Japanese because of its individualism and pronounced moral character. Grousset wrote:

The man and his work, in the words of Father Wieger when he was speaking of Wang Yangming, have something high and noble about them that is made to please a chivalrous people. In fact, the Japanese elites loved Wang Yangming for the same reasons that they loved the Zen masters, because in him, as in the Zen practitioners, they found a prescription for the perfection of the humane person, and a moral breviary for the individual. Zhu [Xi] made encyclopedic erudites and materialist functionaries; Wang Yangming assisted in the fashioning of samurai.⁵³

As for the Chinese scholars, who were intensely aware of Wang Yangming's profound importance to East Asian history, Wang Tch'ang-tche wrote about him not only for this reason but also because he bemoaned the fact that Wang was little known in the West.⁵⁴

Other authors were simply familiar with Japanese scholarship on Wang Yangming. Both Grousset and Forke cited work by Takase Takejirō.⁵⁵ Zenker consulted a German-language article by the Japanese philosopher Inoue Tetsujirō and cited an eight-page review of Inoue's *Nihon Yōmeigakuha no Tetsugaku* published in the *Transactions of the Asiatic Society in Japan*.⁵⁶

Although he doesn't reference Armstrong, Henke published his book on Wang Yangming two years after Armstrong's came out. As we have seen, he too was aware of Wang's importance to East Asian history. Born into the family of a Methodist minister in 1876, Henke traveled to China in 1900 to work as a missionary in Jiangxi Province, first in Nanchang and then Jiujiang. From 1904 to 1907, he served as a professor of homiletics at Tongwen Academy (after 1906, William Nast College). He returned to the United States in 1907 and completed a doctorate at the University of Chicago. That same year, he accepted a position as a professor of philosophy and psychology at Nanjing

⁵³ Grousset, *Histoire*, 358–359.

⁵⁴ Wang Tch'ang-tche, *La philosophie morale*, 195.

⁵⁵ His citations, as footnotes, state "Takejirō III" with page numbers. Grousset cited Tetsujirō Inoue 1897.

⁵⁶ Dening, "Philosophy," 111–118.

University.⁵⁷ In 1911, at the invitation of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society (located in Shanghai), Henke began researching Wang Yangming's work.

The North China Branch was established by British and Americans residing in Shanghai who were seeking to advance the study of and intellectual engagement with China. One of their most important activities was sponsoring research on China that would result in public lectures and the publication of articles.⁵⁸ It seems likely, though not provable in detail, that a growing awareness among society members of the importance of Wang Yangming to East Asian history was at the root of this request. In any case, in autumn 1912, Henke presented the preliminary outcome of his research to the society in Shanghai. This paper—"A Study in the Life and Philosophy of Wang Yangming"—was then published in the society's journal the following year.⁵⁹ This was the first scholarly article about Wang Yangming to be published in an academic journal in the West.

Henke begins by offering his English-language readers a frame of reference in European history, explaining that Wang lived contemporaneous with the voyages of discovery and the beginning of the Reformation, as well as that his revolutionary ideas predated the work of such philosophers as Hobbes, Descartes, and Spinoza by a century. Wang Yangming was a reformer, Henke explains, whose concerns were largely ethical. Deeply worried by the great moral, religious, and political issues in his time, Wang sought to place learning on a firm, bedrock foundation, "which meant finding the very source and life of the universe."⁶⁰ Although he searched intensely in Buddhism, Daoism, and Zhu Xi's philosophy, he failed to find a satisfying solution. It was only when he took office in faraway Guizhou that he found the answer he sought in a "state of realization," which led him to understand that "my nature is sufficient." "Upon this foundation," Henke asserts, "the whole structure of his ontology, cosmology, psychology, and ethics rests."⁶¹

Henke further explains what Wang Yangming meant by nature, providing quotes from the *Chuan xi lu*, and concluding that "this subtle something he calls nature is so profound, so rich, so all-inclusive, that viewed as a whole, [F. H.] Bradley, [E. F.] Taylor, or [Josiah] Royce would probably greet it as

⁵⁷ "Henke, Frederick Goodrich, 1876–1963," May 26, 2009, <http://iagenweb.org/boards/floyd/obituaries/index.cgi?read=235386>.

⁵⁸ For a history of this branch, see Wang Yi, "Huangjia yazhou wenhui."

⁵⁹ Henke, "Study."

⁶⁰ Henke, "Study," 55–56.

⁶¹ Henke, "Study," 55–56.

their old friend the absolute, even though it be in Chinese garb.”⁶² In other words, all three of these philosophers had similarly formulated an absolute idealism, the metaphysical view “that all aspects of reality, including those we experience as disconnected or contradictory, are ultimately unified in the thought of a single all-encompassing consciousness.”⁶³

Henke also explains that Wang Yangming’s primary interest was the mind. Mind is the “embodiment of natural law” and “heaven-given principles.” The volitional activity of mind is the creative activity constituting things in the world. Things become things by virtue of coming within the realm of the mind’s purposes.⁶⁴ Here too, he found evidence for Wang’s idealism. For much of his early life, Henke notes, Wang was frustrated by his inability to solve the problem of knowledge and consequently to arrive at a satisfying answer to the meaning of exhausting principles, investigating things, and extending knowledge to the utmost. He only found relief during his stay in Guizhou, where he realized that the answer was thorough devotion to nature and understanding and developing the mind: “Not things without, but mind itself, offers the solution.”⁶⁵

Last, Henke explained that for Wang Yangming, the source of mind’s knowledge is the “intuitive faculty” or “intuitive knowledge”—his translation of *liangzhi* 良知. The problem of knowledge is solved by depending on and developing this knowledge. As the “point of clearness that natural law attains,” the intuitive knowledge naturally knows right and wrong, and good and evil, thus marking out a path of duty.⁶⁶ By developing it to the utmost, a person can achieve absolute moral perfection, reaching the highest good, and hence become a sage. The sage, Henke explains, “is completely dominated by Heaven-given principles and wholly unhampered by passion, his integrity and moral worth are of the quality of the finest gold.”⁶⁷

In 1913, on account of health issues, Henke returned to the United States, taking an appointment at Allegheny College in Pennsylvania the next year, where he remained until he retired. But upon returning, Henke began corresponding with Paul Carus—then chief editor at Open Court Press, about his book project as well as publishing another article on Wang Yangming in *The Monist*. This was a wise choice. Open Court was established in LaSalle,

⁶² Henke, “Study,” 56.

⁶³ Parker, “Josiah Royce.”

⁶⁴ Henke, “Study,” 56–57.

⁶⁵ Henke, “Study,” 56.

⁶⁶ Myers, “Paul Carus,” 60.

⁶⁷ Myers, “Paul Carus,” 61.

Illinois, in 1887 by Edward Carl Hegeler, a German-American engineer and businessman who had made his fortune on zinc manufacturing in this town. But Hegeler was also deeply interested in matters of theology and science, and he sought to promote the scientific study of religion and ethics. To achieve this goal, he opened the press and began publishing two journals—*Open Court* (from 1887) and *The Monist* (from 1890)—as well as academic books on religion, philosophy, and science.⁶⁸

In 1888, Paul Carus joined the press as an editor. He was an apt choice. Born in Prussia in 1852, Carus obtained his PhD in philosophy and theology at the University of Tübingen in 1876. Because both he and Hegeler were quite open-minded about religious ideas, they threw open the pages of their journals to comparative religious studies, scientific articles, and the study of Oriental religions, willingly including the work of contributors with controversial philosophical ideas.⁶⁹ They also held unconventional beliefs: convinced that religion and science could be reconciled, both found that monistic philosophy was the most suited to achieving this goal. According to Constance Myers, Carus was a Kantian but sought to go beyond him: “The central idea of Carus’s philosophy was an attempt to solve Kant’s problem of dualism—of the unknowability of the thing-in-itself. He sought to bridge the chasm between subject and object and, in this attempt, he reached his monistic conception.”⁷⁰

Not surprisingly, Carus became particularly interested in Oriental thought. In 1893, at the First Parliament of Religions in Chicago, he met Abbot Shaku Soyen 釋宗演 (1860–1919) of the Engaku Monastery (Engaku-ji 圓覺寺) in Japan, who further spurred his interest in Buddhism. In the ensuing two years he wrote *The Gospel of Buddhism*, a kind of primer for readers in the West. He sent proofs of his work to Shaku Soyen, and because Shaku could not read English, he handed them to his student D. T. Suzuki for assistance. In 1897, when Carus needed help translating the *Dao De Jing*, he brought Suzuki to LaSalle, where he would remain for twelve years as a writer and translator.⁷¹ As we have seen, these were the years when both men produced scholarship on the history of philosophy in China, including Buddhism, Daoism, ancient Confucianism, and some Song *Daoxue* philosophers.

Thus, under the guidance of Paul Carus, a clear connection between Open Court Press and the study and publication of work on Eastern thought was established. The press editor “came to be regarded as an authority on Oriental religion, and an expert transmitter of the ideas and ethos contained

⁶⁸ Myers, “Paul Carus,” 59.

⁶⁹ Myers, “Paul Carus,” 61.

⁷⁰ Myers, “Paul Carus,” 62.

⁷¹ Myers, “Paul Carus,” 61.

therein to the English-reading public.”⁷² That is likely the reason that Henke sent him a letter in August 1913 announcing that he had just returned from China and informing him that he had made a critical study of Wang Yangming, producing a manuscript of about 115,000 words, a translation that he “much desired to publish.” Henke made the case that Wang “is the most important and influential Chinese philosopher since the period beginning with the Reformation and the maritime discoveries,” so he expected that his work would “represent a distinct contribution to the subject of Oriental philosophy.”⁷³ He also submitted a revised version of the article he had published in the *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* for publication in *The Monist*.

It may be the case that Carus still did not quite realize the impact of Wang Yangming on the history of Chinese philosophy. After all, neither he nor D. T. Suzuki had included Wang in their surveys. In his reply to Henke, Carus said he feared that the manuscript was too long, especially given that he already had several Chinese translations awaiting publication. He recommended publication of extracts in the form of a short book or a series of articles.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, by mid-September both the article and book were accepted for publication. Carus suggested changing the title of the article from “Wang Yang Ming as a Chinese Philosopher” to “Wang Yang Ming, the Chinese Idealist” or “A Kantian before Kant.”⁷⁵ Given Carus’s own philosophical proclivities and the history of this press, reading Wang Yangming in this way would indeed have made scholarship about him apt material for publication.

Consequently, in 1914, Henke’s article “Wang Yangming: A Chinese Idealist” was published in *The Monist*, and in 1916, his translation of Wang Yangming’s work, *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*, was published by Open Court. After a brief preface, this book provided a biography of Wang edited from Qian Dehong’s 錢德洪 (1496–1574) *Nianpu* 年譜 (“Chronological biography”). Four “Books” follow. The first book is a translation of the first and second *juan* of the *Chuan xi lu* 傳習錄. The second book consists of selections from the third *juan* of the *Chuan xi lu* and the *Daxue wen* 大學問 (“Inquiry Regarding the Great Learning”). The third book is a selection of twelve of

⁷² Myers, “Paul Carus,” 62.

⁷³ Frederick G. Henke, letter to Dr. Carus, August 20, 1913, Open Court Company Publishing Records, Correspondence, Box 15, Southern Illinois University Special Collections Research Center.

⁷⁴ Paul Carus, reply to Mr. F. C. [sic] Henke, August 23, 1913, Open Court Company Publishing Records, Correspondence, Box 15, Southern Illinois University Special Collections Research Center.

⁷⁵ Paul Carus, letter to Mr. Frederick G. Henke, September 11, 1913, Open Court Company Publishing Records, Correspondence, Box 15, Southern Illinois University Special Collections Research Center.

Wang's letters, and the fourth book contains thirty-eight letters and twelve prefaces and essays.

As David Nivison has pointed out, although these documents can be found in the *Wang Wencheng gong quanshu*, the way Henke divided and ordered them is entirely different. In his preface, Henke states that "the volume herewith presented is a faithful translation of volume one of the four volume edition of Wang's works distributed by the Commercial Press of Shanghai."⁷⁶ In fact, the edition he was using was compiled by Shi Bangyao, a Wang Yangming follower who was also from Yuyao 余姚, Zhejiang. His *Yangming xiansheng jiyao* consisted of three major volumes, each with several *juan*, and was first published in 1635. The first volume, the *Lixue bian* 理學編 (Compendium of the learning of principle), consisted of four *juan* and was intended as an introduction to Wang's philosophy. This is what Henke translated. The other two volumes, which were intended to introduce Wang's political and literary achievements, were not included.⁷⁷

Several journals reviewed Henke's book shortly after it was published. Reviewers all recognized the importance of his work, given that Wang Yangming and his compelling life and philosophical ideas were so little known. But some also criticized Henke for failing to offer a systematic overview of Wang's thought. One reviewer, the Japanese scholar Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 (1873–1949), was highly critical of Henke's translation. He believed that absent a proper introduction and annotations, something this book lacked, Wang Yangming's philosophy would remain obscure.⁷⁸

Furthermore, Anesaki found translation of technical terms too plain and modern, or more suited to Zhu Xi's connotations, insofar as they implied conceptually dualistic thinking or empiricism. Translating *liangzhi* as "intuitive knowledge" and "intuitive faculty of the good," for example, risked reducing this "cardinal point in the whole system of Wang's philosophy and ethics" to something too "strictly psychological."⁷⁹ Furthermore, he found translating *zhi liangzhi* 致良知 as "to extend knowledge to the utmost" and "to extend the use of intuitive knowledge to the utmost" highly misleading. The phrase is better translated as "to realize the *liangzhi*" or "to bring the *liangzhi* to full light and efficiency." Finally, translating *gongfu* 工夫 as "task" or "work" is also problematic, Anesaki found, because the term really refers to engaging in a type of meditation or spiritual exercise both while sitting quietly and while doing things.

⁷⁶ Henke, *Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*, xiv.

⁷⁷ Nivison, "Review," 436–442.

⁷⁸ Anesaki, "Review," 595.

⁷⁹ Anesaki, "Review," 596.

Anesaki's review was useful insofar as it pointed out the extent to which Henke may have shifted the conceptual horizon through which Wang Yang-ming would now be understood by individuals relying on the English translation. The language barrier was formidable, and it remains so. Similar questions could be raised about Henke's use of Western conceptual frameworks to assess Wang's thought. For example, Henke claimed that Wang believed each person's mind was a microcosm of the universe, a concept that would naturally lead to ideas of liberty and equality similar to those of the Enlightenment in Europe.⁸⁰ Also, like almost every other scholar who wrote during this period, Henke labeled Wang's philosophy monistic idealism, contrasting it with Zhu Xi's realism. Although these readings were highly problematic, they shaped how Wang Yangming was understood in Europe and North America until new scholarship appeared in the 1960s.

One other American missionary who spent much time in China and wrote about Wang Yangming was Lyman Cady. In 1916, *The Missionary Herald* reported that Reverend Cady was appointed to leave Grinnell, Iowa, for missionary work in north China.⁸¹ It seems likely that he first went to Shandong Christian University (also known as Cheeloo University 齊魯大學), which had been established in Jinan in 1909 through the combined efforts of several mission agencies. Apparently, Cady developed an interest in Chinese philosophy and especially the School of Mind. In 1928 and 1930, writing from the university, he published articles on Chinese philosophy in *The Monist*, including one about Wang Yangming.⁸² Many years later, in 1936, while working at the School of Theology, he delivered two lectures at the School of Chinese Studies in Beijing. These were privately printed that same year.⁸³ In 1939, he finished a dissertation on Lu Xiangshan.⁸⁴

Regarding his research on Wang Yangming, Cady notes that he did not have time to work with Chinese texts, rather relying on Henke's translation and the assistance of the Xu Baoqian 徐寶謙 (1892–1944). He noted, "We were satisfied that Henke's rendering of the text, while in need of revision taken as a whole, gives a fairly reliable view of the original ideas of Wang Yang Ming."⁸⁵ Born in Shangyu, Zhejiang, in 1892, Xu Baoqian was baptized in 1913, spent time studying both in China and the United States, and then taught philosophy in universities in China. As Cady notes,

⁸⁰ Henke, *Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*, xiv.

⁸¹ *The Missionary Herald* 112, no. 7 (July 1916): 301.

⁸² Cady, "Wang Yang-ming's Doctrine," 263–291.

⁸³ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming's "Intuitive Knowledge."*

⁸⁴ Cady, *Philosophy of Lu Hsiang-shan*.

⁸⁵ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming's "Intuitive Knowledge,"* iv.

he was eminently qualified to help him because he too had published work on Neo-Confucianism.

Cady's lectures, and the privately printed book that came out of them, consisted of two parts: "The Doctrine of 'Intuitive Knowledge'" and "Wang Yangming's Relation to Other Thinkers." Cady explains that Wang had "made the doctrine of intuitive knowledge central to his thinking and teaching."⁸⁶ This was a knowledge with metaphysical, epistemological, and moral significance. Henke's rendering of the term as "the intuitive faculty" was appropriate, Cady believed, because it is an "organ of general knowledge, which is an intrinsic part of man's native endowment completely fitted for its function by nature, immediate and untaught."⁸⁷ At times, Wang describes this knowledge in such a way as to make it clear that it is an ultimate principle, and therefore of metaphysical import. In others, this knowledge is clearly "conscience, the maker of moral judgments."⁸⁸ At a practical level, it passes judgment on our ideas, purposes, and moral intentions, even while it ultimately gives rise to them.⁸⁹ Elsewhere, Wang includes higher intellectual processes, such as reason, within the functioning of this knowledge, adding an epistemological dimension to it. All told, however, Wang Yangming's "strong belief in the unity of the mind" and "of the fundamental oneness of psychological processes," Cady observes, makes it difficult to clearly distinguish the relationship between various aspects of the intuitive knowledge and mind.⁹⁰

As for "Wang Yangming's Relation to Other Thinkers," this was the first English-language writing to address him comparatively in some depth. As for his own heritage, Cady explains, the roots of Wang Yangming's thought are to be found in Confucius, Mengzi, the "Doctrine of the Mean" (*Zhong yong* 中庸), the "Great Learning" (*Daxue* 大學), Song *daoxue* philosophers, Lu Xiangshan, and, to an extent, Buddhism. Even though Wang insisted he was no Buddhist, Cady writes, "In phraseology and method he shows Buddhist influence in ethical matters."⁹¹ That includes his concept of mind and his introspective and meditative methods.

As for Western thinkers, Cady briefly elucidates what he found to be fruitful comparisons to Plato, Stoic philosophy, René Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Shaftesbury, and Bergson. Both Plato and Wang Yangming "believe

⁸⁶ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming's "Intuitive Knowledge,"* 1.

⁸⁷ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming's "Intuitive Knowledge,"* 3.

⁸⁸ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming's "Intuitive Knowledge,"* 4.

⁸⁹ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming's "Intuitive Knowledge,"* 9–10.

⁹⁰ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming's "Intuitive Knowledge,"* 11.

⁹¹ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming's "Intuitive Knowledge,"* 29.

that truths are universal and innate to the mind.”⁹² Stoics and Wang Yangming both “sought the life of tranquil reason.”⁹³ Descartes and Wang Yangming’s philosophy grew out of a revolt against tradition and the state of learning in their time. Both had turned within, to their minds, believing that “the truth and certainty of ideas depends upon the recognition of intuition.”⁹⁴ Spinoza and Wang Yangming both gave special place to an intuition that guides a person to the highest metaphysical truths.⁹⁵

Nevertheless, more generally, Cady cautions against simplistic comparison, because the intuitive knowledge “cannot be fitted into the exact limits of our Western analysis of intuition without shearing of some of its characteristic features.”⁹⁶ As for the entirety of his philosophical thought, because the intuitive knowledge is an expression of an “all-pervading unity,” a unity also characterizing the mind’s original condition, Cady labels it monistic idealism.⁹⁷

Although Henke receives credit for being the first person in the West to publish a translation of Wang Yangming’s writing, the first person to publish a book-length study of his philosophy was Wang Tch’ang-tche. From Songjiang in Jiangsu, he entered a Catholic Seminary in Xujiahui 徐家匯, Shanghai, in 1918 and then entered the Jesuit Order in 1921. In 1928, he moved to Europe, where, after studying at a Catholic seminary in Lyon, he became a priest. One year later, he entered the Institut Catholique de Paris, where he became the first Chinese priest to obtain a doctorate in theology at this school. That was in 1935; the following year, he also obtained a doctorate in philosophy.⁹⁸ The title of his dissertation—which was published as a book in 1936—speaks to the subject: *La Philosophie morale de Wang Yangming*. The first chapter provides an account of Wang Yangming’s life in historical context. The second chapter (“L’Immanence de la norme dans notre coeur”) explains Wang Yangming’s doctrine of the identity of mind and principle and the human capacity for moral perfection; how this doctrine diverged from Zhu Xi’s thought; and why the aberrant behavior of scholars in his time had led him to put forward this theory.⁹⁹ The ensuing five chapters (3 to 7) are devoted to explaining the meaning,

⁹² Cady, *Wang Yang-ming’s “Intuitive Knowledge,”* 19.

⁹³ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming’s “Intuitive Knowledge,”* 30.

⁹⁴ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming’s “Intuitive Knowledge,”* 31.

⁹⁵ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming’s “Intuitive Knowledge,”* 32.

⁹⁶ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming’s “Intuitive Knowledge,”* 35.

⁹⁷ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming’s “Intuitive Knowledge,”* 10–14.

⁹⁸ “王昌祉 (Wang Tch’ang-tche) (1899–1959),” *Shanghai shi difangzhi bangongshi*, <http://www.shtong.gov.cn/node2/node2245/node75195/node75207/node75222/node75230/userobject1ai90248.html>.

⁹⁹ Wang Tch’ang-tche, *La Philosophie morale*, 3.

practice, and realization of *liangzhi*, a term Wang Tch'ang-tche chooses not to translate, rather leaving it Romanized as "*liang-tche*."

In his introduction, Wang argues that Chinese thought is unique in making the search for moral perfection a principal goal. Chinese philosophers also believe that moral acts are the highest expression of moral knowledge, and therefore they insist that true philosophy is a philosophy of praxis. Consequently, Wang believed that making known one of the great masters of Chinese moral philosophy was timely, and he chose Wang Yangming because he found him to be exemplary of this strain in Chinese thought. He also stated that his goal was, insofar as possible, to present Wang Yangming on his own terms without engaging in comparative philosophy. All too often, he believed, comparison amounted to fitting Chinese thought into a European framework—in the case of Wang Yangming, for example, Bergson's intuitionism or Kantianism.¹⁰⁰

Because he believed that Wang Yangming's "definitive teaching late in life" and the "central concept in his moral philosophy" was *liangzhi*, Wang Tch'ang-tche devotes nearly the entire book to explicating the meaning of it.¹⁰¹ By nature, people have this good knowledge, and they can actualize it by acting on moral intuition. This knowledge is not objective or external; rather, it is intimate and personal, consisting of moral principles immanent within the heart. Realizing this natural goodness requires concrete practice and an almost religious attitude towards the existence and infallibility of *liangzhi*. One must have a firm faith in it, obeying the guidance of moral intuition and actualizing it in the most concrete challenges of life.¹⁰² This means humbly and resolutely doing what is good and rejecting evil in our actions, according to the guidance of *liangzhi*.

Wang Tch'ang-tche recognizes that Wang Yangming did not explicitly and formally philosophize about what *liangzhi* is in itself. Rather, his concerns were practical and not metaphysical. He developed his ideas from life experience and from what he believed would become self-evident, should the individual pay careful attention to moral awareness: "it [*liangzhi*] was constructed solely upon the immediate terrain of our conscience."¹⁰³ In this regard, Wang Tch'ang-tche's work points in the direction of later trends comparing Wang Yangming's method of philosophizing to phenomenology.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁰ Wang Tch'ang-tche, *La Philosophie morale*, 5–7.

¹⁰¹ Wang Tch'ang-tche, *La Philosophie morale*, 187.

¹⁰² Wang Tch'ang-tche, *La Philosophie morale*, 187.

¹⁰³ Wang Tch'ang-tche, *La Philosophie morale*, 190.

¹⁰⁴ The earliest comparative study is Jung, "Wang Yang-ming and Existential Phenomenology" (1965). See Chapter 3.

Chang Yü-ch'uan wrote the only other scholarly monograph about Wang Yangming published prior to the 1960s. But unlike Wang Tch'ang-tche, he focused on Wang Yangming's political life rather than on his essential doctrines. Chang's book was the first to present a detailed study of Yangming's life as an official and military commander, as well as his political and military thought.¹⁰⁵

Chang initially published his study between 1939 and 1940 as a series of articles in *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review*. The review was a quarterly magazine published by the Chinese Social and Political Science Association, which was established in Beijing in 1915 to encourage the study of law, politics, sociology, economics, and administration, as well as to promote fellowship among individuals with such interests. The *Review* was to be a venue for English-language articles about these subjects.¹⁰⁶ Interestingly, Chang Yü-ch'uan was not only a founding member of the association's executive council but also served on the first editorial board. Prior to 1939, he also repeatedly contributed articles and reviews. Other members were indeed influential figures: the first president of the association was Premier Lu Zhengxiang 陸徵祥 (1871–1949), and the first vice president was none other than Paul S. Reinsch, American Ambassador to China, whom we have already met.¹⁰⁷

Because he spent his life at the intersection between East and West, Chang Yü-ch'uan's background made him a fitting candidate for these roles and for the book that he authored about Wang Yangming. Born in Nanhai, Guangdong, between 1890 and 1898, Chang studied at the Anglo-Chinese College in Fuzhou, at Queen's College in Hong Kong, and then at the Imperial University of Peking. In 1898 he went to Japan to study at Tokyo Imperial University, where he met Sun Zhongshan 孫中山 (Sun Yat-sen, 1866–1925) and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929). Then, in 1901, Chang traveled to the United States where, until 1906, he studied at the University of California and then Yale, completing a master's degree in law. In 1906, Chang was invited by the Qing government to participate in a special examination in law and government offered to students who had studied in Europe and the United States, and he was awarded a *jinshi* degree. This successful educational background launched him into a long series of official positions in the educational and foreign affairs ministries of the Qing, early Republican period, and Nationalist governments. Perhaps

¹⁰⁵ Chang Yü-ch'uan, "Wang Shou-jen." These articles were published as a book in several reprints.

¹⁰⁶ Scott, "Chinese Social and Political Science Association," 375–376.

¹⁰⁷ "Editorial Notes," *The Chinese Social and Political Science Review* 1 (April 1916): 1–2.

the most prominent position he held was as the president of Tsinghua College, from 1918 to 1920.¹⁰⁸

Chang acknowledged the importance of Henke's translation work for studying the philosophy of Wang Yangming, but he found that it covered only about half of Wang's writing, leaving untouched his collection of official documents, poems, and additional literary work. Chang therefore proposed to give an account of "what he believed and what he did as a government official."¹⁰⁹ His study begins with a detailed account of Wang Yangming's life and then analyzes his political life and thought topically, according to the following subheadings: "His Political Theories," "Wang Yang-ming as an Educator," "Wang Yang-ming as a Civil Administrator," and "Wang Yang-ming as a Soldier." Chang concludes with some interesting judgments. As an advocate of the unity of knowledge and action, Wang was "different from the common run of the literary class of people in that he practices what he knows, under the sole guidance of his so-called intuitive faculty." The "secret of his success in his capacity of an educator, of a civil administrator or of a soldier" was doing "what he thinks is right, even at the risk of his own life or liberty." In those roles, Chang estimates, Wang had "no ulterior object to serve except in the interest of the people": "We have failed to discover a single instance in which he is not acting for the best interest of the country and the people, nor can we take exception with him for having an ax to grind."¹¹⁰ For all these reasons, Chang calls on his readers to "faithfully emulate his example, see things by his viewpoint and do things by his standard of ethics."¹¹¹

While Chang Yü-ch'uan was serving his first year as president of Tsinghua, J. J. L. Duyvendak was serving his last as interpreter for the Dutch embassy in Beijing. As we have seen, he published an essay on Wang Yangming in 1927 because he had encountered a resurgence of interest in the great Ming philosopher in contemporary China. As he saw it, modernity had compelled the Chinese to stand at a distance from their Confucian tradition and look at it critically. But owing to the Western encounter, the Chinese realized just how varied their traditions were. In keeping with the Chinese pattern of maintaining continuity within change and looking for authoritative guidance within their own traditions, they rediscovered the work of such thinkers as Mozi and

¹⁰⁸ Zhang Yonghang, "Chang Yü-ch'uan rensheng da shi ji," 1–21. These are unpublished papers emailed to the author on May 5, 2017. Zhang Yonghang is a grandson to Chang Yü-ch'uan. See also Jin Fujun, "Zhang Yuchuan zai Qinghua," 32–36.

¹⁰⁹ Chang Yü-ch'uan, *Wang Shou-jen*, 2.

¹¹⁰ Chang Yü-ch'uan, *Wang Shou-jen*, 267.

¹¹¹ Chang Yü-ch'uan, *Wang Shou-jen*, 268.

Wang Yangming.¹¹² Duyvendak saw this in a positive light because he believed that Wang Yangming's spirit of independent, critical thinking would have a positive impact on youth.¹¹³

Duyvendak ought to have had some insight into the contemporary intellectual scene in China. After all, he had served at the Dutch embassy from 1912 to 1918. Prior, he had studied in Leiden, Berlin, and Paris under such famous sinologists as J. J. M. de Groot, Edouard Chavannes, and Henri Cordier (1849–1925). Upon returning to Leiden in 1919, he took up a position as a lecturer in Chinese at Leiden University. That placed him in what would become one of the most important centers of Chinese studies in Europe. It is well known that Dutch sinology developed in the nineteenth century in concert with the growing needs of the Dutch colonial government in Southeast Asia.¹¹⁴ The government needed interpreters and experts in overseas Chinese affairs to deal with communities of Chinese residing in its territories. As a part of that effort, a chair of Chinese Language and Literature was established at Leiden (along with several other chairs in Oriental and Indological subjects). Duyvendak first studied Chinese with the second occupant of this chair, the renowned J. J. M. de Groot.

Publication of *China Tegen de Westerkim* (China against the western horizon) and a philological study and translation of the *Book of Lord Shang* (1928) cemented Duyvendak's credentials, and he became full professor in 1930. *China Tegen de Westerkim* included several studies on contemporary China, such as a survey of the literary renaissance and a study of Wang Yangming.¹¹⁵ "Een Herleefd Wijzgeer" (A resurrected sage) provides an introduction to the influence of Zhu Xi's philosophy on Wang Yangming, his life as an official and military commander, his fundamental philosophical concepts—especially *liangzhi* and *zhi xing he yi* 知行合一 (the unity of knowledge and action)—and his methods of self-cultivation.

Turning now to surveys of the histories of Chinese philosophy, we note that three of these were originally published in French, and three were published in German. The earliest French survey was Léon Wieger's *Histoire des croyances religieuses et des opinions philosophiques en Chine* (later published in English as *History of the Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in China*). Wieger was born in Strasbourg, France, and entered the Jesuit order in 1881. In 1887, he traveled to a mission in Southern Zhili, China, where he

¹¹² Duyvendak, *China Tegen de Westerkim*, 63.

¹¹³ Duyvendak, *China Tegen de Westerkim*, 97–98.

¹¹⁴ For a thorough study, see Kuiper, *Early Dutch Sinologists*.

¹¹⁵ For Duyvendak's life, I have followed Idema, "Dutch Sinology," 88–93.

practiced medicine. He also mastered the language and produced numerous publications on Chinese history, language, culture, religion, and philosophy. Concerning the *History of the Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in China*, Wieger states that the book's seventy-four chapters (referred to as "lessons" in the table of contents) were written at the request of the Institut Catholique de Paris and "represented thirty years of research and studies made in China, with a view to the propagation of the kingdom of God."¹¹⁶

Although most of the short "Lesson" on Wang Yangming is devoted to his impact on Japan, Wieger does introduce important elements of his thought. Referring to Wang's enlightenment experience while serving at a courier station in Guizhou, Wieger concluded that he "had as it were a revelation."¹¹⁷ He explained that Wang found that once the study of the masters is completed, a man can no longer search for the answers to his doubts in books; rather, he must draw them out of his own heart.¹¹⁸ Regarding this "living word," Wieger continues:

That word, he said, is pronounced *liang-chih*, the innate knowledge, which he defines as "what one knows, without having ever learned it, without having ever thought on it." Only the dictate of innate knowledge, heard and followed by man, gives him the supreme blessings, truth and peace. Once this inner word is heard in the secrecy of the heart, one must believe in it firmly, immovably. For that word is infallible, seeing that it is pronounced by that heart, which is the celestial norm.¹¹⁹

Wieger further explains that Wang Yangming always insisted that because this infallible knowledge is "celestial reason," the will must be obedient to its verdict, executing it with determination and absolute faith. Acting in conformity with it is wisdom. A person has only to watch carefully over himself lest anything human be introduced, sullyng or falsifying this intuition and thus dividing the heart from the moral law: "To ignore this heart, is the great folly; to act contrary to it, is the great error."¹²⁰

Wieger does present Wang's doctrine with a refreshing sensitivity. As a Jesuit, he may have been influenced by the affective turn in Catholic thought in France (Romantic Catholicism), according to which the practice of the faith should be rooted in the appeal to the heart as the site of connection to God. He

¹¹⁶ Wieger, *History of the Religious Beliefs*, preface.

¹¹⁷ Wieger *History of the Religious Beliefs*, 698.

¹¹⁸ Wieger, *History of the Religious Beliefs*, 698.

¹¹⁹ Wieger, *History of the Religious Beliefs*, 698.

¹²⁰ Wieger, *History of the Religious Beliefs*, 700.

likely also had in mind natural law, a concept held by the Catholic Church that had roots both in Stoicism and the Christian scriptures, particularly in Romans 1–2, where the Apostle Paul outlines the moral law that everyone knows intuitively. Romans 2:15–16 describes it as follows: “They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness.”

Such an interpretation would fit well with Wieger’s criticism of Wang Yangming. Having decided that *liangzhi* was like “conscience,” Wieger found it “strange that the man who held conscience in such high esteem, who preached so strongly the obligation to follow it did not rise above that conscience to Him who gave him it.”¹²¹ He maintained that Wang considered it as a kind of vital function, making him, like Zhu Xi, materialistic in his thinking.

Henri Bernard and René Grousset both largely reproduce information and interpretations of Wang Yangming that they found in Wieger’s and Henke’s works, so their surveys need not be covered in detail here. Rather, it is worthwhile to recall that the Ming philosopher had already, by 1940, been included in six such surveys. Both Bernard and Grousset were accomplished scholars of Chinese history and philosophy. Bernard was a French missionary and sinologist. He went to China in 1924 and remained there until 1947, working as both a missionary and a researcher.¹²² He wrote numerous books and articles about China. *Sagesse Chinoise et philosophie chrétienne* consists of a series of lectures on the history of Chinese philosophy, the history of Jesuit missions in China, and, more generally, the encounter between Occidental and Chinese civilization and philosophy. The book was originally written to provide instruction at the college of philosophy at the Jesuit mission in Xianxian 獻縣, Hubei, China. As such, Wang’s work was summarized under concise points: his philosophy as metaphysical idealism; the liberating quality of his philosophy as compared to the rationalism of Zhu Xi’s philosophy; subjectivity and intuitionism in his philosophy of mind and *liangzhi*; Wang Yangming’s philosophy in Japan; and selections from his poetry and letters.¹²³

Grousset also produced a large oeuvre of historical work, but he wrote more broadly about “Eastern” civilizations. He spent most of his career as a curator in two different museums located in Paris, France.¹²⁴ Concerning Wang Yangming, he was most impressed by how his philosophy diverged from Zhu

¹²¹ Wieger, *History of the Religious Beliefs*, 700.

¹²² John W. Witek, “Henri Bernard-Maitre, 1889–1975,” *Biographical Dictionary of Chinese Christianity*, <http://bdcconline.net/en/stories/bernard-maitre-henri>.

¹²³ Bernard, *Sagesse chinoise*, 82–88.

¹²⁴ “René Grousset,” Académie Française, <http://www.academie-francaise.fr/les-immortels/rene-grousset>.

Xi's. Like all the other authors discussed here, he drew strong distinctions between the two based on a simplistic characterization of Zhu Xi's ideas that scholars would question today. Grousset explains that whereas Zhu Xi valued erudition, intellectualism, and acquiring knowledge through compiling and commenting on classical texts, Wang Yangming valued subjectivity and intuition. For Wang, through personal reflection, the individual must discover the infallible truths contained within the heart. For this reason, truth was almost like a kind of revelation, ecstatic in nature.¹²⁵

One area where German sinology excelled in the first half of the twentieth century was in publishing surveys of the history of Chinese philosophy. Whereas English-language introductory surveys neglect Ming philosophy, German surveys include at least some discussion of Wang Yangming and his school of thought. Zenker's *Geschichte der chinesischen Philosophie* and Hackmann's *Chinesische Philosophie* were both first published in 1927, while Forke's *Geschichte der neueren chinesischen Philosophie* was first published in 1938.

Both Hackmann and Forke had been deeply involved with China. Heinrich Hackmann studied Protestant theology at the University of Tübingen, served as a priest for the German community in Shanghai from 1894 to 1901, and then spent time traveling in China and Southeast Asia. In 1913, he was appointed professor of religious history at the University of Amsterdam. Alfred Forke—arguably one of Germany's most accomplished sinologists prior to World War II—was born in 1867 in Braunschweig, the capital of the Duchy of Brunswick. While studying jurisprudence at the University of Berlin, he also attended the Seminar for Oriental Languages, where he learned Chinese. From 1890 to 1903, he worked for the German diplomatic service in China. In 1903, he took a position as a lecturer in the Department of Oriental Languages at Berlin University, and in 1923 he succeeded Otto Franke as a professor at the University of Hamburg.¹²⁶ Forke published numerous articles and books on Chinese literature and philosophy.

Ernst Zenker, on the other hand, wrote about China as a non-specialist. He was born in Bohemia, obtained his law degree in Vienna, and then went on to become a noted journalist, author, and politician, perhaps best known for his work on anarchism. Although he was not an academic Sinologist and did not work directly with Chinese-language sources, the fact that he could produce a basic survey of Chinese philosophy also speaks to the maturation of this field and the availability of translated sources.

¹²⁵ Grousset, *Histoire*, 356–357.

¹²⁶ Erkes, "Alfred Forke," 148–149.

Zenker discusses Wang Yangming in a chapter titled “The Heterodox Schools: Wang Yangming.” By heterodox, Zenker meant the *Xinxue* originating with Lu Jiuyuan during the Song dynasty, and not Buddhism and Daoism. Aside from introducing Wang Yangming’s life and thought briefly, the questions that most exercised his curiosity were passages examining the relation between mind and body or ones that seemed to suggest that Wang’s thought was similar to German idealism. The same held true for Hackmann and Forke. Here are two examples of passages from Wang Yangming’s works that these authors quoted at least in part:

A friend pointed to flowering trees on a cliff and said, “[You say] there is nothing under heaven external to the mind. These flowering trees on the high mountain blossom and drop their blossoms of themselves. What have they to do with my mind?” The teacher said, “Before you look at the flowers, they and your mind are in the state of silent vacancy. From this you can know that these flowers are not external to your mind.”¹²⁷

I was doubtful and said, “A thing is external. How can it be the same as the personal life, the mind, the will, and knowledge?” The teacher said, “The ears, the eyes, the mind, the will, knowledge, and things are parts of the body. But how can they see, hear, speak, or act without the mind? On the other hand, without the ears, the eyes, the mouth, the nose, and the four limbs, the mind cannot see, hear, speak, or act when it wants to. Therefore, if there is no mind, there will be no body, and if there is no body, there will be no mind.”¹²⁸

Nevertheless, Zenker doubts that Wang Yangming was a true idealist, stating that he never claimed that the phenomenal world is less real than the mental world. Zenker argues that Wang’s statement concerning the flowers does not mean he was saying they are an illusion. He believes Wang simply meant that mind authors the appearance of the phenomenal world, not that there is no world apart from what the mind shapes. Here, Zenker’s interpretation is conditioned by arguments in Europe over Kant’s philosophy. Zenker claims that neither Kant nor Wang denied the existence of the world; they only proposed that mind shapes how the world appears: “all perceptions pass through our minds, so that the entire world, in its phenomenal appearance, is

¹²⁷ Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions for Practical Living*, 222. Zenker and Hackmann discuss this passage. See Hackmann, *Chinesische Philosophie*, 364–365; Zenker, *Geschichte*, 625.

¹²⁸ Wing-tsit Chan, *Instructions for Practical Living*, 189. Forke, Hackmann, and Zenker all discuss this passage. See Forke, *Geschichte*, 385; Hackmann, *Chinesische Philosophie*, 364–365; Zenker, *Geschichte*, 623.

indeed the work of our mind.”¹²⁹ For this reason, he suggests that their philosophies could be labeled transcendental realism.

Zenker also assesses Wang Yangming’s status within and contribution to the history of Confucianism. He states that Wang deviated a great deal from Zhu Xi. Whereas Zhu Xi was a rationalist, Wang was a voluntarist and intuitionist. Whereas Zhu Xi was the Thomas Aquinas of the Confucian Church, Wang Yangming was similar to the Christian reformers who sought to return the faith to its foundations in the pristine purity of the ancient texts. In Wang’s case, that meant returning to the original meaning of Confucius’s work. Zenker argues that Confucius privileged self-knowledge and the perfection of virtue over merely practical knowledge of the external world. Zhu Xi shifted Confucius’s focus from perfecting the self in virtue to the rational study of the external world and the improvement of society. Zhu Xi’s philosophy, however, bred a kind of prosaic, pragmatic rationalism that narrowed thinking, robbing it of substance.

Wang Yangming, on the other hand, tried to return the goal to the perfection of virtue. He believed that man contains an intuitive knowledge of the good. By developing this knowledge, man can return to his true nature, spontaneously accord with the law of Heaven (moral law), and participate in a universal unity. Since the divine and the highest good are present in human nature as the moral law, following the intuitive knowledge leads to true liberty.¹³⁰ However, desires and passions prevent man from returning to his true nature. These passions cause him to lose himself in things, and only through purifying himself and turning away from the material can he return to the freedom of true nature.

Zenker sees parallels between this kind of purification and spiritual purgation in Catholicism. He further argues that Wang Yangming’s conception of human nature and purifying the self of desires were influenced by Daoist mysticism. However, he notes that Wang did not accept Daoist passivity and political inaction, rather rejecting such attitudes. For Wang, a person’s state of mind is not determined by whether they are active or living in quiet repose; rather, this is determined by the extent to which they are governed by moral law or desires. If a person follows the intuitive knowledge and, consequently, lives according to the moral law present in their human nature, they will be at peace whether active or passive.¹³¹

Hackmann’s coverage is somewhat less simplistic and shaped by European philosophical categories than was Zenker’s. From what he learned of

¹²⁹ Zenker, *Geschichte*, 627.

¹³⁰ Zenker, *Geschichte*, 631–632.

¹³¹ Zenker, *Geschichte*, 634–5.

Wang Yangming's life in Qian Dehong's *Nianpu* (Chronological biography), Hackmann was impressed by how deeply Wang's philosophy was tied to his life experiences. He saw that Wang was a person who yearned for authenticity and truth and who was averse to empty forms. Zhu Xi's philosophy, as official orthodoxy, was just such a hollow form, as it no longer provided the impetus for scholars to explore existence: it was a "dead system." Wang rather sought spiritual insight and wisdom, developing a philosophy that truly grew from within and from his personal and intimate experiences with life challenges.¹³²

Hackmann sees in Wang's concept of nature an "all-embracing unity." All phenomena—all that exists and happens—ultimately derive from the same nature. That is why the world only becomes truly accessible to people when they turn to their inmost being. The path to finding this knowledge requires looking within the mind, where the design and law of the cosmos lies. In other words, the mind gives form to and conditions what is present to us in the world's appearance.¹³³ Judging from Wang's statement concerning the flowers, Hackmann recognizes that he appears to be an idealist. However, like Zenker, he also notes that Wang did not privilege either mind or body as being somehow more real.¹³⁴

Most of Hackmann's survey is then devoted to explaining the meaning of *liangzhi*. He mentions the English translation of this term as "intuition" but wisely stresses that intuition should not be equated with a particular function of the mind—such as knowledge, feeling, and will. Rather, *liangzhi*, as Wang Yangming understood it, was prior to any particular mental function, a kind of pure knowing inherent in Heavenly principle expressing itself through these functions. This inner light is the basis for moral discrimination, of the knowledge of right and wrong. The metaphysical quality and grandeur of *liangzhi*, however, makes it more than mere conscience. Through it, a man attains spiritual perfection. Because all that is great and good in man is rooted in this knowledge, there is no greater task than to develop this inner guide. It is only that this inner light is concealed by a darkening covering. That covering is the impulses and passions springing from man's natural selfishness. By developing the inner light, one becomes naturally able, in one's likes and dislikes, predilections and aversions, to follow the guidance of the natural law within the mind, as opposed to the impulses behind selfish intentions. In this way, knowledge and action are unified.¹³⁵

¹³² Hackmann, *Chinesische Philosophie*, 361–363.

¹³³ Hackmann, *Chinesische Philosophie*, 364.

¹³⁴ Hackmann, *Chinesische Philosophie*, 365.

¹³⁵ Hackmann, *Chinesische Philosophie*, 366–368.

Among surveys predating the 1950s, Forke's made the most systematic use of primary sources and offered the most complete treatment of Wang Yangming. In constructing his survey, he drew directly from an edition of the *Mingshi* 明史 (Ming history), *Wang Wencheng gong quanshu*, and the *Yangming xiansheng ji yao*. He also cites the work of Zenker, Hackmann, Henke, Xie Wuliang 謝無量 (1884–1964), and Takase Takejirō. For Forke, Wang was “the greatest philosopher after Zhu Xi and the most important one to appear during the Ming dynasty.”¹³⁶ Forke's synopsis of Wang's life—which includes his *Erleuchtung* (enlightenment) in Guizhou as well as his treatment at the hands of the courts of the Jiajing 嘉靖, Longqing 隆慶, and Wanli 萬曆 emperors—was drawn from Henke's translation of Qian Dehong's *Nianpu* and the *Ming shi* biography. Ensuing sections elucidate Wang's theories of *xin ji li* 心即理 (identity of mind and principle), *ge wu* 格物 (investigation of things), *liangzhi*, and the origins of good and evil.¹³⁷

In his concluding appraisal of Wang, Forke summarizes how the scholarship had categorized his philosophy up to his time. Because Wang appears to suggest that everything in the world is in one's own mind, that outside the mind there are no things, and that thought creates the material world, Henke calls his philosophy absolute idealism, while Hackmann labels it epistemological idealism. Forke agrees with this analysis but recognizes that others, such as Zenker, saw in Wang's ideas an *Identitätsphilosophie*. Presumably, the authors had in mind Schelling, whose philosophy of identity “was grounded in his concept of the Absolute in which the ideal and the real, subjectivity and objectivity, are ultimately one.”¹³⁸ By positing the nature of the Absolute as the identity of subject and object, and the ideal and the real, Schelling had sought to overcome dualism.¹³⁹

In his entry for Feng Youlan in the *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Xiaofei Tu explains that his influence in the West was “limited mainly to the reception of *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, which has been translated into multiple Western languages” and was “often recommended as an indispensable read for students of Chinese culture, history, and thought.”¹⁴⁰ Derk Bodde played the critical role of making Feng's survey comprehensible to an English-reading audience. Unable to find work upon completion of a BA in English at Harvard University in 1930, Bodde chose graduate school and

¹³⁶ Forke, *Geschichte*, 380.

¹³⁷ Forke, *Geschichte*, 380–399.

¹³⁸ Williamson, *Introduction*, 70.

¹³⁹ Williamson, *Introduction*, 70.

¹⁴⁰ Tu Xiaofei, “Feng Youlan (Fung Yu-lan, 1895–1990),” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/feng/>.

undertook study of Chinese. In 1931, he received a Harvard-Yenching fellowship for study at Qinghua University, where he remained until 1937, studying Chinese philosophy and culture. That was where he encountered Feng, who had been trying to demonstrate the relevance of traditional Chinese thought to modern times as well as to comparatively study Chinese and Western philosophy. His goal was to build a bridge between Western and Eastern philosophical concerns and methods.¹⁴¹ Bodde explains their first encounter:

One of my happiest contacts came in 1934-35 when I attended Dr. Fung's class on Chinese philosophy at Qinghua University. He had then just published the second volume of his monumental *History of Chinese Philosophy*, which speedily became the standard work in its field. One day when I came to class, Dr. Fung asked me whether I knew of anyone who would be willing to translate his book into English. As a result, I agreed to undertake the task.¹⁴²

The first volume, which covered Chinese philosophy through the early Han dynasty, was published in 1937. It would be another sixteen years before Bodde could complete the second volume, the one including extensive coverage of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism.

In the meantime, with assistance from Duyvendak, Bodde went to Leiden University in 1937, finishing his PhD the following year. He then took a position at the University of Pennsylvania, where he remained for nearly four decades (1938–1975).¹⁴³ The second volume, not surprisingly, was long delayed “owing primarily to the lack of opportunity for personal contacts with the author during the war years.”¹⁴⁴ That changed when Feng Youlan was able to come to his university as a visiting professor in 1946. Bodde resumed the project, and when he obtained a Fulbright scholarship funding study in Beijing from 1948 to 1949, that is where he completed most of the remaining chapters. Those years, of course, were turbulent ones for China, as Bodde testifies: “the dark days of siege of December 1948 and January 1949, when, with shell explosions and machine-gun fire rattling the windows, I with my family sat during the evenings around a primitive oil lamp, where I tried to render into intelligible English the terms for the eight Buddhist forms of consciousness.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Tu Xiaofei, “Feng Youlan (Fung Yu-lan, 1895–1990),” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/feng/>.

¹⁴² Yu-lan Fung, *Short History*, xii.

¹⁴³ Charles Le Blanc, Al Cohen, and Fritz Mote, “Derk Bodde,” *Sinological Profiles*, <http://wsproject.org/current/sinology/profiles/bodde.html>.

¹⁴⁴ Yu-lan Fung, *Short History*, xvii.

¹⁴⁵ Yu-lan Fung, *Short History*, xvii.

However, in 1948, an abridged version of the entire survey was published first. While in Philadelphia, Feng Youlan tried his hand at writing it himself, enlisting Bodde's aid as editor.¹⁴⁶ At the time, Bodde observed that "In spite of innumerable books that have been written about China in recent years, it is remarkable how little really authentic knowledge we in the West have about the philosophy of that country. Even most well-educated Americans, if asked to list some of China's major philosophers will, unless they are China specialists, be unable to name more than Confucius and possibly Lao Tzu." For that reason, he saw this volume as "the first in English that attempts to give a really comprehensive and systematic account of Chinese thought as a whole, from its beginnings with Confucius to the present day."¹⁴⁷

Both the *Short History* and volume 2 of the *History of Chinese Philosophy* devote a chapter to the school of the School of Mind ("Learning of Mind"), primarily its prominent representatives, Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming. The unabridged account provides a concise overview of Lu's thought and compares it to Zhu Xi, whom he characterizes as having brought the "Rationalistic wing" of Neo-Confucianism to full fruition. However, Feng found, it is overly simplistic to distinguish them according to the claim that Zhu stressed learned study while Lu stressed finding one's virtuous nature. In fact, both were concerned with "the functioning of the inner self."¹⁴⁸ How each correlated mind, nature, and principle is more revealing. Whereas Zhu identified nature with principle and distinguished mind from both, Lu identified mind with principle. Lu thus became "the real founder of the rival Idealistic school (*xin xue* 心學)." Two trends hence emerged during the Song dynasty, one beginning with Cheng Yi and culminating with Zhu Xi, and the other commencing with Cheng Hao. It was the latter that was further developed by Lu Xiangshan and Yang Jian 楊簡 (1140–1226) and that culminated with Wang Yangming. Feng asserted that these schools can be summed up as one emphasizing the Learning of Principle while the other emphasizes the Learning of Mind.¹⁴⁹

By devoting separate sections to *Ru* and *Daoxue* scholars, Feng points out, the *Song History* had distinguished a school that claimed to have revived the true teachings of the sages and worthies of antiquity. But while Zhu Xi was given a central position in that treatise, Lu Xiangshan and his principal disciple, Yang Jian, were left out.¹⁵⁰ Feng then cites the *Ming History Ru* treatise to explain Ming developments, shaping perceptions of larger patterns in Ming

¹⁴⁶ Yu-lan Fung, *Short History*, xiii.

¹⁴⁷ Yu-lan Fung, *Short History*, xi.

¹⁴⁸ Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, 585.

¹⁴⁹ Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, 586.

¹⁵⁰ Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, 593.

intellectual history for the reader. Scholars of the early Ming all belonged to schools stemming from Zhu Xi, he explains. Exemplary ones like Cao Duan 曹端 (1376–1434) and Hu Juren 胡居仁 (1434–1484) faithfully adhered to his teachings in their conduct.

A division, however, emerged with Chen Xianzhang and his principal student Zhan Ruoshui (the Jiangmen 江門 school) and then with Wang Yangming and his followers. Solitary and isolated, however, the Jiangmen school died out even as followers of Wang Yangming's school "filled the world" for about a century. However, the *Ming History* tells us, "the concept underlying this unorthodox school obviously ran directly counter to that of Master Zhu," and "as its teachings spread, its abuses became ever more extreme."¹⁵¹ In sum, Feng concludes that "just as Chu Hsi [Zhu Xi] was the culminator of the Rationalistic wing in Neo-Confucianism, so Wang Shou-jen was the culminator of its Idealistic wing. Chronologically speaking, therefore, we may say that the former school reached its apogee during the Sung and Yuan dynasties, where the latter became most flourishing during the Ming."¹⁵²

Regarding Wang's philosophy, Feng Youlan explains that Wang's "Questions on the Great Learning" (*Da xue wen* 大學問) not only represents his thinking late in life but also conveys his principal doctrines. It presents with clarity and precision Wang Yangming's notion of humaneness (*ren* 仁) and of the intuitive knowledge (*liangzhi* 良知). The intuitive knowledge must be developed and brought into operation in order realize the unifying quality of love possessed by the original mind.¹⁵³ It is only through the "extension or translation of the intuitive knowledge into conduct" that knowledge is completed. This is the principle that underlies Wang's doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action. "The mind in its original state," Feng explains, "is unobscured by selfishness. It is a mind in which knowledge and conduct are one and the same."¹⁵⁴

Feng compares elements of Wang Yangming and Zhu Xi's thought, and he ranges over a number of other topics, including Wang's theory of the unity of knowledge and action, criticism of Buddhism and Daoism, account of the origin of evil, and explanation of the unity of activity (*dong* 動) and quiescence (*jing* 靜).¹⁵⁵ Regarding such unity, Feng explains that when Wang Yangming says we should "wholly conform to principle," he means we should

¹⁵¹ Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, 594–595.

¹⁵² Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, 596.

¹⁵³ Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, 601.

¹⁵⁴ Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, 604.

¹⁵⁵ Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, 603–620.

conform to the natural promptings of the intuitive knowledge.¹⁵⁶ The intuitive knowledge, and hence the mind, is like a clear mirror reflecting objects as they appear, all the while remaining unstained by them. In the process and as an element of the power of reflection which indeed shows the true character of things—unattached feeling and emotions spring from the mind, allowing us to respond to and act in this world even as we maintain a mental state of non-action (*wu wei* 無為). “The harmonious unity of activity and quiescence results in genuine and absolute quiescence,” Feng explains; “its unswerving composure, displayed in both activity and quiescence, is a genuine and absolute composure.”¹⁵⁷

Feng concludes with discussion of Wang Yangming’s contemporary critics, such as Luo Qinshun 羅欽順 (1465–1547), Chen Que 陳確 (1604–1677), and two of his own followers, Wang Ji 王畿 (1498–1583) and Wang Gen 王艮 (1483–1541), covering topics heretofore largely absent in the earlier literature. Consequently, from his masterful, lucid overview, the reader will have gained a clear understanding of the intellectual history and philosophical setting for Wang Yangming’s life and ideas, including the kinds of issues he was addressing and controversies he spawned. Up to this time, no other Chinese scholar deeply learned in China’s classical traditions had provided such an introduction to an English-reading audience.

In sum, during the early twentieth century, owing to the nature of his reception in Meiji Japan, as well as the revival of interest in him in China from the late twentieth century, Wang Yangming came to the attention of missionaries living in East Asia as well as academics following the East Asian and Chinese scene. Frederick Henke produced the first major translation of his work, a few scholars wrote articles about him, and he was included in the first major German and French surveys of the history of Chinese philosophy. No doubt, in addition to these critical historical factors, both the religious quality of his notion of *liangzhi* and his philosophy more generally, as well as his seeming idealism, paved the way for a meaningful reception of his ideas at this time.

Although this work is largely neglected today, it does present the basic contours of Wang Yangming’s life and thought, as well as issues of interpretation and comparison. Readers will learn of his compelling life story; his rejection of elements of orthodox Cheng–Zhu Neo-Confucianism; how he drew upon the thought of Mengzi and Lu Jiuyuan, as well as Daoist and Buddhist

¹⁵⁶ Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, 618.

¹⁵⁷ Yu-lan Fung, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 2, 620.

thought; his foundational ideas concerning mind, *liangzhi*, and the unity of knowledge of action; and how his thought might be approached from the perspective of Western philosophical traditions.

During the second half of the twentieth century, a new set of historical factors would lead to more extensive publication of scholarly literature on Wang Yangming and his school of thought. The next two chapters look at the transformation of the Wang Yangming scholarship in the West during the 1960s and 1970s.

CHAPTER 3:

Transformation of the Wang Yangming Scholarship, 1950–1980

The history of writing in the West about Wang Yangming and his school of the learning of mind developed in stages distinguishable by the nature of the scholarship. Prior to the 1910s, he had not been the topic of a scholarly article or monograph. However, his life and philosophy, and even some of his writing, did appear in other types of literature, such as histories, dictionaries, and works of an encyclopedic nature. In the second decade of the twentieth century, this limitation was overcome. Because of his importance to Japanese intellectual history as well as the revival of interest in him in China, Wang increasingly came to the attention of missionaries and educators living in both China and Japan, and, through their work, academics living in Europe and North America learned of him. Consequently, during China's Republican Period (1912–1949), a substantial English-language translation of Wang Yangming's writings was published, along with three monographs and several articles. Also, he was included in at least seven French, German, and English histories of Chinese philosophy.

Although the quality of this modest volume of scholarship was high, it was largely overshadowed by a new period in the study of Wang Yangming dating to roughly the 1960s and 1970s. After that, English-language scholarship generally relied on or took as its point of reference translations of and publications about the Ming scholar-official written during those decades, rarely citing or using work published beforehand. In fact, in the 1960s, several historical factors converged to lead to a substantial growth in the publication of a distinctive scholarship on Neo-Confucianism in the United States.¹ For Wang Yangming scholarship, one of the most important factors was the contribution of Chinese scholars who, owing to the vicissitudes of China's twentieth-century history, chose to relocate from China to the United States, Australia, or Canada. They then spent a lifetime introducing Chinese philosophy to an English-reading audience. Not surprisingly, this generation of scholars went straight to primary sources, perhaps only referencing earlier English-language publications as a matter of good practice. Since this body of scholarship, in terms of scope, generally surpassed earlier work and became more widely

¹ Cui Yujun, *Chen Rongjie*, 93–94.

available in the English language, scholars who wrote about Wang Yangming after the 1980s primarily referenced it.

Yet, while these decades were critical to bringing Wang Yangming's life and philosophy to a broader audience in the West and to promoting the growth in scholarship on him thereafter, the story of how a small number of scholars made this possible and what they had to say has not been written. This chapter aims to provide a synopsis of the history of scholarship on Wang Yangming during this transformative period and to highlight important insights.

In 1972, from June 12 to June 16, a conference sponsored by the Department of Philosophy at the University of Hawai'i was held in Honolulu as part of the university's continuing East-West Philosophers' Conference Program. The conference, titled *Wang Yangming: A Comparative Study*, commemorated the great Ming Confucian's fifth birth centenary. It was attended by many of those scholars who had published or would publish about him and Ming religious and philosophical traditions in the 1960s and 1970s. These were the two decades during which the study of Song and Ming Dynasty Neo-Confucianism rapidly advanced in North America. Wing-tsit Chan (1901–1994), who was then seventy-one and a professor of philosophy at Chatham College in Pittsburgh, presented a paper on Zhan Ruoshui's influence on Wang Yangming.² Cheng Zhongying (Ch'eng Chung-ying 成中英, b. 1935), then thirty-seven and an associate professor of philosophy at the University of Hawai'i, presented a paper on the metaphysics of Wang's philosophy of mind.³ Thomé Fang (Fang Dongmei 方東美, 1899–1978), then seventy-three and a professor of philosophy at National Taiwan University, presented a paper on central tenets in Wang Yangming's philosophy.⁴ The relatively young Tu Weiming (Du Weiming 杜維明, b. 1940), age thirty-two and an assistant professor of history at the University of California, Berkeley, presented a paper on subjectivity and ontology in Wang's thought.⁵ At forty-nine and as a professor of philosophy at Stanford University, David Nivison (1923–2014) presented a paper on existentialism in Wang's moral philosophy.⁶

Other prominent scholars gave papers on followers of Wang Yangming or aspects of the Wang Yangming school of thought. Tang Junyi (T'ang Chün-i 唐君毅, 1909–1978), then professor of philosophy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, gave a paper on Wang's contemporary critics;⁷ Mou Zongsan

² Wing-tsit Chan, "Chan Jo-shui's Influence," 9–30.

³ Cheng Chung-ying, "Unity and Creativity," 49–72.

⁴ Thomé Fang, "Essence of Wang Yang-ming's Philosophy," 73–90.

⁵ Tu Weiming, "Subjectivity and Ontological Reality," 187–206.

⁶ Nivison, "Moral Decision in Wang Yang-ming," 121–137.

⁷ Tang Chün-i, "Criticism of Wang Yang-ming's Teaching," 162–186.

(Mou Tsung-san 牟宗三, 1909–1975), professor of philosophy at the New Asia College of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, gave a paper on Wang Ji's theory of the four negations;⁸ and Okada Takehiko 岡田武彦 (1908–2004), professor of philosophy at Seinan-Gakuin University, gave a paper on the Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming schools at the end of the Ming and Tokugawa Periods.⁹ One year later, in 1973, these papers were published in an issue of *Philosophy East and West*.¹⁰

Although two of the most important contributors to the English-language scholarship on Wang Yangming and the Ming learning of mind published during these two decades—Julia Ching (1934–2001) and Carsun Chang (Zhang Junmai 張君勱, 1887–1969)—were not in attendance (Ching was in Australia and Chang had passed away in San Francisco in 1969), this conference symbolized the extent to which scholarship about Wang had advanced in North America during the second half of the twentieth century. The University of Hawai'i's Department of Philosophy had been established in 1936 under the leadership of Charles A. Moore and Wing-tsit Chan. Their hope was that this institution would introduce the major ideas and distinctive ways of thinking in Asian cultures to the world of Western philosophy and also foster a global community where comparative philosophical discussion could take place. Beginning in 1939, East-West Philosophers' Conferences were held periodically with the goal of bringing together distinguished scholars from all over the world to present papers on East-West comparative themes.

Prior to the 1972 conference, which was one in a series of smaller conferences on individual philosophers convened between 1968 and 1974, six major East-West Philosophers' Conferences had been held. Not surprisingly, many of the distinguished scholars attending in 1972, such as Wing-tsit Chan, Thomé Fang, Tang Junyi, and Cheng Zhongying, had participated in earlier ones.¹¹ Here was a circle of scholars who were familiar with one another's work and actively introducing Chinese thought to the West.

Regarding this conference, in her opening remarks Beatrice Yamasaki stated that one goal was to achieve “greater mutual understanding and sharing of Eastern and Western philosophical ideas and ideals.”¹² Concerning Wang Yangming, she noted that “his ideas were introduced to the West around the

⁸ Mou Tsung-san, “Immediate Successor of Wang Yang-ming,” 103–120.

⁹ Okada Takehiko, “Chu Hsi and Wang Yangming Schools,” 139–162.

¹⁰ For the conference and journal, see prefatory information in *Philosophy East and West* 23, nos. 1–2 (1973): 3–4.

¹¹ “Fifty Years of the Department of Philosophy, University of Hawaii,” *Philosophy East and West* 38, no. 3 (1988): 224–230.

¹² Yamasaki, “Opening Remarks,” 7.

turn of the century and within approximately the last fifteen years, he has attracted a significant degree of interest from persons outside his own country.” That was true, as the conference itself amply testified. As we have seen, however, Wang Yangming also attracted a degree of attention in Europe and North America during the first half of the twentieth century.

In his monograph on Wing-tsit Chan, Cui Yujun notes that when measured by the quantity and scope of publication, Chinese studies in the United States saw a “dramatic change” after the 1950s. There were several reasons for this. First, in the aftermath of World War II, the founding of the People’s Republic of China (PRC), and the Cold War, government and private foundation funding for research on China increased, resulting in a growing number of academic institutions (departments, programs, and classes), journals, conferences, and publications devoted to Chinese studies.¹³ Second, in terms of human resources, many Americans who had spent time in Asia because of World War II returned to the United States with both the skills to study China and an interest in doing so. Last, also because of the wars and shifting political scene in Asia, including the founding of the PRC, many Chinese academics relocated to the United States. As Cui explains, “This group of Chinese and American scholars . . . became the principal force behind research on Chinese philosophy in the United States after the 1950s.”¹⁴

Concerning Wang Yangming’s school of thought, another important impetus to research during these decades was scholarship published by academics residing in Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong, four of whom attended the conference in Hawai’i. Unlike what was the case for mainland China, politics was not a significant obstacle to their research agendas. As Peng Guoxiang and Qian Ming explain, after the PRC was established, Marxism provided the sole acceptable theoretical framework and methodology for academic inquiry, and research and publication were heavily politicized and constrained by government policy and dogmatism. “The development of Ming philosophy—a history full of life, rich and colorful—was simplistically recounted as the history of a struggle between idealism and materialism, dialectics and metaphysics,” Qian writes, “and the thinkers comprising it were accordingly divided up and integrated into two large camps.”¹⁵

Because it was relegated to the idealist camp, scholarship on Wang Yangming and the Ming learning of mind fared especially poorly in this political environment and academic atmosphere. Furthermore, class analysis demon-

¹³ Cui Yujun, *Chen Rongjie*, 93–103.

¹⁴ Cui Yujun, *Chen Rongjie*, 93.

¹⁵ Qian Ming, *Wang Yangming ji qi xuepai*, 553.

strated that Wang's ideas represented the power of the ruling class in a feudal society and were hence implicated in his bloody military suppression of what were identified as peasant and minority rebellions.¹⁶ Although a temporary relaxation in the political climate during the early 1960s led to the publication of a few articles about the Ming Confucian, on the eve of the Cultural Revolution he came under attack, and so it was that during the next decade almost nothing of value was published.¹⁷

Conditions differed with China's neighbors. As for Taiwan, after relocating there in 1949 to counter communism on the mainland, the Nationalist government continued to advocate for Sun Yat-sen's Three Principles of the People. In 1966, in response to the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, the Nationalist government also initiated the Chinese Cultural Renaissance Movement. Both Sun Yat-sen (Sun Zhongshan 孫中山, 1866-1925) and Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi 蔣介石, 1887-1975) were admirers of Wang Yangming, and they even incorporated some of his major doctrines into their own thinking and writing.¹⁸ For all these reasons, the political atmosphere was favorable to scholars who wished to continue their research on Confucianism, even if it would take a number of years to construct the institutions necessary to support it.

Furthermore, several prominent educators who wrote about Confucianism had fled to Taiwan after World War II. According to Huang Chun-chieh, "reacting to identity crises and sociopolitical collapse, these scholars launched valiant responses, hoping that by probing the Confucian tradition they could meet the crisis with powerful proposals for cultural renewal." "Confucian scholars in Taiwan," he explains, "plunged deeply into Confucian studies for a native system by which to interpret and, perhaps, to reform the world anew."¹⁹

Huang recognizes three approaches to Confucianism in the postwar Taiwanese scholarship: historical, philosophical, and sociological. Scholars belonging to the historical category who wrote about the Song-Ming school of principle and more specifically Wang Yangming include Qian Mu (錢穆, 1895-1990) and Xu Fuguan 徐復觀 (1902-1082), while those in the philosophical category include Lao Siguang 勞思光 (1927-2012), Thomé Fang, Tang Junyi, Mou Zongsan, and Liu Shu-hsien 劉述先 (Liu Shuxian, 1934-2016). Each of these scholars, of course, enjoyed academic careers that took them back and forth between Taiwan and Hong Kong as well as to other parts of the world. Tang, for instance, was one among those Chinese intellectuals who had, in 1949, emigrated

¹⁶ Qian Ming, *Wang Yangming ji qi xuepai*, 553.

¹⁷ Qian Ming, *Wang Yangming ji qi xuepai*, 555.

¹⁸ For further discussion, see Chapter 7.

¹⁹ Huang Chun-chieh, *Taiwan in Transformation*, 91.

to Hong Kong. He remained there for much of the rest of his life, playing an important role in establishing the New Asia College and advocating for a role for Confucian philosophy in the modern world. Tang and Mou's scholarship fueled a resurgence of interest in this field of study in Taiwan, especially from the 1970s, by which time their work was receiving much attention as they spent time lecturing and teaching there. We return to their stories in Chapter 7, where the scholarship on modern new Confucianism is discussed with respect to how it elevated the importance of Wang Yangming in the history of Chinese philosophy.

The only scholar of Japanese nationality presenting at the conference was Okada Takehiko. The contributor information for the volume states that he was both a professor of philosophy at Seinan-Gakuin University and emeritus professor of Kyushu University. Indeed, in 1972, Okada retired from his alma mater, where he had been teaching since 1949, and then accepted the other faculty position. His story, which he once recounted for Rodney Taylor, who then ably translated it into English, is of interest because his presence in Honolulu might be considered emblematic of the rich body of academic scholarship on Wang Yangming and the Song-Ming learning of principle that had been published in Japan since the end of World War II.

After graduating from high school in 1931, Okada attended Kyushu Imperial University to study in the Faculty of Law and Letters, which had been added in 1924. Kyushu was not his first choice (Tokyo and Kyoto Imperial universities were), but it turned out to be a blessing—"the most fortunate thing ever to happen to me"—because he met Kusumoto Masatsugu 南本正繼 (1896–1963), a professor of Chinese philosophy who had held the lectureship on this field since 1927. In fact, in 1931, when Okada first encountered him, Kusumoto was lecturing on Wang Yangming's *Chuan xi lu* (Instructions for Practical Living). Impressed by his explanations, as well as by his strong personality, Okada devoted his energies to studying under him, especially the Song learning of principle.²⁰

At that time, Kusumoto had just returned from studying overseas in China, England, and Germany. Among academics in the humanities, Okada later explained, it was still fashionable to conduct research in the mode of European intellectual trends and academic styles, including using comparative methods, such as elucidating Eastern thought with Western ideas or, with the aim of objectivity, engaging in evidentiary scholarship. Kusumoto had a certain fondness for German philosophy, about which they talked a great deal—especially Kant—and, as result, Okada's thesis on ontology in Zhu Xi's philosophy employed Western philosophical methodology.²¹

²⁰ Taylor, *Confucian Way*, 171–172.

²¹ Taylor, *Confucian Way*, 172.

After graduating in 1934, Okada spent the next fifteen years teaching at various elementary, middle, and normal schools. One of those jobs brought him back to Fukuoka where, much to his delight, he was afforded the opportunity to spend more time with Kusumoto. He discovered that the way his teacher went about his research had changed, and he attributed this to Kusumoto's deepening understanding of his own family background. Kusumoto's grandfather was Kusumoto Tanzan 南奔端山 (1828–1883), a Meiji Period Confucian scholar who taught in the tradition of the Cheng-Zhu school of the learning of principle but oriented it towards contemplative practice and personal experience.²² Okada found that Kusumoto similarly “now focused primarily upon feeling and experience rather than strictly scholarly categories.”²³ Thus, to study Zhu Xi, one should regard oneself as Zhu Xi and solve problems as Zhu Xi himself would have solved them. Okada was impacted by this approach but took it even further: “I consider that the study of Chinese thought is an even more personal and internal issue than Dr. Kusumoto found it.”²⁴

By 1949, when he accepted a faculty position at Kyushu, Okada had rejected using comparative methods or Western philosophy to elucidate Song and Ming philosophy. He had concluded that one must personally apply oneself to such learning just as those scholars themselves had. As opposed to the detached scholarly inquiry of the modern academy, Okada held the conviction that one must aim to stay true to the object of study and personally realize the meaning of it for oneself. Hence, this was the approach he adopted while completing his dissertation on the development and influence of the Wang Yangming School during the late Ming. He completed it in 1960, receiving his doctorate two years after his promotion to full professor.²⁵

The subjects of Okada's research should also be understood in relation to his institutional environment. After World War II, Kyushu University continued to play a prominent role in research and publication on Neo-Confucianism in China and Japan. In 1956, Kusumoto received a \$10,000 Rockefeller grant for this research and used it to establish a Song-Ming Thought Research Study Group. Eight faculty and graduate students participated in seminars from 1956 to 1959 and devoted their efforts to publishing new editions of Song and Ming texts or related scholarly articles and monographs. Okada Takehiko and Araki Kengo 荒木見悟 (1917–2017) were among them.²⁶ In 1959, Araki completed his PhD in the Faculty of Letters with a dissertation on the philosophy of

²² Taylor, *Confucian Way*, 28.

²³ Taylor, *Confucian Way*, 173.

²⁴ Taylor, *Confucian Way*, 173.

²⁵ Fukuda Shigeru, “Okada Takehiko sensei,” 113.

²⁶ Fukuda Shigeru, “Okada Takehiko sensei,” 112.

Zhu Xi. During the ensuing two decades, he also wrote wide-ranging studies of Buddhism and Wang Yangming learning.²⁷

Kusumoto Masatsugu's book *Sō Min jidai jūgaku shisō no kenkyū* 宋明時代儒學思想の研究 (Research on Confucian thought in the Song-Ming period), published in 1962, was the main fruit of these years of funded research. In the estimate of Ōshima Akira, this book was one of the most outstanding general histories of this subject published after World War II.²⁸ However, Kusumoto did not cover late-Ming Confucianism, which is one reason that Okada directed his research to the development and influence of the Wang Yangming School in the late Ming. In fact, some of this research was presented at conferences on Ming thought in the United States and then published in English. In 1966, Okada had already spent six months as a visiting professor at Columbia University, where he participated in the seminars on Ming thought arranged by William Theodore de Bary and Wing-tsit Chan. This afforded him the opportunity to interact with other experts on an international stage and to study with Columbia graduate students. However, Okada later wrote of his disappointment with what he saw as a tendency to proffer interpretations without careful reading of the original texts.²⁹

It should also be mentioned that the very year Okada attended the Honolulu conference, he also contributed a chapter to the largest publication project on Wang Yangming in the twentieth century, one regularly cited in this period's scholarship, the *Yōmeigaku taikei* 陽明學大系 (Great Compendium of Yangming Learning). The first book in the twelve-volume set was published in 1972 for the purpose of commemorating the fifth centenary of the birth of the influential Ming Confucian, while the rest appeared over the next two years. Aside from Wing-tsit Chan, the contributors were all accomplished Japanese sinologists who had written articles or books about Wang Yangming and the history of Neo-Confucianism in China, Korea, or Japan. A few of the contributors had also participated in related international conferences held in North America. Uno Tetsuto 宇野哲人 (1875–1974), then professor emeritus of Tokyo University, and the Confucian nationalist and longtime private scholar-advisor Yasuoka Masahiro 安岡正篤 (1898–1983) served as the chief editors.³⁰

Returning to the 1972 conference, all those who presented papers on Wang Yangming illustrate some features of this broader historical context

²⁷ His more prominent monographs include Araki Kengo, *Bukkyō to jukyō* 仏教と儒教 (Buddhism and Confucianism), *Mindai shisō no kenkyū* 明代思想の研究 (Research on Ming dynasty thought), and *Yōmeigaku no isō* 陽明學の位相 (The status of Yangming learning).

²⁸ Ōshima Akira, "Japanese Studies," 104–105.

²⁹ Fukuda Shigeru, "Okada Takehiko sensei," 113–114.

³⁰ For further discussion of Yasuoka's scholarship, see Brown, "Confucian Nationalist."

outlined by Cui Yujun. Here, we further consider scholars who wrote more extensively about Wang Yangming for an English-language audience, especially David Nivison and Wing-tsit Chan. Following, because Julia Ching and Carson Chang also illustrate these patterns and published about Wang Yangming in the 1960s or 1970s, their work and the background to it will be described and explained. Where they relate to the contributions of these authors, miscellaneous articles published by other scholars will be discussed.

David Nivison, for example, had his program of classical studies at Harvard University interrupted by the outbreak of World War II. He was drafted and then assigned to learn Japanese and serve as a codebreaker. After the war, he returned to Harvard but changed his major to Chinese, earning an AB in Far Eastern Languages in 1946. He then completed a doctorate in Chinese philosophy in 1953 (his dissertation was on the Qing scholar Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠). While studying at Harvard in 1948, he was also hired by the Oriental Languages Department at Stanford University. He would remain at Stanford, actively involved with several departments (East Asian Languages and Cultures, Philosophy, and Religious Studies), until his retirement in 1988.³¹

The first of Nivison's three papers on Wang Yangming grew out of discussions with other academics at Stanford. He collaborated with colleagues in the philosophy department, often holding fruitful conversations with the American philosopher Donald Davidson (1917–2003), a prominent student of W. V. Quine.³² One issue they discussed was the problem of “weakness of will”—that is, how and why a person fails to do what he or she knows to be right. Recognizing that this problem was not only pondered in the West going all the way back to Socrates but also discussed in Chinese philosophy, and especially by Wang Yangming, Nivison wrote a paper titled “The Problem of ‘Knowledge’ and ‘Action’ in Chinese Thought since Wang Yang-ming.”³³

The institutional setting for this essay's publication is worth noting. In 1951, John King Fairbank had contacted several scholars with a shared interest in China's intellectual traditions. They met and formed the Committee on Chinese Thought. This was a subcommittee of the Committee on Far Eastern Studies sponsored by the American Council of Learned Societies and the Far Eastern Association. Members had a shared interest in finding fresh approaches to Chinese thought and, to that end and with funding from the Ford Foundation, held a conference on this subject in Colorado in 1952.³⁴ That is where

³¹ Bryan W. Van Norden, “Obituary for David S. Nivison,” February 28, 2015, <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/obituary-david-nivison-bryan-van-norden>.

³² Van Norden, “Obituary.”

³³ Nivison, “Problem of ‘Knowledge’ and ‘Action,’” 112–45.

³⁴ Wright, *Studies in Chinese Thought*, ix.

Nivison, who was then completing his PhD at Harvard and also serving as an instructor of Chinese at Stanford, first presented this work.

The next year, Nivison's conference paper was published together with the others in *Studies in Chinese Thought*, a volume edited by another professor at Stanford, Arthur F. Wright. In the "Introduction," Wright observes that the "Western interest in Chinese thought has persisted for more than three centuries. Despite that interest there has been to date little sustained, objective, and systematic study of Chinese thought."³⁵ Although he was somewhat exaggerating the case, with contributions from such scholars as Joseph Levenson, Derke Bodde, and William Theodore de Bary, the volume did signal a new stage in the study of Chinese intellectual history in the United States, just as David Nivison's chapter signaled a different kind of scholarship on Wang Yangming.

Nivison, however, did not go on to publish a scholarly monograph on the Ming philosopher. His interests were wide-ranging, and he worked in many areas of Chinese philosophy and history. His next paper on Wang was the one presented at the 1972 conference. But as Bryan W. Van Norden explains, "many of Nivison's most interesting essays were delivered at conference presentations and remained unpublished, circulating among a small but admiring group of other scholars as photocopies or even blue 'ditto-sheet' copies."³⁶ For example, in 1973, the very year his conference paper was published in *Philosophy East and West*, Nivison was also giving talks about Wang Yangming at universities in California. The paper for those was only published in 1996 as part of an edited volume containing articles on many topics. Interestingly, according to Van Norden, knowing that Wang was suspicious of the educational value of the written word, "Nivison preferred to leave the chapter in the informal, conversational style in which it was originally delivered."³⁷

Even with this informal style, "The Philosophy of Wang Yangming" provided a remarkably sensitive overview of Wang's theory of mind and program for moral self-cultivation. For Nivison, Wang is a philosopher concerned with "standard problems," such as "the relation of mind to body, the mind's place in nature, [and] the way the mind works."³⁸ But these concerns are secondary to Wang's ethics: "He is always a moralist, interested in straightening out people and society, teaching people how to make themselves better persons." Furthermore, his moral philosophy has a powerful psychological and religious dimension. In terms of psychology, Nivison states, "he is constantly engaging in

³⁵ Wright, "Introduction," 1.

³⁶ Van Norden, "Obituary."

³⁷ Nivison, "Ways of Confucianism," 308.

³⁸ Nivison, "Ways of Confucianism," 218.

a sort of inner phenomenological scrutiny of moral experience.”³⁹ As for the religious dimension to his thought, he demonstrates a messianic sense of mission, uses the language of mysticism to point to “a transcendent and imminent higher reality that all people . . . somehow partake of, ordinarily without being aware of it,” teaches the soteriological goal of moral perfection (sagehood), and describes *liangzhi* (pure knowing) in such a way as to make it a “‘god within’ and without”—“an object of faith.”⁴⁰ Lastly, Nivison says that Wang articulates a path of self-transformation leading to “the good state—total anxiety free effectiveness, ‘pure knowing’ illuminating every response, the mind like a mirror so that we ‘roam the universe with the creator.’”⁴¹ Throughout the paper, Nivison explains these philosophical, psychological, and religious elements of Wang’s philosophy in some detail.

In the 1960s and 1970s, as Ming Confucian philosophy was being translated into and interpreted in English, some scholars sought to bring Wang Yangming’s thought and the School of Mind into dialogue with existentialism, phenomenology, and existential phenomenology. In response to an essay Okada had published in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, titled “Wang Chi and the Rise of Existentialism,” Nivison presented a paper at the 1972 conference examining whether Wang Yangming’s ideas about how moral decisions are made contained existential dimensions.

At times, Nivison notes, Wang seems to suggest that the mind has no inherent direction other than the direction it gives itself in acting. Insofar as the “moral truth is just given in the mind and the mind just is its acts in particular situations,” Wang’s ethics appear radically situational and in some sense existential.⁴² Furthermore, both the apophatic terminology used to describe the mind and the language of spontaneity and immediacy used to describe the functioning of *liangzhi* (“pure knowing”) suggest parallels to existential ideas concerning nothingness, free choice, and authenticity.⁴³ However, while fleshing out these apparent similarities, Nivison also highlights fundamental differences. Existentialists, for example, generally reject the notion of human nature and an objectively definable good that can be revealed to reason and provide the basis for moral judgment. Wang Yangming, on the other hand, believed that “each human does, after all, have a nature or direction that we may well call the ‘substance’ of the mind, which is not

³⁹ Nivison, “Ways of Confucianism,” 218.

⁴⁰ Nivison, “Ways of Confucianism,” 218–220.

⁴¹ Nivison, “Ways of Confucianism,” 224.

⁴² Nivison, “Moral Decision,” 123–124.

⁴³ Nivison, “Moral Decision,” 123–124.

reducible without remainder to whatever might actually happen to be one's mental and intentional acts."⁴⁴

But Nivison was neither the first nor the last to write such a comparative study. Just five years later, in 1978, Julia Ching composed a penetrating comparative study of the thought of Wang Yangming and Martin Heidegger.⁴⁵ She referenced not only Nivison's contribution but also the pioneering work of Hwa Yol Jung, the first to write about this topic in English. A Korean-American political theorist and philosopher who spent most of his academic career at Moravian College, Jung (1931–2017) published a substantial English-language study in the journal *International Philosophical Quarterly* in 1965.⁴⁶ Titled "Wang Yang-ming and Existential Phenomenology," the article is groundbreaking for the clarity with which it brings into dialogue seemingly distinct philosophical traditions, all of which had (and still have) a reputation for being abstruse, esoteric, and difficult to read. Subsequently, in 1969,⁴⁷ 1986,⁴⁸ and then as late as 2013,⁴⁹ Jung carried this discussion further. The last article explains why he felt so passionate about writing about this:

As a neophyte in philosophy who had just begun in earnest to study phenomenology and existential philosophy in the era of positivist dominance under the tutelage of the American philosopher John Wild at Northwestern University in the fall of 1961, I wrote an experimental essay on Wang Yangming in the hopes of showing an affinity between him and existential phenomenology or the "second school" of phenomenology, which hybridizes Søren Kierkegaard's existential philosophy in the 19th century and Edmund Husserl's phenomenology in the 20th century.

The major reason for writing this essay on Wang Yangming and existential phenomenology was simply to counteract Eurocentrism prevalent in the long tradition of modern Western philosophy . . . which regards the non-West, for example, China and India, as non-philosophy, while the West monopolizes the universal truth of philosophy. If I showed, I thought, an affinity between Wang Yangming and existential phenomenology, that is to say, if I elevated the comparable

⁴⁴ Nivison, "Moral Decision," 134.

⁴⁵ Ching, "Authentic Selfhood," 3–27.

⁴⁶ Hwa Yol Jung, "Wang Yang-ming and Existential Phenomenology," 621–636.

⁴⁷ Hwa Yol Jung, "Jen: An Existential and Phenomenological Problem," 169–188.

⁴⁸ Hwa Yol Jung, "Unity of Knowledge and Action," 19–38.

⁴⁹ Hwa Yol Jung, "Wang Yangming and the Way of World Philosophy," 461–487.

status of the former to the level of the latter, Chinese thought exemplified in Wang Yangming would legitimately be a philosophy, not just a species of intellectual thought.⁵⁰

Julia Ching and Hwa Yol Jung recognized the seemingly insurmountable cultural and linguistic gaps between these distinct traditions, but they also aspired to the universal by finding common ground. Ching's decision to focus on two philosophers whom she believed showed a "basic compatibility" was wise.⁵¹ That she could also read German and Chinese, among other languages, made the fruits of her research even more compelling. On the European side, Jung cast the net far wider, over a "diverse" group of thinkers: Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, Sartre, John Wild, and Martin Buber. Jung had obviously read deeply into the French-, German-, and English-language literature pertaining to existentialism and phenomenology, whereas for Wang Yangming he appears to have relied largely on primary source material translated into English by Wing-tsit Chan. Jung hoped that the tools of existential phenomenology would help to build a bridge between East and West, perhaps even opening a path to articulating "a phenomenology of phenomenologies."⁵² Although that has not yet happened, comparative inquiry along the lines pursued by both of these scholars has continued to bear fruit up to the present, most notably in the work of the Lu Yinghua and the German philosopher Iso Kern.⁵³

Although the synoptic quality of their articles makes it impossible to go over all the points of comparison they raise, a few stand out. Jung states that both phenomenology and Wang Yangming are concerned with examining the world from the perspective of the subject.⁵⁴ He finds parallels between Wang Yangming's concept of *xin* 心 (mind) and *yi* 意 (will; intention) and what the phenomenologists describe as consciousness and intentionality. Both define things or objects in terms of how they appear to and become meaningful to persons in acts of consciousness. Furthermore, Jung finds parallels between the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) and pre-reflective knowledge and Wang Yangming's description of the functioning of *xin* and *liangzhi* 良知 (intuitive knowledge).⁵⁵

In German phenomenology, the lifeworld is the world as directly or immediately experienced in the subjectivity of everyday life. Pre-reflective knowledge is a type of intuitive awareness that is prior to reflection and orients the individual to the lived world in a very practical sense. Jung believes that

⁵⁰ Hwa Yol Jung, "Wang Yangming and the Way of World Philosophy," 462.

⁵¹ Ching, "Authentic Selfhood," 3.

⁵² Hwa Yol Jung, "Wang Yang-ming and Existential Phenomenology," 636.

⁵³ For discussion, see Chapter 7.

⁵⁴ Hwa Yol Jung, "Wang Yang-ming and Existential Phenomenology," 622.

⁵⁵ Hwa Yol Jung, "Wang Yang-ming and Existential Phenomenology," 627.

liangzhi is similarly pre-reflective and intuitive, as a type of knowledge that guides the individual in everyday life. In sum, “there is a close affinity between the philosophy of Wang Yangming and existential phenomenology both in their approach and spirit, particularly in their philosophical spirit, which shuns much of the traditional speculative conundrums and chimera of abstraction in the name of humanity.”⁵⁶ However, in his interpretation of Wang Yangming, Jung might be criticized for minimizing the moral and metaphysical import of *liangzhi*, which is the inborn capacity to distinguish and do what is right and, therefore, to become sagely. This seems quite different from a phenomenological description of the operation of pre-reflective knowledge in the lifeworld, even if the intent in both cases is analysis of how people act and make decisions in everyday life.

Julia Ching claims that both Heidegger and Wang Yangming have a central concept around which all their other concepts revolved.⁵⁷ For Heidegger, that is the ontology of Dasein (being); for Wang, it is mind. Both posit a dialectic of the hidden and manifest whereby what is real has been forgotten or obscured and requires rediscovery: “For both men, truth is basically that which is hidden, yet awaiting manifestation. Thus, on the personal, existential level, both accord in emphasizing the need to achieve authenticity in one’s personal life, to become in truth what one is.”⁵⁸ Likewise, also for both, the aspiration to authenticity developed out of a youthful striving for self-fulfillment and for finding meaning in life. They built their philosophies around a kind of visionary moment of truth, an existential moment “which marks the passage from inauthenticity to authenticity.”⁵⁹ For Wang Yangming, that was the enlightenment he had in Longchang, Guizhou, when he discovered the identity of mind and principle (*xin ji li*); for Heidegger, that was a “moment of vision” when “Dasein has brought itself back from falling.”⁶⁰ Last, both men drew on traditions of speculation about the dialectic of the latent and manifest. For Heidegger, Ching states, “it may be traced to Plato and Plotinus, and is especially characteristic of the great mystics, of those philosophers who have incorporated and articulated the insights of mysticism. I refer here to Meister Eckhart, Nicholas of Cusa, and Hegel himself, but also to Heidegger’s contemporaries, the mystic Teilhard de Chardin and the philosopher A. N. Whitehead.”⁶¹ In China, of course, similar speculation (about, for example,

⁵⁶ Hwa Yol Jung, “Wang Yang-ming and Existential Phenomenology,” 636.

⁵⁷ Ching, “Authentic Selfhood,” 6–7.

⁵⁸ Ching, “Authentic Selfhood,” 7.

⁵⁹ Ching, “Authentic Selfhood,” 21.

⁶⁰ Ching, “Authentic Selfhood,” 22.

⁶¹ Ching, “Authentic Selfhood,” 24.

substance and function, or ontological ground and practice) can be found in all the major traditions, Daoism, Buddhism, and Neo-Confucianism.

The Chinese-American scholars who presented papers on Wang Yang-ming at the conference are equally illustrative of historical patterns in the second half of the twentieth century. They were also more important contributors to this scholarship, at least as measured by quantity. By 1972, Wing-tsit Chan had contributed the most. His *Oral Biography* provides some insight into how he ended up publishing about Chinese philosophy in the United States.⁶² Like other Chinese scholars who migrated to the West and then published in English, he grew up in the semi-colonial environment of early twentieth-century China and was therefore compelled to live between East and West. Likewise, the turmoil of the 1930s and 1940s played an important role in his decision to relocate to the United States. Thus, prior to studying at Harvard and obtaining his PhD in 1929, Chan's intellectual development had been shaped by a traditional Chinese upbringing and education but also by his study of modern subjects taught by Americans or Western-trained teachers at a Christian missionary school (Canton Christian College, which was later renamed Lingnan University).

In 1935, after serving as Dean of Academic Affairs at Lingnan for six years, Chan took a visiting professorship at the University of Hawai'i. After returning to Lingnan briefly, he accepted a full-time position at Hawai'i, leaving China just before the Japanese invasion in the summer of 1937. That move launched his long career in the United States. As he explained in his interview, because the war prevented him from returning to China, "I decided I would stay, and the whole family would stay here permanently."⁶³ He also explained that these decisions left him feeling that he had somehow failed China because he did not take part in the Japanese resistance or contribute to the reconstruction of China. Nevertheless, he found some consolation in his scholarship: "Of course, I can say that I have been spreading Chinese culture in the United States, and honestly I believe I have done and have tried to do a good job."⁶⁴

Chan did indeed do a fantastic job. What stands out about his work is the extraordinary volume of high-quality educational materials he published, all of which became so important for both undergraduate and graduate education as well as for making Chinese philosophy more widely available to the public. Thus, although he would become most well known in East Asia for his large corpus of scholarship on Zhu Xi, students in the United States encountered

⁶² Bloom, "Wing-tsit Chan, 1901–1994," 327–347.

⁶³ Bloom, "Wing-tsit Chan, 1901–1994," 343.

⁶⁴ Bloom, "Wing-tsit Chan, 1901–1994," 342.

him through his guided translations of Chinese philosophy and, less so, his encyclopedia contributions. Regarding the latter, Chan quipped, “I perhaps have had a monopoly on encyclopedia writings on Chinese philosophy.”⁶⁵

The 1960s was the decade during which he produced most of his translations, including his widely utilized *Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, which was published in 1963. At this point, he was professor of philosophy at Chatham College and emeritus professor of Chinese culture and philosophy at Dartmouth College. But he also translated other major works that same year, such as the *Chuan xi lu* 傳習錄 (*Instructions for Practical Living, and other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yangming*), *Dao de jing* 道德經 (*The Way of Lao Tzu: A Translation and Study of the Tao-Te Ching*), *Liu zu tan jing* 六祖壇經 (*The Platform Scripture, the Basic Classic of Zen Buddhism by Hui-neng*), and the *Jin si lu* 進思路 (*Reflections on Things at Hand: The Neo-Confucian Anthology by Chu Hsi and Lu T'su-ch'ien*).

Wing-tsit Chan's choice of texts for translation was dictated by the state of English-language scholarship on Chinese philosophy in the 1950s. According to Cui, this decade was “a turning point in [Chan's] academic life.”⁶⁶ He saw that in Europe and the United States, scholarship on Tang dynasty Buddhism and Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism was lacking and therefore sought to introduce this literature more completely, especially Neo-Confucianism and the philosophy of Zhu Xi. That is where the state of American scholarship had led him.⁶⁷

Almost all of Chan's publications on Wang Yangming date to the 1960s and early 1970s. For a broader public, he published “Wang Yangming” entries in three major encyclopedias—*Encyclopedia Britannica* (1960, 1967), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1967), and *Encyclopedia Americana* (1969). For students of Chinese philosophy, he produced important translations of Wang Yangming's work that became standard reference material for scholars writing in English. Chapter 35 of his *Sourcebook*, “Dynamic Idealism in Wang Yangming,” includes the *Inquiry on the Great Learning* and selections from the *Instructions for Practical Living*.⁶⁸ The copyright page for the first edition indicates the kind of institutional support Chan found for this major project. Published by Princeton University Press, the *Sourcebook*'s primary source of support was a grant from the Ford Foundation for publication of work in the humanities and social sciences through university presses.

⁶⁵ Bloom, “Wing-tsit Chan, 1901–1994,” 334.

⁶⁶ Cui Yujun, *Chen Rongjie*, 244.

⁶⁷ Cui Yujun, *Chen Rongjie*, 244–246.

⁶⁸ Chan, *Sourcebook*, 654–691.

Chan also collaborated with William Theodore de Bary in producing what was destined to become the most widely utilized primary source reader for studying Chinese history: *Sources of Chinese Tradition*. First published in 1960, it included a chapter with an introduction to selections from Wang Yang-ming's writings. This book was just one of the many fruits of the growing collaboration between these two scholars. Beginning from the 1960s, they played a pivotal role in the introduction of Neo-Confucianism to the English-language world.

Chan and de Bary first met in 1949 at China's Lingnan University. De Bary was then instrumental in bringing Chan to Columbia as an instructor in 1964 and as a visiting professor in 1966.⁶⁹ Together, they arranged seminars and conferences on Neo-Confucianism at Columbia University and promoted the publication of much scholarship on this topic and late imperial China's intellectual history. Thus, Wing-tsit Chan's scholarly work on Wang Yangming was one component of their broader efforts in the 1960s and 1970s to make Neo-Confucianism more widely available to and understood by students in American universities. No doubt, Chan's most important publication was the *Instructions for Practical Living, and other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yangming*. This book includes a complete translation of the *Chuan xi lu*, the *Inquiry on the Great Learning*, as well as documents representative of Wang Yangming's social and political thought and policies. Chan also included bibliographies for the English, Chinese, and Japanese scholarship on Wang, thus encapsulating the state of the field as of 1963. For his translations, he used the *Si bu congkan* (Four Branches Collectanea) edition of the *Wang Wencheng gong quanshu* (Complete works of Sir Wang Wencheng).

The *Instructions* was one volume in a larger set of translations of Asian historical materials made possible through funds granted by the Carnegie Foundation. This series, "Records of Civilizations: Sources and Studies," was edited by members of the history department at Columbia University, and the books were published by Columbia University Press. De Bary was responsible for editing East Asian publications. In fact, *Sources of Chinese Tradition* was also published through this venue.

Aside from providing translations of Wang Yangming's work for students in the English-reading world, Chan and de Bary also wrote about Wang Yangming. However, while Chan published four journal articles—including a study of the extent to which Wang's philosophy was Buddhist,⁷⁰ a comparative

⁶⁹ Cui Yujun, *Chen Rongjie*, 270–271.

⁷⁰ Chan, "How Buddhist was Wang Yang-ming," 203–216.

study of Wang and Zhan Ruoshui,⁷¹ a brief biography,⁷² and an annotated bibliography⁷³—de Bary did not produce scholarship solely focused on Wang. As it is well known, he rather wrote wide-ranging interpretations of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism or, more specifically, about the Wang Yangming school in the late-Ming and Huang Zongxi.

Both scholars praised Wang Yangming. It goes without saying that they thoroughly admired the person and found his life story compelling, sentiments they convey to their readers. They also rightly stressed his great importance to China's intellectual history. In his preface to the *Instructions*, Chan wrote, "The *Instructions for Practical Living (Chuan xi lu)* has been chosen for translation for the simple reason that no one can adequately understand Chinese thought without having read this work in its entirety. This embodiment of Wang Yangming's philosophy is indisputably the most important Chinese philosophical classic since the early thirteenth century."⁷⁴ In the *Sourcebook*, de Bary observed that among vibrant developments in the intellectual and cultural activity of the Ming, "it was the teachings and personal example of Wang Yangming that were to have the most explosive effect."⁷⁵ Wang's dynamic conception of self and sagehood, and the "near revolution in sage learning" brought about by his reformulation of "the learning of the mind-heart," de Bary wrote, "came to dominate the intellectual scene during the sixteenth century almost as if they represented a new orthodoxy."⁷⁶

Both scholars also highlighted Wang's humanism, valuing of subjectivity, emphasis on ethical conduct, and stress on the ultimate goal for the individual: realizing the oneness of self with all things. They found, too, that his thought had a liberating quality. Concerning his philosophy, Chan stated that "it set Chinese thought free. It created a new philosophy and it restored Confucianism to its central emphasis on purpose and action."⁷⁷ De Bary found that his subjective approach "opened up almost unlimited possibilities for individual development and self-expression."⁷⁸ Thus, Wang's conception of sagehood "opened the way to a kind of 'popular' movement involving a greater potential participation of ordinary men in the fulfillment of Confucian ideals."⁷⁹

⁷¹ Chan, "Chan Jo-shui's Influence," 327–347.

⁷² Chan, "Wang Yang-ming: A Biography," 63–74.

⁷³ Chan, "Wang Yang-ming: Western Studies," 75–92.

⁷⁴ Chan, *Instructions*, xi.

⁷⁵ De Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1, 842.

⁷⁶ De Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1, 843.

⁷⁷ Chan, *Sourcebook*, xi.

⁷⁸ De Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," 151.

⁷⁹ De Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," 150.

On the other hand, both scholars were at times critical of Wang Yang-ming. Chan believed that in terms of his theory of knowledge, Wang had narrowed the field of intellectual inquiry strictly to moral inquiry. Regarding the investigation of things (*ge wu*), he changed it from what Zhu Xi had intended. Whereas Zhu had interpreted “investigating things” as rational and objective inquiry, Wang redirected it solely to moral introspection. For him, a person shall apply himself to interpreting the moral quality of emerging thoughts and desires so that he can proactively do good and remove evil. Chan concluded that, “philosophically, Wang’s position is weak because it entirely neglects objective study and confuses reality with value.”⁸⁰ He characterized Wang’s philosophy as a kind of naïve idealism.

De Bary believed that, although Wang’s ideas fostered individualism during the later Ming, his own understanding of *liangzhi* “was based on the assumption of a common moral nature,” something that was “almost Wang’s fundamental article of faith.”⁸¹ For that reason, “individual differences were for him of secondary importance, and the value of the individual in his uniqueness is not something Wang dwells on.” Consequently, although he sought to free the individual from within by pointing to the autonomous source of moral knowledge, Wang Yangming did not believe that acting on it would lead to radical social reforms or any kind of restructuring of traditional social relationships and obligations. Thus, he strongly emphasized community over the individual and, at times, appeared to be a “hopeless traditionalist and idealist . . . naively addicted to moralistic solutions of complex cultural problems.”⁸²

Over time, Wing-tsit Chan’s translation efforts gave impetus to growth in scholarship on Wang Yangming. Reviews were generally positive and found his translation of the *Chuan xi lu* to have surpassed the work of Frederick Henke.⁸³ Specialists and students both able and unable to read Chinese routinely consulted it and cited it in their work. Mostly that happened from the 1980s forward, when a larger body of literature began to appear. But there were some earlier publications that benefited from it. For example, Paul Wienpahl (1916–1980), a philosophy professor at the University of California, Santa Barbara, wrote two articles, one titled “Wang Yang-ming and Meditation” (1969) and the other “Wang Yang-ming and Spinoza.” Unable to read Chinese, he relied entirely on Chan’s translation, even if he was dissatisfied with some of it. He believed, for example, that translating *liangzhi* as “innate knowledge”

⁸⁰ Chan, *Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, 655.

⁸¹ De Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism,” 151.

⁸² De Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism,” 153.

⁸³ Nivison, *Review*, 436–442.

would call to mind theories of knowledge put forward by Plato and Descartes. He found that Carsun Chang's use of "intuitive" more correctly conveyed the meaning.

As for his first article on Wang Yangming, Wienpahl argued that a close reading of the *Instructions* demonstrated both that he was a practiced meditator and that sitting in meditation was a critical element of his teaching throughout his life. Wienpahl claimed that the goal of meditation was to achieve oneness or unity: "non-dualism is the goal."⁸⁴ That goal was also sometimes described as the "desire to form one body with all things." Furthermore, although Wang found many pitfalls in meditation, it was nevertheless a way of life for him. Wienpahl was impressed by how, for Wang, "all of life is meditation" because one is meditating whether tranquil or active.⁸⁵

Regarding Wang Yangming and the seventeenth-century Dutch philosopher Spinoza, Wienpahl drew many points of comparison, even if only in an exploratory fashion. Of most interest, perhaps, is the comparison between *li-angzhi* ("innate knowledge of the good") and Spinoza's notion of the intuitive knowledge. For Spinoza, he explains, at an intuitive level of understanding the distinction between ideas and objects disappears. Ideas transition from book knowledge to active knowledge, and we become free relative to the extent to which ideas are adequate. This intuitive knowledge also gives rise to universal love and the intellectual love of God. That love is eternal, has no beginning, and possesses all the perfections of love. Finally, the virtuous man is the man who knows intuitively—that is, a man who lives in accordance with reason and, therefore, according to his true nature. All these ideas, Wienpahl believed, found parallels in Wang Yangming's understanding of the innate knowledge of the good and the unity of all things in the world.⁸⁶

One other scholar present at the 1972 conference who has also contributed important English-language work on Wang Yangming was Tu Weiming. After graduating in 1961 with a BA from Tunghai University (where he had studied under such modern new Confucians as Mou Zongsan and Xu Fuguan), Tu went to the United States on a Harvard-Yenching Institute scholarship. He completed a PhD in History and East Asian Languages and Civilizations in 1968 and first taught at Princeton University from 1967 to 1971. His dissertation, "The Quest of Self-Realization: A Study of Wang Yang-ming's Formative Years," documents Wang Yangming's youth with the goal of elucidating formative intellectual influences and how he reached his first set of fundamental

⁸⁴ Wienpahl, "Wang Yang-ming and Meditation," 210.

⁸⁵ Wienpahl, "Wang Yang-ming and Meditation," 220.

⁸⁶ Wienpahl, "Spinoza and Wang Yang-ming," 22–27.

doctrines after his experience of enlightenment in Guizhou in 1509. This is what Tu revised and published in 1976 as a book titled *Neo-Confucianism in Action: Wang Yang-ming's Youth (1472-1509)*.

Explaining the origins of his project, Tu Weiming wrote, "My research led me to believe that the single most important perennial concern in Yang-ming's formative years was his quest for sagehood defined in terms of Confucian symbolism."⁸⁷ Thus, Tu found it necessary to explore "not only what sagehood really means but also how it can be attained."⁸⁸ For him, Wang saw sagehood primarily as an ethico-religious ideal and viewed attaining it as a dynamic process of transformation. Tu's "analysis of the first crystallization of Yang-ming's thought in his quest for sagehood" therefore includes exploration of religious and psychological dimensions.⁸⁹ Those concerns were, no doubt, stimulated by his having studied Neo-Confucian philosophy under modern new Confucians in East Asia and also by his exposure to Western psychological theory while studying under Robert Bellah, Erik H. Erikson, and Benjamin Schwartz at Harvard University.⁹⁰

One scholar who was unable to attend the 1972 conference but was certainly as qualified as anyone there to speak about Wang Yangming was Julia Ching. At that time, she was likely in Australia, where she held a position as a tenured lecturer at Australian National University. ANU was also the alma mater for her doctoral work. The title of the dissertation she defended in 1971 had the same name as the book it became in 1976: "To Acquire Wisdom: The 'Way' of Wang Yangming."

The path to her PhD work was long and winding. Born in Shanghai in 1934, Ching spent the first fifteen years of her life moving between Shanghai and Hong Kong. Not surprisingly, referring to air raids in Shanghai, Ching recounts that "my earliest memories are of war."⁹¹ First her family fled to Hong Kong after the Japanese invasion, and then, after returning to Shanghai, her father's close connections to the Nationalists required them to flee when the Communists took over in 1949.⁹² Nevertheless, throughout that time she was able to attend Catholic schools in both cities, something that led to a major life decision. Ching moved to the United States and, in 1951, began attending

⁸⁷ Tu Weiming, *Neo-Confucianism in Action*, xi.

⁸⁸ Tu Weiming, *Neo-Confucianism in Action*, xii.

⁸⁹ Tu Weiming, *Neo-Confucianism in Action*, xii.

⁹⁰ Tu Weiming, *Neo-Confucianism in Action*, xv.

⁹¹ Ching, *Butterfly Healing*, 11.

⁹² Ching, *Butterfly Healing*, 16. He was a practicing attorney in Shanghai, president of the Shanghai Bar Association, member of the Nationalist Assembly. He also played a role in drafting the constitution of the Republic of China.

the College of New Rochelle, a Catholic women's college. Two statements in her autobiography explain the impact of these formative early years. Ching highlights how "birth and circumstances conspired to place me between two cultures, between east and west," and says that "the constant wandering, the uprooting and re-rooting, became a theme in my life."⁹³ Such shuffling between continents led her to be "always aware of my smallness and aloneness in a sea of humanity, whose waves threaten to engulf me."⁹⁴ Clearly, the foundation for her extraordinary ability to write between cultures was laid early in life. Additionally, engaging in the study of comparative religions and philosophy inspired her intense search for meaning.

For the next two decades, Ching's life was largely shaped by her religious vocation. Believing that she had a "calling from god," she entered the Catholic Ursuline Order as a novice in 1953.⁹⁵ Then, upon finishing her BA, she entered the Catholic University of America, where she finished an MA in 1960. In 1963, after a brief stint serving as a private tutor in Paris, Ching went to Taiwan to teach as a novitiate nun. She was placed at a mission school in Hualian, at the time an underdeveloped part of the island largely populated by native Taiwanese.

Those familiar with her work will know that Julia Ching wrote much about Chinese religions but also about the religious dimensions of Chinese philosophy, especially the philosophies of Wang Yangming and Zhu Xi. Her approach to scholarship was influenced by her own lifelong, intense search for meaning and transcendence. Early on in her novitiate, for example, Ching avidly pursued her religious calling; with her "soul yearning for communion," she took very seriously "finding god," doing the proper readings and meditations, and steeping herself "in the liturgical mysteries" to the point that she became "spiritually intoxicated," and "strong spiritual emotions rose to the fore."⁹⁶

But the time she spent in Taiwan, where she remained from 1963 to 1967, eventually led her in a different direction that culminated both in her obtaining a PhD in Chinese philosophy and then, in the following year, leaving the religious order altogether for an academic career. In sum, the contradictions in Taiwan's semi-colonial environment, where French-speaking nuns from Belgium, Canada, and France were missionizing the Taiwanese children in a language Ching little understood, troubled her personally. She notes that this

⁹³ Ching, *Butterfly Healing*, 19.

⁹⁴ Ching, *Butterfly Healing*, 19.

⁹⁵ Ching, *Butterfly Healing*, 20.

⁹⁶ Ching, *Butterfly Healing*, 34–36.

experience left her “in culture shock during my whole time there.”⁹⁷ She witnessed firsthand how another Chinese nun, although competent in French, still became unhappy and then decided this was not her vocation and departed.⁹⁸ Ching simply felt alienated by these circumstances. She also fell afoul of her mother superior, with whom she spoke frankly about concerns she held, “confessing” them before her.

This was a critical turning point in her life. Julia Ching recounts that upon leaving her office, she “felt a psychological release” that left her at peace, as if she was “buoyed up by a strange sense of the divine presence within, and by communion with the universe of mountains and trees without.”⁹⁹ This happy state persisted for months, just when Ching began to spend her free time at the school library reading Chinese literature, history, and philosophy. Her recollections about this moment in her life bring out clearly where she was going intellectually and reveal why she chose to study Wang Yangming at the Australian National University:

I spent whole weekends reading, so absorbed at times that I could hardly stop in the evening. I had received a Chinese education much earlier. Now I was giving myself a refresher course, while also deepening my understanding.

The great human being is one with heaven and earth and all things [her italicization]. I was fascinated by such lines in Chinese philosophy, which reflected my own spiritual experience.

One with heaven and earth and all things. Even *one body with heaven and earth and all things*. There is perceived unity between soul and body, and there is crossing of the boundary between the human and the natural. For the human body is the microcosm, while the universe is the macrocosm.

There were great philosophers, who aimed at becoming sages. Not so different from my quest for holiness. Their philosophies were not separate from their lives. And their lives were not split between soul and body.

From my readings I was acquiring a new respect for Confucius and those who were his followers. Especially Mencius and Wang Yangming. Those men were committed to improving society, but first, to improving their own character. Some of them were mystics, *one body with the universe*.

⁹⁷ Ching, *Butterfly Healing*, 43.

⁹⁸ Ching, *Butterfly Healing*, 43–44.

⁹⁹ Ching, *Butterfly Healing*, 44.

There is hidden meaning in what the Chinese classics say about birds flying and fish leaping, I murmured to myself. These creatures are showing their zest for life. Often, I repeated to myself the lines from my favorite philosopher, Wang Yangming: “As I sit in silence in the woods, the green mountains understand well my unspoken words.”

The core of Chinese thought lies in the oneness of heaven and the human being in virtue. So we misunderstand China if we say that Chinese culture limits itself to external human relations or behavior, that it has no inner spiritual life or religious or metaphysical sentiment.

The shapers of Chinese culture always thought in the context of the great, wide world, of “all under heaven.” *That is the difference between Chinese culture and the particular cultures of other countries with clear boundaries, of which it forms a part, I thought to myself. In Chinese landscape painting the human figure looks small against the background of nature. But it remains the most important part, that which gives consciousness to the rest of the universe.*

And even in Taiwan, a place of exile for many Chinese, we can extend our minds to the great, wide world. Even if, as Plato would say, we live in a small spot on the earth like ants and frogs in a marsh, lodging around the sea. Or some may think we’re like China’s proverbial frog, looking at the sky from the bottom of the well. But the well is deep and can capture the moon, if not the sun itself.

I was returning home to Chinese culture.¹⁰⁰

Another important development pushed her life in a new direction. In 1966, Julia Ching discovered lumps in her breast and became very ill. She had developed breast cancer at the shockingly young age of thirty-two. For treatment, she went to Taipei, where she lived with relatives while undergoing surgery and radiation treatments. Then, in 1967, after having served briefly as dean of studies at the newly established Wenzao Ursuline College in Gao xiong, she left Taiwan and spent time traveling and studying—in Rome, Vienna (where she studied German at Vienna University), Israel, Thailand, and then Australia. In Australia, she settled down into her doctoral program and began teaching. In 1969, she was appointed as a tenured lecturer.

¹⁰⁰ Ching, *Butterfly Healing*, 44–45.

In her autobiography, Ching asks, “Why did I choose Chinese studies anyway?”:

I had started out moving far away from things Chinese toward the compelling attractions of Western civilization. I only came back to the study of China as an adopted child looking for its natural parents.

I was deeply interested in the spiritual and religious dimension of Chinese thought. At a time when the Cultural Revolution made some disturbing headlines, and when the survival of Chinese civilization was at stake, I felt a personal mission to keep the flame alive. That was in the late sixties. I ended up receiving a doctorate from the university.¹⁰¹

Before publishing her book on Wang Yangming in 1976, Ching had served as a lecturer at ANU until 1974 and as a visiting associate professor at Columbia from 1974 to 1975, and then she moved to Yale University in 1975, where she was appointed associate professor of the East Asian Studies and Philosophy Department. During these years, the majority of her publications were about Wang Yangming. She published a book containing translations of many of his letters,¹⁰² as well as articles in *Numen*,¹⁰³ *Oriens Extremus*,¹⁰⁴ and the *Journal of the History of Ideas*.¹⁰⁵ These articles were spun out of the book revision process. In addition, after publishing her book, she wrote the article comparing the thought of Martin Heidegger and Wang Yangming. While accomplishing all of this, she benefited greatly from conversations with such accomplished scholars as Okada Takehiko, William Theodore de Bary, Mou Zongsan, Tang Junyi, Wing-tsit Chan, and Liu Cunyan, among others.

To Acquire Wisdom: The Way of Wang Yangming remains the only work in English that systematically presents Wang Yangming’s philosophy. As for why she wrote it, Ching explained that, “writing as a woman—and hence with a more personal note—it may be useful for me to say that the figure of Wang Yangming, with his restless energy for activity and social commitment, and his irrepressible yearning for stillness and contemplation, held an attraction for me which has been powerful and enduring.”¹⁰⁶ She believed that in today’s world, where intellectual pursuits favor technical specialization, study of the Chinese

¹⁰¹ Ching, *Butterfly Healing*, 60.

¹⁰² Ching, trans., *Philosophical Letters of Wang Yang-ming*.

¹⁰³ Ching, “Beyond Good and Evil: The Culmination of the Thought of Wang Yang-ming.”

¹⁰⁴ Ching, “All in One: The Culmination of the Thought of Wang Yang-ming (1472–1529).”

¹⁰⁵ Ching, “Some Notes on the ‘Wang Yang-ming Controversy.’”

¹⁰⁶ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, xix.

rationale as articulated by Wang reminds us of what it means to search for the good, to undertake a quest for wisdom, and to seek a more meaningful human existence.¹⁰⁷

The merits of Julia Ching's book—and all her writing for that matter—are the clarity with which she presents complex philosophical ideas and her sensitivity to religious ideas and indeed profound questions of meaning. It goes without saying that her mastery of numerous languages and learned knowledge of philosophical and religious traditions East and West meant that she was able to write at a level few could match. Here, since it will be impossible to sum up the rich territory covered by her book, a few of her insights will be presented.

In her introduction, "Truth and Ideology: The Confucian Way and Its Transmission," Ching explains the background to Wang Yangming's thought in the evolution of Confucian philosophy from the Song to the early Ming Dynasty. She sees in that evolution an interplay between philosophical truths established by the great Confucian philosophers and the institutionalization of that philosophy by state authorities who, by so doing, sought ideological legitimation. During the early Ming, Ching writes, "the price of government support, and of official promulgation in the whole country [of Zhu Xi commentaries on classical texts]," was the loss of Confucianism's inner vitality, "rigidity and stagnation."¹⁰⁸ Like others before him, Wang reacted against this prevailing orthodoxy, the ideological dimensions of the School of Principle, by returning "to the sources of Confucian inspiration in the name of truth rather than ideology."¹⁰⁹

In chapter 1, "Wang Yang-ming: The Man and the Philosopher," Ching offers a brief intellectual biography while paying special attention to Wang's personality and character. She states that "Yangming's entire life was to become an expression of mad ardor. His was the daring of a magnanimous man, driven by a restless energy, to fulfill limitless ambitions, not for worldly success, but for the attainment of absolute values."¹¹⁰ This is the passion that drove him throughout his life, both in his philosophical journey and in his rocky political career, as he weathered trials and opposition. Ching also explains his intellectual journey through the lens of the "Five Falls" described by his friend, Zhan Ruoshui, and the "Three Changes" documented by his principal student and biographer, Qian Dehong. The "Five Falls" refers to Wang's dabbling in knightly ventures, horsemanship and archery, literary arts,

¹⁰⁷ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, xix.

¹⁰⁸ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 20–21.

¹⁰⁹ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 2.

¹¹⁰ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 27.

Daoism, and Buddhism before becoming committed to the learning of the sages in 1506, at age thirty-four.¹¹¹ The “Three Changes” refers to the evolution of his principal precepts: the unity of knowledge and action, quiet meditation, and the extension of the innate knowledge of the good.¹¹² Ching concludes that Wang Yangming’s restless energy and ambition ultimately led him to a higher goal: “He was to reach beyond ardor, on to sagehood.”¹¹³

In chapter 2, “The Starting Point: *Xin* [Mind],” Ching explains why mind is central to Wang Yangming’s philosophy. Mind is the starting point because, “For him [Wang], *xin*, which is one with nature, is the source of all goodness as well as the principle of all conscious and moral activity, possessing within itself the power of conducting the human person to the highest goals of sagehood.”¹¹⁴ That is, the mind is capable of self-transcendence, of perfecting itself. In its original, pristine state, it is one with *li* 理, “the source of all being and virtue,” and “the totality of all goodness present in the universe as well as in man.”¹¹⁵ But in all but the sage, the mind finds itself in an obscured state with imperfections, incompletely manifested and realized, its purity, simple goodness, and capacity to fully embody heavenly virtue blocked by selfish desires. To return to the pristine state, where the original substance of mind and therefore the highest good has again been fully realized and manifest, requires finding the right method. That is what Wang Yangming restlessly sought. Fortunately, it is none other than the mind’s capacity for self-transcendence that prompts the practice of virtue: “It is the moral or virtuous nature of *xin*, which manifests the presence of natural knowledge of the moral nature of human relationships and of a natural ability to act in accordance with such knowledge.” By virtue of having this mind, all are capable of fully realizing their inherent goodness, of becoming perfected beings: “the mind-and-heart, is the self, which is both given and to be created, possessing the seed of perfection and yet in need of continual perfection, finding and fulfilling itself through testing itself in the ebb and flow of stillness and activity which makes up the whole of life.”¹¹⁶

Chapter 3 also addresses issues of methods and the doctrines pertaining to them, in a preliminary way, covering in brief Wang Yangming’s theory of the unity of knowledge and action and the importance he placed on sitting in

¹¹¹ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 36.

¹¹² Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 43.

¹¹³ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 50.

¹¹⁴ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 56.

¹¹⁵ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 59.

¹¹⁶ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 73.

meditation. But Ching's following two chapters, "The Controversies: *ge wu*" and "The 'Way' Discovered: *zhi liangzhi*," go more deeply into the practices Wang espoused. As it is well known, Wang did not accept Zhu Xi's arrangement of the *Great Learning*, rather preferring the Old Edition. He believed that Zhu Xi had defined the practice of investigating things and extending knowledge in a manner that was overly onerous, unfocused, linear, and cumulative. If the goal remains realizing heavenly principle (*tianli* 天理)—that is, acquiring wisdom and illuminating virtue—through recovering the pristine purity of the mind-heart, then the method must be tailored to its dynamic capacity for self-perfection. Hence, Wang made "making the intention sincere" the principal message of the *Great Learning* and the starting point for self-cultivation. As well, he interpreted *ge wu* as "rectifying affairs."¹¹⁷ The focus is the mind in its every movement. Regardless, since the mind has this dynamic self-perfecting and self-determining capacity, by which its essential goodness is realized, authoritative texts and figures—such as Song commentaries, classical texts, and even Confucius—can only provide, with their spiritual richness, preliminary guidance to the individual. Ultimately, wisdom can only be rediscovered at its source—in one's own heart.¹¹⁸

In chapter 4, Ching presents Wang Yangming's doctrine of extending knowledge of the good (*zhi liangzhi* 致良知). With it, he had finally formulated his long-sought universal method for attaining sagehood. The knowledge to be sought is good knowledge, a foundational, moral sense that is inborn but also acquired through practice. It is the original substance of mind (*xin zhi ben ti* 心之本體), mind in its purity, genuine sincerity and compassion, the mind of the Way (*daoxin* 道心), the bright and spiritual expression of heavenly principle, and an inner forum discerning right and wrong. To extend this knowledge is to develop the capacity for virtue that the individual inherently possesses, enabling him "to act according to his originally good nature by the practice of virtue leading to complete self-transcendence."¹¹⁹

This is achieved primarily by allowing one's goodness to overflow into social responsibility. A moral doctrine requires moral action. But to extend knowledge is not merely to adhere to principles or to perform moral duties; rather, "it is simply the great principle to do always in one's life what one's mind and heart says is right and good."¹²⁰ As long as one acts morally, the mind will remain tranquil whether one is socially and politically active or withdrawn

¹¹⁷ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 76–77.

¹¹⁸ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 102–103.

¹¹⁹ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 106.

¹²⁰ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 114.

in contemplation. The original substance of mind is made known or manifested in righteous action, in what Mengzi refers to as “accumulating righteousness (*ji yi* 集義).” That is what extending the good knowledge entails. To the end of his life, this simple method remained Wang’s infallible starting point for achieving sagehood. Wang Yangming saw it as the true and orthodox teaching of the sages of ancient times.

Chapters 5 and 6 explore the culmination of Wang Yangming’s teachings late in life. Ching finds in his philosophizing a kind of mysticism rooted in his having realized an enduring state of mind from which all reality is perceived as dynamic unity.¹²¹ Mind is not only the source of moral activity but also a vital consciousness uniting the individual to the universe. As the mind becomes ever more pure and transparent, its fundamental goodness—the fully humane heart, otherwise known as the original substance of the good knowing (*liangzhi bentu* 良知本體), which is a higher order of ontological reality and the absolute—naturally and spontaneously reveals itself, culminating in an experience of “oneness with Heaven and earth and all things” or, in other words, true sagehood.¹²² His final teaching is of this self-transcending mind-in-itself (*xinti* 心體) or *liangzhi*-in-itself.¹²³ As the ultimate reality and highest good, *liangzhi* provides the path to oneness, universality, and inclusiveness, redefining traditional divisions between orthodoxy and heresy, transcending conventional understandings of good and evil, and overflowing into social and political responsibility.

One other scholar who made important contributions to English-language scholarship on Wang Yangming was Carsun Chang. Had he not passed away in San Francisco in 1969, the 1972 conference would surely have been incomplete without him. Chang had published a paper on Wang in *Philosophy East and West* in 1955, a book about him in 1962, and an extensive chapter about him in volume 2 of his *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, which was also published in 1962.

Chang produced this scholarship as part of a broader corpus of English-language work on Confucianism dating back to the 1950s. In 1949, at age sixty-three, he departed China. Because of his associations with the Nationalist regime, Chang left just prior to the establishment of the PRC. At the invitation of the Ministry of Education in India, he first spent time in India on lecture tours. After briefly returning to Hong Kong in 1952, he relocated to the United States that same year, remaining there until he passed away in 1969 (although

¹²¹ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 126.

¹²² Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 126–127.

¹²³ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 159.

he was often traveling the world on lecture tours).¹²⁴ With his political activities diminishing, he spent more time on scholarly research and publication and was particularly concerned to explain and promote Confucian thought.

As it is well known, Chang is recognized as either a first- or second-generation modern new Confucian. Therefore, he has been categorized as one among a group of individuals who promoted this tradition because they saw it as being the essence of China's intellectual and cultural traditions, as well as having the potential to bring about moral regeneration and modernization in China. For this reason, he has also been labeled as a cultural conservative whose vision for China differed from those who embraced liberal or radical political ideologies.¹²⁵

Beginning in 1953, Tang Junyi traveled to the United States and visited Chang several times. They agreed that Chinese studies in the West were both underdeveloped and distorted by how missionaries had understood and transmitted Chinese traditions, by the practical emphasis of foreign affairs experts, and by what they perceived as a tendency on the part of sinologists to treat the objects of their study as historical curiosities.¹²⁶ For them, Chinese historical culture was a living tradition with spiritual significance for both China and the world in modern times. In the "Preface" to his *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, Chang wrote of Chinese culture that it is a dynamic, vital organism.¹²⁷ He pointed out that Western scholars had largely limited themselves to studies of the thought of Confucius and Laozi, as well as that of some of their contemporaries and successors, while largely neglecting the intellectual thought of the last 1,500 years. He found this to be one-sided and mistaken.

Most important, Chang believed that Confucian traditions, especially the learning of the mind and nature in Neo-Confucianism, offered an ethics and metaphysics that addressed questions of meaning and values in ways that empiricism, scientism, and positivism could not. In 1958, in cooperation with Mou Zongsan and Xu Fuguan, Chang issued a well-known declaration, the "Manifesto on Behalf of Chinese Culture Respectfully Announced to the People of the World." This Manifesto contains sections that explain what they believed the West should learn from the East. In the last one, "Our Hopes for World Learning," they wrote,

Humanity should engage in another type of study, one that does not merely regard nature and humans themselves objectively, as targets for sober-minded study. This learning, rather,

¹²⁴ Liu Yilin and Luo Qingfeng, *Zhang Junmai*, 232–242.

¹²⁵ Zheng Dahua, *Zhang Junmai*, 334.

¹²⁶ Zheng Dahua, *Zhang Junmai*, 334.

¹²⁷ Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, vol. 1, 7.

should be the sort that treats humanity itself as an existential subject, and strive for the condition in which this existential subject gradually surpasses the ordinary and achieves sagehood, with their aspirations increasingly expanding and their wisdom becoming increasingly lucid. Thus they can then reach the stage of being rounded and spiritual, where grand emotions are increasingly so deep that one's chest overflows with the benevolence of compassion and the mind of sympathy. This sort of study is not theology and it is not the study of external ethical norms or psychology. Rather, it is a type of study that connects knowledge and actions in order to allow for man to transcend his own existing body and ascend to spiritual enlightenment. This is what the Confucians called the Learning of the Mind and Nature or the Doctrine of Learning and Pattern, or the Learning of Sagehood.¹²⁸

As Liu Yilin and Luo Qingfeng have pointed out, Chang thought that Wang Yangming had an especially important role to play in this regard and found him to be not only one of China's great philosophers but also a philosopher of global importance.¹²⁹ These authors conclude that because of the extent to which Chang's writings about Wang Yangming reveal a deep reverence and respect, he was "clearly Wang Yangming's pupil."

Furthermore, the roots of Chang's Wang Yangming scholarship clearly go back to the years he spent in Japan studying at Waseda University, from 1906 to 1911, at the very moment some intellectuals in Japan were promoting the Ming Confucian's ideas as a resource for modernization. While publishing introductory materials for an English reading audience, he also published a small volume in Chinese comparing the history of Wang Yangmingism in China and Japan. Titled *Bijiao zhong ri Yangmingxue* 比較中日陽明學 (Comparing China and Japan's Yangming learning), Chang wrote this book after leaving China in 1949 and while residing in Washington. He then had it published in Taiwan in 1955, at a time when few were discussing Wang's philosophy in East Asia.¹³⁰ Deng Hong points out that Chang's understanding of the Japan story can be traced back to Inoue Tetsujirō and Takase Takejirō's scholarship.¹³¹ However, this volume, while similarly serving as a primer for Wang Yangming's basic doctrines, is quite different in other respects. It has the goal of rectifying China's failure to adapt Wang Yangming's ideas to modern

¹²⁸ Harris, *Manifesto*, 27–28.

¹²⁹ Liu Yilin and Luo Qingfeng, *Zhang Junmai*, 293.

¹³⁰ Deng Hong, *Riben de Yangmingxue*, 82–83.

¹³¹ Deng Hong, *Riben de Yangmingxue*, 86. Chapter 2 discusses this scholarship.

times by contrasting this with Japan's better reading of and implementation of his ethics. For Chang, China needed Wang Yangming, just not the Wang Yangming of his late-Ming followers. The slender volume also goes into some detail regarding the supposed Wang Yangming School in Japan, as Chang had learned of it from the three Japanese interpreters.¹³²

The *Philosophy East and West* article, the chapter in *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, and the book *Wang Yang-ming: Idealist Philosopher of Sixteenth-Century China* largely traverse the same information about Wang Yangming. In fact, at 102 pages, the book is not much longer than Chang's survey history chapter, especially if the epilogue, "A Study of Chinese Intuitionism," is not included in the total. This book was published by the Institute of Asian Studies at St. John's University as the first in a series of studies on Chinese philosophers. "If Zhu Xi during the Song period brought Confucian thought to its highest expression in the realm of cosmology," wrote the institute director, Paul T. K. Sih, "Wang Yangming brought this same tradition to its finest expression in the realm of epistemology and possibly in ontology. Yet, there are few studies of Wang in any Western language."¹³³

After a brief account of Wang Yangming's life, Chang outlines what he considered to be Wang's basic doctrines.¹³⁴ He presents Wang as an ontological idealist who firmly believed in the intelligibility of the world and who held these propositions:

1. Man's mind is the mind of the universe.
2. The mind's knowing (the intuitive knowledge) is the core of reality; that is, reality is contained in consciousness.
3. Through knowing, the principles of everything can be found; things are not external to us but are objects of consciousness.
4. The universe is a unity in which man is the mind or center; men comprise a brotherhood, and physical things show a spiritual affinity with mind.
5. If there were no mind or intuitive knowledge, the universe would not operate.
6. Matter, or the world of nature, is material for the mind to work with.

In what follows, as Wing-tsit Chan summarized it in his review, Chang discusses Wang Yangming's theory of mind and the "realization of intuitive knowledge" (*zhi liangzhi*), providing substantial quotations from the *Inquiry*

¹³² For further discussion of Chang's comparative study, see Chapter 8.

¹³³ Chang, *Wang Yang-ming*, v–vi.

¹³⁴ Chang, *Wang Yang-ming*, 13.

on the *Great Learning* and *Record of Practice*.¹³⁵ He explains Wang's system of idealism by showing how he attempted to solve the problem of the dualisms of the individual and universe, mind and world, and knowing and acting. Chang also explains Wang Yangming's position in relation to his Confucian predecessors, how his thought developed over time, and differences that emerged among his followers. He concludes with an analysis of the relationship between Wang's thought and what Chang labels "Chinese intuitionism."

The intuitionism to which Wang was the heir was a tradition begun by Mencius (Mengzi). Mencius asserted that men are rational beings endowed with a natural disposition to benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and knowledge. Man is also born with intuitive knowledge, a knowledge possessed without the exercise of thought.¹³⁶ During the Song dynasty, it was Lu Xiangshan 陸象山 who best articulated Mencius's intuitionism by stating that Mencius's four dispositions are a man's original mind. "Lu Jiuyuan agreed with Mencius that, if one submits to the authority of the mind, one has the innate ability to discover what is right for oneself because one's nature is perfect or complete from one's birth," explains Chang. One has only to eliminate desires and the prejudices resulting from our likes and dislikes to discover that this is so. Lu also identified mind with reason, a natural gift from Heaven, as opposed to something outside oneself.¹³⁷ Wang's ideas, as listed in the propositions above, further constituted the foundations of this tradition of intuitionism.

With the work of Carsun Chang, this historical overview of a transformative period in the study of Wang Yangming in the English-language literature published between 1950 and 1980 can be concluded. As we have seen, many factors lie behind the appearance of this dynamic scholarship: big-picture historical developments in China prior to those decades, funding for research on China during the Cold War, and the unique biographies of scholars who wrote about Wang Yangming and shared their confident belief in the importance of his compelling life story and the universal significance of his philosophy. These scholars provided foundational translation work, important studies of Wang's life and philosophy, and promising avenues for looking at him in a comparative philosophical perspective. After the 1980s, a new stage in the study of Wang and Ming philosophy can be said to have developed, in the sense that a more dispersed, wide-ranging scholarship trickled into the stream, written by scholars of a new generation whose academic careers were shaped in different and diverse settings.

¹³⁵ Wing-tsit Chan, Review of *Wang Yang-ming*, 458–459.

¹³⁶ Chang, *Wang Yang-ming*, 78.

¹³⁷ Chang, *Wang Yang-ming*, 86–87.

CHAPTER 4:

A Rising Volume of Varied Publications— The Academic Historical Setting, 1980-2020

In prior chapters, scholarship on Wang Yangming and his school of the learning of mind has been organized according to chronological periods because it made sense to do so. The translation of a significant portion of his collected works by Frederick Henke in 1916 and Wing-tsit Chan's translation of the *Chuan xi li* in 1963 signaled turning points that brought forth a new set of scholarship about the Ming scholar-official and his school. The background to Henke's scholarship was the influence of Wang Yangming's ideas on Meiji intellectuals and the subsequent revival of interest in him in China at the turn of the century. Wing-tsit Chan was impacted by the turmoil of China's twentieth-century revolutionary history, which had led some intellectuals to migrate to the United States, where they produced scholarship on China's philosophical traditions.

But scholarship on Wang learning in the West at the turn of the millennium is not so easy to divide into shorter periods. No one translation or scholarly monograph marks a turning point or can be highlighted as a symbol of a confluence of historical factors. The volume of publications is far larger and was produced in an even more noticeably internationalized setting by scholars living and researching all over the world. If anything, a deepening globalization might be the simplest explanation for the greater volume because it captures so many developments. That is, both political events and advances in transportation and communication technology have made it simpler and less costly for scholars to build on prior scholarship and to internationalize their work and speak to a global audience. Of course, because English, at least as of the time of this writing, remains the most dominant international language, scholars wishing to speak to a global audience have opted for publishing in this language.

Because the last forty years or so of writing about Wang Yangming and his school of thought does not lend itself to chronological division, I have chosen to organize it thematically. First, in this chapter, the historical setting for publication of scholarship in the West will be sketched out, followed by chapters that organize that scholarship topically. Some scholarship more squarely focuses on Wang's political life and thought as well as the history of his school, some engages in comparative religious study, and some more purely

focuses on his philosophy. The principal focus throughout this chapter will be the English-language scholarship and the historical and institutional context for it, but German- and French-language scholarship will not be ignored.

The previous chapter aimed at reconstructing the historical and biographical background for the publication of major monographs and important articles about Wang Yangming during the 1960s and 1970s. Other trends in the study of Ming China and Ming philosophy that have impacted scholarship since 1980 were left aside and require further discussion. Martin J. Heijdra (currently the director of the East Asian Library at Yale University) has provided a helpful bibliographical essay, “Ming History: Three Hundred Years of History Still Searching for Recognition.”¹ I will use this as a guiding framework.

Many scholars writing about Ming China in the 1960s and 1970s had noted that they were self-conscious of the fact that the field was underdeveloped in the West. In 1968, as a supplement to the German sinologist Wolfgang Franke’s (1912–2007) bibliography of Ming scholarship in Europe and the Japanese historian Yamane Yukio’s (b. 1921) bibliography for such scholarship in Japan, a group of American scholars produced a Ming directory. The idea was to promote communication between scholars working in this field, “which had begun to flourish in Japan and spill over into the United States.”² Heijdra points out that “only a few scholars in this directory born before 1930 had recently published scholarship on the Ming period.” Some of those, he believes, might be called the “founders of Ming history in the United States.”³ Charles O. Hucker (1919–1994), who taught at the University of Michigan, had published two influential studies of the Ming state. Frederick W. Mote (1922–2005), who was training PhD students at Princeton University, had written a monograph about the Ming poet Gao Qi. Both Hucker and Mote would later publish two of the more widely utilized surveys of the history of China, *China’s Imperial Past: An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture* (1975) and *Imperial China, 900–1800* (2000). Both scholars, of course, briefly introduce Wang Yangming and have something to say about the impact of his school in the sixteenth century.

More consequentially for intellectual history, Wing-tsit Chan (1901–1994) published his translation of the *Instructions for Practical Living and other Neo-Confucian Writings* in 1963. Soon thereafter, in 1966, William Theodore de Bary (1919–2017) organized a conference on Ming thought, the

¹ This essay was included in an edited volume with chapters surveying the state of Chinese studies in North America. See Zhang Haihui et al., eds., *A Scholarly Review of Chinese Studies in North America*, 79–98.

² Heijdra, “Ming History,” 80.

³ Heijdra, “Ming History,” 80.

papers for which were published in 1970 in *Self and Society in Ming Thought*. Chan and de Bary, of course, trained students to pursue Ming intellectual history, especially Neo-Confucianism, and their labors would bear fruit in the scholarly literature that appeared from the late 1970s through the 1980s. Those were the decades during which scholarship on Ming thought reached a peak in English-language literature.

Returning to the 1960s, given the smaller number of publications on Ming China relative to other periods in China's history, the directory "made clear that Ming publications at this time were not yet fashionable."⁴ But this was about to change. In his 1982 publication *The Glory and Fall of the Ming Dynasty*, Albert Chan (1915–2005) wrote, "The past almost half a century has witnessed a rebirth in the study of Ming history."⁵ "When I was writing my dissertation in 1952," he recounted, "not one of the general histories of China then published gave an adequate account of the Ming dynasty."⁶ In stating this, however, Chan was also taking into account scholarship in East Asia and Europe. The finest contributions, he felt, had come from Chinese and Japanese scholars, while the field was newer in the West. "The contribution made by European and American sinologues to Ming studies has been smaller than their contribution to the study of other dynasties," he observed, adding that "Since the war, however, scholars of a younger generation have increasingly become interested in the study of the Ming dynasty."⁷

This younger generation was indeed critical to the development of Ming studies. Heijdra states that "it is the not negligible number of scholars born in the 1930s listed in the directory as working on, or having just finished, their dissertations that shows that Ming studies was beginning to reach a critical mass of practitioners."⁸ Aside from the China historian and educator Ronald Dimberg, most of the listed academics did not specifically produce scholarship on Wang Yangming or his followers, but some of their scholarship, which began to appear from the 1970s, did touch on mid-Ming intellectual history. Among them, the historians and educators John W. Dardess (1937–2020), John E. Wills (1936–2017), and John T. Meskill (1925–2017) all produced historical monographs that directly mentioned the Ming school of the learning of mind.

By 1975, when the first volume of the journal *Ming Studies* was published, Ming China and world historian Edward Farmer (b. 1935) could

⁴ Heijdra, "Ming History," 80.

⁵ Chan, *Glory and Fall*, xv.

⁶ Chan, *Glory and Fall*, xvi.

⁷ Chan, *Glory and Fall*, xvii–xviii. Chan is referring to World War II.

⁸ Heijdra, "Ming History," 81.

confidently state that “interest in the Ming period has grown to the extent that it now seems practical to undertake a regular publication along the lines established by *Ch’ing-shih wen-t’i* and the *Sung Studies* newsletter.”⁹ With financial support from the China and Inner Asia Regional Council and the Association of Asian Studies, a group of Ming scholars founded this publication as a vehicle for the rapidly developing field of Ming studies.¹⁰

The first volume surveyed the state of the field. Irene Bloom (1939–2010), then serving as the journal’s executive secretary, reported on the activities of the Regional Seminar in Neo-Confucian Studies, which had been inaugurated at Columbia University in 1974 with support from the Committee on Studies of Chinese Civilization established by the American Council of Learned Societies. Bloom reported a membership of twenty-six scholars from eighteen different institutions in the eastern United States, as well as seventeen corresponding scholars located at other institutions in the United States, Europe, and East Asia. The goal of the seminar was to organize smaller seminars, conferences, and workshops on the intellectual history of the early modern period in China, Korea, and Japan.¹¹ Indeed, in June 1974, members attended a conference held in Hawaii on “Neo-Confucian Sources of ‘Practical Learning’ in the Ming and early Tokugawa Periods.” Cheng Chung-ying, for example, gave a paper on practical learning in Yan Yuan, Zhu Xi, and Wang Yangming.¹² Most papers, however, concerned Japanese Neo-Confucianism and the influence of the Wang Yangming school in Japan. These papers were eventually published in 1979 as the third volume in series of books on similar topics, the first being *Self and Society in Ming Thought* (1970) and the second *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism* (1975).

Members and corresponding members of the seminar had indeed been active or would become active in publishing about Ming intellectual history, with dissertations and monographs or with articles gracing such journals as *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* and *Philosophy East and West*. Many had written or would write about Wang Yangming and his followers, including David Nivison, Okada Takehiko, Tu Weiming, Wing-tsit Chan, Julia Ching, Ronald Dimberg, and Cheng Chung-ying.¹³ After writing his dissertation on Gao Panlong, the religious studies scholar Rodney L. Taylor would go on to write about the religious dimensions of Neo-Confucianism. John Meskill produced

⁹ Farmer, “News of the Field,” 1. After the first five volumes, *Ch’ing-shih wen-t’i* was renamed *Late Imperial China*.

¹⁰ Heijdra, “Ming History,” 81.

¹¹ Farmer, “News of the Field,” 4–5.

¹² Cheng Chung-ying. “Practical Learning in Yen Yuan,” 37–68.

¹³ For the list of members, see Farmer, “New of the Field,” 7–8.

an excellent study of Ming academies, highlighting the pedagogy and social activities of Wang Yangming and Zhan Ruoshui 湛若水 (1466–1560).¹⁴ More broadly, concerning Ming intellectual history, in 1979 Willard J. Peterson published a monograph on Fang Yizhi 方以智 (1611–1671);¹⁵ in 1980, Judith Berling published a book on Lin Zhao'en 林兆恩 (1517–1598);¹⁶ in 1986, Edward T. Ch'ien published a monograph on Jiao Hong 焦竑 (1540–1620);¹⁷ and in 1983, Joanna Handlin published a book on Lü Kun 呂坤 (1536–1618).¹⁸ Finally, in 1987, Irene Bloom published an introduction to and translation of Luo Qinchun's *Knowledge Painfully Acquired* (*Kun zhi ji* 困知記).¹⁹ This list could be expanded to include studies of important Neo-Confucian thinkers belonging to the Song and Yuan dynasties.

The 1970s and 1980s were to some degree the heyday for well-sourced, scholarly studies of prominent Ming Confucians in the mode of intellectual history, and one might reflect on the extent to which similar scholarship published thereafter has matched this volume and level of work. The first issue of *Ming Studies* also contained bibliographies of recent scholarship and dissertations on Ming China written in Western languages. Recent scholarship referred to the years 1973 and 1974, and among the sixty-three entries, twenty-one had Ming thought or intellectual history as their topic, and sixteen of those were about Wang Yangming and his school.²⁰ The list of 140 doctoral dissertations spanned the years 1945 to 1975. Twelve of these pertained to what Heijdra referred to as “the newly popular intellectual history.”²¹ Interestingly, of the thirty-three dissertations separately listed as being in progress, the majority (nine) concerned intellectual history. For instance, Judith Berling was writing about Lin Zhao'en, Irene Bloom about Luo Qinchun, Jean-Francois Billeter and Edmund M. Frederick about Li Zhi, Alison Black about Wang Fuzhi, Anne M. Chien about Hu Juren, Edward T. Ch'ien about Jiao Hong, Monika Übelhör about literati circles in sixteenth century China, Rudiger Matchetzki about Wang Ji, and Joanna Handlin about Lü Kun.²²

¹⁴ Meskill, *Academies in Ming China*.

¹⁵ Peterson, *Bitter Gourd: Fang I-chih and the Impetus for Political Change*.

¹⁶ Berling, *Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao'en*.

¹⁷ Ch'ien, *Chiao Hung and the Restructuring of Neo-Confucianism in the Late Ming*.

¹⁸ Handlin, *Action in Late Ming Thought: The Reorientation of Lü K'un and other Scholar-Officials*.

¹⁹ Bloom, *Knowledge Painfully Acquired: The K'un-chih chi by Lo Ch'in-shun*.

²⁰ Allsen, “Current Ming Bibliography,” 60–65.

²¹ According to Heijdra's tally, eighteen dissertations pertained to literature, sixteen to political history, fifteen to east-west relations, eight to art history, eight to social history, and seven to economic history.

²² For the dissertation information see Allsen, “Current Ming Bibliography,” 60–65.

A major project predated and accompanied the founding of *Ming Studies* and this academic writing, bringing scholars together in collective efforts that resulted in important resources for and impetuses to further research on Ming China and its intellectual world. That was the *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, which was published in 1976. According to Heijdra's assessment, this two-volume dictionary "was the first major achievement of North American sinologists specializing in Ming history," surpassing in scholarship and sophistication Arthur W. Hummel's (1884–1975) *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period*.²³ The biographies, he notes, were all "based on extensive original research and source discovery."²⁴

The *Dictionary* was the fruition of nearly two decades of research and writing. It was produced under the direction of a committee established in 1960 by the Association of Asian Studies and funded primarily by grants from twenty colleges and universities and the Rockefeller Foundation. The 650 entries were penned by 125 scholars from more than seventeen different countries.²⁵ In 1976, the year of its publication, de Bary explained that, "In the 1960s, when the Ming Biographical History Project of the Association of Asian Studies was first being organized, the study of Ming thought hardly existed in the West. This is true of many other aspects of Ming Studies, of course, and one of the major reasons for undertaking the project was the belief that a major reference work of this kind would provide a stimulus and aid to the development of studies in many aspects of this neglected period, just as *Eminent Chinese of the Ch'ing Period* had done for research on the Qing Dynasty in the late 1940s and 1950s."²⁶

It was de Bary's hope that "because of the primitive state of Ming studies in the West," the project would provide "reliable tools for a new generation of scholars in Ming thought."²⁷ Combined with the "major impetus given to studies in Ming thought by Professor Chan's translations from the work of Wang Yangming," de Bary believed, a new generation of scholars would be "provided an entrée to a whole world of philosophical discourse which had been obscure, and too insecurely grasped for any but a few to work confidently in it."²⁸

In terms of Wang Yangming and his school, the *Dictionary* was both new and useful not so much because of the biography it provided for Wang

²³ Heijdra, "Ming History," 82–83.

²⁴ Heijdra, "Ming History," 81.

²⁵ Heijdra, "Ming History," 82–83.

²⁶ De Bary, "Ming Project," 20.

²⁷ De Bary, "Ming Project," 20.

²⁸ De Bary, "Ming Project," 20.

Yangming—Chan had already provided a detailed one in 1972—but rather because of the coverage of literati who were followers of his school of thought. For instance, biographies were provided for Zhang Yuanbian 張原忭 (vol. 1, pp. 110–111, by L. C. Goodrich and C. N. Tay), Jiang Xin 蔣信 (vol. 1, pp. 227–230, by Julia Ching), Qian Dehong 錢德洪 (vol. 1, pp. 241–244, by Julia Ching), Zhou Rudeng 周汝登 (vol. 1, pp. 271–274, by Chao-ying Fang and Julia Ching), Luo Rufang 羅汝芳 (vol. 1, pp. 975–978, by Julia Ching), Luo Hongxian 羅洪先 (vol. 1, pp. 980–984, by Stanley Y. C. Hughes), Nie Bao 聶豹 (vol. 2, pp. 1096–1098, D. W. Y. Kwok), Ouyang De 歐陽德 (vol. 2, pp. 1102–1104, by Tu Wei-ming), Tang Shunzhi 唐順之 (vol. 2, pp. 1252–1256, by Ray Huang), Zou Shouyi 鄒守益 (vol. 2, pp. 1310–1312, by Julia Ching), Zou Yuanbiao 鄒元標 (vol. 2, pp. 1312–1314, by Charles O. Hucker), Wang Ji 王畿 (vol. 2, pp. 1351–1355, by Julia Ching), and Wang Gen 王艮 (vol. 2, pp. 1382–1385, by Julia Ching).

As should be evident, the 1970s and 1980s were a promising time not only for the development of the field of Ming studies but also for the study of Ming Confucian intellectual history. As early as 1976, de Bary could note with enthusiasm that scholars with whom he was collaborating were now actively undertaking the challenge of “understanding a field of study quite new to us,” one that was far advanced in Korea and Japan.²⁹ As he understood the unfolding scene, a series of conferences held the world over—in Illinois, Italy, and Hawai‘i, for instance—and the conference volumes that came out of them provided much of the stimulus for this research. Many scholars who were not originally Ming specialists saw the importance of this dynasty and of developing the expertise necessary to study it. Influenced by the early work of the Japanese intellectual historian Shimada Kenji 島田虔次, whose 1948 publication *Chugoku ni okeru kindai shii no zasetsu* 中國における近代思維の挫折 (The reversal of early modern thought in China) had first forcefully raised this issue, there was the recognition that Ming studies was critical to the development of China’s philosophical and religious traditions. “As a result and within a very short time,” de Bary observed, “our situation in regard to scholarly expertise on the later history of these major traditions has rapidly, indeed dramatically, improved.”³⁰ He saw this research as necessary to reach backward into the Song and Yuan dynasties, and forward into the Qing—“to uncover a wide range of new developments in Chinese history and culture which had previously been dismissed as only footnotes or afterthoughts of a glorious classical movement.”³¹ In brief, as a result of the

²⁹ De Bary, “Ming Project,” 21.

³⁰ De Bary, “Ming Project,” 21.

³¹ De Bary, “Ming Project,” 21.

conferences and conference volumes, he felt, “perceptions of Ming thought have been changed.”³²

Another important development must be factored into this picture, and that was the effort of Cheng Chung-ying to promote the study of Chinese philosophy in the West. The fact of the matter is that the journal he established in 1973—the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*—became home to many articles on Neo-Confucianism. As it is well known, Cheng studied with Fang Dongmei 方東美 (Thomé Fang) at National Taiwan University. In 1956, he decided to leave Taiwan and study in the philosophy department at the University of Washington. After completing an MA in 1958, he moved on to Harvard University, where he studied broadly in Euro-American philosophical traditions and completed a PhD in 1963. He was then hired by the philosophy department at the University of Hawai‘i, where he launched his lengthy and impressive career of introducing Chinese philosophy to the West and making it comprehensible and relevant to modern times.³³

Writing in 1986, when he penned the essay “Chinese Philosophy in America, 1965–1985: Retrospect and Prospect,” Cheng explained what was going through his mind when he founded the journal in 1973 and the International Society for Chinese Philosophy in 1975. On the one hand, he had “come to this country to seek the wisdom of the West in order to save the East.”³⁴ China’s long philosophical traditions, he believed, did not fit well with the modern world of science, technology, democracy, and individual rights. Yet, because these traditions were a part of his identity, he held the conviction that they were “a form of humanity and a form of reason,” both deeply practical but also employing a language with a profound referential meaning. Thus, the crisis in these traditions might be described “as the crisis of the loss of the referential meaning, whether Confucian, Daoist, or even Chinese Buddhist.”³⁵ “Like a time-weathered old tree,” he observed, “Chinese philosophy may appear to have scars on the outside, but it still has a sustained inner life.”³⁶ That inner life both appeals to the heart and is articulate, but it must be contemplated deeply to find its potential and “universal message for mankind.”³⁷ It was Cheng’s conviction that the inner life of these traditions might benefit from the “methodological strength and the metaphysical grace of Western philosophy,” through what he referred to as the “analytic reconstruction of Chinese

³² De Bary, “Ming Project,” 21.

³³ Pfister, “Bio-Philosophical Profile,” 63–64.

³⁴ Chung-ying Cheng, “Chinese Philosophy,” 155.

³⁵ Chung-ying Cheng, “Chinese Philosophy,” 155.

³⁶ Chung-ying Cheng, “Chinese Philosophy,” 156.

³⁷ Chung-ying Cheng, “Chinese Philosophy,” 156.

philosophy.”³⁸ That inner life, and its implicit reason and tacit knowledge, could be articulated more explicitly for the benefit of the modern world.

When he arrived in Hawai‘i in 1963, he found that others shared his concern for developing a dialogue between philosophers East and West. To that end, at conferences such as the Fourth East-West Philosophers’ Conference held in 1964, he made plans with other Chinese philosophers to promote this dialogue. Those included, for example, his teacher Fang Dongmei, Tang Junyi, Hsieh Yu-wei 謝幼偉 (1905–1976), Wu Jingxiong 吳經雄 (1899–1986), Wing-tsit Chan, Liu Shuxian 劉述先 (1934–2016), and Huang Siu-chi 黃秀璣 (b. 1913). “At that meeting,” Cheng explains, “it dawned on all of us that it was perhaps the first time in Chinese history that so many Chinese philosophers were scattered outside of China in different locations.”³⁹ Hence, for the purposes of communication, Cheng started printing a newsletter. He also looked for ways “to transplant Chinese philosophy into a new soil,” by urging his colleagues “to do soul-searching in order to revitalize the inner life of the tradition.”⁴⁰

But there was another important dimension to his thinking that drove his scholarship. Cheng believed that Western philosophy was likewise in a state of crisis. He saw that philosophers working within Western traditions were looking for new idioms and paradigms, and that Western traditions had been unable to effectively coordinate science and technology with humanity and life. He believed a paradigm enlargement or shift might be made possible by engaging with the insights and perspective of other traditions. Hence, “on the basis of both my reflections on the Chinese philosophical tradition and the Western philosophical tradition,” Cheng recalls, “the founding of the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* was called for.”⁴¹ The journal was intended as a bridge for dialogue between East and West but also “to transplant Chinese philosophy into a new medium with the purpose of making contributions to both Western philosophy and Eastern philosophy.”⁴²

Cheng Chung-ying’s recollections are well worth recounting because, similar to de Bary’s reflections on Ming thought while teaching at Columbia, they tell us about the thinking of someone who was at the center of another place and a separate constellation of events responsible for a literature on Chinese philosophy, Neo-Confucianism, and Wang Yangming. Furthermore, of course, the desire to foster such dialogue between traditions with deep histories

³⁸ Chung-ying Cheng, “Chinese Philosophy,” 156–157.

³⁹ Chung-ying Cheng, “Chinese Philosophy,” 157.

⁴⁰ Chung-ying Cheng, “Chinese Philosophy,” 157.

⁴¹ Chung-ying Cheng, “Chinese Philosophy,” 160–161.

⁴² Chung-ying Cheng, “Chinese Philosophy,” 161.

was central to the thinking of the founders of *Philosophy East and West* and, beginning in 2000, of *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*. These are the three journals that became a principal home for English-language scholarship on Chinese philosophical traditions, the physical location for the presentation or reframing of nearly three thousand years of Chinese philosophical discourse within the linguistic horizon of the dominant international language. To these can be added *Asian Philosophy* (1991) and *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* (2006).⁴³ They became home to a literature penned by scholars hailing from extraordinarily diverse ethnic, national, and academic backgrounds; having different motivations, intellectual curiosities, and theoretical orientations; and attempting to meet differing personal goals and institutional demands.

However, the remainder of the twentieth century saw some changes in the field of Ming studies that would also impact research on Wang Yangming and his sixteenth-century followers. Regarding the field more generally, Heijdra notes that “there were just a greater number of students, and a larger, eclectic variety of approaches.”⁴⁴ He also believes that “by this time the influence of Columbia-style studies of Neo-Confucianism had certainly begun to fade.”⁴⁵ Criticism of Edward T. Ch’ien’s 1986 monograph *Chiao Hung and the Restructuring of Neo-Confucianism in the Late Ming* was perhaps indicative of this trend. Ch’ien was drawn to Neo-Confucianism while pursuing graduate studies at Columbia University under the guidance of William Theodore de Bary. Explaining his mentor’s impact, Ch’ien says that as “the driving force for the development of Neo-Confucian studies in this country,” de Bary had “taught me that the Chinese intellectual tradition is worth pursuing not only because it is historically meaningful and relevant as a scholarly concern but because it is philosophically significant as a humanistic undertaking.”⁴⁶

Thus, Ch’ien’s work evolved into another Columbia-style contribution to the study of Ming Neo-Confucian thought. Jiao Hong was a disciple of Geng Dingxiang, close friend to Li Zhi, and also associated with other members of the Taizhou school. In line with the intellectual tenor of his times, he was well versed in China’s three great traditions and sought to syncretize them at a deep conceptual level. Ch’ien believed that showing how he did so sheds light on three important issues in the late Ming: Neo-Confucian syncretism, the ongoing controversy between the Cheng-Zhu and Lu-Wang schools, and the emergence of evidential research. Thus, this was a work of synthesis, and

⁴³ Of course, there are many other journals that publish articles on Chinese philosophy and intellectual history, and I have only chosen three prominent ones.

⁴⁴ Heijdra, “Ming History,” 84.

⁴⁵ Heijdra, “Ming History,” 85.

⁴⁶ Ch’ien, *Chiao Hung*, ix.

it does indeed capture something of the fabric of the Wang Yangming school in the late Ming.

However, prominent historians vigorously criticized such Columbia-style studies on Ming Neo-Confucian thought. Yu Yingshi's criticisms of Ch'ien's book were similar to Frederick Mote's critique of William Theodore De Bary's scholarship. Neo-Confucian metaphysical and ethical ideas, they believed, had been elevated to ever more profound heights, operating in an airy world of their own, divorced from their social and political setting, and simplistically abstracted from complex scholarly traditions. In brief, Mote and Yu found these studies of Ming thought to be insufficiently historical, and therefore prone to errors of interpretation. That is why they penned lengthy critiques of their work exposing ones they had found.⁴⁷

Although intellectual history and philosophy remained important, other subjects of study were becoming more so. This is the pattern that persisted into the new millennium. Younger scholars in the field of Ming studies were spending more time on topics belonging to social and cultural history, among other trending fields of study. Looking at both the content of dissertations and Ming studies panels, Heijdra found that a strength was the greater place given to nonpolitical or nonintellectual historical factors. Although work was still being produced on Ming thought, literary and art studies dominated, followed by a host of newer topics falling into the areas of social history, cultural history, and the history of science, gender, and material culture, to name a few.⁴⁸ No doubt, this trend reflected the cultural turn in historical studies in the West.

All told, two trends stand out. First, de Bary's hopeful vision, as articulated in 1976, for the emergence of a robust scholarship on Ming thought, most particularly intellectual history of the type he practiced, was only partially fulfilled in the ensuing decade and then failed to be realized. Studies like those produced in his time will henceforth only be scattered in small numbers across dissertation databases and journals devoted to Ming China, such as *Ming Studies* and *Late Imperial China*. Most scholarship (but not all) on Wang Yangming and his school became more purely philosophical or religious, written by people hailing from philosophy departments all over the globe or schools of divinity in the United States, and published in the appropriate field-related journals. A second trend is simply the low volume of publications on Ming intellectual history and philosophy after the 1980s, which can be likened to a persistent trickle until just the last few years (2010s).

⁴⁷ Yu Yingshi, "Intellectual World," 24-66; Mote, "Limits of Intellectual History," 17-25.

⁴⁸ Heijdra, "Ming History," 85-86.

Miscellaneous data for the scholarship on Ming Neo-Confucianism are suggestive of these trends in both North America and Europe. For example, in his bibliographies for the years 1980–1999, Dietrich Tszchanz lists 314 dissertations on Ming studies completed in North America, Europe, Australia, and Russia. According to my count, thirty-four of these have Ming philosophy and intellectual history as their main topic. Among those, ten have as their topic Ming learning of the mind scholars, and most of those date to the 1980s. These include, in chronological order, Cheng Pei-kai’s “Reality and Imagination: Li Chih and T’ang Hsien-tsu in Search of Authenticity” (1980), Joseph Kuang-su Chow’s “Detachment in the Philosophy of Wang Yangming: the Concept of *liang-chih*” (1981), M. Theresa Kelleher’s “Personal Reflections on the Pursuit of Sagehood: The Life and Journal (jih-lu) of Wu Yu-pi (1392–1469)” (1982), Kandice Hauf’s “The Jiangyou Group: Culture and Society in Sixteenth-Century China” (1987), Ann Chipping Woo’s “Ch’an Kan-chuan and the Continuing neo-Confucian Discourse on Mind and Principle” (1986), Philip Ivanhoe’s “Mencius in the Ming Dynasty: The Moral Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming” (1987), Lee Sheng-kuang’s “Commoner and Sagehood: Wang Ken and the T’ai-chou School in Late Ming Society” (1990), Renate Soeder’s “Private and öffentliche Moral: ‘Die Aufzeichnungen zur Unterscheidung der Lehren’ von Feng Congwu (1556–1627)” (1995), Simon Man-ho Wong’s “Liu Tsung-chou: His Doctrine of Vigilant Solitude” (1996), and Lü Miaw-fen’s “Practice as Knowledge: Yang-ming Learning and Chiang-hui in Sixteenth-Century China” (1997).⁴⁹

Another statistic to consider is the small number of articles that have Ming Neo-Confucians specifically as their topic. The numbers are striking. For the years 1973 to 1999, the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* published a total of forty-seven articles on Confucianism in Imperial China (pertaining to any topic falling within the Han to Qing dynasties). Seventeen had Zhu Xi as the main topic, nine were on Wang Yangming, five on Neo-Confucianism, three on Dai Zhen 戴震, two on Qing Confucian schools, two on Shao Yong 邵雍, and one each on Wu Cheng 吳澄, Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章, Hu Juren 胡居仁, Gao Panlong, Jiao Hong, Huang Zongxi, Liu Zongzhou 劉宗周, and Wang Fuzhi 王夫之. Just over half of these had been published by 1985. For the years 2000 to 2015, thirty-six articles were published about topics pertaining to Confucianism from the Song to Qing dynasties. Twelve concerned Zhu Xi, eight concerned Wang Yangming, and five concerned Neo-Confucianism in general. Last, volumes published between 2016 and 2019 only contained two articles on Ming Confucians, one each for Zhan Ruoshui and Wang Yangming in an issue devoted to knowledge and action in Chinese philosophy.

⁴⁹ Tszchanz, “Doctoral Dissertations,” 86–112.

Another example is the journal *Dao*. For the years 2001 (when the journal began) to 2015, roughly 120 articles had as their topics pre-Qin Confucianism, modern Confucianism, or broadly comparative studies of Confucianism. However, only twenty-three articles had scholars of later imperial China (i.e., the Song to Qing dynasties) as their topic: eight on Zhu Xi, five on Wang Yangming, two on Neo-Confucianism, two on Zhang Xuecheng 章學誠, and one each on Zhang Zai 張載, Cheng Hao 程顥 and Cheng Yi 程頤, Li Zhi 李贄, Liu Zongzhou, Wang Fuzhi, and Dai Zhen. In sum, taking articles as the measure, there is very little writing in English about Song to Qing Confucianism, and most of it concerns Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming. Although I haven't compiled numbers, this same situation holds true for the entirety of Imperial China's Confucian tradition. Clearly, writing about pre-Qin and modern Confucianism, or Confucianism more generally, as well as Daoism and Buddhism remains more voluminous in the English-language literature.

Anecdotal evidence from Europe also suggests a similar pattern. Considering only Ming learning of the mind Confucians, Herausgegeben von Fabian and Volker Heubel's bibliography of German scholarship on Chinese philosophy, which ends with 2006, lists only four items with Wang Yangming as the topic.⁵⁰ One of those is a translation of Shimada Kenji's comparative study of Wang Yangming and Zhu Xi.⁵¹ Ralph Weber's "Bibliography on 'Chinese Philosophy' in Europe, 2007–2013" (with 351 entries in eighteen languages) is dominated by classical Chinese philosophy first and modern Chinese philosophy second, with only a handful of publications on Song and Ming Confucians. In fact, only three entries pertain to the Ming, one article each on Wang Fuzhi and Luo Qinshun, and the major monograph by Iso Kern on Wang Yangming and his school.⁵² There is one monograph each for Chen Xianzhang and Wang Gen. In 2011, Harriet T. Zurndorfer published an article on "The State of Ming Studies in Europe," where she reviews scholarship published since 1995.⁵³ She lists collaborative projects as well as individual publications according to topic. None of the projects or topics were specifically Ming intellectual history, philosophy, or thought. Of course, one could say that intellectual history is included within the purview of other topics, such as scholarship on art history, print culture, local history, gender studies, and legal history. To a degree, that reflects the "cultural turn" among historians who subordinate thought to culture. But with the exception of Anne Gerritsen's *Ji'an Literati and the Local in Song-Yuan-Ming*

⁵⁰ He Fabi and Gu Xinpeng, eds., "Deyu zhi Zhongguo zhexue yanjiu shumu," 53–146.

⁵¹ Shimada, *Die Neo-Konfuzianische Philosophie*.

⁵² Weber, "Bibliography," 397–418. For Iso Kern's book, see Chapter 7.

⁵³ Zurndorfer, "State of Ming Studies," 1–6.

China (2007), Zurndorfer lists no books that specifically focus on the thought of a Ming Neo-Confucian or Ming Neo-Confucianism.

While giving due recognition to the fact that there has been a steady trickle (which has grown faster recently) of dissertations, books, and articles about Ming Neo-Confucians and Wang Yangming, one might still ask why the volume of publications has remained relatively small since the later 1980s. Several factors should be considered. First, prior chapters have demonstrated the historical reasons that Ming Neo-Confucian literature was less represented at the turn of the twentieth century and far less likely to have come to the attention of intellectuals living in Europe and North America. Conditions were slightly better for Song *Daoxue* thinkers because Zhu Xi's synthesis was designated as political orthodoxy and his commentaries were prescribed for examination. As a result, the texts of Song *Daoxue* thinkers were distilled over the centuries into various compendiums, and this literature could be more readily translated into a different language environment.

For Ming Neo-Confucians, especially the Ming learning of the mind scholars, historical factors dating to the late-sixteenth century eventually determined that their thought and writings were largely dismissed during the Qing Dynasty. Furthermore, with a few important exceptions, their writings did not go through the same process of distillation. The exceptions, of course, are the edited records of discourses (*yulu* 語錄) and letters compiled by Sun Qifeng 孫奇逢,⁵⁴ Zhou Rudeng 周汝登,⁵⁵ and Huang Zongxi.⁵⁶ The *Chuan xi lu* is in many ways a unique document, so much so that translations of it have afforded those unable to read Chinese in the West the opportunity to write about Wang Yangming's ideas. As for his followers, it is a bit unfortunate that Julia Ching was unable to include any primary source translations (records of discourses, letters) in *The Records of Ming Scholars*, as opposed to only the prefaces and biographies. Huang Zongxi's commentary takes for granted a degree of familiarity with the intellectual history of the thinkers under discussion and is not readily understood. Thus, aside from translations and studies of Wang Yangming's work, students of Ming thought in Europe and North America would have limited access to translations of Ming Neo-Confucian literature and only a small volume of scholarly monographs to consult.

In sum, to a degree, intellectual history fell into disfavor after the 1980s. Recently, intellectual historian On-cho Ng, currently at Pennsylvania State

⁵⁴ Sun Qifeng 孫奇逢, *Lixue zong chuan* 理學宗傳 (Transmission of the main lineage of the learning of principle).

⁵⁵ Zhou Rudeng 周汝登, *Sheng xue zong chuan* 聖學宗傳 (Transmission of the main lineage of the learning of the sages).

⁵⁶ Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲, *Ming ru xue an* 明儒學案 (Records of Ming Scholars).

University, offered his impression of the state of the field in a personal email communication with the author, stating, “that there is so little on Ming-Qing intellectual history is largely a function of the job market, I think. We just can’t encourage students to do intellectual history anymore, as the market does not look upon it kindly. I really belong to the last generation that was still able to work on the traditional kind of intellectual history.” He adds, “In my case, to stay relevant, I have pretty much moved over to the fields of philosophy and religious studies, where most of my scholarly activities have been located in the last two decades.”⁵⁷ When there are few job positions for specialists in a particular field of study, students will be less likely to spend the time necessary to overcome the language barriers and master the literature necessary to write about it.

Similar barriers might also exist in Europe, at least for Ming studies more generally. In her state of the field study, Harriet Zurndorfer asks, “So how should we evaluate the state of Ming studies nowadays in Europe?” Her analysis is worth quoting at length:

I would suggest that it is eclectic, with no real center, and that there are historical reasons for this. Like the study of the Song dynasty, interest in the Ming was a postwar phenomenon. Pre-war study in Europe had focused almost entirely on the ancient period, or the last hundred years of the Qing. But, unlike the study of the Song which attracted a certain appeal in the USA already in the late 1940s and 1950s thanks to the influence of Edward Kracke, interest in the Ming was less forthcoming until the work of de Bary, Hucker, and Ray Huang drew attention to the period. The first European scholars who worked on the Ming made important contributions: Tilemann Grimm on education, Frank Münzel on penal law, and, of course, Wolfgang Franke whose publications still have relevance today. But none of these men left immediate successors.

Nowadays, university education for China Studies in Europe is geared very much to the contemporaneous, and the study of classical Chinese has had to take a backseat to spoken Mandarin. Undergraduate classes are very much oversubscribed in most universities, and the kind of advanced study that would prepare someone for what is better known as graduate school in the United States simply does not exist.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ On-cho Ng, email communication to the author, July 19, 2018.

⁵⁸ Zurndorfer, “State of Ming Studies,” 5.

Like On-cho Ng, Frédéric Wang—at the time of this writing the Director of the Center of Chinese Studies (Directeur du Centre d'Etudes Chinoises) at Sorbonne University—also states that with regard to France, very few scholars had been publishing papers on Ming intellectual history in the last few decades.⁵⁹ The situation is a bit better for the Song Dynasty.

Returning to North America, and the United States in particular, Ng's publication strategy makes sense because much of the scholarship on Neo-Confucianism has been originating from academics employed in philosophy or religious studies departments. However, even here obstacles abound, especially for the field of Chinese philosophy. The first alarm bell was sounded in 2008, in the American Philosophical Association's Newsletter on "Asian and Asian American Philosophers and Philosophies." The guest editor, philosopher and educator Amy Olberding, noted that this newsletter originated "with the perception among colleagues of a crisis in Chinese philosophy in the United States and the difficulties faced by students who wish to enter the field but find relatively few selections."⁶⁰ Students wishing to study Chinese philosophy may feel compelled to do so outside the United States, in East Asia (or Singapore), or in East Asian Languages and Cultures Departments. Both Stephen Angle and Bryan W. Van Norden highlighted the fact that when they went to graduate school (1980s and 1990s), specialists in Chinese teaching in top philosophy departments were located at four institutions—University of Michigan (Donald Munro), University of California at Berkeley (Kwong-loi Shun), Stanford University (David Nivison), and the University of Hawai'i (Roger Ames, Cheng Chung-ying, and Antonia S. Cua). But as of 2008 only Hawai'i still had specialists, while the others had no plans for hiring.⁶¹

Van Norden further notes that the top twenty-five institutions listed in an influential ranking system for philosophy programs—the Philosophical Gourmet Report—did not have faculty who specialized in Chinese philosophy. Four departments in the top fifty had faculty with an interest in Chinese philosophy, but none could read classical Chinese well. Hence, Van Norden quipped, "I respect these scholars very much, and they have produced some genuinely outstanding work. However, imagine if you wished to become a specialist on Plato or Aristotle but could not find a doctoral supervisor to work with who

⁵⁹ Frédéric Wang, email communication to the author, August 8, 2018.

⁶⁰ Amy Olberding, "From the Guest Editor," *APA Newsletter on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies* 8, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 1.

⁶¹ Stephen C. Angle, "Does Michigan Matter," *APA Newsletter on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies* 8, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 3; Bryan W. Van Norden, "Three Questions about the Crisis in Chinese Philosophy," *APA Newsletter on Asian and Asian-American Philosophers and Philosophies* 8, no. 1 (Fall 2008): 4.

could read classical Greek.”⁶² He observes that to do this a student would have to move outside ranked programs or the United States. It is worth noting that among those specialists in philosophy departments listed in the entirety of the newsletter, only a few had produced scholarship on Ming philosophy. From an earlier generation, those are Cheng Chung-ying and David Nivison. From later generations, and scholars active today, those are JeeLoo Liu, Philip J. Ivanhoe, Stephen Angle, and Kwong-loi Shun.

Regarding the reasons for this relative weakness in graduate philosophy programs in the United States, Van Norden suspects a lack of knowledge among philosophers in the United States: “most U.S. philosophers simply don’t know about Chinese philosophy.”⁶³ He also points to curriculum inertia and a lingering “chauvinistic ethnocentrism.” More recently, in 2015, Bryan Bruya took a closer look at the status of the Chinese philosophy field and echoed the same conclusions drawn seven years earlier by contributors to the newsletter. “The status of multiculturalism in American philosophy Ph.D. programs,” he concluded, “is at a crisis point.”⁶⁴ He could cite four such programs with full-time specialists in Chinese philosophy specifically hired for their expertise, and a total of nine programs with full-time specialists. He found that although other scholars were writing in the field from other departments and overseas, there was “a dearth of Chinese philosophy in American Ph.D. programs,” hence causing the field to suffer “in both the quality and quantity of output.”⁶⁵

Bruya finds several important factors at work in hiring trends extending over several decades. First, looking back to the post-war period and up to the present, “a robust movement toward multiculturalism, diversity, and globalism” has impacted the development of program and curriculum development as well as the hiring necessary to support it. Bruya find the origins of this issue in “the worldview that went hand in hand with American reconstruction efforts in Europe and parts of Asia after World War II, namely, that more understanding across cultures would contribute to a more peaceful world.”⁶⁶ Up to the present, Bruya believes, “the force for multiculturalism and diversity continues to grow, and with the global influence of China steadily increasing, there should be an additional momentum.”⁶⁷ Thus, his communications with department chairs showed an interest in having specialists in Chinese philosophy as well as a high level of interest in such courses from students.

⁶² Van Norden, “Three Questions,” 4.

⁶³ Van Norden, “Three Questions,” 4.

⁶⁴ Bruya, “Tacit Rejection,” 369–389.

⁶⁵ Bruya, “Tacit Rejection,” 371.

⁶⁶ Bruya, “Tacit Rejection,” 375.

⁶⁷ Bruya, “Tacit Rejection,” 375.

In his article, “Chinese Philosophy Lifts off in America,” Carlin Romano provides some of the concrete evidence for these trends. More sessions on Chinese philosophy are being held at the annual American Philosophical Association conferences. Regional conferences, such as the Midwest Conference on Chinese thought, are being held annually. Several organizations have been formed to support the field, such as the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, the International Society for Comparative Studies of Chinese and Western Philosophy, and the Association of Chinese Philosophers in North America. Some university administrations and departments are trying to respond to rising student interest and demand.⁶⁸

However, according to Bruya, two factors have slowed this worldview from impacting philosophy programs. The first squelching factor dated back to the post-war period, when logical positivism and the philosophy of language—both of which “tended to take an ahistoric, scientific view of philosophy”—were ascendant at elite universities.⁶⁹ Consequently, philosophy departments at elite universities were concerned primarily with core analytic issues, such as the philosophy of mind, the philosophy of language, metaphysics, epistemology, logic, and the philosophy of science. This trend only began to change in the 1990s and at the turn of the millennium, when continental and ancient philosophy made a comeback. The study of non-Western traditions, Bruya believes, will benefit from this.

Another “squelching factor” is the rankings provided by Brian Leiter’s *Philosophical Gourmet Report*. He believes these rankings have shaped how philosophy departments build their programs, to the detriment of non-Western traditions. Consequently, while the forces for multiculturalism and diversity in education continue to grow, “universities still have little to offer in the way of non-Western philosophy.”⁷⁰ Bruya’s survey of university websites and programs left him with the clear impression that “philosophy is defined by and bounded by the Western tradition” and thus remains Eurocentric. “It is ironic, tragic even, that while most universities are moving toward multicultural curricula and global involvement,” he concludes, “philosophy departments are generally content to remain within Eurocentric walls.”⁷¹

In sum then, looking at developments dating back to the 1980s and continuing up to the present, larger trends would seem to militate against the publication of scholarship on Ming Neo-Confucianism. The field of Ming studies veered away from intellectual history, and the scale of Chinese philosophy in

⁶⁸ Romano, “Chinese Philosophy,” b6–b9.

⁶⁹ Bruya, “Tacit Rejection,” 376.

⁷⁰ Bruya, “Tacit Rejection,” 378.

⁷¹ Bruya, “Tacit Rejection,” 380.

philosophy departments, as well as the areas of expertise of those who teach it, is not supportive of a robust scholarship. This is why scholarship on Wang Yangming and his followers has remain scattered and decentered, coming in at a trickle from many different directions, with something of an uptick in recent years. What Harriet Zurndorfer observes here also applies to the study of Wang Yangming and his school. “To sketch what is happening in Ming studies in Europe these days is not an easy task,” she writes, adding that, “Given the fact that this field is so international, with people from many different backgrounds and nationalities working all over the globe on this topic, I do not find it easy to pinpoint what exactly makes a particular publication or project representative of Ming studies in Europe.”⁷²

Yet, although conditions for the publication of scholarship on Ming Confucian intellectual history and philosophy might seem unfavorable, specialists in Ming studies and Chinese philosophy have produced a large volume of introductory literature that does lay out the general contours of sixteenth-century developments. Here, since this literature is quite vast and varies from the popular to the academic, more prominent surveys that cover this topic shall be mentioned. The more notable English-language historical surveys include Charles Hucker’s *China’s Imperial Past*,⁷³ Jacques Gernet’s *A History of Chinese Civilization*,⁷⁴ Frederick Mote’s *Imperial China 900–1800*,⁷⁵ Harold Tanner’s *China: A History*,⁷⁶ and John Dardess’s *Ming China, 1368–1644: A Concise History of a Resilient Empire*.⁷⁷ Introductions to Chinese philosophy with sections on the Wang Yangming school include Yao Xinzong’s *An Introduction to Confucianism*,⁷⁸ Liu Shuxian’s chapter in Bo Mou’s *History of Chinese Philosophy*,⁷⁹ Anne Cheng’s *Histoire de la pensée chinoise* (History of Chinese thought),⁸⁰ and Wolfgang Bauer’s *Geschichte der Chinesischen philosophie: Konfuzianismus, Daoismus, Buddhismus* (History of Chinese philosophy: Confucianism, Daoism, and Buddhism).⁸¹

To these works should be added two books that specifically introduce Neo-Confucianism. One provides a historical synthesis and the other two a philosophical introduction for undergraduate students. Barry C. Keenan’s

⁷² Zurndorfer, “State of Ming Studies,” 1.

⁷³ Hucker, *China’s Imperial Past*, 371–376.

⁷⁴ Gernet, *History of Chinese Civilization*, 438–441.

⁷⁵ Mote, *Imperial China 900–1800*.

⁷⁶ Tanner, *China: A History*, vol. 1, 325–326.

⁷⁷ Dardess, *Ming China, 1368–1644*, 88–201.

⁷⁸ Yao Xinzong, *Introduction to Confucianism*, 109–114.

⁷⁹ Liu Shu-hsien, “Neo-Confucianism (II): From Lu Jiu-yuan to Wang Yang-ming,” 396–428.

⁸⁰ Cheng, *Histoire de la pensée Chinoise*, 496–531.

⁸¹ Bauer, *Geschichte der Chinesischen philosophie*, 277–290.

Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation was written as part of the *Dimensions of Asian Spirituality* series edited by Henry Rosemont Jr. The goal of this series was to make the spiritual dimensions and contemporary relevance of Asian philosophical and religious traditions more understandable to college students and general readers. As for Keenan's volume, Rosemont observes that it is "a most timely addition to the series in two distinct ways: it describes a scholarly and nontheological spiritual path of direct relevance to Western scholars and students, and thereby also provides a historical, philosophical, and religious background against which the many and varied patterns of intellectual and religious activities comprising the revival of Confucianism in the People's Republic of China (PRC) today might fruitfully be examined."⁸² He believes Keenan successfully demonstrates that Neo-Confucians were much more than civil servants and have much to teach us all today.

Indeed, Keenan says that his book "tells the story of the moral and spiritual practice of Neo-Confucian self-cultivation in Chinese history."⁸³ It is an intellectual movement that provided "one of the most sophisticated formulations of self-cultivation in the history of humanistic education," Keenan explains, which it achieved by reshaping the canonical texts, providing metaphysical concepts, and promoting an elaborate program of self-cultivation.⁸⁴

The majority of the book is devoted to the program for self-cultivation laid out by Zhu Xi, especially through his commentaries on the *Great Learning*, a text that "laid out the steps of self-transformation."⁸⁵ Some attention is given, however, to "Self-Cultivation Upgrades" from the fifteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Wang Yangming was "the exiled scholar of singular insight" who took Neo-Confucian thought in a new direction.⁸⁶ Wang believed that Zhu Xi had left some of the basic insights of Confucius and Mencius undeveloped. For him, goodness comes not from finding the principle in things but rather from innate knowledge. Keenan explains that Wang Yangming provided a different reading of the *Great Learning*, one that led to a stress on making one's intentions sincere. For him, "serious self-cultivation through the absolute sincerity of intentions allows one to see the true character of the innate self."⁸⁷

Although little space is devoted to Wang Yangming, Keenan does situate him within a broader context of a philosophical tradition now recognized as a spiritual tradition, one that is intimately relevant to the individual's personal

⁸² Keenan, *Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation*, xii.

⁸³ Keenan, *Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation*, xxi.

⁸⁴ Keenan, *Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation*, 3.

⁸⁵ Keenan, *Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation*, xxi.

⁸⁶ Keenan, *Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation*, 76.

⁸⁷ Keenan, *Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation*, 77.

development. “Starting from an empathy that builds one’s moral self by reaching out to others, and expanding by observing personal reverence and civility in relationships,” Keenan explains, “Neo-Confucian ethics begins and ends in a this-worldly commitment to humaneness that is sustained through human interaction.”⁸⁸

The other introductory text, *Neo-Confucianism: A Philosophical Introduction*, was written by Stephen Angle and Justin Tiwald. They believed that such a textbook was necessary because after Carsun Chang published his *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, “much of the best scholarship published in the decades since then focused on intellectual biography or the history of ideas.”⁸⁹ This scholarship, in their estimate, was useful but not entirely satisfactory because although “Neo-Confucian ideas had the depth and sophistication to be engaged with as philosophy,” few philosophers were paying attention to this tradition.⁹⁰ This crisp distillation of late imperial China’s Confucian tradition is achieved by focusing on the thought of a few representative Neo-Confucians from the Song, Ming, and Qing Dynasties and arranging discussion of them thematically.

Concerning Wang Yangming, perhaps what is of most interest in this book is not only the concise philosophical articulation of his major concepts, but also the effort to pin down translation. Wang asserted that “heartmind is Pattern” (*xin ji li* 心即理), meaning that we should not seek “a coherent pattern whereby we can order ourselves harmoniously”, what something truly is—its ultimate nature, and a prescription (*li*) outside ourselves, “but rather attend to how our heartmind guides us.”⁹¹ For Wang, good and bad emerge from the functioning of heartmind, as opposed to from following or failing to adhere to external moral rules. This raises the question as to how we can determine which inclinations are right—“warranted by consideration of pattern”—and which are merely personal and contingent.⁹² Complicating this matter is the first line of his “Four Axioms”, which appears to suggest that heartmind is ultimately without moral distinctions: “In the inherent reality of heartmind, there is no distinction between good and bad” (*wu shan wu e xin zhi ti* 無善無惡心之體). However, according to Angle and Tiwald, this does not mean that heartmind is morally neutral and inert, but rather that “the heartmind’s natural responses (which he calls ‘good knowing,’ *liangzhi* 良知) spontaneously establish the proper norm for each given situation, without following

⁸⁸ Keenan, *Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation*, xxiv.

⁸⁹ Angle and Tiwald, *Neo-Confucianism*, vi.

⁹⁰ Angle and Tiwald, *Neo-Confucianism*, vi.

⁹¹ Angle and Tiwald, *Neo-Confucianism*, 81.

⁹² Angle and Tiwald, *Neo-Confucianism*, 82.

any guidelines that apply across all cases.” The heartmind itself “creates the explicit norms of good and bad on the spot,”⁹³ the idea being that “when one experiences emotions following their natural, non-selfish course of reaction, this revealing of cosmic Pattern is good knowing.”⁹⁴ Just how this happens, the methods of self-cultivation necessary for “reaching good knowing” (*zhi liangzhi* 致良知), as well as the philosophical conundrums raised by his ideas, are further explored in this precise introductory text.

Last, some attention needs to be given to translation work that has appeared since Wing-tsit Chan published his translation of the *Chuan xi lu* in 1963 and Julia Ching published a selection of *Letters* in 1973. In 2009, Philip Ivanhoe put together a primary source reader for what he calls the “Lu Wang School of Neo-Confucianism.” Part I contains selected translations from the *Platform Sutra*, Part II contains selections from the writings of Lu Xiangshan, and Part III contains selections from the writings of Wang Yangming. Ivanhoe provides introductions to each set of translations, and while he attempts to sketch out “important features of the history, biography, and philosophy of the authors,” his principal goal is to present the main themes “that inform these writings.”⁹⁵

This chapter has aimed to provide an overview of the historical background to the literature on Wang Yangming and his followers published in the West since the 1970s, with an emphasis on the English-language literature and developments in North America. On the one hand, factors have limited the publication of such scholarship, including academic trends and a de-emphasis on intellectual history, the job market, biases in the Western academy—especially philosophy departments—and the persistent challenge for any student East and West trying to develop the skills to work with Ming sources and publish them in English, French, or German. On the other, the consistent recognition of the intrinsic importance of Ming Neo-Confucianism and the School of Mind by scholars working in different fields of study, the impetus given to the study of Ming thought by the work of earlier scholars, the impact of globalization on how academic scholarship is produced and published, and changing policies in China since Reform and Opening have all contributed to a steady flow of publications. The ensuing three chapters organize and present this scholarship thematically.

⁹³ Angle and Tiwald, *Neo-Confucianism*, 61.

⁹⁴ Angle and Tiwald, *Neo-Confucianism*, 104.

⁹⁵ Ivanhoe, *Readings from the Lu-Wang School*, xi. Also, it should be noted that Hackett Publishing issued another primary source reader that included Ivanhoe’s selections from Wang Yangming. See Van Norden and Tiwald, eds., *Readings in Later Chinese Philosophy*, 261–289.

CHAPTER 5:

Biographical and Historical Studies of Wang Yangming and his Followers

The aim of this chapter is to provide an overview of historical writing about Wang Yangming and the movement he inspired in sixteenth-century Ming China. First, this research places Wang Yangming in the context of the course of early and mid-Ming dynasty intellectual, social, and political history, giving such context as background to his life experiences and intellectual trajectory. Second, some of this literature is biographical, and justifiably so, as Wang's life is not only compelling on its own merits but also touches on so many facets of his time, as well as being closely intertwined with how he went about introducing his philosophical tenets. Likewise, Wang was a Ruist scholar-official whose ideal was to unify theory and practice. His political career, which included positions ranging from serving as local magistrate to serving in Beijing, as well as conducting military campaigns and implementing policy with real-world implications, becomes topical in light of his philosophy. Third, as sixteenth-century Wang Yangmingism (the following to which he gave rise) played a dominant role in Ruist philosophical discourse, the literature on this topic will also be covered in the chapter. Finally, the chapter concludes with scholarship on the impact of intellectual trends during the late Ming and Qing dynasties on the school of Wang Yangming.

The Early Ming Background

Intellectual histories of the Ming dynasty often begin by explaining the special relation that developed between the early Ming state and Neo-Confucian philosophy. “The beginning of the Ming dynasty (1368-1644),” states French sinologist Anne Cheng in her *Histoire de la pensée chinoise* (History of Chinese thought), “was marked by the restoration of a Chinese identity, the recovery and expansion of territory, as well as an economic dynamism which stood in stark contrast to the strengthening of imperial autocracy.”¹ With the advice of Confucian scholars, early Ming emperors institutionalized Cheng-Zhu Confucianism: “the rise of imperial despotism after the Song dynasty

¹ Anne Cheng, *Histoire*, 497.

relied on the Cheng-Zhu tradition, which constructed an orthodoxy that became the basis for state examinations and lessons provided to the emperor by his Confucian counselors.”² During the Yongle 永樂 emperor’s reign (Zhu Di 朱棣, r. 1402–1424), this relationship was tightened. Compendia and commentaries on Neo-Confucian texts were compiled by members of the Hanlin Academy, principally to provide materials for examination preparation. However, this genre of texts and the format of the examination essays stifled intellectual inquiry and creativity. Furthermore, because Zhu Xi’s plans for moral education were institutionalized, the boundary between the fate of the individual and the state was blurred. For this reason, while scholastic debates among School of Principle (*lixue* 理學) scholars might on the surface appear to be purely academic in nature, the stakes were high because orthodox thinking was one channel by which the state extended its power over the population.³

Nevertheless, Cheng explains, the eremitic ideal in Chinese history persisted after the fall of the Mongol Yuan dynasty, on the fringes of this official orthodoxy and such debates. Some Neo-Confucians chose not to conform to expectations regarding examination preparation and official service. Cheng writes, “The philosophy of the first half of the Ming dynasty, which is characterized by a spiritual quest outside established book knowledge and the hierarchical structure of ritualized morality, is marked by great religiosity.”⁴ Examples include Neo-Confucians like Wu Yubi 吳與弼 (1391–1469) and Hu Juren 胡居仁 (1434–1484). They stressed seriousness as a form of mental discipline, sanctioned quotidian life, and kept spiritual journals for the purpose of examining conscience. They also gave greater emphasis to the inner workings of the mind. This trend becomes more marked with Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章 (1428–1500). He eventually engaged in a solitary spiritual quest outside of book learning for the purpose of discovering Heaven’s pattern (*tianli* 天理, also translated as Heaven’s reason or the principle of Heaven) in his mind. As for Wang Yangming, Cheng explains, “The desire to refocus on the mind that emerged from the beginning of the Ming dynasty culminated in the mid-Ming with Wang Yangming.”⁵

In *Neo-Confucianism in History*, Peter Bol discusses the degree to which, during the early Ming, Neo-Confucianism served as a state-sponsored orthodoxy and the ideological foundation of imperial autocracy. During the reign of the Yongle emperor, he notes, “the new regime launched a series of projects that supported scholars and Neo-Confucianism, in particular through

² Anne Cheng, *Histoire*, 498.

³ Anne Cheng, *Histoire*, 499.

⁴ Anne Cheng, *Histoire*, 499.

⁵ Anne Cheng, *Histoire*, 500.

the collection and publication, in 1415, of Neo-Confucian interpretations of the Four Books and Five Classics and Neo-Confucian writings on moral philosophy.”⁶ Furthermore, the Yongle emperor tied the Neo-Confucian ideal of sagehood to strong imperial rulership: the ruler should also aspire to sagehood. As with the Yuan dynasty, Neo-Confucian learning was closely linked to the state and hence the halls of power. The normal trajectory for a student would be to master a body of knowledge now readily available in compendia of Song *daoxue* 道學 (School of the Way) commentaries, sit for a series of examinations, and then serve in officialdom. Thus, Neo-Confucianism was overtly political and ideological.

Nevertheless, like Anne Cheng, Bol explains that as Neo-Confucianism was further cemented as the ideological foundation of Ming autocracy, some Neo-Confucians were setting themselves at a distance from the state and turning to teaching and building personal networks among literati.⁷ After all, Neo-Confucians had always made a special claim to knowledge of the true Way as it was handed down by the sages of antiquity, independent of any established authority. Thus, even as the Ming court sought ideological control, independent-minded Confucians still “saw themselves as the proper source of ideology”⁸ and diverged in their personal journeys.

One renowned representative of this trend was Wu Yubi, who showed a spirit of principled independence. Bol finds that he symbolizes “a turn from the Neo-Confucian intellectualism of Zhu Xi to internal reflection and thus points toward the great revival of literati Neo-Confucianism with Wang Yang-ming at the beginning of the sixteenth century.”⁹ Wu embodied a dimension of Neo-Confucianism primarily oriented towards establishing one’s personal identity and becoming a moral person. He believed that the authority of the sage-kings of antiquity was transferred to Confucius (and hence, Confucian scholars). Zhu Xi represented this same tradition in his time, and now Ming scholars were the heirs and should carry the torch. For Wu, Confucianism was a living tradition whose power lay outside the control of the emperor. At a time when Neo-Confucianism was strongly tied to power and wealth, he sought to recover its original goal of fundamentally changing the person.

In “The Ch’eng-Chu School in the Early Ming,” Wing-tsit Chan demonstrates that these fifteenth-century Neo-Confucians were by no means “a faint echo of the Neo-Confucianism” of the Song dynasty philosophers Cheng Hao, Cheng Yi, and Zhu Xi. On the contrary, Chan demonstrates, in the hands of

⁶ Bol, *Neo-Confucianism*, 148.

⁷ Bol, *Neo-Confucianism*, 149.

⁸ Bol, *Neo-Confucianism*, 95.

⁹ Bol, *Neo-Confucianism*, 149.

both the Hedong School (*Hedong xuepai* 河東學派: Cao Duan 曹端 and Xue Xuan 薛宣) and the Chongren School (*Chongren xuepai* 崇仁學派: Wu Yubi and Hu Juren), early Ming Neo-Confucianism “underwent significant changes, assumed a definite direction, and in these ways anticipated the rise of the School of Mind that culminated in Wang Yangming.”¹⁰

Thus, Chan was refuting the view of modern scholars whom he believed had neglected these Confucians or portrayed them as merely faithful followers of Song Neo-Confucians. By so doing, these scholars had exaggerated the newness and independence of the School of Mind established by Chen Xianzhang and Wang Yangming. They were following a characterization established by the *Ming History* (*Ming shi* 明史) and Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲.¹¹ Chan’s opinion was that, “if we examine the philosophies of the four philosophers, we shall find that they steered Cheng-Zhu philosophy in a new direction and in doing so prepared an intellectual atmosphere conducive to the growth of the philosophies of Chen Xianzhang and Wang Yangming.”¹² In particular, although they varied a great deal in their thought, these four Neo-Confucians showed markedly less interest in metaphysical speculation and the doctrine of the investigation of things, and they were far more concerned with the mind and its cultivation.¹³

Other scholarship paints a similar picture. However, the English-language scholarship on fifteenth-century Ming intellectual history is limited, perhaps giving the impression that little of philosophical significance happened before Wang Yangming. Paul Yun-ming Jiang’s book on Chen Xianzhang,¹⁴ Khee Heong Koh’s study of Xue Xuan and the Hedong School,¹⁵ M. Theresa Kelleher’s introduction to and translation of Wu Yubi’s journal, and the recent English edition of Zhang Xuezhi’s *Mingdai zhhexueshi* 明代哲學史 (*History of Chinese Philosophy in the Ming Dynasty*) offer important correctives, filling in the story further.¹⁶

Three Articles on Wang Yangming’s Life and Legacy

In his *Mountain of Fame: Portraits in Chinese History*, historian John E. Wills (1936–2017) paints a portrait of Wang Yangming’s life in fifteen pages.

¹⁰ Wing-tsit Chan, “Ch’eng-Chu School,” 29.

¹¹ Wing-tsit Chan, “Ch’eng-Chu School,” 31.

¹² Wing-tsit Chan, “Ch’eng-Chu School,” 32–33.

¹³ Wing-tsit Chan, “Ch’eng-Chu School,” 42.

¹⁴ Paul Yun-Ming Jiang, *The Search for Mind: Chen P’ai-sha, Philosopher, Poet*.

¹⁵ Khee Heong Koh, *A Northern Alternative: Xue Xuan (1389-1464) and the Hedong School*.

¹⁶ Kelleher, *The Journal of Wu Yubi: The Path to Sagehood*.

He had, Wills asserts, “pursued with single-minded simplicity and intensity a few of the central puzzles of the Confucian moral life.”¹⁷ These puzzles had first been pondered by his late-Tang and Song Neo-Confucian predecessors, who engaged in “an intellectually ambitious quest for Confucian answers to questions about the nature of reality and knowledge that had not been central in early Confucianism but had been insistently raised by Buddhism.”¹⁸ They also maintained the “priority of moral purity and the setting of good examples over all considerations of profit, power, and practical policy,” a standpoint that took on new life in the political circumstances of Song, Yuan, and Ming China.¹⁹ As for Wang Yangming, Wills explains, he “claimed a proud lineage of scholars and high officials,” and so he grew up in the kind of family that would have had high hopes for its sons to “perform brilliantly on the examinations, have successful careers, and thus cast glory on all their ancestors.”²⁰

Wills provides a concise account of the main events of Wang Yangming’s youth: his grandmother’s dream when he was born, failure to speak until he was four, signs of brilliance at a young age, absence from his wedding, struggle to balance examination preparation with the pursuit of sagehood, confusion over the meaning of the investigation of things, encounter with the Confucian Lou Liang, passing of the *jinshi* exam in 1499, early assignments, struggles with health issues, withdrawal to the Yangming Grotto, experimentation with Daoist meditation, encounter with a Chan monk, realization that his human attachments would always remain powerfully in his thoughts, clash with the court eunuch Liu Jin, and exile to Longchang, where he experienced his first fundamental intellectual breakthrough.²¹ “It was here at Longchang,” Wills explains, “that Wang Yangming drew on his newfound courage and utilized the terrible dangers of his situation to push himself to his greatest insights.”²² Those insights included the newfound convictions that human nature is sufficient for attaining sagehood and knowledge must be united with action.

Wills explains that from 1509 until 1516, Wang Yangming held many posts and his following grew, even as some elites began to regard him as a heretic because of his criticisms of Zhu Xi. Following, he was assigned to lead military campaigns and devise policies to quell unrest in Jiangxi province. In 1519, he suppressed the rebellion by the Prince of Ning. Wang Yangming had “called on his long-suppressed military inclinations and became a trainer

¹⁷ Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 201.

¹⁸ Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 202.

¹⁹ Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 202.

²⁰ Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 205.

²¹ Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 201–209.

²² Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 208.

of troops, strategist, and trickster in the Zhuge Liang tradition.”²³ In the aftermath, while facing enemies at the court, he unveiled his new, central concept, which can be literally translated as “good knowledge” (*liangzhi* 良知).²⁴ Good knowledge is the moral knowledge that is always present within as well as what we must act on when responding to the affairs of life.

Wills ponders why Wang Yangming believed his ideas were philosophically significant, young scholars flocked to hear him, and his thought became a crucial component of Chinese intellectual life. Answers to these questions, Wills states, “may bring us closer, at this last great summit of Confucian thought, to some of its deepest strengths and problems.”²⁵ He argues that Wang Yangming had not so much radically changed the Neo-Confucian vision as he had rephrased some of its most crucial insights. In doing so, he rescued those insights from maladies widespread in his time—selfish calculation, the excesses of intellectualism, and theater. Sagehood is indeed a profoundly meaningful and achievable goal. Metaphysically speaking, the structure of mind reflects the patterns of the universe (*li* 理). These patterns are all parts of one all-embracing pattern, a unity. At root, the good knowing is the manifestation of this unity and is thus a perpetual call to moral engagement. The crux of moral action is effort because the basic substance of mind (*xin zhi bentu* 心之本體) is unremitting moral effort. Clarifying it, however, requires hard work. “Extending good knowledge,” Wills explains, “was a matter of not seeking certain results or effects of our actions, but rather of unremitting effort, alive and alert, and at the same time cautious, ever fearful of any beginnings of selfish or improper thoughts.”²⁶ Wills asserts that this teaching appealed strongly to scholars “who were committed both to serious and principled involvement in politics, community life, and family affairs and to a quest for a vision of unity with the deepest cosmic and spiritual realities.”²⁷ In such a vision, “the boundary between self and world fade away, and all the things in the world come to completion in human consciousness, in joyful recognition of oneness with them.”²⁸

In “The Debate over Recognition of Wang Yangming,” Chu Hung-lam explains the politics of the debate at the Ming court over Wang’s proper recognition, as well as the publication history of the first two editions of the *Wang Wencheng gong quan shu* 王文成公全書 (Complete works of Master Wang

²³ Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 211.

²⁴ Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 213.

²⁵ Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 208.

²⁶ Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 213–214.

²⁷ Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 214.

²⁸ Wills, *Mountain of Fame*, 208.

Wencheng), one of which appeared in Hangzhou and the other in Nanjing.²⁹ It was in late 1573, during the first year of the reign of the Wanli 萬曆 emperor (Zhu Yijun 朱翊鈞), that an imperial decree was issued declaring that Wang was to be honored by having his tablet placed in the Temple of Confucius, where he would be recognized as a true Confucian (*zhen ru* 真儒) and placed on the sacrificial rolls. This decree, however, was only implemented ten years later, in 1584, after the death of the powerful official Zhang Juzheng 張居正. It was also only issued after heated debate at the Ming court.³⁰ Advocates for this honor were confronting memorials issued by fierce critics who called into question the significance of Wang's contribution in the areas of both scholarship and military achievements. It was their conviction not only that those had been exaggerated but also that the most important criteria—moral character and the degree to which a candidate was a model of virtue—had not been met. Some of the things said were a bit ugly, but his supporters ultimately prevailed by arguing for his accomplishments as a servant of the Ming state, one with verifiable deeds demonstrating the credibility of his teaching.

The entire debate was no doubt deeply shaped by the personal, ideological, and political motives of those officials involved. As Koh explains, “this was the highest honor any Confucian scholar could attain.”³¹ It was a closely guarded form of prestige, competition for the honor was keen, and it was an important tool for defining orthodoxy. In fact, especially during the sixteenth century, enshrinement became “a battleground in the ‘war’ over orthodoxy.”³² Only four survived it: Xue Xuan, Chen Xianzhang, Hu Juren, and Wang Yangming. Koh explains how earlier debates over Xue Xuan's enshrinement had already signaled a paradigm shift in thinking over criteria for evaluation. It was argued that enshrinement should be a reward for meritorious contribution to the tradition, especially as evidenced by practice—one's conduct in and out of office. Thus, Koh broadens Chu Hung-lam's argument with more historical background.³³

Chu writes that the article “began with a bibliographic study of Wang Yangming's collected works in 1985 when I was a research staff member of Princeton's Department of East Asian Studies.”³⁴ He was appointed to this position after obtaining his PhD in 1984 under the guidance of Frederick W. Mote. Mote had asked him to participate in his research projects, including

²⁹ Chu Hung-lam, “Debate over Recognition,” 47.

³⁰ Chu Hung-lam, “Debate over Recognition,” 68.

³¹ Khee Heong Koh, *Northern Alternative*, 146.

³² Khee Heong Koh, *Northern Alternative*, 146.

³³ Khee Heong Koh, *Northern Alternative*, 162–165.

³⁴ Chu Hung-lam, email to author, October 21, 2019.

editing the Gest Library Journal and evaluating a set of rare Chinese books held in the Princeton Library. The library contained what is called the Colby Collection, which was purchased from Colby College in 1984. Among the forty-one books included in this collection, Chu found that one of the most valuable was a copy of the thirty-eight *juan* edition of the *Wang Wencheng gong quan shu*. During the Ming, two editions appeared, one compiled by Xie Tingjie 謝廷傑 and printed in Nanjing and one supposedly published by Guo Chaobin 郭朝賓 in Hangzhou. The latter was the rarer edition, with limited circulation, but also the one contained in the collection. Chu established the date of publication (1572) and demonstrated that the true compiler was Xie Tingjie. This research led him to ask more questions about the politics behind Wang Yangming's recognition, and thus to the publication of the *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* article.³⁵

In “‘Goodness Unbound’: Education According to Wang Yangming,” Kandice Hauf examines how Wang Yangming redrew the boundaries of Confucianism along several different lines. Here was a man who was not so much interested in abstract definitions as in concrete results. His principal goal was to lead people to sagehood through “goodness unbound,” that is, by having them recover the innate moral knowledge present within. This knowledge, Wang taught, gave one the autonomy to make judgment calls about right and wrong and hence what ultimately matters from an ethical standpoint. Thus, the innate moral knowledge endowed people with a natural capacity to transcend conventional or inherited thinking about the proper boundaries between spiritual traditions, sages and commoners, and Han and non-Han peoples.

Wang Yangming, Hauf explains, grew up in a society where Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism had to some degree amalgamated. He studied Buddhism and Daoism, and they had become of great personal significance to him. Even after he committed himself to the Confucian path and its demand for social and political commitment, and even while criticizing these traditions for a kind of selfishness, Wang still pointed out what was of value in them, “finding transcending grounds to teach an ecumenical approach.”³⁶ Throughout his life, while serving and teaching, he engaged with Buddhist monks and Daoist hermits, employed Buddhist and Daoist terminology, and spent time in Buddhist and Daoist establishments. In sum, Wang shifted the goal posts for making distinctions between the three traditions, offering grounds for a more accommodating approach.

³⁵ Chu Hung-lam, “‘Colby Collection,’” 7–10.

³⁶ Hauf, “‘Goodness Unbound,’” 125.

Furthermore, Wang changed the nature of discourse on distinctions between Han and non-Han peoples. As a centrally appointed official asked to serve in regions of southern China populated by non-Han ethnic groups, where the Ming state was consolidating control, he was necessarily involved in the ongoing Confucian project of civilizing through education. He too believed in using Chinese culture to transform the non-Han (*yong xia bian yi* 用夏變夷) and established institutions to work towards that goal.³⁷ Based on his experiences with non-Han ethnic groups located in border or backwater regions of the Ming territory, he was upbeat about and confident in their basic goodness and capacity to lead a moral life. Thus, in Hauf's estimate, Wang's approach was comparatively more liberal and accommodating. For example, even though he had ample reasons to disapprove of the renovation of a Miao shrine to Xiang, the evil stepbrother to the mythical sage-king Shun, he found that some Confucian values were exemplified in this local cult and thus consented to its continuation.³⁸ In sum, Wang Yangming expanded the boundaries of Confucianism, making it more doctrinally elastic and practically responsive to real-world problems. He did so both as an outcome of his own philosophical vision and in response to those social issues where he saw a need to realize his vision in practice.

These three pieces were published between 1988 and 1994, at a time when English writing about Wang Yangming was shifting to more strictly philosophical analysis based on a narrower set of texts. However, more recently, book-length biographies have appeared that narrate the entirety of Wang Yangming's life, including his intellectual development, social world, and political career.

In *Wang Yangming: An Essential Biography*, Umberto Bresciani correctly notes that although there are numerous books that cover the Ming Confucian's philosophy in Western languages, "there is no complete biography."³⁹ A professor of Italian who retired from Fu Jen Catholic University in Taipei, he considers himself "an assiduous student of Chinese thought."⁴⁰ Bresciani found ample justification for writing Wang's biography—as one of China's "four great masters of Confucianism," he explains, "he was at the same time a legendary military leader and tactician, a wise governor of provinces, a hero against an evil government, a first-class Confucian philosopher, a spiritual guru to countless

³⁷ Hauf, "'Goodness Unbound,'" 131.

³⁸ Hauf, "'Goodness Unbound,'" 136.

³⁹ Bresciani, *Wang Yangming*, 3.

⁴⁰ Umberto Bresciani, email to author, November 6, 2017.

people, a refined poet, and a respected painter and calligrapher.”⁴¹ His admirable qualities are so diverse that Western languages lack a suitable word to describe him. In China, he points out, the term *shengren* 聖人 is used, “which is close to the point.” He also notes that Wang Yangming has been revered for attaining the three immortalities (*san bu xiu* 三不朽)—that is, achieving due recognition for having established virtue, meritorious deeds, and a philosophy. Last, Bresciani states, “Wang Yangming has been admired and celebrated by many as a paradigmatic figure in Confucianism, because he manifested in himself the two dimensions of an accomplished Confucian personality, both the sage inside (*neisheng*) and the king outside (*waiwang*).” Bresciani adds that “very few figures in history had the will to pursue the Confucian doctrine and at the same time the opportunity to realize it in actual political life.”⁴²

In writing what he calls his “attempt at a basic popularized account of Wang Yangming’s life,” Bresciani benefited not only from a century of Western scholarship on Wang Yangming but also from recent Chinese biographies, of which there are many. Those include, in chronological order, Chung Tsai-chun’s 鍾彩鈞 *Wang Yangming sixiang zhi jinzhan* 王陽明思想之進展 (The progression of Wang Yangming’s thought) (1993); Fang Zhiyuan’s 方志遠 *Kuang shi da ru: Wang Yangming* 曠世大儒—王陽明 (A peerless great Confucian—Wang Yangming) (2000); Qian Ming’s 錢明 *Ruxue zheng mai: Wang Shouren zhuan* 儒學正脈: 王守仁傳 (The orthodox line of *Ru* learning: Biography of Wang Yangming) (2006); and Dong Ping’s 董平 *Wang Yangming de shenghuo shjie* 王陽明的生活世界 (The world in which Wang Yangming lived) (2009).

Wang Yangming’s Political Career and Military Campaigns: Further Reflections

Wang Yangming is no stranger to controversy. He was both an influential Confucian thinker and a scholar-official who served the Ming court in several official capacities, including ones with military-related duties. Thus, he had ample opportunity to put his ideas into practice. Because two of his central doctrines require real-world practical application—the unity of knowledge and action and realizing good knowing—the ideological implications of them, as evidenced by his personal and political conduct, become topical. Therefore, much ink has been spilled examining his political career, including his military campaigns and the policies he implemented as an official.

⁴¹ Bresciani, *Wang Yangming*, 2.

⁴² Bresciani, *Wang Yangming*, 3.

Some authors have written specifically about Wang Yangming's military thought and strategy. They tease this out from memorials he submitted concerning security along the northern border, memorials pertaining to his military campaigns, and his "Commentary on the Seven Military Classics" (*Wu jing qi shu ping* 武經七書評). Sumner B. Twiss and Jonathan K. L. Chan do so in "Wang Yang-ming's Ethics of War," a chapter included in an edited volume—*Chinese Just War Ethics: Origins, Development, and Dissent*—that examines Chinese attitudes towards war throughout history. Contributors were specifically interested in the ethical dimensions of warfare—that is, how war was justified in China's different intellectual traditions. Thus, for example, they examine the classical Confucian position (of Mengzi and Xunzi) on the responsible use of military force.

In this chapter, Twiss and Chan propose that Wang Yangming provides a uniquely significant case study for the reasons cited above: he both elaborated a Confucian philosophy and led military campaigns, and he was deeply learned in both the Confucian and military classics. Furthermore, unlike his Warring States period predecessors, he served a centralized state that was facing internal challenges to its authority, especially in borderlands.

Twiss and Chan try to answer three questions: What were Wang Yangming's criteria for engaging in a just war (Lat.: *ius ad bellum*)? What rules (or laws) should guide the way warfare is conducted (Lat.: *ius in bello*)? And what are the principles that apply to terminating war and transitioning to peace (Lat.: *ius post bellum*)? Regarding the first, his memorials indicate that several criteria must be met. The intention must be right. War might be necessary to restore peace and security to the people and to alleviate suffering. The cause must be just. Banditry, for instance, might reach such a level of intensity as to require military intervention to stop it and punish the perpetrators. Also, engaging in warfare should be a last resort. Nonviolent alternatives must be exhausted, such as giving bandits the opportunity to lay down their arms and reform themselves. This is the duty of the just official, who should, as a Confucian, show a benevolent concern for the people. Lastly, the right authority must be invoked to justify war. An official should act on the authority of the emperor and the imperial government.⁴³

Regarding the conduct of warfare, the authors found that Wang did not strictly distinguish between strategy and morality. He paid close attention to the training of military leadership and the organization of troops because he wanted not only to be victorious but also to minimize casualties. It is true that in matters of leadership, preparation, and strategy, he was deeply influenced

⁴³ Chan and Twiss, "Wang Yangming's Ethics," 158–159.

by Sunzi's *Art of War*. It is well known, for instance, that he made ample use of deception when waging war. This has caused some controversy. But for Wang, as he rationalized it, stratagem was a means to moral ends shaped by Confucian values. Deception may be necessary to minimize the use of force. Furthermore, individuals who have put themselves outside the moral community through their criminal activity do not deserve above-board treatment.⁴⁴ The most important goal for Wang as a commander was to instill troop discipline so that people would not be indiscriminately killed and property recklessly destroyed. Thus, while waging war, he repeatedly gave bandits the opportunity to surrender. He also tried to separate out those capable of reforming themselves.⁴⁵

Finally, post-war measures were of utmost importance to Wang Yangming. He spent a considerable amount of time developing them. They fell into two categories: economic recovery and social reform. Both policy categories aimed at restoring peace, security, and prosperity to the common people. After providing initial relief measures, Wang implemented long-term policies to improve education and government administration. Most importantly, he greatly encouraged local self-government. This required empowering local leaders and implementing community compacts, policies that reflect the direction of his moral philosophy. Since people are naturally good, they are capable of responsibly handling their own affairs.⁴⁶ But for this to happen, they need officials to provide the right conditions. In conclusion, authors Chan and Twiss state that in all three stages of war, right intent (just motivation) was central to Wang Yangming's thinking.

A recent dissertation visits the influence of Wang Yangming's military thought and activities on the sixteenth century. In "The Soldier as a Sage: Qi Jiguang (1528-1588) and the neo-Confucianization of the Military in Sixteenth-Century China," Barend Noordam explains the historical setting for the life and writings of this famous Ming general. He explains that Qi was unusual in that although he was born into a hereditary military household, he was highly literate, interacted with civil officials, and wrote manuals integrating Confucian ethics and military training. Noordam tries to explain how such a man and his work could appear at this time. He points to a scholarly literature arguing that the late Ming dynasty sees a rehabilitation of the military, which is why it could weather several crises.

The high official Zhang Juzheng played a key role in this process. He patronized both hereditary military officials and military-minded civil officials

⁴⁴ Chan and Twiss, "Wang Yangming's Ethics," 162–163.

⁴⁵ Chan and Twiss, "Wang Yangming's Ethics," 166.

⁴⁶ Chan and Twiss, "Wang Yangming's Ethics," 171.

who were involved in rebuilding and expanding armies. Cooperative relations that developed between the civil and military both facilitated and were facilitated by cultural and ideological changes that had made the two realms more acceptable to each other. Literati showed an increasing interest in martial values, and scholar-officials were more actively involved in solving military crises and leading military campaigns.

Noordam believes that the genesis of this network of interacting civil and military officials, as well as the corresponding cultural change, must be traced back to the mid-Ming dynasty. From the late-fifteenth century through the 1550s, China was plagued, in the south, by piracy, banditry, and native rebellions, as well as by Mongol incursions along the northern border. According to him, over the course of the fifteenth century, the system of hereditary military families and garrisons deteriorated. Civil bureaucrats were forced to step in and find new solutions for handling military crises, by recruiting soldiers from new sectors of society, playing leadership roles on the front lines, and providing theoretical resources from the Confucian tradition to explain their strategies and buttress the martial ethos.

The premier example of just such a civil official was Wang Yangming, whose policies and Neo-Confucian theories contributed to bridging the divide between the civil and the military. His military solutions and theoretical orientation influenced important members of the sixteenth-century civil-bureaucratic elite, especially those involved in military affairs. Furthermore, Qi Jiguang engaged with Wang's learning of the mind and integrated some of his ideas into his military writings. Noordam believes that owing to the influence of Wang Yangming's ideas, Qi and his contemporary civil and military elites were able to bridge the socio-cultural divide and, as well, Qi contributed to a Neo-Confucianization of the military profession.

Other scholars have looked more carefully at the theoretical significance of specific military campaigns but are quite divided in their judgments. Xu Fuguan, Julia Ching, and Cai Renhou, for instance, generally found that Wang Yangming's actions reflected his profound empathy and concern for the welfare of the people.⁴⁷ According to this line of interpretation, he had, in accordance with a traditional ideal, successfully united sageliness within and kingliness without, that is, virtue with governing. As an official, he did his utmost to govern humanely, only applying the military instrument as a last resort, very much in accord with the principles analyzed by Chan and Twiss. That meant adhering to the great principle that one must always do in one's life what one's mind and heart says is right and good.

⁴⁷ For a discussion with sources, see Israel, *Doing Good and Ridding Evil*, 9–10.

On the other hand, some scholars, such as those writing in a Marxist framework, have viewed Wang Yangming's philosophy primarily as an ideology that legitimated and served a system of power relations, such as a feudal social order or autocratic political order. Thus, far from providing governing elites with a more enlightened or liberating understanding of those they governed, his doctrines merely served to reinforce forms of oppression embedded in the sociopolitical order. At a theoretical level, the voice of the innate knowledge of the good (*liangzhi* 良知) was to a significant degree shaped by a particular ethics—the assumptions about the nature of the political and social held by an elite of which he was a part, and the monarchical and meritocratic political-institutional order he served. Hence, Wang naturalized a particular set of norms as an expression of human nature shared by all. He proposed that society be structured according to an order of virtue that belonged to a time and place. And he assumed that good institutions of an ideally functioning monarchy (sagely rule) and meritocracy (by men of virtue) were the normal venue for assisting subjects in the ultimately soteriological goal of recovering their natural moral goodness. He could not help bringing to his assignments a horizon of powerful assumptions that shaped how he saw the social disorder before him and how he chose to rectify it.⁴⁸

The most controversial campaigns, and the ones that have received the most attention, are those Wang led to quell armed uprisings by native Zhuang chieftains in Tianzhou, Guangxi, as well as by the Yao people of that same province's Rattan Gorge. In "The Last Campaigns of Wang Yangming," for instance, Leo Shin closely examines Wang Yangming's use of military force against these so-called "Yao bandits" of Bazhai 八寨 and Datengxia 大藤峽. After achieving a peaceful resolution of the Tianzhou conflict, Wang turned his attention to the Yao. These non-Chinese peoples had troubled the Ming state for decades, and Wang concluded that military operations to exterminate them were imperative. The offensive lasted three months and around three thousand Yao were killed (or "exterminated," to use Wang's language). Wang regarded this campaign as a total triumph that uprooted a long-festering problem.

But given Wang Yangming's peaceful settlement of an earlier conflict in Guangxi, Shin asks why he chose to use force against these peoples.⁴⁹ On the one hand, he finds, Wang's strategies were a rational response to the political and social situation in Guangxi. On the other, they were also the outcome of his philosophical views regarding the nature of non-Chinese. These views were shaped by a conventional and deep-rooted Ming political and civilizing

⁴⁸ Israel, *Doing Good and Ridding Evil*, 318–319.

⁴⁹ Leo Shin, "Last Campaigns," 103.

discourse on the nature of non-Chinese indigenous peoples, the “*man yi* 蠻夷” of the south, as well as by Wang’s specific philosophical ideas. Wang generally took a softer, more liberal approach, confident that non-Chinese could be integrated into the Ming realm. However, at times he determined that rebellious peoples were beyond the pale.

While he believed native peoples could be changed or “civilized” (*hua* 化 or *xianghua* 向化) over time, he also recognized that this could only happen under certain circumstances. All people are endowed with the same human nature and innate moral knowledge, but absent the correct environmental conditions and proper nurturing, that nature and moral knowing will become obscured. While some people reach the point where they can no longer be changed, others can be transformed over time through the implementation of enlightened policies. Thus, Wang implemented a two-prong policy, first using force to exterminate the worst elements and then taking long-term measures to civilize the Yao.⁵⁰

As Shin has suggested, Wang Yangming’s military campaigns in Guangxi will no doubt continue to generate debate and more research. These would seem to be perfect test cases for studying the real-world implications of such tenets as the unity of knowledge and action, the innate knowledge of the good, and the humaneness of the one body of humanity. Furthermore, the politicization of research on Wang Yangming in modern times energizes such purely academic pursuits. Beginning during the 2010s, with the imprimatur of Xi Jinping, this once “butcher” of peasants and ethnic minorities of the Maoist years was identified by the government of the PRC as holding the key to understanding China’s traditional culture. This resulted in much state funding for academic research, conferences, and the renovation of historical sites. But this has not come without criticism, and the reception of Wang Yangming in modern times in Guangxi remains a sensitive issue. The Chinese-American political activist and dissident Yu Jie 余傑 even claims that “to a high degree, the reason General Secretary Xi Jinping praises Wang Yangming owes to his meritorious achievements in suppressing border ‘*man yi*.’”⁵¹ In other words, Wang Yangming was not merely a loyal servant to an expanding Ming state. There was also a certain dimension to his conduct and thought that aligns with imperial China’s colonizing logic and civilizing mission.

⁵⁰ Leo Shin, “Last Campaigns,” 115.

⁵¹ Yu Jie 余傑, “Xi Jinping weihe chongbai Wang Yangming 習近平爲何崇拜王陽明 (Why does Xi Jinping revere Wang Yangming),” *Zhongguo renquan shuangzhou kan* 226 (Jan. 2018), accessed October 18, 2021, <https://www.hrichina.org/chs/zhong-guo-ren-quan-shuang-zhou-kan/yu-jie-xi-jin-ping-wei-he-chong-bai-wang-yang-ming-tu>.

However, such politicized interpretations and uses of the Ming Confucian will also remain subject to factual evidence, more of which has surfaced in the last decade on account of the efforts of Chinese scholars. Even prior, in “Guizhou no Wang Yangming 貴州の王陽明 (Guizhou’s Wang Yangming),” for instance, Namba Yukio 難波征男 explores his experiences with and characterization of the locals he encountered in this province while living near the Longchang postal station. Namba not only failed to find any bigotry on his part but also shows that Wang had claimed that the natives displayed their human nature more authentically, the same nature that was shared by Han Chinese but was distorted by the embellishments of an artificial culture.⁵² Furthermore, his article “Wang Yangming to minzoku mondai 王陽明と民族問題 (Wang Yangming and the problem of ethnic groups)” provides a detailed account of the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Tianzhou. Namba found that Wang Yangming’s policy decisions regarding a political settlement for the once rebellious native chieftains were in part reached through his willingness to recognize their unique cultural characteristics.⁵³

More recently, on the other hand, Tang Kwok-leung has asserted that the actions Wang Yangming took in Guangxi had little to do with his political thought or philosophy. In “Tianzhou shi fei wo benxin: Wang Shouren de Guangxi zhi yi 田州事非我本心—王守仁的廣西之役 (The Tianzhou outcome is not what I really wanted—Wang Shouren’s assignment in Guangxi),” Tang demonstrates that Wang’s decisions were compromises formed in response to external political factors largely beyond his control. He also explains how events unfolded on the ground, within the context of actions taken by other actors and the constraints of Ming institutional norms and rules. The fact of the matter is that contrary to what some have claimed and putting the Confucian rhetoric aside, Wang Yangming would have preferred to subdue the Tianzhou chieftains by military force.⁵⁴

Contemporary Criticism of Wang Yangming

Whereas the East Asian scholarship on Wang Yangming’s Ming dynasty critics and followers is voluminous, the same cannot be said for the English-language literature. However, enough has been published to give an interested reader some understanding of the contours of this criticism and

⁵² Namba Yukio, “Guizhou no Wang Yangming,” 235.

⁵³ Namba Yukio, “Wang Yangming to minzoku mondai,” 91.

⁵⁴ Tang Kwok-leung, “Tianzhou shi fei wo ben xin,” 268.

the movement he inspired. It should be noted here that late-Ming critics are discussed in the final section of this chapter.

Wang Yangming was indeed controversial in and after his time. By critics, I refer to scholars who disputed or rejected some component of his philosophy, as opposed to political adversaries, even if the motives behind rejecting his interpretations of the Confucian tradition were by no means divorced from concerns over the influence his ideas might have on society. Some critics were friends or acquaintances who merely politely disagreed with his tenets and corresponding interpretation of classical texts (or of Zhu Xi's commentaries on them); some were first- or second-generation followers who found themselves, over time, disagreeing with or modifying some of his teachings as they molded their own philosophies in a diverse and heated philosophical environment. Others were scholars who lived during or after his time but identified with other strands in the Confucian tradition, attacking his tenets and interpretations on that basis and bemoaning their influence on philosophical discourse, society, and culture.

As for contemporaries with whom Wang had personally interacted and corresponded, the two who have received the most attention are Luo Qinchun 羅欽順 (1465–1547) and Zhan Ruoshui 湛若水 (1466–1560). Comparative study of their philosophies appears in Carsun Chang's *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, Tang Junyi's article "The Criticism of Wang Yangming's Teachings as Raised by his Contemporaries," Kim Youngmin's dissertation "Redefining the Self's Relation to the World: A Study of Mid-Ming Neo-Confucian Discourse," and, most recently, Zhang Xuezhong's *History of Philosophy during the Ming Dynasty*. As well, articles, dissertations, and books on one or the other invariably dive into their arguments, most notably Anping Chin's dissertation, "Chan Kan-Ch'üan and the Continuing Neo-Confucian Discourse on Mind and Principle," Irene Bloom's *Knowledge Painfully Acquired: The K'un-chih chi by Lo Ch'in-shun*, and Kim Youngmin's lengthy articles.

Regarding Zhan, like Wang Yangming, he was a highly accomplished Confucian scholar whose life spanned the middle of the Ming dynasty. Their friendship is a famous one in Chinese history and has been much researched in East Asia, but Zhan's life and followers were overshadowed by those of Wang, and the volume of scholarship on him pales by comparison. He makes his entrance into the Western literature during the 1960s and 1970s, when Ming scholarship bloomed.⁵⁵ Indeed, even in China and Japan, no detailed study of Zhan or of his relationship with Wang Yangming had been published prior to

⁵⁵ For an overview, see Israel, "Zhan Ruoshui," 37–38.

these decades. In his study of Zhan's influence on Wang Yangming, Wing-tsit Chan pointed out that Shiga Ichirō 志賀一郎 and Okada Takehiko were the first to do so, although he found their work lacking.⁵⁶

Chan demonstrates that Zhan had influenced Wang in several ways. He played a role in Wang's decision to reject Daoist practices in favor of a clear commitment to Confucian doctrine (and becoming a sage). Although Wang advocated quiet sitting (*jing zuo* 靜坐) in his early pedagogy, over time his attitude towards meditation cooled, and he rather stressed the unification of activity and tranquility (*dong jing he yi* 動靜合一).⁵⁷ That was an important teaching for Zhan too, and this may have influenced his friend. Also, Zhan's emphasis on Cheng Hao's doctrine of forming one body with heaven, earth, and the myriad things (*tiandi wanwu yi ti* 天地萬物一體) influenced the development of this tenet in Wang's philosophy. Especially late in life, Wang Yangming forcefully articulated how extending the innate knowledge of the good eventuates in realizing unity with the cosmos.⁵⁸

Carsun Chang, Tang Junyi, Anping Chin, Kim Youngmin, and Zhang Xuezhi address the debate between Wang and Zhan and bring out where they differed or, at least, where they believed they differed, if they really did to the degree that was assumed.⁵⁹ Was Zhan's teaching of *sui chu tiren tianli* 隨處體認天理 ("to experience the Heavenly principle in any occasion of life" [Tang Junyi]; "the ubiquitous realization of Heavenly principle" [Zhang Xuezhi]; or "personally realizing the principle of Heaven wherever one may be" [Anping Chin]) different from Wang Yangming's teaching of *zhi liangzhi* (realizing/extending the innate knowledge of the good)? Both were in search of an undivided, immediate, ever-present objective moral knowing that transcends separateness—subjective and objective, interior and exterior, mind and world, knowledge and action—as well as the correct practice for attaining and sustaining these goals, as the essence of achieving sagehood. One faulted the other for reinforcing boundaries along one of these lines or another, or for misunderstanding his position.

Their debate over the meaning of *ge wu* 格物 has received the most attention. Zhan saw a bias towards the internal in Wang's position. Wang had glossed *ge* as "to rectify" and *wu* as "intention" (which include the object/thing/matters toward which intention is directed). Hence, *ge wu* means rectifying one's intentions or motivating thoughts, and it implicitly encompasses the

⁵⁶ Wing-tsit Chan, "Chan Jo-shui's Influence," 11.

⁵⁷ Wing-tsit Chan, "Chan Jo-shui's Influence," 15–16.

⁵⁸ Wing-tsit Chan, "Chan Jo-shui's Influence," 30–31.

⁵⁹ See Kim Youngmin, "Political Unity"; Zhang Xuezhi, *History of Chinese Philosophy*, 81–111; Ann-ping Chin Woo, "Chan Kan-ch'uan," 55–80.

world given in intention. For Zhan, Wang was yet separating out an internal mental process from the whole and hence philosophizing by reference to a divided moral agent. Zhan also asks, if *ge wu* is the same as rectifying one's intentions/thought, then why did the *Great Learning* add this additional step in the sequence *zheng xin cheng yi zhi zhi ge wu* 正心誠意致知格物 (commonly translated as rectifying mind, making intentions sincere, extending knowledge, investigating things)? Wang, on the other hand, believed that Zhan's central tenet was in danger of stepping outside undivided mind in the search for true moral knowing. Personal realization of the principle of Heaven wherever one may be might very well spill over into conceptualizing moral principles. There was a certain academic quality to Zhan's learning that Wang found suspicious. Indeed, Zhan more highly valued the role of learned study of the classics in the pursuit of moral knowledge.

That said, one gets the sense from reading these studies of their arguments that Zhan and Wang were not so far apart from one another. Zhan claimed that insofar as the all-encompassing or cosmos-embodying mind attains centrality and correctness when experiencing (aroused and responding), Heaven's pattern (Heaven's reason, the principle of Heaven) will be revealed and become visible and hence known. This is witnessing Heaven's reason wherever one may be, ubiquitously, without interruption. Tang Junyi once wrote, "I have to say that to experience the Heavenly principle in any occasion of life, as taught by Zhan, may not be contradictory to Wang's teaching. According to Wang, *liangzhi* has a natural light as a conscient consciousness. As man exists as an occasion of life, and things are encountered in the occasion, his *liangzhi* can know by its natural light the Heavenly principle for his responsive action."⁶⁰ Thus, for Wang, "the most important thing in man's moral life is to realize the moral principle which is known in his present concrete occasions of life."⁶¹ In this regard, he shares common ground with his friend Zhan.

Regarding Luo Qishun, because he rejected the Ming School of Mind, his criticism was more thoroughgoing than Zhan's. Irene Bloom, who translated an edition of Luo's *Knowledge Painfully Acquired* (*Kun zhi ji* 困知記) notes that although he was "a man of intense seriousness and incisive intelligence" and "the most prominent adherent of the Cheng-Zhu school,"⁶² many factors, such as the exceptional popularity of Wang Yangming, "have tended to obscure the fact that the *Kun chih chi* also circulated widely and exerted considerable influence during the Ming period."⁶³

⁶⁰ Tang Chün-i, "Criticisms of Wang Yang-ming's Teachings," 170.

⁶¹ Tang Chün-i, "Criticisms of Wang Yang-ming's Teachings," 171–172.

⁶² Irene Bloom, trans. and ed., *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, 1.

⁶³ Irene Bloom, trans. and ed., *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, 11.

Given the philosophical significance of this “collection of reading notes and reflections on philosophy and history,” which was first published in two *juan* (volumes) in 1528, Wang and Luo’s shared experiences as contemporaries make their intellectual disagreements all the more indicative of the threads of mid-Ming intellectual history. Luo was born just seven years before Wang, although he long outlived him. He acquired the highest examination degree in 1493; Wang did so in 1499. Their political careers extended over three emperors’ reigns (the Hongzhi, Zhengde, and Jiajing emperors), although, unlike Luo’s, most of Wang’s career transpired outside the capitals. Both spoke to how their philosophies were born of hardship and suffering.⁶⁴ A spirit of independent criticism, undeterred by “established authority,” stands out in their writings, and both were held in high regard for their personal integrity. Lastly, they corresponded—Luo received a copy of the first volume of the *Chuan xi lu* in 1519 and, in 1520, of Wang’s “Old Text of the Great Learning” and “Zhu Xi’s Final Conclusions Late in Life.” Lengthy philosophical letters sent to Wang by Luo in 1520 and 1528 were translated by Bloom and included in her book. Wang’s letter to Luo, composed in 1520, famously appears in the second volume of the *Chuan xi lu*.⁶⁵ Bloom calls this “a remarkable debate of the 1520s that was to have echoes and reverberations for many years thereafter.”⁶⁶

Luo’s principal criticism of the School of Mind, exemplified for him by Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming, was that it had permitted a “subtle infiltration” of Confucian intellectual life by “deceptive and dangerous” Buddhist errors. The serious consequence of this was a misunderstanding of principle (*li* 理) and its collapse into identity with mind. By identifying mind with principle, the School of Mind fails to distinguish itself from Chan Buddhism. “The ‘clarifying the mind and perceiving the nature’ of the Buddhists and the ‘fully developing the mind and knowing the nature’ of Confucians seem similar but are in reality different,” Luo writes.⁶⁷ His explanation as to why this is so goes to the heart of his criticism of Lu and Wang. Through their contemplative practices, Buddhists separate from form and attain emptiness. Following, they integrate form and emptiness as a higher level of realization, in what they call enlightenment. However, in fact, they are only perceiving the subtle functioning of the mind, as pure intelligence (or spirit) and consciousness (*xu ling*

⁶⁴ Irene Bloom, trans. and ed., *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, 5.

⁶⁵ Irene Bloom, trans. and ed., *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, 175–188.

⁶⁶ Irene Bloom, trans. and ed., *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, 12.

⁶⁷ Irene Bloom, trans. and ed., *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, 51.

zhijue 虛靈知覺).⁶⁸ What they have failed to perceive, on the other hand, is nature, which is “vital principle,” “the most perfect,” “the mind of Dao.”

As such, having dangerously constricted inquiry and being one-sidedly preoccupied with subjective awareness, they have failed to direct their inquiries to a higher plane, to the objective reality of the principles of Heaven and earth and the myriad things. Principle is the spontaneous order, the unregulated regularity patterning *qi*. It is also the origin of our humanity, our moral sense, whereas consciousness itself is not intrinsically moral. Luo further proposes that principle is both one, a unity, while also diverse in its particularizations. In illuminating principle—the embedded pattern of “principle is one; its particularizations are diverse”—one must neither fall into emptiness nor remain confined to the tangible realm of particular objects.⁶⁹ Therefore, a correct understanding of *ge wu* 格物 is necessary. Wang Yangming had incorrectly interpreted it as rectifying or correcting the mind, misunderstanding the *Great Learning* and making the first step in *zheng xin cheng yi zhi zhi ge wu* superfluous. Luo rather interprets *ge* as “penetration” and *ge wu* as “penetration with no separation (*tongche wujian* 通徹無間).”⁷⁰ Hence, while it is true that, as Bloom has pointed out, Luo embraced the Song School of Principle’s spirit of learned scholarly inquiry in his “commitment to intellectual understanding of the objective world,”⁷¹ the objective world to which he refers—the objective reality of principle—most certainly is, as Kim Youngmin has suggested, not empirical inquiry into the natural world.⁷² Rather, his ultimate goal was a unity of self and world, “luminous clarity of insight into the mystery of the unity of all being,”⁷³ wherein “things are myself and I am things, altogether unified without any differentiation.”⁷⁴ In this regard, Luo appears to be pointing to the same contemplative goal as Wang Yangming was by realizing the body of humanity through extension of the innate knowledge of the good, even if differently conceptualized—by maintaining a distinction between mind and principle, and by giving a unique interpretation to the meaning of an embedded pattern wherein oneness is maintained amid diverse particularizations.

⁶⁸ Irene Bloom, trans. and ed., *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, 52.

⁶⁹ Kim Youngmin, “Luo Qinshun,” 390.

⁷⁰ Kim Youngmin, “Luo Qinshun,” 437; Irene Bloom, trans. and ed., *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, 58.

⁷¹ Irene Bloom, trans. and ed., *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, 14.

⁷² Kim Youngmin, “Luo Qinshun,” 377.

⁷³ Irene Bloom, trans. and ed., *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, 56.

⁷⁴ Irene Bloom, trans. and ed., *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, 58.

In his “The Criticisms of Wang Yangming’s Teachings as Raised by his Contemporaries,” an article submitted to the 1973 East-West Philosopher’s Conference, Tang Junyi surveys his Ming critics. Those include Lu Nan 呂柟 (1479–1542), Huang Wan 黃綰 (1480–1554), Zhan Ruoshui, Luo Qinshun, Nie Bao, Wang Ji, Wang Dong 王棟, and Wang Shihuai 王時槐 (1521–1605). Most notably, Tang organizes critique based first on its degree of internality, that is, the extent to which it brings out some “intrinsic inconsistency or insufficiency,” and second on the degree to which it is explicit. Thus, he tries to establish criteria for judging the seriousness of a critique. Lu Nan and Huang Wan’s critiques were external “because they did not address themselves to the problems within Wang’s teachings.” Zhan and Luo’s, on the other hand, while internal and more serious, were still external to a degree, as they argued from a standpoint rooted in other strands within the Confucian tradition and lacked an “adequate understanding of Wang’s position.”⁷⁵ In fact, the most serious critiques emerged from within Wang’s school itself, from his first- or second-generation followers, and these critiques were more or less explicit.

One individual not covered by Tang is Huang Zuo 黃佐 (1490–1566), another contemporary critic of Wang Yangming. As Chu Hung-lam explains, he was a “versatile scholar and prolific writer” who carried on a “spirited debate with Wang Yangming over the conception and theory of the unity of knowledge and action.”⁷⁶ Using Huang Zuo’s “Ordinary Conversations (*Yong yan* 庸言),” Chu reconstructs his encounters with Wang in 1523 and 1528 and translates Huang’s recollections about them. Convinced Wang’s theory was incorrect, Huang put his inkbrush to use for the purpose of explaining their debate over the relative priority of knowledge or action. For Huang, knowledge initiates action, and once the action is complete, new knowledge can be acquired and utilized for the benefit of future action. His position, of course, differed from Wang Yangming’s theory that knowledge and action form a unity, and although the debate failed to change anyone’s mind, they did come to share a mutual respect. Chu explains that “Wang Yangming had met a respectable opponent in the intelligent and well-versed classicist Huang Zuo.”⁷⁷

In sum, these studies, while few in number, amply show that Wang Yangming’s philosophy was indeed the subject of much criticism in and just after

⁷⁵ Tang Chün-i, “Criticisms of Wang Yang-ming’s Teachings,” 178.

⁷⁶ Chu Hung-lam, “Huang Zuo’s Meeting,” 54.

⁷⁷ Chu Hung-lam, “Huang Zuo’s Meeting,” 69.

his time. This is a topic that merits more research. More recently, for instance, looking west and east, both George L. Israel and Liu Yong have written of how one of Wang's once serious students, Wang Dao 王道 (1487–1547), became estranged from his master and forged his own philosophical path, writing critically of Wang's theory of knowledge and classical hermeneutics.⁷⁸ This subject was also broached by the first volume of the *Sources of Chinese Tradition*—Chen Jian's 陳建 (1497–1567) *Thorough Critique of Obscurations to Learning* (*Xue bu tong bian* 學部通辨), a “thoroughgoing defense of Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy” and refutation of Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming—but it still awaits in-depth study. For Chen, Lu and Wang were covert Buddhists who had collapsed or blurred the distinction between the human mind (the empty, spiritual consciousness, or consciousness in general) and the Mind of the Way (the source of principle). Consciousness is not inherently moral, which is why there is a distinction to be made between nourishing an empty and quiescent spirituality through contemplative techniques and nourishing moral principle through study and analysis.⁷⁹

The First-Generation Followers of Wang Yangming

“The most influential school of philosophy in the Ming dynasty,” Carsun Chang writes, “undoubtedly was that of Wang Shouren [Yangming]. He had followers in all the provinces and his influence was felt everywhere.”⁸⁰ We now turn to these followers. The outlines of this movement, however, remained obscure until the 1980s, when sections of Huang Zongxi's *Ming ru xue an* 明儒學案 (Case studies of Ming Confucians) were translated into English. This project took more than a decade. In her 1975 report on the state of Ming studies, Irene Bloom mentioned that the project was “being carried out by members of the [Columbia University's Regional] Seminar [on Neo-Confucian Studies] on a cooperative basis.”⁸¹ Given her record of research, it was fitting that Julia Ching serve as the chief editor. The list of other major contributors included many scholars who had been writing about Ming intellectual history since the 1970s: Irene Bloom, Anne Ch'ien, Edward Ch'ien, Ronald Dimberg, Chao-ying Fang, Joanna Handlin, Rodney Taylor, and John D. Langlois. According to Ching, because of his own research on Huang Zongxi,

⁷⁸ See Israel, “Wang Yangming in Chuzhou,” 14–20; Liu Yong, “Cong menren dao pipanzhe,” 77–114.

⁷⁹ De Bary and Bloom, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1, 884–887.

⁸⁰ Carsun Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, vol. 2, 74.

⁸¹ Farmer, “News of the Field,” 5.

William Theodore de Bary proposed this project and obtained an initial grant from the Council of Learned Societies.⁸²

Ching explains that the *Record* is concerned with seekers whose “philosophies never lost sight of wisdom and, particularly, of a wisdom inseparable from a life of virtue.”⁸³ For them, life served as the “ultimate testing ground for the genuineness of his philosophy.”⁸⁴ That is why biography is so important for Confucian scholars. It reveals how their lives were the context and reason not only for the development of their moral philosophies but also for their commitment to improving the social order. In fact, many of the men studied by Huang Zongxi in trying circumstances calling for heroism and self-sacrifice, their lives serving in some sense as an indictment of the times. Consequently, Ching believes that the *Record* complements Huang Zongxi’s *Plan for a Prince* (*Ming yi dai fang lu* 明夷待訪錄), “an outspoken critique of political despotism.”⁸⁵

The translation is an abridged version of Huang’s work, which contains two hundred biographies of Ming Confucians as well as selected letters and records of discourses (*yu lu* 語錄). For disciples of Wang Yangming, Huang chose to organize them geographically, primarily by provinces but also by larger regions or master-disciple affiliation. Ching sought to include those recognized as the most creative thinkers in their time as well as to represent each school or branch of a school with at least one individual (extending across the length of the Ming dynasty). Prefaces for each school were included in their entirety, and forty-two biographies were translated and annotated.

Twenty-three biographies belong to Wang Yangming and disciples of various branches of his school, fairly representing not only the ratio of members of the Wang school to those belonging to others but also the fact that his school dominated Confucian discourse during the sixteenth century. That list includes Wang Yangming; Xu Ai 徐愛, Qian Dehong 錢德洪, and Wang Ji

⁸² Ching, *The Records of Ming Scholars*, xi. The book was not published, however, until 1987. According to Rodney Taylor, most involved were young scholars busy with their own major publications necessary to secure tenure and promotion, so the book was placed on the back burner. He further writes, “There was also a very complex editorial process with checks and counter-checks on the translations—after all, a lot of people were involved and the editor needed to create some consistency in the translations themselves, i.e. consistency in terminology, cross-referencing, etc.—not a task I would have wanted to undertake! Thus, the years sped by—when we would get together in conference, seminars, etc. I remember we would say to each other—‘heard anything about the MJHA Project.’” (Rodney Taylor, email communication to the author, September 6, 2020)

⁸³ Ching, *Records of Ming Scholars*, xiii.

⁸⁴ Ching, *Records of Ming Scholars*, xiii.

⁸⁵ Ching, *Records of Ming Scholars*, xiv.

王畿 (the Zhezhong school 浙中王門=Zhejiang Province); Zou Shouyi 鄒守益, Ouyang De 歐陽德, Nie Bao 聶豹, Luo Hongxian 羅洪先, and Hu Zhi 胡直 (the Jiangyou school 江右王門=Jiangxi Province); Tang Shunzhi 唐順之 (the Nanzhong school 南中王門=Southern Metropolitan Region); Jiang Xin 蔣信 (the Chuzhong school 楚中王門=Huguang Province); Mu Konghui 穆孔暉 (the Northern school 北方王門); Xue Kan 薛侃 (the school of Yue and Min 閩粵王門=Fujian and Guangdong Province); and Wang Gen 王艮, Wang Bi 王襜, Han Zhen 韓真, Xu Yue 徐樾, Luo Rufang 羅汝芳, Geng Dingxiang 耿定向, Geng Dingli 耿定力, Jiao Hong 焦竑, and Zhou Rudeng 周汝登 (the Taizhou school 泰州王門=Taizhou Prefecture, Jiangsu Province).

The Records of Ming Scholars is remarkably important because prior to its publication in 1987 remarkably little had been written about Wang Yang-ming's followers. Before the 1970s, writing about Ming philosophy was almost solely limited to Wang. A glaring exception is Alfred Forke's *Geschichte der neueren chinesischen philosophie* (History of modern Chinese philosophy), the third volume in his comprehensive survey of the history of Chinese philosophy. In Book II, Part IV, "Wang Yang-ming und seine Schule (Wang Yangming and his school)," somewhat similar to Huang's case studies (on which he heavily relied), Forke surveys the lives and philosophies of Wang Gen, Xu Ai, Zou Shouyi, Qian Dehong, Wang Ji, and Luo Hongxian, albeit treating them as individuals, which was sensible enough given how difficult it is to classify Wang's disciples or those influenced by his philosophy.⁸⁶

In his chapter on them in the second volume of *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought* (another exception, as it was published in 1962), Carsun Chang (Zhang Junmai) pointed out that, "Since each developed the master's teaching in his own way, the physiognomy of the school took various forms, some of them fanciful to the extreme, thus causing decline and eventual collapse."⁸⁷ For an outline, Zhang Junmai followed Huang's geographical divisions, choosing men illustrative of "how Wang's doctrines were developed and interpreted" from the following places: Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Jiangsu and Anhui, Hubei and Hunan, north China, Guangdong and Fujian, and Taizhou. "All of these groups followed the banner of *liangzhi*," he notes, "but each interpreted it in its own way."⁸⁸

Zhang's largely anecdotal and indiscriminate coverage of adherents quickly reveals that each group cannot be defined by a consistent philosophical position. The different direction taken by Wang Ji and Qian Dehong, for instance, "only goes to show how deep was the split, even among colleagues of the same

⁸⁶ Forke, *Geschichte*, 399–422.

⁸⁷ Carsun Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, vol. 2, 74.

⁸⁸ Carsun Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, vol. 2, 98.

school of Zhejiang.”⁸⁹ Thus, Zhang writes, “It should now be clear that there are infinite possibilities in the interpretation of Wang Shouren’s leading idea of *liangzhi*. The reader will also begin to understand why the master’s teaching after his death became unrecognizably distorted by internal divergencies.”⁹⁰

As for the origin of divergence, Zhang found Huang Zongxi’s explanation useful:

The theory of the realization of *liangzhi* was formulated in his [Wang Yangming’s] last years. There was not time for him to make a profound study of this doctrine with his pupils. Thus, each pupil later interpreted it in his own way and in the light of his own subjective views. The students discussed it in as speculative a manner as one might at a gaming table. The result was that these discussions had little to do with Wang Shouren’s original ideas or with his original intentions.⁹¹

In other words, the analytical focus for establishing the distinctions between or explaining disputes among Wang Yangming’s disciples should be how each interprets *liangzhi*, and the reason for their variegated interpretations are to be found both in how Wang presented his central tenet and his followers’ individual idiosyncrasies.

As for classifying followers according to those “subjective views,” Wang Ji proffered a scheme at a gathering in Fuzhou, Jiangxi, in 1562. Zhang translated his statement:

The idea of *liangzhi* was followed by every one of us. Who dared depart from it? However, we have unavoidably allowed our personal opinions to play on it. Some of us say “*Liangzhi* should remain in a state of utter calmness, neither shining with its light nor displaying it. Like a mirror, it is itself brightness which remains quiet, and when things are brought in front of it, it simply reflects their beauty and ugliness. If a mirror were busy emitting light, it would become clouded.” There are others among us who say: “There is no ready-made *liangzhi*, but only a *liangzhi* which needs cultivation, as gold ore in the mine needs melting, purifying, and beating before the gold can show its lustre.” Still others say: “*Liangzhi* starts only with operation. It cannot be found prior to activity. It has nothing to do with a so-called stage of pre-activity.” Some

⁸⁹ Carsun Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, vol. 2, 103.

⁹⁰ Carsun Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, vol. 2, 101.

⁹¹ Carsun Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, vol. 2, 99.

of us even say: “*Liangzhi* is in its essence desireless. If it does its work according to its nature it will agree with *dao*, and will not have to eliminate desire.” Another group says: “The knowledge of *dao* is divided into two parts. There is (1) the part of essence, which is to perfect one’s nature; there is (2) the part of operation, which is to put it into practice. Thus *liangzhi* has its essence and operation.” Finally, there are those among us who say: “The steps of learning must follow a natural order. The way to seek it is to begin with the root and to end with the branch. Once knowledge is acquired there will be no difference between internal and external. But realization of knowledge has a beginning and an end.” Such are the difference shades of meaning under which *liangzhi* has been understood, thereby providing a basis for classification.⁹²

With these seven categories, Wang Ji had provided the first significant classification scheme for differentiating the essential differences obtaining among his master’s students.

At the 1972 Wang Yangming conference held in Hawaii, Okada Takehiko presented another scheme for classifying Wang Yangming’s followers, one derivative of Wang Ji’s, narrowing the camps down to three. “The Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming Schools at the end of the Ming and Tokugawa Periods” was simply a brief synopsis of snippets of his *Ō Yōmei to minmatsu no jugaku* (Wang Yangming and late Ming Confucian learning), which was published in 1970 as a revision of his doctoral dissertation. His translator was Robert J. J. Wargo, a native to Cleveland, Ohio, who had, from 1968 to 1973, completed his PhD at Michigan University while serving as an assistant professor in the Philosophy Department at the University of Hawaii.⁹³

Within an article’s limits, Okada could survey “only the barest outline of the thought” of followers belonging to his three camps, followers whose philosophical language is difficult to penetrate whether in the original or in translation. Thus, as opposed to trying to extract the general features of each from the article, it seems preferable to go to Okada’s book, where he offered a brief synopsis. First, since he drew from Wang Ji, it may be of use to arrange those branches in a table, in comparison to Wang Ji’s.

⁹² Carsun Chang, *Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, vol. 2, 99–100.

⁹³ Tom Kasulis and Lynne E. Riggs, “Robert J. J. Wargo: Scholar, Editor, Friend,” *SWET: Society of Scholars, Editors, and Friends*, www.swet.jp/tributes/article/robert_wargo, accessed September 13, 2018.

Classification of Wang Yangming's Followers by Wang Ji and Okada Takehiko

Position on <i>liangzhi</i> (Okada's camps)	Wargo's translation	Another translation	Wang Ji	Carsun Chang's translation	Another translation
歸寂 <i>gui ji</i>	Returning to tranquillity	returning to silence	良知非覺照須本于歸寂而始得如鏡之照物明體寂然而妍媸自辨滯于照則明反眩矣	<i>Liangzhi</i> should remain in a state of utter calmness, neither shining with its light nor displaying it. Like a mirror, it is itself brightness which remains quiet, and when things are brought in front of it, it simply reflects their beauty and ugliness. If a mirror were busy emitting light, it would become clouded.	<i>Liangzhi</i> is not reflecting awareness. It must be grounded in returning to silence and only then will it first be acquired. Like a mirror reflecting things, when the clear essence is silent beauty and ugliness are intrinsically discriminated. If mired in reflection, then the clarity becomes blurred.
修証 <i>xiu zheng</i>	Cultivation	cultivate and witness	良知無見成由於修証而始全如金之在礦非火符鍛煉則金不可得而成也	There is no ready-made <i>liangzhi</i> , but only a <i>liangzhi</i> which needs cultivation, as gold ore in the mine needs melting, purifying, and beating before the gold can show its lustre.	<i>Liangzhi</i> is not present in perfection now. It is only perfected after cultivation and witnessing. Like gold ore in a mine, without smelting and tempering it you cannot obtain it in pure form.
已發 <i>yi fa</i>	prior emergence	after arising	良知是從已發立教非未發無知之本旨	<i>Liangzhi</i> starts only with operation. It cannot be found prior to activity. It has nothing to do with a so-called stage of pre-activity.	The teaching of <i>liangzhi</i> is established from the perspective of what has arisen. It is not the fundamental aim of the unknowing prior to arising.

現成 <i>xian-cheng</i>	Realization or manifestation	present in perfection now; or true mind (<i>zhi xin</i> 直心) ⁹⁴	良知本來無欲直心以動無不是道不待復加銷欲之功	<i>Liangzhi</i> is in its essence desireless. If it does its work according to its nature it will agree with <i>dao</i> , and will not have to eliminate desire.	<i>Liangzhi</i> is originally without desire. If the impulse arises from true mind then nothing will not be in accord with the Way. It is not necessary to apply further effort to eliminate desire.
體用 <i>ti yong</i>	Substance and function	essence-function, or sovereign (<i>zhuzai</i> 主宰)	學有主宰有流行主宰所以立性流行所以立命而以良知分體用	The knowledge of <i>dao</i> is divided into two parts. There is (1) the part of essence, which is to perfect one's nature; there is (2) the part of operation, which is to put it into practice. Thus <i>liangzhi</i> has its essence and operation.	In learning there is a sovereign power and the flow of mental events. The sovereign power is that by which nature is established. The flow of mental events is that by which destiny is established. Thus, <i>liangzhi</i> is divided into essence and function.
終始 <i>zhong shi</i>	End and beginning	orderly sequence (<i>shunxu</i> 順序)	學貴循序求之有本未得之無內外而以致知別始終	The steps of learning must follow a natural order. The way to seek it is to begin with the root and to end with the branch. Once knowledge is acquired there will be no difference between internal and external. But realization of knowledge has a beginning and an end.	In learning an orderly sequence is to be treasured. In seeking it there is a course running from beginning to end. Once acquired, there will be no [distinction] between inner and outer, but beginning and end are distinguished by the realization of knowledge.

⁹⁴ Wang Ji does not use the term *xiancheng* in this passage, so Okada is attributing this position to the statement, which in fact describes common characteristics of followers holding this position. Qian Ming draws *zhi xin* from the passage. As for *ti yong* and *zhong shi*, these were simply the last two characters in the passage, which is why Qian Ming likewise chose a different word from it to represent it more adequately. See Qian Ming *Yangmingxue*, 110–111.

From this table, it should be clear that Okada believed these camps could be narrowed down to three: the quietest or tranquility camp (=Return to Silence); the cultivation camp (=Cultivate and Witness); and the existentialist or realization camp (=True Mind).⁹⁵ Regarding outstanding features of each, Okada's "General Introduction" states:

What the Present in Perfection Now camp advocates is to regard what Wang Yangming speaks of as *liangzhi* as the *liangzhi* that is present-in-perfection right now. They stress "forthwith present in perfection," looking upon spiritual practice as an obstacle to the [mind's] primordial essence [*xin zhi bentu* 心之本體: the condition/state of mind's ultimate/inherent reality] and discarding it. Furthermore, they identify the natural flow of my mental events directly with the primordial essence, nature, and destiny. Consequently, Yangming's tenet that "everyone's mind contains a sage" was prevalent among this Confucian camp. They believe that since *liangzhi* is perfectly present right now, should one fail to acquire insight into the identity of being and nonbeing then one will be incapable of acquiring insight into the true reality of *liangzhi*. Thus, they espouse the sudden enlightenment of "directly embracing it," "immediate faith," and "when one is solved all is perfect," rejecting gradual cultivation. In comparison to seeking the primordial essence through [contemplative moral] practice, this is to directly apply effort to the primordial essence. Hence, this developed into the "primordial essence is [contemplative moral] practice. . . ."

The Return to Silence *liangzhi* camp believes that within what Yangming speaks of as *liangzhi* there is a distinction to be drawn between "the void and silent essence [*xu ji zhi ti* 虛寂之體]" and "the functioning of bestirred arising [*gan fa zhi yong* 感發之用]." This is very much like Yangming professing that "realizing the innate knowledge of the good [*zhi liangzhi* 致良知]" is a matter of cultivating the root and trunk so that the vitality reaches to the branches and leaves. Hence, this camp believes the fundamental aim of Yangming's [tenet of] "realizing the innate knowledge of the good" is for one to

⁹⁵ Okada Takehiko, "Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-ming," 139. Wargo uses the term "school," but while this term holds for the followers of Wang Yangming as a whole, since the differences among them were not strictly defined and maintained by groups, it is better to think of these divisions as camps where a few individual followers shared some theoretical common grounds.

establish the essence by returning to silence and realize the essence in functioning, that is, establish the essence to realize functioning. Only by so doing will one be able to comport with the general tenor of what Master Cheng means when he states that “essence and function derive from one source, the manifest and subtle are without division.” Thus, this camp regards the tenet of Yangming’s middle years—“emphasize stillness”—as the main objective of “realizing the innate knowledge of the good.” Although in its origin the Return to Silence camp’s philosophy was unavoidably partial to silence, thereafter it changed to personally realizing the void and silent genuine reality of the single essence of motion and stillness. However, because it regarded returning to silence as the main objective, this camp necessarily became distant from Yangming’s philosophy of mind, which is one rich with vitality and movement. . . .

The Cultivate and Witness *liangzhi* camp emphasizes that one should be capable of truly grasping the original meaning of *liangzhi* as Yangming spoke of it, as moral principle and also *tianli* 天理 [Heaven’s pattern, principle, or reason]. Also, one should be capable of truly understanding the essential spirit of what he means by saying that “the primordial condition is [contemplative moral] practice, and the [contemplative moral] practice is the primordial condition.” One absolutely must not misunderstand the fundamental objective of Yangming’s theory of “*zhi liangzhi* [realizing the intuitive knowing].” Scholars belonging to this camp made an effort to rectify two kinds of errors [among his followers]: the Present in Perfection Now camp’s straying and the bias towards tranquility among the Return to Silence camp. To do so, they point to the importance of *tianli* and nature and advocate seeking the primordial condition by exerting [moral contemplative] effort, which is in fact equivalent to the tenet that “practice is the primordial essence.” Consequently, without expecting that it would be so, this approach leaned closely in the direction of Song learning. As with the theory of the Return to Silence camp, it was difficult for this approach to fit with the direction of the development of Wang learning as well as contemporary intellectual trends. Thus, in the intellectual world of the late Ming, only the thought of the Present in

Perfection Now camp appeared to really thrive, something that perhaps makes sense.⁹⁶

Okada's three categories and corresponding descriptions of their general features as well as of the philosophies of those placed in each have exercised a considerable influence on the East Asian scholarship regarding this sixteenth-century movement. Over the next few decades and into the early 2000s—partly as a consequence of China's reform and opening, after which mainland Song-Ming *lixue* scholarship boomed—Okada's work inspired other schemes. More generally, scholars residing in both the PRC and the ROC adopted different angles for understanding the movement, producing lengthy tomes that cast a conceptual net over it. Indeed, during Okada's lifetime, other scholarship had identified different camps or branches. However, the English scholarship only offers the barest glimpse of it, and its impact will perhaps only be felt over time.

In general, it is widely acknowledged that several factors contributed to the diverging philosophical positions adopted by Wang's followers. First, Wang Yangming's philosophy, such as the tenets he stressed, changed over time. Second, depending on his judgment about where a student stood on the path to sagehood, Wang adjusted his pedagogy. This means that those followers who closely interacted with him may have encountered different instruction and that his writings are amenable to varied reception and interpretation. Third, one can take into consideration individual proclivities and social status, as well as the political, social, and cultural context impacting the ideas of each person who declared himself a follower.

The idea that Wang Yangming's followers could be divided into categories according to how they interpreted and developed his ideas serves as background for Lü Miaw-fen's dissertation research, which was conducted in the 1990s at the University of California, Los Angeles. "Practice as Knowledge: Yangming Learning and *jianghui* in Sixteenth-Century China" was completed in 1997 and then evolved into a substantial Chinese-language monograph, *Yangmingxue shi ren she qun: lishi, sixiang, yu shijian* 陽明學士人社群：歷史，思想，與實踐 (Literati societies of the school of [Wang] Yangming: history, thought, and practice). The fundamental question Lü had asked is "Why was it that Wang Yangming's philosophy could, in a short time, develop into a new school of thought and, furthermore, rapidly spread and change?"⁹⁷ The fact of the matter is that Wang and his disciples not only subscribed to certain compelling interpretations of the Confucian tradition but also did so in a particular

⁹⁶ Okada Takehiko, *Wang Yangming yu Ming mo*, 99.

⁹⁷ Lü Miaw-fen, "Practice as Knowledge," 3.

context and under particular conditions that were conducive to the growth of their movement. To answer this question, Lü found it necessary to shift the focus from the style of intellectual history and the history of ideas that had heretofore dominated scholarship to the political and social conditions enabling the movement and the cultural characteristics defining it. Hence, for three specific geographical regions, she documents this for three generations of Wang Yang-ming adherents, including the societies they formed and the activities they engaged in to expand their influence, down to the local level. Those regions were Jiangxi's Ji'an Prefecture, Zhejiang, and the Southern Metropolitan Region.

In sum, one should first factor in the rising prominence and prestige of Wang Yangming on the political and intellectual scene, which can be attributed to the appeal of his controversial interpretations of critical texts in the Confucian tradition and his successful military campaigns, and then how he parlayed that into Ming social practices and institutions beneficial to his purposes, especially lecture forums (meetings for discussing learning) and academies. Second, by the sixteenth century, as a result of population growth and trends in burgeoning economic growth, urbanization, commercialization, and literacy, ever greater numbers of men were able to engage the examination ladder, the institution that shaped educational channels and mechanisms, controlling the pathway to an official career and hence determining status and power in society. Yet the number of higher degrees and official posts were not increased to accommodate the growing number of licentiates (candidates with the lowest degree), and this created an audience at the local level, a pool of men who, along with gentry and local officials, were engaged with intellectual and cultural trends, education, and politics, not solely for the purpose of pure philosophy but also to elevate their cultural capital and political status.

By participating in lecture forums, constructing academies, and declaring adherence to a Confucian master, these men were not only engaging with Confucian intellectual trends, training for virtue and assisting friends with the same, and changing local customs and culture but were also developing an ethos and identity that made sense of their lives and met their needs, making connections that might benefit their political career, and forming associations with other local elites who held power in local societies. Indeed, Wang Yang-ming did not reject involvement with examination and seeking office but developed his tenets for the purpose of changing society and political culture, and many of his disciples did in fact exercise significant influence locally and rose to powerful positions.⁹⁸ But outside the halls of power, his followers flourished in the sociocultural world they created. They formed organized

⁹⁸ Lü Miaw-fen, "Practice as Knowledge," 418–420.

associations of scholars, gentry, and officials at a local level to elevate and propagate their master's philosophy (learning). They regularly gathered at academies and Buddhist temples, along with other establishments, to conduct sacrifices in courtyards before an image of their master, to declare their resolve to and ardor for sagehood as Wang Yangming had defined it and inherited this lineage of the Dao—from Confucius's student Yanzi. They furthered that resolve by chanting poetry, forming friendships to advance their personal and spiritual and material goals, holding philosophical discussions about passages taken from the Four Books or statements made by their master, and engaging in the mental discipline of quiet sitting so as to experience the fruits of a still mind and what it may yield—enlightenment.

Lü finds that she was influenced by academic trends in research on Chinese intellectual history dating to the 1980s, when Columbia-style intellectual biography gave way to social and cultural history, as well as by seminal works in the field of history written by such historians as Lynn Hunt, Roger Chartier, Russell Jacoby, and William J. Bouwsma. Furthermore, in this light, she felt that much research on the Wang Yangming School had been conducted primarily with pivotal texts and without sufficient use of a much broader contemporary literature. One reason for this was the fact that the collected works of many of Wang Yangming's followers were not included in the *Siku quanshu* 四庫全書 (Four treasuries library), which meant that, heretofore, academics had to go without them or travel to Japan's Oriental Library (Toyo Bunko) to read and copy them. However, in the 1990s, the Fu Sinian Library of the Academia Sinica obtained photocopies of many of these and, in addition, more appeared in the *Siku quanshu cunmu congshu* 四庫全書存目叢書, *Xuxiu si ku quanshu* 續修四庫全書, and *Siku jin hui shu congkan* 四庫禁毀書叢刊. In terms of historical sources, this was a "huge breakthrough," enabling scholars to reassess Huang Zongxi's categories and others influenced by him.⁹⁹ Thus, when she returned from California to Taipei, Lü was able to combine her analytical approach with this broader array of sources, the fruit of which remains one of the major contributions to the study of this movement at the turn of the twenty-first century.

Although other Wang Yangming followers aren't absent from the English literature, followers placed by Okada Takehiko in the existentialist or realization subschool have consistently received the most attention. Wang Ji, for instance, was the topic of papers presented by Mou Zongsan and Zhang Zhongyuan (Chang Chung-yuan) at the 1972 Wang Yangming conference held in Hawaii. Both had the conviction that he was Wang Yangming's most accomplished and accurate interpreter.

⁹⁹ Lü Miaw-fen, "Practice as Knowledge," 5.

In fact, Chang Chung-yuan's paper elevates Wang Ji's philosophizing to the pinnacle of China's three traditions—the perfection of Wang Yang-ming's tenet of *liangzhi*—comparing it to and identifying it with elements of Heidegger's philosophy, essentially proposing that within this horizon of ideas lies a perennial philosophy, the notion that “the absolute present is constituted by the unity of contradiction.”¹⁰⁰ Chang contended that by assimilating teachings from Buddhism, Zhuangzi, and the *Classic of Change*, “Wang Ji was able to give a clearer, more detailed, and systematic presentation of the meaning of *liangzhi* than any other philosopher,” including his master, Wang Yangming.¹⁰¹

For Wang Ji, *liangzhi* is having the “mind of the absolute present (*jian zai xin* 見在心),” enjoying a “mystic identity (*xuan tong* 玄同)” that appears when representational thinking ceases. As “empty illumination and silent radiation,” *liangzhi* is a direct identity obliterating, within and without, human subjectivity and the objectivity of being. It is also solitary knowledge (*du zhi* 獨知), knowledge of the solitary one; primal knowledge (*qian zhi* 乾知), knowledge of origin, or originating knowledge; and a knowledge free from thought and action (*wu suo si wei* 無所思維). As the latter, Chang explains:

This knowledge is illumination through spontaneity and directness. It is right in stillness or nonaction that action takes place. Thus, stillness cannot be conceived as inward. It is also right in action that stillness takes place. Thus, action cannot be conceived as outward. It is movement, yet it is without motion. This between Being and Nonbeing is the subtlety of invisibility.¹⁰²

Wang Ji's description of *liangzhi*, Chang claims, not only brought him to the common origin of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism but also provides grounds for comparison with Heidegger's philosophizing over meditative thinking—a thinking, in the service of intuition, about the essential source of identity as the language of Being—as opposed to representational thinking—thinking mediated by categories.¹⁰³

As for Mou's, we return to him in Chapter 7, where the role of the new Confucianism of the twentieth century in channeling the Ming School of Mind is broached. Aside from these early papers on Wang Ji, since the early 1970s, the Taizhou group has received the most attention, no doubt because the philosophical and social characteristics of it seemed to align with trends recognizably early modern, a category that had also been applied to other Ming

¹⁰⁰ Chang Chung-yuan, “Essential Source of Identity,” 44.

¹⁰¹ Chang Chung-yuan, “Essential Source of Identity,” 34.

¹⁰² Chang Chung-yuan, “Essential Source of Identity,” 41.

¹⁰³ Chang Chung-yuan, “Essential Source of Identity,” 35.

economic trends and cultural developments. William Theodore de Bary's influential essay "Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought" was really the first to bring this branch to the attention of an English-reading audience. It has often been stated that whereas the modern West values individualism, pre-modern China valued collectivism. De Bary observed this, and his goal was to problematize such a simplistic perception. Heavily influenced by Shimada Kenji's *Chugoku ni okeru kindai shii no zasetsu* 中國における近代思惟の挫折 (The frustration of modern thought in China), he found that "in the most general sense the problem of the individual is implicit in the whole Ming preoccupation with the self."¹⁰⁴

For de Bary, the Wang Yangming school in particular brought "most sharply into focus the debate over the nature and role of the individual in the sixteenth century."¹⁰⁵ "A type of individualistic thought with strikingly modern features did arise," de Bary stated, "in conjunction with large social and cultural forces, out of a liberal and humanitarian movement within the Wang Yangming school in the sixteenth century."¹⁰⁶ Some members of the Taizhou school had demonstrated a strand of radical thought that resembled individualism in the modern West. However, this strand's potential was never realized or normalized in later Chinese history.¹⁰⁷ This all began with Wang Yangming himself, whose internalization of the notion of sagehood had the effect of liberating the process of self-development from external standards, opening up "almost unlimited possibilities for individual development and self-expression." Such potential was what the later Wang Yangming school explored to the limit.¹⁰⁸ Wang's confidence "in trusting one's own mind as the ultimate authority," de Bary claimed, had a "quicken effect on the thought of those times."¹⁰⁹

The man who best realized this potential was Wang Gen, a salt maker's son who vigorously promoted the idea of the common man as a sage. Wang Gen and Wang Yangming, of course, similarly stressed the importance of having moral awareness and changing the world according to an innately given sense of right and wrong. Wang Gen, however, emphasized something about the self: he believed that the self must first be secured through self-love and

¹⁰⁴ De Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," 150. According to Joshua Fogel, the nuances, approaches, and emphases "owe much to Shimada's pioneering work" (Shimada Kenji, *Pioneer*, xv).

¹⁰⁵ De Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," 150.

¹⁰⁶ De Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," 223.

¹⁰⁷ De Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," 224.

¹⁰⁸ De Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," 151.

¹⁰⁹ De Bary, "Individualism and Humanitarianism," 156.

self-respect (what he called *bao shen* 保身). By loving and respecting oneself, a person can become an activist for changing society and country. Wang Gen also made the *Great Learning* more directly relevant to people of all stripes—that is, non-elites—making the welfare and security of the individual the basis for social order.¹¹⁰ In brief, he had made the egalitarian and populist dimensions of Wang Yangming's thought more clearly visible. For him, the great man (*da zhangfu* 大丈夫) is one who finds joy and self-fulfillment by going where a spontaneous moral knowledge leads him—that is, by helping other human beings.¹¹¹ Although Wang Gen had no clear social and political program, de Bary explains, he put forward ideas that had a liberating potential, populist character, and even revolutionary nature. His personal example and teachings made his school remarkably dynamic, and it exerted a wide influence on sixteenth-century China.¹¹² De Bary follows these trends further down the Ming by tracing Wang Gen's influence on He Xinyin and Li Zhi.

Given its broader social impact, early prominent historical surveys invariably speak to the Taizhou branch while leaving the others out. In *China's Imperial Past* (1975), for instance, Charles Hucker states that, “during the second half of the sixteenth century, some second-generation followers of Wang widely proclaimed that every man was his own judge of right and wrong, that every impulse should be translated unthinkingly into action.”¹¹³ These followers “preached egalitarian, libertarian doctrines to large, excited crowds.” Some thinkers, like Li Zhi, demonstrated a kind of “iconoclastic nonconformity.” As Wang's writings became more popular, traditional Confucians grew alarmed. They criticized Wang Yangming's left-wing disciples as “mad Chanists.” Li Zhi, of course, was eventually arrested as a heretic and committed suicide in prison.

A more moderate movement centered on the Donglin Academy, which adhered more closely to Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism, dominating the intellectual scene in the early 1600s. After the Donglin faction was doomed by court politics of the 1620s, “Wang Yangming extremism was effectively discredited and died out when Ming China was taken over by the Manchus.”¹¹⁴ Thereafter, Hucker explains, Cheng-Zhu orthodoxy remained the mainstream of Chinese philosophy until the twentieth century. He adds that Wang was better appreciated in Japan, “where his doctrines had great influence on the nineteenth century zealots who began the transformation of Japan into a modern nation.”¹¹⁵

¹¹⁰ De Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism,” 163–164.

¹¹¹ De Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism,” 169.

¹¹² De Bary, “Individualism and Humanitarianism,” 173.

¹¹³ Hucker, *China's Imperial Past*, 375.

¹¹⁴ Hucker, *China's Imperial Past*, 375.

¹¹⁵ Hucker, *China's Imperial Past*, 375.

In his *History of Chinese Civilization* (Fr., 1972; Eng., 1982), Jacques Gernet tells a similar story, albeit in more detail. The fifteenth century, he writes, “was certainly not one of the most innovative and brilliant in the history of China.”¹¹⁶ The sixteenth century, however, saw a reawakening of philosophical reflection, led by Wang Yangming, who exerted a considerable influence on China at this time, and then on Korea and Japan. He interiorized *li* 理, the principle of order in society and the universe, and rejected any separation between action and knowledge. His central concept was *liangzhi*, a term he borrowed from Mengzi. Prior to contamination by egoistic thoughts and desires, Wang believed, the mind is fundamentally good. That goodness is what an individual must aim to recover.

Wang Yangming’s teachings, Gernet further explains, “formed the basis for the development of most of the schools of the sixteenth century.”¹¹⁷ These consisted of a few dozen or even hundreds of disciples who grouped around one among several masters. Forums for discussing learning and academies were characteristic of this age, although some worried that these phenomena were a sign of division. Gernet explains that “the further we advance in the sixteenth century the more independence of mind there is, and the more classical traditions are affected by Buddhist and Daoist influences.”¹¹⁸

Among the diverse environment, the Taizhou branch is notable for “the emphasis which it put on spontaneity and on the rejection of knowledge.”¹¹⁹ Its basic thesis was that no effort is required to attain *liangzhi* because it is already present in everyone. The most remarkable member of this school was Li Zhi, “one of the most famous literati at the end of the sixteenth century.”¹²⁰ His sympathy for Buddhism, enthusiasm for vernacular literature, defense of the oppressed, attack on traditional morality and hypocrisy, and taste for heroic individuals all made him representative of an age. “We find similar attitudes among his contemporaries,” Gernet explains, “attitudes which reflect an evolution in thought which it seems legitimate to connect with the social changes of the end of the sixteenth century and with the development of an urban culture in which learned and popular traditions mingled.”¹²¹

Several books, dissertations, and articles have been written about Taizhou affiliates. The only book-length study of Wang Gen, the subschool’s enigmatic founder, was published by the German sinologist Monika Übelhör in 1986.

¹¹⁶ Gernet, *History of Chinese Civilization*, 438.

¹¹⁷ Gernet, *History of Chinese Civilization*, 439.

¹¹⁸ Gernet, *History of Chinese Civilization*, 441.

¹¹⁹ Gernet, *History of Chinese Civilization*, 440.

¹²⁰ Gernet, *History of Chinese Civilization*, 440–441.

¹²¹ Gernet, *History of Chinese Civilization*, 441.

Wang Gen (1483-1541) und seine lehre: eine kritische position im späten konfuzianismus (Wang Gen and his teaching: A critical position in late Confucianism) is a work of intellectual history that examines his life and thought in the context of mid-Ming society and politics. Wang Gen, Übelhör points out, was indeed eccentric but also possessed an original mind and had a profound impact on sixteenth-century China. She provides a detailed biographical account of Wang Gen, examines the role of the individual in his teaching, explains major concepts in his thought and their classical sources, outlines his proposals for the development of a harmonious social order, and reviews contemporary assessments and criticisms of him.

A more recent publication is Johanna Lidén's "The Taizhou Movement: Being Mindful in Sixteenth Century China." The topic was suggested to her by Torbjörn Lodén, a sinologist at Stockholm University, where Lidén completed her PhD in the Department of Ethnology, History of Religions, and Gender Studies. Using both a wide array of Ming sources and current scholarship on the topic, Lidén explains the religious ideas and practices, activities, and organization of the Taizhou movement, providing the context of the historical setting in the Jiajing and Wanli reigns. She focuses particularly on Wang Gen, with whom the movement originated, but also discusses the life and thought of Yan Jun, He Xinyin, and Luo Rufang. She shows how Wang Gen's thought was influenced by Wang Yangming but also how his ideas about protecting and respecting the self (*bao shen* 保身 and *jing shen* 敬身) were new. For Lidén, "Taizhou movement" is preferable to "Taizhou school" because the ideas associated with it spoke to the concerns of people from all walks of society. Members of the movement did in fact hold heterogeneous ideas, advocated different kinds of practices, and were quite active at the local level, where they engaged in various religious and social activities.

Lidén is particularly concerned to identify the religious qualities of the Taizhou movement. Taizhou practitioners exemplified the porous nature of the boundaries between Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism during the Ming. In their discussion of the pursuit of enlightenment and methods for inducing specific states of mind, they evidence Buddhist and Taoist influences. However, their framework is fundamentally Confucian. Thus, they did not worship Buddhist or Taoist deities, their principal concern was the transformation of the individual and society, and their practices included singing, reciting, meditation, philosophical discussions, and ethical commitments. In general, Lidén considers the movement to be religious in nature and, in consultation with a literature on religions, expends some effort trying to define in what sense it was "religious." She asserts that while it is true that the Taizhou practitioners failed to establish religious institutions, the practices they advocated were primarily aimed at inducing states of mind that rendered the secular world sacred.

Finally, Lidén provides moving accounts of the fates of such Taizhou members as Yan Jun and He Xinyin, whose ideas and actions made them seem dangerous to people in power, leading to their persecution.

A few articles have also been written about Wang Gen and the Taizhou school. In “The Taizhou School (*Taizhou xuepai*) and the Popularization of *Liangzhi* (Innate Knowledge),” Cheng Yu-yin explains how Taizhou scholars transformed complex philosophical ideas into simple messages that people from all walks of life could understand.¹²² In particular, Taizhou activists converted Wang Yangming’s metaphysical conceptualization of *liangzhi* into the more emotive, moral concept of *liangxin* 良心. They then disseminated this more accessible notion of conscience by proselytizing to the masses through such venues as lineage organizations, guild halls, and community covenants. Looking at the history of Confucian activism too, there was something new going on here: Taizhou scholars’ social commitment shows a markedly egalitarian style. It should also be noted that Cheng used statistical data to map out the distribution of Taizhou followers, giving a clear picture of the geography of the social movement.¹²³

As for the Jiangxi group, Wang Yangming was assigned by the Ming court to quell unrest in southern Jiangxi (and neighboring provinces) in 1517. He arrived in Ganzhou early that year and, for the most part, remained in the region until 1521. While carrying out military campaigns, Wang was also actively teaching his latest Confucian philosophical tenets and interpretations of classical texts, something that attracted young men from all over the region to come study under him. Many formally declared themselves disciples, establishing a Jiangxi branch, although this branch should be understood in geographical terms and not as a subschool or sect within a broader Wang Yangming movement. That is because the men composing it held diverse interpretations of their master’s philosophy.

Although Huang Zongxi, as the American sinologist Kandice Hauf has put it, “considered this group to be the truest followers,”¹²⁴ they have not attracted the level of research Taizhou adherents have. In 1987, under the supervision of Yu Yingshi and Jonathan Spence at Yale University, when Ming studies had seen a “tremendous flowering,” Hauf completed a dissertation on four of the most prominent first-generation followers: Nie Bao, Zou Shouyi, Ouyang De, and Luo Hongxian. This was indeed an extraordinary group of nationally prominent scholar-officials who were socially and politically active both in the local and national arenas. However, Hauf’s goal “was to get beyond

¹²² Cheng Yu-yin, “The Taizhou School,” 45.

¹²³ Cheng Yu-yin, “The Taizhou School,” 60–61.

¹²⁴ Hauf, “Jiangyou group,” 2.

philosophical writings and metaphysical speculations” and rather to bring into view their “shared cultural orientations” through a close study of their social lives and social action.¹²⁵ That is why she expends much effort on historical reconstruction of their family backgrounds and lives, the educational institutions and programs they promoted, local initiatives such as tax policy and community covenants, and the religious dimensions of their personal conduct and experiences. This is a dissertation rich in concrete historical content, one that awaits complementing with a study of the intellectual history of this branch.

Lastly, in *A Ming Society: T'ai-ho County, Kiangsi, Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries*, John Dardess provides much detail regarding the intellectual debates carried on by Wang Yangming followers native to this county. During the Ming, he explains, a series of nationwide intellectual trends surged like waves through Taihe and swept up the local elites—students, teachers, writers, and officials. These waves lasted about a generation or two before receding as the next gained steam.¹²⁶ The fourth wave was the movement inspired by Wang Yangming, and it “swamped the elite of Taihe County.”¹²⁷ But Taihe men responded to it differently, as Dardess’s study of Luo Qinshun, Ouyang De, Wang Si, Liu Kui, and Hu Zhi’s collected works shows. He found that although from the same county, these men “acted as though in their minds they were inhabitants of completely different planets.”¹²⁸ Some became Wang’s disciples while others disagreed with him. Controversies over matters of power and ethics consumed their energy and passion.¹²⁹ Wang Yangming’s followers not only worked to develop and spread their own distillation of his thought but also understood that there was a game to be played in the world of power politics. To protect their movement, they actively sought the patronage of grand secretaries at the Ming court.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, Taihe’s sixteenth-century elites held diverse views on self-discovery, epistemological certainty, and ultimate values, and “none issued a philosophy of personal endeavor, or of social and political action, that was broad-based or practicable enough to assist a large number of their county compatriots.”¹³¹

¹²⁵ Hauf, “Jiangyou group,” 2.

¹²⁶ Dardess, *Ming Society*, 4.

¹²⁷ Dardess, *Ming Society*, 5.

¹²⁸ Dardess, *Ming Society*, 216.

¹²⁹ Dardess, *Ming Society*, 215–246.

¹³⁰ Dardess, *Ming Society*, 221–222.

¹³¹ Dardess, *Ming Society*, 245.

The Fate of the Wang Yangming School in Qing China

Historians have taken a close look at what became of the school of Wang Yangming during the late Ming and early Qing dynasties. John Dardess explains that late-Ming politics played a critical role in bringing the *jiangxue* movement to an end. This movement peaked in the 1550s and 1560s because high officials in Beijing, like Xu Jie 徐階 (1512–1578), had shielded and supported it. However, the powerful grand secretary Zhang Juzheng 張居正 (1525–1582) was hostile to *jiangxue* circles and ordered the closing of academies across the nation in 1579.¹³² Thus, the movement inspired by Wang Yangming was forcibly repressed.

But Dardess identifies another reason for the dwindling of this school of thought in the late Ming. A younger generation of intelligentsia no longer found fulfillment in the “message of moral spontaneity” and “the positive effects of radiating goodness.” He explains that, “While Confucian evangelism was a spent force after a half-century in vogue, other contemporaneous moral and religious movements developed greater organizational strength.”¹³³ There was a revival of both popular and elite Buddhism. Some literati directed their energy towards marketing intellectual products in a dynamic commercial economy. Others turned their attention to practical problems of local administration.

Dardess adds that, in the early 1600s, twenty-five years after academies had been shut down, a new political current led to the return of *jiangxue*. The reopening of the Donglin Academy signaled this development, and other academies soon followed. However, this politically provocative revival “was not an attempt to revive the precepts of Wang Yangming.”¹³⁴ Although Donglin activists were inspired by some of his ideas, they generally favored Cheng-Zhu Neo-Confucianism. This movement was also more confrontational than Wang Yangming’s brand of politics. Donglin activists shared a “self-righteous moral absolutism.”¹³⁵ They were not concerned with abstract ideas but rather with their practical relevance to current affairs. That meant analyzing the sources of political malaise, targeting officials, and mobilizing men and opinions to make things right.

Nevertheless, the *jiangxue* movement of the sixteenth century and the Donglin movement shared common ground. Literati organized for educational, social, and political purposes. Academies were the physical space where

¹³² Dardess, *Ming China, 1368–1644*, 93.

¹³³ Dardess, *Ming China, 1368–1644*, 93.

¹³⁴ Dardess, *Ming China, 1368–1644*, 99.

¹³⁵ Dardess, *Ming China, 1368–1644*, 100.

they could do so with some autonomy. However, Dardess notes, this peculiarly Ming pattern for self-organization was “a historical dead end.” The Qing dynasty prohibited all such activities because they saw them as threats to security and order. Thus, literati energies went in other directions.¹³⁶

In his *Geschichte der chinesischen Philosophie: Konfuzianismus, Daoismus, Buddhismus* (History of Chinese philosophy: Confucianism, Daoism, Buddhism), Wolfgang Bauer also provides an overview of late-Ming intellectual history and the reaction against what was perceived as the errors of Wang Yangming’s radical followers. After the death of Li Zhi, a more rigorous, less subjective form of Confucianism emerged. Donglin scholars such as Gao Panlong 高攀龍 (1562–1626) and Gu Xiancheng 顧憲成 (1550–1612), while not averse to meditation, were highly critical of Wang Ji and Wang Gen’s Taizhou School. As they saw it, both had given too much credence to Wang Yangming’s statement that the substance of mind is beyond good and evil, and they feared that such a doctrine could lead to the collapse of the entire system of ethical values. Donglin scholars were closer to the position of Qian Dehong: virtue must be systematically, gradually cultivated through moral effort.¹³⁷ Bauer suggests that “The argument shared a distant resemblance to the rather familiar question of whether biological conditioning or environmental experience was more decisive for the nature of man.”¹³⁸ Late-Ming Confucians were more concerned with how people were in the present—their accumulated habits and problems—than they were with speculating on innate goodness and the original self.

Thus, Bauer explains, the direction of the development of Confucianism was reversed, as scholars once again set out in search of the true teachings of the ancients and for a more reliable version of the Confucian tradition. The Manchu invasion only furthered such trends. It threw the Ming intelligentsia into a state of crisis and led to a pained search for the causes of decline as well as a reevaluation of the past. In search of the true meaning of classical texts, scholars such as Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 (1613–1682) embraced an entirely new, critical methodology (*kaozheng* 考證: evidential research). For him, investigating things (*ge wu* 格物) requires pious reflection on the classics and the world’s condition, not contemplation of metaphysical things. Gu believed he was taking a more sober, critical approach to real-world problems than those School of Mind Confucians who engaged in incomprehensible meditations on mind and human nature. Thus, he stressed learned inquiry and maintaining a sense of shame in personal conduct—that is, intellectual curiosity and ethical

¹³⁶ Dardess, *Ming China, 1368–1644*, 102.

¹³⁷ Bauer, *Geschichte*, 291–292.

¹³⁸ Bauer, *Geschichte*, 293.

conduct. After all, metaphysical ideas were not things discussed by Confucius. Consequently, Gu redirected scholars to the simplicity of early Confucianism. He also engaged research on tangible subjects, such as epigraphy, phonetics, and historical geography.¹³⁹

In sum, Bauer asserts, Gu Yanwu represents a spirit of inquiry that emerged in the early Qing, one very different from Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. Evidential research became the order of the day: knowledge must be accumulated inductively, by collecting and verifying individual facts, and conclusions must be verified with evidence. Uncovering the timeless wisdom of the classical texts through painstaking textual criticism was preferable to Song-Ming style hermeneutics (*quanshixue* 詮釋學).¹⁴⁰

The Ming-Qing transition was, in fact, hard on the Ming learning of mind. Intellectual historians have written extensively about prominent scholars belonging to this period and their criticisms of Wang Yangming and his school. An entirely new intellectual atmosphere emerged during the Qing dynasty. For example, On-Cho Ng's monograph, *Cheng-Zhu Confucianism in the Early Qing: Li Guangdi (1642-1718) and Qing Learning*, examines Wang's thought with reference to "larger intellectual developments in the Ming-Qing transition."¹⁴¹ He provides an overview of how the intellectual history of this time has been characterized in scholarship:

The late Ming and early Qing intellectual contestations apparently led to the diminution of the Song-Ming *daoxue* (learning of the Way) tradition of moral speculative philosophy (*yili zhixue*). This tradition came to be generally and generically labeled as *Songxue* (Song learning) in the Qing, and it faced the challenge of concrete and practical learning. There was the rise of the so-called *jingshi* (practical statecraft) scholarship focusing on the study of institutions, history, and governance, coupled with the emergence of *Hanxue* (Han learning), concentrating on the exegetical and philological probing of classical texts. The genesis of such an interpretation of the developments of Qing learning and thought actually owes much to the appropriation of the utterances of the eminent early Qing savants, who deplored abstruse metaphysical speculation and vacuous moral introspection that appeared to be pervasive among the Ming literati. . . . By the mid-Qing period in the eighteenth century, when evidential scholarship (*kaozheng*

¹³⁹ Bauer, *Geschichte*, 301.

¹⁴⁰ Bauer, *Geschichte*, 302.

¹⁴¹ On-Cho Ng, *Cheng-Zhu Confucianism*, 1.

xue) based on a critical and empirical methodology became dominant, Song-Ming learning increasingly came to be categorized as a monolithic type of moral discourse, impractical, speculative, and feckless.¹⁴²

Thus, in earlier scholarship, whereas Qing learning is portrayed as practical in intent and empirical in its approach to scholarship, Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism is characterized as overly speculative and subjective.

De Bary's *Sources of Chinese Tradition* also introduces the contours of intellectual change in the seventeenth century. The decline and fall of the Ming dynasty led the "upholders of Confucian ideal standards" to a searching critique of the causes for it. Some blamed Wang Yangming and those disciples who took his ideas in radical directions. Gu Yanwu "bitterly attacked the intuitionism of the Wang Yangming school of Neo-Confucianism." He was convinced that this school's subjectivity, scorn for book learning, and empty speculation had "seriously debilitated the intelligentsia of the late Ming."¹⁴³ Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (1619–1692) similarly believed Wang's followers had "perverted Confucianism, and it was their influence that had resulted in the moral anarchy and social chaos that led to the ruin of the Ming dynasty."¹⁴⁴

Like Bauer, *Sources of Chinese Tradition* identifies Gu Yanwu as representative of a new spirit of practical learning in the seventeenth century. Believing that doing so might answer why the Ming dynasty had faltered, Gu rather pursued such fields as economics, statecraft, and military defense. That is what led him to criticize Wang Yangming's followers who were, as he saw it, lost in speculation on mind and human nature. Gu was also interested in such academic subjects as phonetics, and his research exemplifies the inductive method of research known as *kaozheng* (evidential inquiry). This is the type of scholarship that dominated the Qing dynasty. De Bary writes that, "with the firm establishment of the Manchu Qing dynasty in the latter half of the seventeenth century, there was a marked change in the climate of Confucian thought. The reaction against the subjectivism and idealism of the Wang Yangming school continued."¹⁴⁵ The most influential school of thought to employ evidential research was the school of Han learning. Han learning scholars were dissatisfied with Song-Ming metaphysical speculation and looked to Han dynasty scholars as guides to the classics. Furthermore, with Manchu patronage, the school of Zhu Xi underwent a strong revival in scholarly circles. Thus,

¹⁴² On-Cho Ng, *Cheng-Zhu Confucianism*, 1–2.

¹⁴³ De Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 2, 36.

¹⁴⁴ De Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 2, 29. For an in-depth study of Wang Fuzhi's critique, see McMoran, "Late Ming Criticism of Wang Yang-ming," 91–102.

¹⁴⁵ De Bary, *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 2, 41.

several Qing intellectual trends brought the school of Wang Yangming to an end.

Other monographs point out similar intellectual trends. In *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China* (1984), Benjamin Elman provides a seminal study of this transition. He writes that “Historians gradually have recognized that an important shift in intellectual and philosophic orientation began in 17th century China.”¹⁴⁶ As he characterizes this shift, “Confucian literati had outgrown earlier forms and modes of Confucian thought.”¹⁴⁷ The fall of the Ming to the Manchu barbarians confirmed for them that recent Confucian discourse was sterile. It betrayed the true teaching of Confucius. Qing scholars turned away from Song-Ming metaphysical speculation and lost interest in the goal of sagehood.¹⁴⁸ Instead, they sought to recover the true meaning of the classics through exacting research, rigorous analysis, and collecting evidence from ancient artifacts and documents. Thus, they developed a “philological tradition of evidential research,” transforming the Confucian tradition of learning and scholarship.¹⁴⁹ Elman calls this “an intellectual revolution,” with a distinctly empirical orientation.¹⁵⁰

In his *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology* (also published in 1984), John Henderson developed similar themes regarding the strikingly different intellectual atmosphere of the Qing dynasty. According to him, a classical correlative cosmology “exercised a pervasive influence on premodern Chinese thought and culture.”¹⁵¹ It was also an essential component of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. Like the Christian scholasticism of the medieval West, scientific inquiry was subordinated to metaphysics and moral philosophy. Such cosmological speculation, however, was not a prominent feature of learning of the mind Confucians. Unlike what is the case for Song learning of the way philosophers, “such disquisitions are rather rare.”¹⁵² The school of the learning of mind usually focused on the Four Books, which have little to say about correlative cosmology. Late-Ming intellectuals who did discuss cosmology, like Liu Zongzhou and Sun Qifeng, generally reaffirmed and disseminated it. They were not particularly innovative.¹⁵³

¹⁴⁶ Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, 3.

¹⁴⁷ Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, 3.

¹⁴⁸ Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, 5–7.

¹⁴⁹ Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, 6.

¹⁵⁰ Elman, *From Philosophy to Philology*, 7.

¹⁵¹ Henderson, *Development and Decline*, xv.

¹⁵² Henderson, *Development and Decline*, 131–132.

¹⁵³ Henderson, *Development and Decline*, 136.

In the seventeenth century, however, components of the traditional cosmology were questioned by Qing scholars as part of a broader intellectual transition in which empirical inquiry was emphasized. Thus, Henderson believes, “the seventeenth century marked a new epoch in the history of Chinese as well as European thought. It saw the rejection of a sense of cosmos that was pervasive, in both history and popular culture, through almost two thousand years of Chinese history, hence ranking as “a major transitional era in the history of post-classical Chinese thought.”¹⁵⁴ Philosophical trends belonging to preceding centuries were expressly repudiated. Scholars such as Gu Yanwu, Wang Fuzhi, Yan Ruoju 閻若據 (1636–1704), Hu Wei 胡渭 (1633–1714), and Lu Longqi 陸隴其 (1630–1692) criticized the idealism, speculative metaphysics, and teachings of Ming philosophers of the School of Mind. They instead sought to reestablish classical studies on a new foundation. For them, that foundation would be established by applying philology and exegesis to canonical texts because later accretions and interpretations could be identified and rejected. In brief, Qing *kaozheng* undermined the textual basis for Song-Ming metaphysics. They exposed the heterodox origins of aspects of traditional cosmology.¹⁵⁵

Henderson acknowledges that he was influenced by Chinese historians who saw in the Qing a distinct phase in the intellectual history of China. He references the scholarship of Pi Xirui 皮錫瑞, Liang Qichao, Qian Mu 錢穆, and Hu Shi 胡適. Liang Qichao, for instance, “helped to establish the view that its [Qing’s] practical, empirical, and textualist orientation constituted a sharp break with the metaphysical modes associated with Song and Ming Neo-Confucianism.”¹⁵⁶ However, other scholars, like Wing-tsit Chan and Yu Yingshi, see continuities within change. Song-Ming learning of principle thinkers recognized the significance of classical scholarship and statecraft studies but rather stressed the importance of moral self-cultivation. Henderson presciently notes that seventeenth-century criticism has “tended to obscure the continuities that do exist between Ming and Qing intellectual history.”¹⁵⁷

This is a point that both On-Cho Ng’s study of the Li Guangdi and Chin-Shing Huang’s study of the early Qing Lu-Wang scholar Li Fu drive

¹⁵⁴ Henderson, *Development and Decline*, xv.

¹⁵⁵ Henderson, *Development and Decline*, 173.

¹⁵⁶ Henderson, *Development and Decline*, 139. Liang Qichao’s reading of this intellectual history may be found in his *Qingdai xueshu gailun* 清代學術概論, as well as in Immanuel C. Y. Hsu’s translation. See Liang Ch’i-ch’ao, *Intellectual Trends in the Ch’ing Period*, 27–28.

¹⁵⁷ Henderson, *Development and Decline*, 138.

home.¹⁵⁸ Ng writes that “any nuanced portrayal of Qing learning should perforce recognize its continuity with the Song-Ming tradition.”¹⁵⁹ To a degree, evidential research was the logical outcome of the ongoing debates over the relative merit of the learning of principle and the learning of mind. Both scholars sought to prove their positions and buttress their arguments by turning to philology. Philosophical arguments were boiled down to technical arguments over the proper interpretation of classical texts. Li Guangdi, for example, was yet another Qing Confucian who believed that Wang Yangming’s philosophy was responsible for the literati’s ethical degeneration. He believed Wang’s teaching on the mind and nature was fundamentally flawed. Song *Daoxue* thinkers were closer to the truth, but their philosophies needed to be reformulated on a more solid classical foundation. However, the preferred method for this reformulation was not metaphysical speculation or self-inquiry.

In his *Imagined Civilizations: China, the West, and their First Encounter*, Roger Hart likewise questions historical accounts that portray the late Ming as one of decline. He explains that this notion was first put forward by Qing scholars. Liang Qichao reiterated it, linking the demise of the Ming to intellectual decadence. Liang also extolled Xu Guangqi and other Jesuit collaborators for their contributions to science. The introduction of Western learning hastened the trend towards empirical enquiry. The Qing Dynasty represented a turn toward science and a break with a subjective metaphysics. This narrative of decline was then introduced into Western historical work. In his *Patterns of the Chinese Past*, for example, Mark Elvin tries to explain the Ming dynasty’s supposed lack of economic, scientific, and technological innovation. The main causes, as Elvin saw it, were Ming isolationism and the disastrous consequences of Wang Yangming’s moral intuitionism. In his book, Hart shows that, on the contrary, Ming scholars were engaging in an advanced form of mathematics that surpassed their European counterparts.¹⁶⁰

The purpose of Hart’s research, of course, was not to revise such critical interpretations of followers of Wang Yangming but rather to rethink related parallel narratives. Yet other scholarship has and will continue to do so, and a few points are worthy of consideration. First, it should be noted that Qing evidential scholarship took it as an article of faith that correctly studied, the

¹⁵⁸ Ng, *Cheng-Zhu Confucianism*; Chin-shing Huang, *Philosophy, Philology, and Politics in Eighteenth-Century China*.

¹⁵⁹ Ng, *Cheng-Zhu Confucianism*, 5.

¹⁶⁰ Hart, *Imagined Civilizations*, 79–80.

classics could provide objective guidance in matters of ethics. Through critical study of them, one can learn how best to live an ethical life and organize a human community on a moral foundation.¹⁶¹

Wang Yangming, on the other hand, identified good knowing (*liangzhi* 良知) as the ultimate moral compass. He and his followers insisted on the reality of *liangzhi* and the objectivity of the ethical knowledge it expresses. What they primarily disagreed on was the best methods for realizing *liangzhi*, for bringing it to light and correctly following its guidance. Their philosophical discussions over the content of *liangzhi* and the practice of realizing it might also be regarded as a kind of empirical inquiry, in the sense that they relied on experimenting with mental discipline, observing the results, and discussing them with a community of like-minded followers. It is for reason of its superiority in the matter of contemplative inquiry that modern new Confucians, on philosophical grounds, rejected the idea that Wang Yangmingism was intellectually inferior and surpassed by Qing evidential research. On the contrary, as discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 7, they have argued for quite the opposite, which is why modern new Confucians became a channel for the revival of interest in Wang Yangming in the twentieth century.

Second, a substantial body of scholarship has accrued around late-Ming intellectuals influenced by Wang Yangming—most especially Li Zhi—demonstrating that the movement that originated as a commitment to his teachings worked in tandem with other social, cultural, and economic trends to lead to changing literati identities and a reconfiguration of the norms for human relationships. These intellectual and cultural trends are, for example, explored in Kai-wing Chow's *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism and Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China*. Behind them lies an evolving ethic, one associated with the Wang Yangming movement, an ethic that lays emphasis on authenticity, spontaneity, friendship, well-being of the self, and valorization of the quotidian, values that served to loosen the constraints placed on the individual as a consequence of their social status. The influence of Wang Yangmingism on late-Ming and Qing intellectual history will remain as an important topic for scholarly inquiry.

¹⁶¹ See, for example, Kai-wing Chow, *Rise of Confucian Ritualism*. He writes, "By focusing on the Ch'ing scholars' interests in classical studies, philology, and an empirical methodology, current studies have by default obscured the profound commitment to a *specific* vision of Confucian society—a vision of a new social order based on pure Confucian rituals and doctrines." (2)

Conclusion

This chapter has covered a substantial amount of territory with respect to the historical scholarship on Wang Yangming and the movement inspired by him. On the one hand, setting his life and Confucian philosophy in historical context continues to demonstrate just how compelling his life story can be and how significant his influence was for the course of sixteenth-century Ming dynasty intellectual history. On the other hand, it also shows that Wang Yangming was articulating ideas already being expressed to some degree by his Ming School of Principle predecessors, the controversial nature of his political career, and the serious nature of philosophical criticism directed towards him in his time. All of these are subjects that merit further research.

CHAPTER 6:

Religious Studies of Wang Yangming

Was Wang Yangming religious? Are his doctrines better understood as religious ideas? Was his intellectual development not only philosophical in nature but also spiritual? The same questions might be asked of his followers, as Johanna Lidén, for example, has done so in her study of the Taizhou movement.¹ When the academic study of religions developed in the West in the nineteenth century, scholars identified Confucianism as one among a group of world religions. A historical process of secularization had led to the objectification of religious traditions, which could now be observed from the outside, as it were, as roughly parallel expressions or phenomena of the human journey, albeit in different times and places. In the twentieth century, religious studies as an academic field was increasingly institutionalized through the establishment of departments, professorships, curriculums, and courses for the study of religions. Consequently, the volume of academic publications on world religions and comparative religious studies soared. These publications debate the definition of religion, provide translations of major texts, explain the origins and histories of religious traditions, and identify major beliefs and practices belonging to them. Confucianism, of course, was included in this discussion. The literature defining its religious characteristics and treating it as a world religion is substantial.²

However, prior to the 1970s, in the English-language literature, Wang Yangming and his followers were rarely discussed in the framework of religious studies or comparative religions. Those who wrote about them generally did not treat them as men of faith or examine their lives and thought in religious terms. Wang Yangming was usually regarded as a moral philosopher, idealist, or outstanding Confucian scholar-official. The most obvious reason that he was not identified as a religious man or leader is that the meaning of “religious” had been defined by other religions, especially monotheistic traditions. Another reason lies in the relative neglect of Ming Neo-Confucians

¹ See chapter 5 for a discussion of her research.

² For an in-depth exploration of the history of the study of Confucianism as a religion, with a bibliography of the relevant literature, as well as discussion of definitions of the religious and how those apply to Confucianism, see Sun, *Confucianism as a World Religion* and Yong Chen, *Confucianism as Religion*.

in the Western literature prior to the 1960s. Finally, sinologists who did study the Song-Ming School of Principle did not see it as manifestly religious in nature. While the religious dimensions of classical Confucianism were quickly recognized by Jesuits from the moment they stepped foot in China, Neo-Confucianism was generally regarded as a type of metaphysics or materialistic philosophy. The nineteenth-century academic literature merely reiterated the privileged status given to classical Confucianism. What was religious about Confucianism was believed to have originated in classical times, and it persisted through Chinese history in the form of various beliefs and practices.

However, in recent decades, more scholarship examining the religious dimensions of Wang Yangming's thought has been published. This chapter reviews English-language comparative religious studies scholarship as it pertains to him and also utilizes it as a window upon a larger East Asian scholarship. Most English scholarship focuses on similarities and differences between Wang Yangming's ideas and those of Christianity or of a specific Christian theologian. A few scholars, however, have looked more specifically at Buddhist influences, introducing a topic long discussed in East Asia. All told, it is valuable literature because it enriches our understanding of Wang Yangming, creating more avenues to interpreting his life and thought and showing where the issues he addressed and ideas he put forward are shared by peoples of other faiths.

Comparative Religious Studies Scholarship to the 1990s

Chapter 1 has already discussed the bias towards the classical in early sinology and how it impacted studies of Ming thought, but the work of one other nineteenth-century sinologist also illustrates this bias and its impact. One of the earliest comparative studies of Confucianism was James Legge's *The Religions of China: Confucianism and Taoism Described and Compared with Christianity*. Legge was the prolific translator of Chinese classical texts selected for inclusion in the *Sacred Books of the East* series edited by Max Müller (1823–1900), “one of the founding architects of the world religions discourse.”³

For Legge, Confucianism was the religion of ancient China, with Confucius as its founder, and his description and analysis of Confucian religious ideas and ritual practices remained largely confined to the classical texts he translated. Legge's “investigation of Confucianism and Chinese religions,”

³ Sun, *Confucianism as a World Religion*, 50.

writes Wang Hui, “was manifestly ‘textual’ and fundamentalist, confined to a few ancient texts, while the living tradition was often ignored or measured against the textual ‘originals.’”⁴ Thus, even as he utilized Zhu Xi’s commentaries for translation work, he was generally dismissive of Neo-Confucianism, which he saw as a corruption of the tradition. For him, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, Confucianism was preserved in state ritual and persisted as various popular customs and mores. Wang Hui claims that Legge’s Christian beliefs and goals as a missionary led him to construct an original Confucianism, monotheistic in nature, that could “be used an invincible weapon in critiquing the ‘corrupted’ contemporary Confucianism and as a bridge through which the Chinese can be brought back to a knowledge of God.”⁵

To be fair, Confucian classicism itself gives primacy to the literature of antiquity as the authoritative source of truth. But another obstacle prevented the Song-Ming School of Principle from being recognized as a stage in the development of a religious tradition. Western historical scholarship on the encounter between the educated elites of late imperial China and Christian missionaries has described a gulf between the worldviews of Neo-Confucianism and Christianity. Jacques Gernet’s classic study of this encounter, *China and the Christian Impact*, elucidates how the Chinese literati (and Buddhist monks) were operating with entirely different mental categories and modes of thought than Jesuits. Gernet wrote, “The fact remains that everything that goes to make up Christianity—the opposition in substance between an eternal soul and a perishable body, the kingdom of God and the earthly world, the concept of a God of truth, eternal and immutable, the dogma of the Incarnation—seemed strange or incomprehensible to them.”⁶

In the first volume of his *Handbook of Christianity in China*, published in 2001, Nicolas Standaert summarizes conceptual reasons for the rift that emerged as Christians and Confucians began to realize that they held very different ideas about the nature of reality. Prior, in 1989, Standaert had explored these differences in his monograph on the late-Ming Confucian and Christian Yang Tingyun 楊廷筠 (1562–1627). As a Christian, for example, Yang could not accept the fundamental Neo-Confucian belief acclaimed by Cheng Hao 程顥 and Wang Yangming whereby “the humane man forms one substance with Heaven, earth, and the ten thousand things.” Jesuits like Nicolò Longobardo (1559–1654) saw in this doctrine the threat of materialism and atheism. How can man unite with God, who is in all respects

⁴ Wang Hui, *Translating Chinese Classics*, 42.

⁵ Wang Hui, *Translating Chinese Classics*, 76.

⁶ Gernet, *China and the Christian Impact*, 3.

superior? Yang Tingyun responded by proffering an argument distinguishing the nature of things from human nature and human nature from the nature of the Master of Heaven.⁷

In the Handbook, Standaert explains that belief in a single, personal creator God clearly distinguishes Christianity from Chinese religions. The omnipotent Lord of Heaven is of a category different from the Neo-Confucian impersonal power called Tian 天 (Heaven) or the highest principle, immanent in everything that exists, called *li* 理 (principle). Neo-Confucians held no concept of creation ex-nihilo (that is, out of nothing), and Christian theology possessed no concept of the unity of substance (*ti* 體) and function (*yong* 用), of a oneness immanent in all phenomena. Also, the Neo-Confucian concept of a heavenly-mandated, good human nature differed from the Christian conception of a created soul, beset with original sin, that remains lost until saved by conversion, good works, and the grace of God. The concepts of incarnation, passion, redemption, and the Trinity were entirely foreign to Confucians. Introspection, remorse, and the performance of good works were important to both Christians and Confucians, but Confucians did not connect these acts to belief in an immortal soul, free will, and the severity of God's judgment after death. In brief, the moral philosophies of Jesuit missionaries and Chinese literati, while sharing some similarities in practice, rested on fundamentally different ontological and theological grounds. For Confucians, moral self-cultivation required following one's good nature and transforming one's physical endowment by according with a moral order, the principle of Heaven (*tianli* 天理). This was quite different from following the commandments of and finding redemption in the grace of a creator God.⁸

With these conceptual barriers in mind, we can now turn to religious studies publications on Wang Yangming. Frederick Henke, for instance, contributed a brief entry about him to the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, a thirteen-volume set published between 1908 and 1921. According to the editor, Scottish Free Church minister and biblical scholar James Hastings (1852–1922), the encyclopedia aimed to include articles on every religion and ethical system, religious beliefs and customs, ethical movements, philosophical ideas, moral practices, and “such persons and places as are famous in the history of religion and morals.”⁹ Wang Yangming fit the final description, but he was included because of his ethics and philosophy, not because he was considered a religious figure.

⁷ Standaert, *Yang Tingyun*, 194–197.

⁸ Standaert, *635-1800*, vol. 1 of *Handbook of Christianity in China* (2 vols.), 642–655.

⁹ James Hastings, ed., *A–Art*, vol. 1 of *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics* (13 vols.).

Nevertheless, a reader might feel that Henke's brief description of Wang Yangming's life suggests an important role for a type of religious experience. In explaining Wang Yangming's harsh treatment at the hands of the Ming court and his subsequent exile to Guizhou, Henke writes:

It was a critical situation: in suspense over his own fate, realizing that at any moment a decree from the capital might order his death, he found his followers one by one falling ill. Nothing daunted, he chopped wood, carried water, and made soft-boiled rice for them, cheering them with songs and stories of home. In view of his own precarious position, he had a sarcophagus made for himself. In the midst of these adversities the chief subject of his meditation was the conduct of a sage under similar circumstances. One night at midnight the great enlightenment came, and suddenly he realized what the sage meant by "investigating things for the sake of extending knowledge to the utmost." Overjoyed, he unconsciously called out, and, arising from his couch, paced the floor. "I was wrong," he said, "in looking for fundamental principles in things and affairs. My nature is sufficient to solve all the problems of existence." From that time on he was a faithful defender of idealism in opposition to the realism of the philosopher Chu, whose commentaries, then as now, were esteemed as the final authority.¹⁰

Although this description hints at what might be interpreted as a religious experience—enlightenment induced by meditation—Henke seems to have read it as an intellectual breakthrough born of quiet deliberation amid an existential crisis, one with profound philosophical implications. Wang's trials led him to formulate a philosophical idealism. He believed that the mind held the key to all the problems an individual might confront. Because the mind is a microcosm of the universe, and the universe is ultimately one "all-pervading unity," the mind is able to perceive universal truths about the human condition. The structure or pattern of the universe is therefore built into the mind, giving it the capacity to know. For that reason, the individual is also the ultimate source of authority, fully capable of making autonomous, rational judgments. This confers a certain dignity and equality, freeing a person from the fetters of tradition. "It was not as a strategist and statesman that Wang made his largest contribution to human welfare," Henke states, "but rather as a great moral reformer,

¹⁰ Henke, "Wang Yang-ming," in vol. 12 of *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 674.

who may justly be ranked with Socrates in his appreciation of moral values and his emphasis upon fullness of life and moral integrity as of far more worth than fame or gain.”¹¹ For Henke, Wang was primarily a moral philosopher and idealist who grounded knowledge in a rich experience of a powerful intuitive faculty.

The French Jesuit and sinologist Léon Wieger, as discussed in chapter 2, also ascribed religious qualities to Wang Yangming’s intellectual development and ideas. His enlightenment experience at the courier station in Guizhou, for instance, is like a revelation. *Liangzhi* is the living or inner word heard in the secrecy of the heart. One must firmly believe in this infallible knowledge, obeying and executing its verdicts with determination and unwavering faith. What puzzled Wieger, however, was that although Wang Yangming “held conscience in such high esteem,” grounding it in “celestial reason [*tianli* 天理],” he failed to realize “Him who gave him it.”¹² Hence, his philosophy was ultimately materialistic, failing to realize its religious potential.

Lyman Cady also saw parallels between *liangzhi* and the Christian notion of moral law. As noted in chapter 2, the Protestant missionary and educator’s privately printed book briefly compares Wang Yangming to several Western philosophers. But he also concludes with a discussion of “Wang’s Doctrine of Intuition and Christian Teaching.” “What possibilities are there in the teachings of Wang Yangming,” he asks, “which have been studied as points of attachment for Christian teaching and the assimilation of Christian ideas?”¹³ Cady suggested that Wang’s concept of mind as the one reality of the universe might logically lead to the Christian understanding of God. As a child of God, a Christian can find clues to God’s reality and presence in his own self, especially from the divine law written into the heart. Furthermore, according to Cady, Wang Yangming makes mind the center of personal and moral life in such a way as to imply a personal being behind it, not an impersonal one. That is where Cady saw some hope for a shared religious belief in a divine reality. Also, he believed that a Christian teacher would find Wang’s teaching of the unity of knowledge and action congenial to his own thinking. For a Christian too, the religious and moral life must not be separate from experience and action.¹⁴

David Nivison was perhaps the first to elucidate more formally the religious dimensions to Wang Yangming’s thought for an English-reading audience. Seemingly prophetically, in his “Philosophy of Wang Yangming,”

¹¹ Henke, “Wang Yang-ming,” in vol. 12 of *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 674.

¹² Wieger, *History of the Religious Beliefs*, 698–700.

¹³ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming’s “Intuitive Knowledge,”* 42.

¹⁴ Cady, *Wang Yang-ming’s “Intuitive Knowledge,”* 43–44.

he wrote that Wang comes across as a utopian with an anti-intellectual bent, something he found disturbing because beautiful utopian ideas are “essentially totalitarian” at heart and “can become the basis of something quite horrible.”¹⁵ But of more interest to him was the religious tone: “Wang, in writing and talking about philosophy, is also practicing and teaching a religion at the same time, and only by remembering this can one see what is going on.”¹⁶ Wang’s moral philosophy, Nivison claimed, “is at the same time a religion.”¹⁷ Wang held a nearly messianic sense of mission. He was pained by his insight into the human predicament and driven to save people from it. Through his own trying experiences he learned “how the worms in a person’s heart can be got rid of, so that one is at peace with oneself.” Properly directed, people’s miserable and ugly lives can become beautiful and happy. “Wang’s religion,” Nivison states, “is not a theism of devotion and salvation but a religion of self-transformation.”¹⁸ The goal of that transformation—sagehood—“is one that has just as much pull as any kind of religious conception of salvation in ‘Heaven.’”¹⁹ Sagehood is “a state in which one spontaneously dances in sheer wordless delight.”²⁰

Ultimately, Nivison explains, for the sage the object of devotion is mind, which has a mystical capacity to perceive the highest reality and confer moral perfection. For Wang Yangming, Nivison says, the mind’s “manifestations in me include my desires and thought, even my confusions and selfish impulses, but also an infallible awareness of that confusion and selfishness, an inner ‘shining mind,’ master, teacher, that is both myself and other, at least in the sense that for me there can be no justified pride of possession, only the duty to listen, heed, trust, reverence, obey.”²¹ Wang called the mind’s guidance *li-angzhi*, which was like a god within but also an object of faith. “All of Wang’s philosophical theory and suggestive phenomenological description of inner mental workings are directed towards guiding the ‘student’ in what he and they call ‘the task’ (*gongfu*)—a never-ending ‘effort’ of self-monitoring and self-change which is to let this inner voice speak clearly and ensure that we will always follow it.”²² In fact, Nivison believed, this effort was not unlike “an active life of constant prayer.”²³

¹⁵ Nivison, “Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming,” 217.

¹⁶ Nivison, “Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming,” 218.

¹⁷ Nivison, “Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming,” 218.

¹⁸ Nivison, “Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming,” 219.

¹⁹ Nivison, “Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming,” 219.

²⁰ Nivison, “Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming,” 219.

²¹ Nivison, “Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming,” 220.

²² Nivison, “Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming,” 220.

²³ Nivison, “Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming,” 220.

Julia Ching also found that Wang Yangming's thought was religious in nature. It is well known that she spent a lifetime explaining the religious dimensions of Confucianism in a richly comparative context. Shortly after publishing her book on Wang Yangming's philosophy, she published *Confucianism and Christianity: A Comparative Study* (1977). Ching wrote this at a time when she could not yet predict the outcome of the 1974 anti-Confucius campaign in the People's Republic of China. She saw in this campaign a threat to the survival of the living Confucian tradition, making her project even more personally meaningful. She asks: Is Confucianism a philosophy or religion, or is it both? Ching notes that Jesuit missionaries had posed such questions over three hundred years before but argues that "they have never been adequately answered."²⁴ Furthermore, missionary-scholars like James Legge and W. E. Soothill produced early studies of Confucianism, and many more followed thereafter. However, Ching claimed of her work, and rightfully so, "this is, I think, the first study of Confucianism done in light of a clearly contemporary understanding of Christianity, with a manifest intention of promoting more intellectual dialogue between the two traditions."²⁵

Ching explains that, as technical terms, philosophy and religion did not enter the Sino-Japanese vocabulary until texts were translated in the nineteenth century. She proposes that Confucianism "represents a tradition of human wisdom," which is what philosophy in East Asia largely signified. Christianity, on the other hand, is primarily a revealed religion. Yet, in her time, Ching could identify historians of religion such as Joseph Kitagawa and Ninian Smart who discerned "a strong religiosity at the heart of the Confucian tradition." As well, both Christianity and Confucianism had "exercised a decisive influence in shaping the beliefs, moral codes, and behaviors of large populations in the East and West."²⁶ Thus, Ching explains, "I present this book to all those who have some interest in Confucianism as a religious tradition."²⁷

Ching reflected on how her methodological approach grew out of her academic experiences. Writing in the 1970s, she found that comparative philosophy and religion was "a frontier region rather than a discipline in itself."²⁸ Those engaging in it risked being regarded as dilettantes attempting something nearly impossible. The sinologist will feel that anyone attempting to interpret Eastern traditions without the necessary linguistic skills is naive. Such interpreters lack depth of knowledge. But those who engage in comparison

²⁴ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, xv.

²⁵ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, xix.

²⁶ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, xvi.

²⁷ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, xix.

²⁸ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, xvi.

bemoan the parochialism of the area studies specialist. They lack breadth of knowledge. Both types of researchers tend to be “disdainful” of theologians who have a sectarian interest in engaging in religious dialogue. Thus, methodologies vary depending on how Confucianism is defined and on the “vested interests of the disciplines themselves.”²⁹

Ching also points out that methodological problems are further complicated by the personal background of the researcher. For herself, that meant “an East Asian who has studied in both East and West, and who is at present living and working in the West.”³⁰ These circumstances raise the issue of identity. Which culture and tradition does one most identify with, and what perspective should be adopted in treating the other? Or should one refuse to be drawn to either side and remain somewhere in the middle? She resolved this issue similarly to Joseph Kitagawa, who identified himself with the West but without losing his Eastern identity.³¹

Yet, for this book, Ching does approach her subject matter with a kind of disinterested objectivity. As a comparative historian of ideas, she drew her “methodology from the nature of the traditions being studied, proceeding, in each case, from the sacred books and classical texts to the development of philosophical interpretations and their present-day relevance.”³² Her exposition compares Confucian classics to the New Testament, but she also gives due consideration to Christian exegesis and Confucian commentaries. Ching states, “I give real importance to the movement of thought called Neo-Confucianism, in which form the Confucian tradition has come down to the present.”³³ Unlike what was the case for many Westerners who had studied the tradition, she recognized that far from dampening the religious qualities of the Confucian tradition, Neo-Confucians had in fact amplified them. But they did so in a way that was foreign to dogmatic Christianity and closer to Christian mysticism.

Wang Yangming is a perfect example of this amplification. In *To Acquire Wisdom: The Way of Wang Yang-ming*, Ching poses the question of whether Wang is a sage, mystic, or thinker. Concerning his discoveries, she wonders, “Are these of the order of philosophical thought, or religious vision? Was his wisdom born of a religious experience of reality, which consists primarily in certain special moments of ‘enlightenment’ or supra-rational consciousness, and only secondarily in continual reflection upon the meaning of the insights

²⁹ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, xvii.

³⁰ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, xvii.

³¹ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, xvii.

³² Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, xvii.

³³ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, xviii.

received, especially as confirmed and enriched by new experiences in the realm of ordinary life?”³⁴ Ching concludes in this work that Wang Yangming had pointed to a type of knowledge that is mystical in nature and lies beyond the reach of dialectical reasoning. Thus, he was both a sage and a mystic: “after having reached the peak of thought that reason could bring him, he has also been favored with certain experiences and insights that effected a certain ‘leap’ beyond the realm of reason and dialectic.”³⁵

In *Confucianism and Christianity Compared*, Ching briefly discusses Wang’s ideas concerning conscience and the Absolute. In the New Testament, she states, conscience is spoken of as a spiritual disposition, a power to act, that is ennobled by faith in Christ. Catholic doctrine also recognizes a natural moral law rooted in human nature. Confucians, of course, had always recognized an inner faculty of moral discernment. Mencius had spoken of the sense of right and wrong common to all men and of the knowledge of the good and the ability to do good that all people have without needing to learn it. Wang Yangming made this faculty the basis of his entire philosophy. *Liangzhi* is both ethical and metaphysical; it is moral sense and intuition, the foundation of human existence.³⁶ But whereas for him conscience is primarily given with birth and immanent, for a Christian it is oriented towards God, the supreme lawgiver and judge.

Ching offers an exposition of the history of writing about the transcendent leading up to Wang Yangming’s discussion of it. Although a God is not the chief actor as he is in Jewish traditions and Christian Gospels, one is present in the Confucian classics, as *Shangdi* or *Tian*. “The Confucian tradition,” Ching writes, “may be described as possessing at the same time theistic and agnostic or even atheistic tendencies, with the former dominating over the latter.”³⁷ The latter tendencies unfolded in part as secularization. The almighty addressed in the *Classic of Odes* and the *Classic of Documents* became a natural or impersonal source of the ethical humanism of later classical times. This secularizing trend peaks with the rationalism and skepticism of the Warring States philosopher Xunzi and the Han dynasty philosopher Wang Chong (ca. 27–100 CE).

However, Ching writes, “the problem of God in Confucianism is all the more interesting because of the evolution of the understanding of God.”³⁸ Theism gave way to philosophical interpretations of the Absolute. A prophetic

³⁴ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 182.

³⁵ Ching, *To Acquire Wisdom*, 183.

³⁶ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 89–90.

³⁷ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 126.

³⁸ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 112.

religion with a personal god evolved into mysticism, “where the emphasis is more upon the oneness of self and the universe, the so-called pantheistic tendencies.”³⁹ “Confucianism,” Ching explains, “offers an example of a transition from the earlier personal deity of the classics to the later God-Absolute of the philosophers.”⁴⁰

The mystical tendency was already evident in the work of Mengzi, a philosopher for whom Heaven was present within man’s heart. Consequently, he who knows his own heart and nature knows Heaven. Mengzi thus represented a trend towards making the divine immanent. The *Doctrine of the Mean* also evidences this mystical dimension, stating that the Way of Heaven (*tian dao* 天道) is transcendent, eternal, and unceasing, “characterized by the universal harmony found in nature as well as in man.”⁴¹ The Neo-Confucians simply bring these trends to full fruition. For them, the Absolute—variously referred to as the supreme ultimate (*taiji* 太极), principle of Heaven (*tianli* 天理), and mind (心 *xin*)—is the source of all being and goodness, holding the universe together and explaining its inner meaning. This Absolute strongly resembles mystical notions of God found in the thinking of German Dominican theologian Meister Eckhart and French Jesuit theologian and philosopher Teilhard de Chardin.

For Wang Yangming, Ching explains, the original substance of mind (*xin zhi bentu* 心之本體) is the Absolute. It is identical with Heavenly principle (*tianli* 天理) and the Tao, ultimate reality. Behind ego and the false self lies this innermost core of a person’s being. If discovered, “he will be transformed, completely true to himself and to the universe in which he lives, following its natural course of operation which leads him to the realization of perfect goodness, which is the ultimate revelation of the Absolute in himself.”⁴² Ching sees this as a type of spiritual cultivation leading to mystic insight, the discovery of true self. The language, she claims, is reminiscent of Christian mysticism, especially of Meister Eckhart, for whom “the spark of the soul is the light of God’s reflection, which is always looking back to god.” Wang’s subjective Absolute resembles Eckhart’s godhead, because the original mind is the ultimate reality hidden in the heart of man.⁴³

In the 1980s and 1990s, systematic comparative work like Ching’s was advanced by other academics who saw religious or spiritual dimensions to Confucianism, however those might be defined. In addition to their commitment

³⁹ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 113.

⁴⁰ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 113.

⁴¹ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 113.

⁴² Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 136.

⁴³ Ching, *Confucianism and Christianity*, 136–137.

to objective historical study, these scholars also sought to demonstrate the relevance of this tradition to modern times. Tu Weiming wished to salvage its reputation, to show in a positive light a “maligned system of ideas.”⁴⁴ John Berthrong and Robert Neville sought to do the same, also asking if Confucianism is “portable.” Was it a philosophy “rooted and rootable only in East Asian culture” or a world philosophy that could be transplanted into a non-East Asian cultural milieu?⁴⁵ These scholars wanted to know if they too could be legitimately Confucian and what the intellectual profile of a Boston Confucian would be.⁴⁶

Since the academics asking these questions interacted with one another at conferences, they developed a shared sense of purpose and supported each other’s publication activities. Several of them lived and taught in the northeastern United States and, due to the geographical connection, began to refer to themselves as Boston Confucians. The appellation came out of a Confucian-Christian Dialogue Conference held at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1991, when the participants joked about how they had all come from the Boston area.⁴⁷ For them, this was reminiscent of “Boston Brahmins,” a phrase coined by Oliver Wendell Holmes in his novel *Elsie Venner*, referring to Boston aristocrats who believed destiny had set them apart to create a shining city on the hill. Two groups comprised this academic circle, one that had formed under the leadership of Tu Weiming at Harvard University and another under Neville and Berthrong at Boston University. One other important participant was at a distance from this circle, teaching at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and that was Rodney Taylor.

Their broader Confucian projects, however, are not under study here.⁴⁸ Rather, to what extent did Wang Yangming figure into these projects and inter-religious dialogue? Although these scholars were fully aware of his importance to the Confucian tradition, aside from Tu Weiming’s publications, the Ming School of Mind remained largely marginal to their scholarship. Berthrong has explained the reason for this. The “Northern School,” as he called it, “was more closely identified with an inclination toward and appreciation of the work of Wang Yangming and his followers.”⁴⁹ Members saw themselves as heirs to second-generation modern New Confucians such as Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi, “the direct historical, spiritual, and intellectual heirs to the

⁴⁴ Tu Wei-ming, *Humanity and Self-Cultivation*, xvii.

⁴⁵ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, xxi.

⁴⁶ Berthrong, “From Xunzi to Boston Confucianism,” 437.

⁴⁷ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, xxi.

⁴⁸ See, for example, Berthrong, “From Xunzi to Boston Confucianism,” 433–50.

⁴⁹ Berthrong, *All Under Heaven*, 438.

Song-Yuan-Ming-Qing development of the Confucian Way.”⁵⁰ The “Southern School,” on the other hand, “seeks to find its identity in the study of Xunzi and Zhu Xi,”⁵¹ and hence rejects the modern genealogical search for a “true, authentic Mencian Confucianism” as it was transmitted by a lineage of Song-Ming Confucian masters.⁵² Indeed, Xunzi is central to the American Confucian projects of both Berthrong and Neville, while Berthrong incorporated more scholarship on Zhu Xi.

In *All Under Heaven: Transforming Paradigms in Confucian-Christian Dialogue*, for instance, he provides an “inquiry into comparative religion,” one bringing Christianity and Confucianism into renewed dialogue.”⁵³ The ideas for the book were nurtured at Chicago Theological Seminary, where he learned much about Neo-Confucianism from the intellectual historian Edward Ch’ien and the literary scholar Anthony Yu. He had also been deeply involved in councils and conferences held for interfaith dialogue, as well as the academic circle of the Boston Confucians. Even during this time, leading up to 1994 when the book was published, he found that “Very little is known in Christian theological circles about the development of the spiritual or religious dimensions of the Confucian tradition compared to the modern Christian understandings of Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism.”⁵⁴

Berthrong provides an overview of “six epochs” in Confucian learning, with Wang Yangming belonging to the fourth as one of the Song-Ming learning of the Way scholars. “Wang, through a practice of intense personal cultivation,” he explains, “rediscovered what he took to be the true Confucian method of spiritual insight based on *liangzhi* as the innate knowledge of reality as manifested in the mind of the sage.”⁵⁵ It is especially his “vision of a socially reforming and engaged Confucianism” that has been influential in political reform movements in East Asia. However, in keeping with his own robust theoretical defense of a “XunZhu combination” as best suited to Boston, Berthrong has little else to say about the Ming School of Mind. Rather, he finds that Southern Song Confucians, especially Zhu Xi, “set the stage for the modern dialogue of Confucian and Christians.”⁵⁶ “Without understanding the Song reformation of the Confucian Way, no one can comprehend modern Confucian discourse,” writes Berthrong.⁵⁷ Thus, his book introduces Zhu Xi’s metaphysics

⁵⁰ Berthrong, “From Xunzi to Boston Confucianism,” 440.

⁵¹ Berthrong, *All Under Heaven*, 438.

⁵² Berthrong, “From Xunzi to Boston Confucianism,” 440–441.

⁵³ Berthrong, *All Under Heaven*, 1.

⁵⁴ Berthrong, *All Under Heaven*, 2.

⁵⁵ Berthrong, *All Under Heaven*, 437.

⁵⁶ Berthrong, *All Under Heaven*, 4.

⁵⁷ Berthrong, *All Under Heaven*, 4.

and explores the relationship between his thought and Alfred North Whitehead's process philosophy and Charles Hartshorne's process theology.

The Ming School of Mind is also largely on the margins of Robert Neville's *Boston Confucianism: Portable Tradition in the Late-Modern World*. His book goes to great lengths to define what it is about Confucianism that makes it a world philosophy and religion. He formulates definitions and motifs for analyzing the spiritual dimensions of religious traditions and applies those to Confucianism. Most importantly, he makes every effort to explain in detail what Confucianism has to offer Boston, a place where, for him, Christianity is an essential cultural component.

On the whole, Neville shows a preference for pre-Qin Confucianism. He states that to transport Confucianism to America, three core elements should be included: primary scriptures, secondary scriptures, and interpretive context. The primary scriptures—by far the most important—include the *Analects*, *Doctrine of the Mean*, *Mengzi*, and *Xunzi*. However, secondary scriptures—Neo-Confucian writings—while “important for the Confucian locating himself in a complex dialogue,” Neville believes, “do not constitute a body of writings that needs to be appropriated and given some positive interpretation.”⁵⁸ In fact, he even makes the peculiar proposal that “Perhaps contemporary Confucians have to ‘get over’ the Neo-Confucians just as post-modern Western philosophers are supposed to get over modernity; still, that would be shaping their current work with a stance toward those secondary scriptures.”⁵⁹ This position seems to align with what Berthrong refers to as the “originary” impulse and hegemony of origins in the Western presentation of Confucianism, according to which “the earliest manifestation is the most authentic.”⁶⁰ As for interpretive context, Neville is simply referring to a basic knowledge of Chinese history and culture.

Neville concisely summarizes significant normative principles, themes, and motifs contained in each of the ancient scriptures, and he asserts that the most important theme for Boston Confucianism is ritual propriety. Confucius's and Xunzi's critical insight was that “the higher institutions of culture consist in the exercise of ritual propriety.”⁶¹ Virtues cannot be properly restored without attending to the social behaviors that embody them. Xunzi was especially clear about this: skeptical of the supposed original goodness of human nature, he argued that people must be shaped by “stylized or conventional social forms that mediate people's relations with one another, with nature, and

⁵⁸ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 7.

⁵⁹ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 7–8.

⁶⁰ Berthrong, “From Xunzi to Boston Confucianism,” 441.

⁶¹ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 11.

with institutions such as family, community order, government, and arts and letters.”⁶²

Neville argues that Xunzi’s conviction that people must be humanized through ritual propriety is promising for the development of a Boston brand of Confucianism. He believes that this dimension of Confucianism aligns well with a strand of American pragmatism running from Charles S. Pierce to John Dewey, one that utilizes semiotics to analyze language in its social context. The pragmatists pay special attention to the connections between people’s representation of the world and their intentions. They analyze how representations fit into the elaborate systems of signs that make up a culture, as well as how they serve to achieve an individual’s purposes—or, in other words, their performative function. In sum, pragmatists and the Confucians share an interest in the analysis of the signs shaping our social habits. This can serve as a starting point for critiquing signs and further shaping them according to whatever values are considered of utmost importance (such as harmony for Confucianism).⁶³

Neville seems to feel that, in developing an American edition of Confucianism, no other facet of this tradition is more important than the Xunzian strand. True enough, in his chapter on “Resources for a Conception of Selfhood,” he does indicate that the Confucian emphasis on how the individual orients himself to any particular social situation as well as the Confucian quest for poise in harmonizing these orientations offer valuable insights into the nature of selfhood and the importance of relations and engagement.⁶⁴ Otherwise, Neville seems to find rough equivalents for everything that is admirable about this tradition in his own, Christianity, providing rich comparisons between the two traditions throughout the book. While doing so, he describes motifs of transcendence in Confucianism, including those of Wang Yangming. Of him, Neville writes:

The great Ming Neo-Confucian Wang Yangming was contemporary with Luther and like him intensified a subjective focus. Wang criticized Zhu Xi’s distinction of principle from material force as too dualistic and insisted that principle is everything. The crucial point for Wang is the continuity of thought and action. Whereas most of the other Neo-Confucians were scholars, teachers, and administrators, Wang was most prominent as a military general. Impatient with the earlier advocacy of meditative quiet-sitting to gain clarity and contact with the inner mind or principle, Wang emphasized meditation in action, centeredness in battle as it were. Proper

⁶² Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 6.

⁶³ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 14–15.

⁶⁴ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 189.

sagely discipline leads to an instant expression of the principle in one's inmost heart, what he called "innate knowledge," in the actions of ordinary and extraordinary life. But even more than the Song philosophers he emphasized the transcendence of principle.⁶⁵

Neville quotes Wang Yangming's Four-Sentence Maxim (*si ju jiao* 四句教) as proof of the last point. As Neville understands this teaching, it shows the continuity of the self "with the origin of all things that transcends even the distinction between good and evil."⁶⁶ He interprets this to mean that "Always within the human sphere, we should be attentive to good and evil. But the mind with which we do this in itself transcends that distinction. It is the mind from which all things in the universe derive, and it is on that basis that Wang developed his famous exposition of the ancient claim that to be humane is to be one body with the universe."⁶⁷

Neville learned of Wang Yangming through the translations of Wing-tsit Chan but also through the work of Tu Weiming. "No contemporary Confucian, or New Confucian," he wrote, "has been clearer than Tu Weiming in claiming that Confucianism is a religion or, at least, has a serious religious dimension."⁶⁸ Furthermore, Neville recognized him as a key leader in advancing the work of the Boston Confucians, a kind of "Confucian ritual master" for this important public conversation. Indeed, since the late 1970s, Tu Weiming had been publishing books with the goal of constructing his "third epoch of Confucian humanism," including *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Chung-yung* (1978), *Humanity and Self-Cultivation: Essays in Confucian Thought* (1979), and *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (1985).

For Tu, Confucianism is a spiritual tradition and "religio-philosophy," a defining characteristic of which is confidence in the perfectibility of man through self-effort. He writes:

Undoubtedly the primary concern of the Confucianist is to become a sage . . . the Confucian sage symbolizes the most authentic, genuine, and sincere man. From the Confucian point of view, the ultimate basis of and actual strength for becoming a sage are located in the very nature of man, which is imparted, but not created, by Heaven. The path to sagehood is therefore an unceasing process of self-transformation.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 156.

⁶⁶ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 156.

⁶⁷ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 156–157.

⁶⁸ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 83.

⁶⁹ Tu Wei-ming, *Humanity and Self-Cultivation*, 86.

For Tu, Wang Yangming's life is exemplary of this quest, and his teaching centered on it. His pedagogy focused on "none other than the learning of how to become a person, which in Neo-Confucian terminology means how to cultivate one's own body and mind and how to realize the universal humanity in oneself." His learning was directed towards self-learning, the quest for self-knowledge, authenticity, and manifesting "the genuine humanity in the self."⁷⁰ Tu believed this was a spiritual quest with religious significance.

Consequently, through Tu's work, Neville learned much about the Confucian quest for sagehood and of the special place Wang Yangming held in Tu's discussion of it. He believed Tu had "given the lie" to the idea that Confucianism is merely bland religiosity, a kind of "bureaucratization of existential concerns."⁷¹ Rather, as Neville understood his argument, the Confucian is first and foremost concerned with becoming a humane person, a goal that requires "the existential choice to enter onto the path of self-transformation to sagehood."⁷² This decision resembles conversion, "a turning of the soul from outward preoccupations to an inward human nature which, if engaged sincerely, can power the process of self-cultivation."⁷³

Neville notes that Tu developed these ideas largely through discussions of Wang Yangming. Wang had argued that the mind always has an intentional direction that, ideally speaking, arises from "heavenly principle" (*tianli* 天理). At an ontological level, mind is something like the affective manifestation of heavenly principle, which is its "original substance" (*benti* 本體). The existential problem lies with what happens as mind encounters things. Because of selfish desires, mind can become fixated on objects and therefore separated from its rootedness in heavenly principle. Desires will distort the true intentions of the mind, separating mind from its original substance. Thus, Neville explains, the central problem for self-cultivation "is that the ordinary state of affairs is that we are alienated from our original substance."⁷⁴

Neville explains that "Tu follows Wang Yangming in giving a dual prescription for reversing alienation."⁷⁵ Those include such medicines as "the vigorous extirpation of selfish desires," "the direct turning of the intention inward to the heavenly principle itself," and "rigorous self-criticism and the cultivation of self-control." None of these, however, were particularly new to

⁷⁰ Tu Wei-ming, *Humanity and Self-Cultivation*, 144.

⁷¹ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 84.

⁷² Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 85.

⁷³ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 84.

⁷⁴ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 84.

⁷⁵ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 84.

the Confucian tradition of self-cultivation. Neville believes that Tu's special contribution

...is to accentuate a theme of Wang's, namely, the recovery of heavenly principle in the heart, the second medicine. By turning inward to principle and attaining sincerity, in which heavenly principle is neither obscured nor paralyzed, suddenly the mind can turn back outward to objects sincerely and without fixation, interpreting and responding to them with something like spontaneous rightness. This is Wang's notion of *liangzhi* (innate knowledge affectively expressive in action). With a proper orientation to heavenly principle in the heart and mind, indeed, the whole person, can find and conform to heavenly principle in all its objects and in the structures of its own responses. The ontological point is that everything that exists arises from heavenly principle, and the existential point is that when this clearly or sincerely informs the mind, the mind acts to make us "one body with the world." But the ordinary situation is that we are alienated from the heavenly principle that constitutes our very hearts.⁷⁶

Neville has much more to say about Tu Weiming's Confucian philosophy, such as whether this inward turn to heavenly principle counts as a kind of conversion, the role of ritual, the meaning of humaneness (*ren* 仁), and the problem of evil, all the while providing comparisons to similar themes in Christianity.

At one point, Neville does call into question whether Confucianism really provides the resources necessary to overcome alienation and evil. In his chapter on "a preeminent Confucian thinker of our time, the leading thinker of the Boston Confucians," Neville states that Tu "has pointed out the relevance of his thought for the Western problematic of existential alienation in the modern world and shown how Confucianism has a vast range of resources to bring to that issue. But at the same time, by indirection this chapter has indicated two points on which Boston Confucianism needs to look to Western resources."⁷⁷ One of these resources is pragmatism, as explained above. But Neville brings up a more serious issue: "The second is the more religious issue of conversion, or the overcoming of alienation so as to tap into the ontological foundation of love or humaneness. If one is seriously alienated, it is not clear that the commitment to overcome alienation is possible without some extra invention."⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 84.

⁷⁷ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 104.

⁷⁸ Neville, *Boston Confucianism*, 104.

Of course, Neville has in mind the Christian notion of grace, something for which he did not find a satisfying equivalent in the Confucian tradition as it came to him through the English-language literature he read.

This Southern School, as Berthrong identified it, did not go uncriticized for drawing together Xunzi and pragmatism as a potentially American strand in the evolving Confucian tradition. In “Confucianism as a World Philosophy: A Response to Neville’s Boston Confucianism from a Neo-Confucian Perspective” (2003), the philosopher Liu Shu-hsien, who retired from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1999, called attention to the second-generation New Confucian philosophers’ critique of pragmatism from the perspective of transcendental analysis. Liu emphasizes that ritual should not be thought of as prior to the virtue of humaneness. Although it is true that children learn propriety from adults generationally, “what comes first in time does not make it the foundation to justify our behavior.”⁷⁹ Rather, he explains, ritual should reflect “the natural growth of the mind-heart of humanity within us,” because only behaviors manifesting that humaneness “are worthwhile to be observed and cultivated as habits.”⁸⁰

For the New Confucians, Liu states, “when one realizes the humanity (*ren*) within the self, she or he correlates with the creativity (*sheng*) of Heaven.” Hence, realizing humaneness establishes a metaphysics, for through virtue Heaven is in some sense accessed. He believes that the practice of ritual as established routines can lead to the uncovering of its basis in the mind-heart of humanity, and from there to the ontological source, the revelation of the transcendent mind and nature. Ultimately, one comes to regard the myriad things as one body, as Wang Yangming had envisaged it. “This reverse approach,” Liu explains, “is self-reflexive, rising to a different level other than knowledge and intelligence.” Such insight rises above the pragmatist’s straightforward problem-solving approach, which relies on accumulating empirical knowledge.⁸¹ Clearly, for Liu, and for Neo-Confucians more generally, a distinction must be drawn between origins in a classical and historical sense and origins in an ultimate sense, which is why the metaphysical ideas of the Ming School of Mind cannot be skirted in the name of a more authentic classical tradition.

Rodney Taylor also made a persuasive case for recognizing, as one of his books was titled, *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*. The idea for the volume originated at the International Conference on Confucianism and Christianity in the World Today held in Hong Kong in 1988. At that time, Robert

⁷⁹ Liu Shu-hsien, “Confucianism as a World Philosophy,” 59–73.

⁸⁰ Liu Shu-hsien, “Confucianism as a World Philosophy,” 59–73.

⁸¹ Liu Shu-hsien, “Confucianism as a World Philosophy,” 59–73.

Neville proposed that Taylor contribute a collection of his published and unpublished essays on the religious dimensions of the tradition to the SUNY Series in Religion Neville had been editing.

Taylor agreed. After all, since completing his PhD on Gao Panlong 高攀龍 (1562–1626) in 1974 at Columbia University and taking a position at the University of Colorado, Boulder, he had written many papers on this topic. These were presented at conferences held by the American Academy of Religion, the Association of Asian Studies, and Columbia University. They were also nourished in the intellectual atmosphere fostered by those he interacted with, such as Tu Weiming, William Theodore de Bary, John Berthrong, Judith Berling, and Robert Neville. He was fully aware that Tu Weiming, the modern New Confucians of East Asia, and Okada Takehiko believed Confucianism could be revitalized and made relevant to modern times. This was to be “a third epoch of Confucian humanism,” as Tu had coined the phrase. As for the book *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*, Neville explains that it asks, “Does the Confucian path of the sage count as a religious path of spiritual perfection?”⁸² Taylor asserts that far from being merely an ethical system and humanistic teaching, Confucianism was “profoundly religious.”⁸³ Any interpretation ignoring this quality was missing its “quintessential feature.” Thus, he believed it was “time for Confucianism to assume its rightful place among the major religious traditions of the world.”⁸⁴

In his publications, Taylor devotes much effort to defining what it was about Confucianism that made it religious in nature. Heaven (*tian* 天), for example, functions “as a religious authority or Absolute frequently monistic in its structure.”⁸⁵ Neo-Confucians explored the relation between the individual and this Absolute, elaborating a way for the individual to move toward it. That movement ultimately required a radical change in the person. “This process of transformation,” Taylor writes, “is the salvational or soteriological element and the quintessential characteristic in the identification of a religious tradition.”⁸⁶ For Neo-Confucians, the person so transformed is the sage: “in the relationship between Heaven as a religious Absolute and the sage as a transformed person, we have the identification of a soteriological process and, as a result, the identification of the religious core of the tradition.”⁸⁷ Thus, the central driving force for learning was commitment to becoming a sage. Sages

⁸² Taylor, *Religious Dimensions*, x.

⁸³ Taylor, *Religious Dimensions*, 1.

⁸⁴ Taylor, *Religious Dimensions*, 2.

⁸⁵ Taylor, *Religious Dimensions*, 2.

⁸⁶ Taylor, *Religious Dimensions*, 3.

⁸⁷ Taylor, *Religious Dimensions*, 3.

are worthy of emulation because they develop the potential of their human nature to the point where they have become conscious of the principle of Heaven (Heaven's reason), the basic moral nature and metaphysical structure of the universe. With sagehood, one experiences oneness with all things, witnessing directly a basic goodness of which humans are capable of sharing. This experience could count as a type of apophatic mysticism or, more simply, a sense of interconnectedness and moral responsibility.

Taylor further explores these ideas throughout his book, touching on many related topics. Is the sage also a kind of saint? What is the difference? What was the Neo-Confucian quest for sagehood ultimately about? One goal is oneness, "a mental attitude" that permits a person to know very directly the moral nature shared by all things and hence to act morally. Wang Yangming called this common moral nature *liangzhi* ("innate knowledge"). *Liangzhi* allows the individual to transcend boundaries and to know directly what is outside the self.⁸⁸ Taylor also asks if the quest for sagehood leads to the writing of religious autobiography. He believes that with an emphasis on the interior life, self-examination, and self-conscious pursuit of spiritual truths, Ming Neo-Confucianism indeed did so. The autobiography of Hu Zhi 胡直, disciple of Luo Hongxian and follower of the Wang Yangming school, is just one example. It focuses on Hu's effort to attain sagehood, relates moments of doubt and crisis experienced in the process, and describes breakthroughs, "a form of self-transformation in which the individual's true nature is seen in a unitary relation with Heaven, earth, and the ten thousand things."⁸⁹

Also worth mentioning is Taylor's exploration of the relevance of the sudden/gradual paradigm in Buddhism to distinguishing different Neo-Confucian prescriptions for self-cultivation. "In general terms," he writes, "the Zhu Xi school favored the practice of quiet-sitting while the Wang Yang-ming school felt it to be unnecessary and even potentially harmful as a practice. For Yang-ming and his followers, a person's sageliness was revealed within activity, reflecting the confidence in the innate knowledge to manifest itself of itself. A meditative regimen was not only secondary but antithetical to the potential immediacy of the realization of sagehood."⁹⁰ Although Wang Yang-ming had once taught quiet-sitting as an important method of self-cultivation, he eventually moved away from it. His focus became the clarification of the innate knowledge, the substance (*benti* 本體) of which is present whether one

⁸⁸ Taylor, *Religious Dimensions*, 45.

⁸⁹ Taylor, *Religious Dimensions*, 55.

⁹⁰ Taylor, *Religious Dimensions*, 78.

is tranquil (*jing* 靜) or active (*dong* 動). His followers, Taylor notes, were divided on this issue.⁹¹

Wang Yangming and Christianity

Up to the 1990s then, the religious dimensions of Wang Yangming's life experiences and thought were discussed primarily as a part of wide-ranging inquiries into Confucian religiosity or Confucianism and Christianity. Thereafter, academics native to East Asia who had personally experienced both traditions and resided in both East Asia and the United States looked at some of these issues in more detail. The Korean Christian theologian and scholar of East Asian religious studies Heup Young Kim published a dissertation and book comparing the Swiss Protestant theologian Karl Barth to Wang Yangming. The Korean-American Methodist minister Seok Hwan Hong wrote a dissertation comparing John Calvin to Wang Yangming. The Malaysian-Chinese professor of comparative religions and philosophy Peter T. C. Chang published a book comparing the life and thought of Wang Yangming to that of Bishop Joseph Butler. Lee Hsin-yi completed a dissertation comparing the moral philosophies of Wang Yangming to those of H. Richard Niebuhr. Combined, these scholarly inquiries provide rich reflection on how, through close study of key representatives, seemingly disparate traditions might be brought together into a meaningful dialogue.

In 1996, Heup Young Kim (b. 1949) published *Wang Yang-ming and Karl Barth: A Confucian Christian Dialogue*. It began as a doctoral dissertation he completed at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. Yet little about his early life would have suggested that he might one day become a theologian. Kim was raised in a "Korean family steeped in a thousand-year history of Confucianism."⁹² His published clan genealogy extended back through thirty generations of Confucian scholars. Furthermore, he graduated from Seoul National University with an engineering degree and worked for several major Korean corporations. But then, while staying in the United States, he experienced a radical conversion to Christianity, so he chose to remain and explore this further, first at Princeton Theological Seminary and then at Berkeley.

Interestingly, even after converting to Christianity, Kim found that the more he studied theology, the more he became convinced that Confucianism

⁹¹ Taylor, *Religious Dimensions*, 82–3. For further discussion, see his *The Confucian Way of Contemplation: Okada Takehiko and the Tradition of Quiet-Sitting*. This is a translation of several chapters in Okada Takehiko's *Zazen to seiza* 坐禪と靜坐 ([Chanist] just sitting and [Confucian] quiet sitting), including a lengthy introduction as well as interviews with Okada.

⁹² Personal communication with the author, July 24, 2018.

was deeply embedded in his soul and body. “Subtly but powerfully, Confucianism works inside me,” he wrote, “as my native religious language.”⁹³ Thus, for him, theology must include both the total response of one’s being to God and critically wrestling with one’s Confucian roots. “Doing East Asian theology necessarily involves the study of Confucianism as a theological task,” he wrote.⁹⁴ His goal therefore became to find a theological paradigm that could encompass the Confucian Dao.

Wang Yang-ming and Karl Barth: A Confucian-Christian Dialogue was “a beginning of that theological enterprise.”⁹⁵ He sought to bring together in dialogue major figures who represented their traditions. In his view, Wang Yang-ming was “a seminal thinker and great reformer in the history of Confucianism,” while Karl Barth “was one of the most significant Church theologians in the history of Western Christianity since the reformation.”⁹⁶ Although they articulate radically different religious paradigms, one theo-historical and the other anthropo-cosmic, they share a common interest in answering the question of “how to be fully human.”⁹⁷ Wang Yangming’s Confucian teaching on self-cultivation “aims to realize the true self (*liangzhi*) latent in human nature.” Karl Barth’s Christian doctrine of sanctification aims to realize one’s true elected nature. They both believe that our fundamental ontological reality is radical humanity (*liangzhi* and *humanitas Christi*). Evil arises when we deny our radical humanity, which nevertheless has the power to remove it. For Wang we must identify our subjectivity with our true mind-heart, while for Barth we must discover our connection with Jesus Christ. As our ontological reality, radical humanity is spiritually empowering. How does one become fully human? This is both a very concrete, practical question and also the most universal. For Wang and Barth, the process of self-transformation leading to realizing one’s full humanity is also a communal act. The meaning of humanity is realized only in ever-expanding circles of human relatedness, until all humanity is brought together in solidarity.

Heup Young Kim furthered his comparative religious studies research in later publications. Those include an article comparing *liangzhi* and *humanitas Christi* published in the *Korea Journal of Systematic Theology*,⁹⁸ a chapter titled “Christianity’s View of Confucianism: An East Asian Theology or Religions,” and a recent book, *A Theology of Dao*.

⁹³ Heup Young Kim, *Wang Yang-ming and Karl Barth*, 1.

⁹⁴ Heup Young Kim, *Wang Yang-ming and Karl Barth*, 1.

⁹⁵ Heup Young Kim, *Wang Yang-ming and Karl Barth*, 7.

⁹⁶ Heup Young Kim, *Wang Yang-ming and Karl Barth*, 7.

⁹⁷ Heup Young Kim, *Wang Yang-ming and Karl Barth*, 7.

⁹⁸ Heup Young Kim, “Liang-chi and Humanitas Christi: An Encounter of Wang Yang-ming and Karl Barth.”

Seok Hwan Hong is a Korean-American Methodist minister whose personal, spiritual journey led him to his dissertation work. He was born in South Korea to a family with diverse religious commitments. The tensions between these commitments led Hong to a searching exploration of how one can remain an authentic Christian in a diverse faith environment. In 1987, at twenty-eight years old, he decided to study in the United States, first completing a degree at Emory University and then studying at Boston University under Robert Neville and John Berthrong. Thus, his PhD was nurtured by “Boston Confucianism,” a central concern of which was examination of the religious dimensions of the tradition as well as the value it holds for people all over the world in modern times. Furthermore, Neville was leading the “Boston University Comparative Religious Ideas Project.” Conducted between 1995 and 1999, the project aimed to generate a comparative method that could reconcile seemingly irreconcilable religious traditions around the world. Neville believed vague comparative categories identifying significant aspects of them could be used to generate meaningful comparisons.⁹⁹

Thus, Boston University was well suited to Seok Hwan Hong’s particular set of concerns, intensely aware as he was of the “so-called irreconcilability between Christianity and Confucianism.”¹⁰⁰ He saw himself as “an insider of Christianity” who, from personal experience, understood that “the Confucian way of life deeply saturates the way of life and thinking of people of East Asia.”¹⁰¹ Thus, Christianity could never simply displace Asian religions but rather must find a way to integrate them into its theology. To address how this might happen, he engaged in an in-depth study of John Calvin’s and Wang Yangming’s fundamental religious doctrines, respectively, the *imago Dei* and *liangzhi*.

Hong believed that one should not be naïve about the nature of the challenge at hand. After all, Calvin had little that would resemble the Way (*dao* 道), the principle of Heaven (*tianli* 天理), illuminating luminous virtue (*ming ming de* 明明德), resting in the highest good (*zhi zhi shan* 止至善), the mind’s essence (*xin ti* 心體), and the one body of the ten thousand things (*wan wu yiti* 萬物一體), while Wang Yangming held no concepts resembling a creator God, Christ, revelation, redemption, justification, providence, or grace. “Wang Yangming and John Calvin,” Hong writes, “apparently fail to share any similar concepts with respect to religious matters and philosophical thought.”¹⁰² More to the point, whereas for Calvin “Christ is essential for the restoration of

⁹⁹ Seok Hwan Hong, “Ultimate Human Transformation,” 9–10.

¹⁰⁰ Seok Hwan Hong, “Ultimate Human Transformation,” 2.

¹⁰¹ Seok Hwan Hong, “Ultimate Human Transformation,” 295.

¹⁰² Seok Hwan Hong, “Ultimate Human Transformation,” 3.

the imago Dei,” Wang Yangming “does not need Christ to realize *liangzhi*.”¹⁰³ *Liangzhi* is entirely sufficient for self-transformation.

Nevertheless, Wang and Calvin do appear to share some concerns, and these can be formalized as categories for deeper comparison. They both offer a diagnosis of the human predicament, explain the causes or origins of it, and present solutions for resolving it. They outline a spiritual path to what Frederick Streng has called “ultimate human transformation.” For Calvin, a human being is created in the image of God, but this image has been perverted by sin. For Wang Yangming, *liangzhi* is imparted by Heaven but has become darkened by selfishness. Consequently, Hong writes, “the restoration of the imago Dei and the realization of *liangzhi* are the major human project in each tradition.”¹⁰⁴ What makes that process spiritual is that in both cases personal integration is achieved through self-transcendence in relation to ultimate reality. A person’s relationship to ultimate reality is fundamentally transformed.¹⁰⁵ Hong’s dissertation also goes into some depth regarding several other comparative categories, such as personal identity, the human predicament, causes of the human predicament, sources of the solution, the nature of the Absolute, and the means of ultimate human transformation.

Lee Hsin-yi’s dissertation was also inspired by a personal search for answers to existential questions. Born and educated in both a Christian and Confucian environment, Lee was intensely aware that both traditions require an ethical life but also provide differing explanations as to why one must be moral and how that is achieved.¹⁰⁶ To further his understanding, he wrote a comparative study of prominent moral philosophers belonging to each tradition, the German-American Protestant theologian H. Richard Niebuhr and Wang Yangming. “They have shown their profound accomplishment in investigating human moral nature,” Lee writes, “one from a Neo-Confucianist and the other from a Christian point of view.”¹⁰⁷ Whereas Niebuhr developed an ethics of responsibility rooted in a Christian faith, Wang Yangming developed a theory of the unity of knowledge and action rooted in his theory of mind.

Lee describes several areas where these two moral philosophers share common ground. They both deemphasize external ethical codes, including moral laws, duties, and principles. Their ethical theories are neither deontological nor teleological. Authentic moral action does not derive from thinking about rules to which one must conform or by thinking about outcomes and

¹⁰³ Seok Hwan Hong, “Ultimate Human Transformation,” 293.

¹⁰⁴ Seok Hwan Hong, “Ultimate Human Transformation,” 4.

¹⁰⁵ Seok Hwan Hong, “Ultimate Human Transformation,” 20.

¹⁰⁶ Lee Hsin-yi, “Moral Philosophies,” 1–2.

¹⁰⁷ Lee Hsin-yi, “Moral Philosophies,” 2.

strategizing to achieve those.¹⁰⁸ Rather, both ethical theories share a concern with the engaged moral actor confronting real-life situations. They recognize the complexity of moral life and suggest that an individual should aim at locating the fitting moral response. Lee provides the analogy of playing in a symphony. The larger context of moral life is like a symphony, while the moral agents are the musicians. Thus, the moral life is aesthetic in nature, emerging as a pattern that fits with time and place.

However, Niebuhr's and Wang's ethics are not entirely situational. Both point to an ultimate reality as the source and reference point for undertaking moral action in the present. For Wang Yangming, the source of virtue is the mind-heart, *liangzhi*, and *tianli*, which are ultimately identical. The mind is fundamentally knowledge of goodness, a good knowing. By acting on the good knowing present in the mind, the mind treads the path of self-realization and purification, ultimately reaching the goal of the unity of heaven and man. Through *liangzhi*, Heavenly principle manifests in awareness as the basis for moral action. Ultimately, *liangzhi* unveils a primordial unity of the self with all beings in the universe. "It is fundamentally an experienced and lived reality," Lee writes, a journey of "forming a spiritual communion with all beings in the universe."¹⁰⁹

For Niebuhr, ethical action also takes place within a transcendent context and must seek to be inclusive. He introduces the notion of responsibility. Just as faith shapes the spiritual life, so should responsibility shape the moral life.¹¹⁰ On the one hand, our moral actions are conditioned by our psychology and all kinds of historical contexts. On the other hand, we are participating in a higher context that transcends particular ones, God's creation, and God is the transcendent source of value, source and savior of the many beings. A moral actor responds to others within the context of a universal community sustained and preserved by the good will of God.¹¹¹ God treats us as responsible beings, and we should respond to others as if God is acting on us and we are reacting to God. Jesus Christ is the perfect model for doing so.

He concludes his dissertation with reflection on the personal significance of these two moral philosophies for him. He finds that Wang's notion of responding to the promptings of the pure heart-mind shares similarities to Niebuhr's notion of responding to a given situation as if one is responding to the actions of God. Wang Yangming had shown that as ordinary people going about our lives, we are designed to continuously experience and affirm the

¹⁰⁸ Lee Hsin-yi, "Moral Philosophies," 162–3.

¹⁰⁹ Lee Hsin-yi, "Moral Philosophies," 201.

¹¹⁰ Lee Hsin-yi, "Moral Philosophies," 87.

¹¹¹ Lee Hsin-yi, "Moral Philosophies," 176.

humanity in us. By doing so, we can become authentic, genuine, and sincere people. Niebuhr shows us that we are created by God as responsible beings located in a web of relationships. God is the center of our value, and Jesus Christ is a perfect moral model who shows us how to respond to all that befalls us. Niebuhr's concept of inclusiveness is similar to Wang's notion of the unity one experiences once rid of selfish desires. Last, they both believe that the aim of moral life is learning how to find the most fitting or harmonious way to respond to our moral dilemmas.¹¹²

Peter T. C. Chang, a professor at the University of Malaya, also sought to advance the dialogue between Confucianism and Christianity through comparative study of sophisticated representatives. "Do human civilizations possess the capability for harmonious co-existence," he asks, "or is a clash of fundamental values inevitable?"¹¹³ The relationship between these two traditions might yet go in either direction. Even after a long history of encounter, he writes, "the quest for mutual comprehension remains unfinished."¹¹⁴ Thus, Chang sought to deepen the encounter by bringing Bishop Joseph Butler and Wang Yangming into dialogue. With their unique expositions of conscience and *liangzhi*, both men had made crucial contributions to their religious tradition's ethical system. Both Butler and Wang lived in a time of crisis, eighteenth-century England and sixteenth-century China. They both responded by calling on their fellow countrymen to recapture the ideals put forward by their respective Christian and Confucian moral visions. They both believed that mankind is intended to fulfill a divine order—to realize a higher purpose or plan. For Butler that was God's plan, and for Wang it was the Dao or Heavenly principle. Both of these plans, Chang explains, "affirmed a common goal, i.e., the universal aspiration for the harmonious coexistence of all humanity."¹¹⁵

Both men believed that humans are equipped for the sacrosanct task of participating in this sacred drama. Each person has a special role to play because of the guidance given by conscience. Chang writes, "Butler and Wang asserted that human conscience represents the individual's authoritative guide to right and wrong."¹¹⁶ For Butler, natural law doctrine determines that people are a law unto themselves; "they have the rule of right within."¹¹⁷ For Wang Yangming too, we are autonomous moral agents because we are endowed with *liangzhi*, the ultimate authority. In both cases, this is a divine component in

¹¹² Lee Hsin-yi, "Moral Philosophies," 213–214.

¹¹³ Chang, *Bishop Joseph Butler*, 12.

¹¹⁴ Chang, *Bishop Joseph Butler*, 13.

¹¹⁵ Chang, *Bishop Joseph Butler*, 161.

¹¹⁶ Chang, *Bishop Joseph Butler*, 13.

¹¹⁷ Chang, *Bishop Joseph Butler*, 172.

our human nature. Wang describes *liangzhi* as being like a bright clear mirror, and Butler describes conscience as the “candle of the lord within.”¹¹⁸ However, Chang explains, “they both warned that conscience is not infallible, and unless people heed its dictates and are diligent in self-cultivation, it may yet become ‘asleep’ and ‘buried.’”¹¹⁹ Conscience can be ignored or rebelled against, weakening the moral self and undermining social order. Consequently, both men developed programs to nurture critical thinking and moral sensibility. Throughout the book, Chang parses out the fine distinctions between their moral philosophies but also notes where they share common ground. Like the other authors who have issued such comparative studies, Chang relies primarily on Wing-tsit Chan’s *Instructions for Practical Living and other Neo-Confucian Writings*. In conclusion, he asks how Wang Yangming and Bishop Joseph Butler might critique one another, and then he assesses the relevance of their moral philosophies for contemporary discussions of comparative religious ethics.

Wang Yangming and Buddhism

As for English-language comparative studies of Wang Yangming and figures central to other religious traditions, these remain quite scarce. There does not, for instance, appear to be research that compares his or his followers’ school of mind to important figures belonging to other world religions, such as Judaism, Islam, or Hinduism. Even studies of the influence of Daoism on his philosophical development are absent, although one might look to Tu Weiming’s and Julia Ching’s monographs for some discussion. The one important exception is Buddhism, which was touched on in the introduction. Whereas the influence of Buddhism and Daoism on Neo-Confucianism more generally and Wang Yangming and his school in particular are the subjects of a vast Japanese- and Chinese-language literature, few scholars have carried out detailed systematic comparisons for an English-reading audience.

In 1962, when Wing-tsit Chan published “How Buddhist was Wang Yang-ming?”—the earliest English-language article to address this topic—he sought to take on what he viewed as the established consensus: that Wang Yangming was heavily influenced by Chan Buddhism. “It is not generally realized, however,” he wrote, “that he was less in contact with Buddhism than is generally suspected, and that he was more critical of Buddhism than he was receptive to it.”¹²⁰ Chan especially noted that Japanese scholars had

¹¹⁸ Chang, *Bishop Joseph Butler*, 177.

¹¹⁹ Chang, *Bishop Joseph Butler*, 13.

¹²⁰ Wing-tsit Chan, “How Buddhist is Wang Yang-ming?” 203.

a “tendency to exaggerate Wang’s acceptance of Buddhism and minimize his opposition to it.”¹²¹ He criticized what he saw as an incorrect identification of *liangzhi* with Buddhist concepts in Tokiwa Daijō’s *Shina ni okeru bukkyō to jukyō dokyō* 支那に於ける仏教と儒教道教 (The relation between Chinese Buddhism and Confucianism and Buddhism). Nevertheless, like Tu Weiming in his dissertation on Yangming as a young man, Chan also benefited from Kusumoto Bunyu’s 久須本文雄 *Ō Yōmei no zenteki shisō kenkyū* 王陽明の禪的思想研究 (Research on Wang Yangming’s Zen thought), a fine study of Yangming’s use of Buddhist language to express his doctrines as well as the presence of the Buddhist landscape in his life (such as the temples he visited).

Chan’s goal was to show where Wang differed because, he explains, “his critics and his supporters have grossly exaggerated his affinity with Buddhism and have undermined his attack on it.”¹²² Chan believed they had given too much weight to Wang’s statement that the innate knowledge (*liangzhi* 良知) is identical to the “original state” (*benlai mianmu* 本來面目) expounded upon by Buddhists. They also made too much of his deployment of Zen (Chan 禪) idioms and techniques when teaching, as well as of the time he spent at Buddhist temples.¹²³ For Chan, where terminology used to describe mind is identical, that is largely incidental or secondary, because “the Neo-Confucian concept of the mind as an embodiment of the Principle of Nature [Heaven’s reason 天理], or the Moral Law, and the spirit of creation are totally absent in Buddhism.”¹²⁴ As Wang Yangming explains it, “Innate knowledge by its own nature discriminates between good and evil.”¹²⁵

Furthermore, Chan claims, Wang “had no intimate Buddhist friends,”¹²⁶ and his temple visits were merely diversions, as was the norm for scholars in his time. Perhaps most notably, Chan asserted that whereas “in the entire *Chuan xi lu* [Instructions for Practical Living], Wang quotes only once from a Buddhist text,”¹²⁷ he offers vigorous criticism in seventeen different conversations.¹²⁸ In one, Wang even insists that because Zen Buddhists claimed to be free from attachment to relationships, they are in reality attached, whereas the opposite case holds for Confucians. “In Wang’s view,” Chan explains, “to

¹²¹ Wing-tsit Chan, “How Buddhist is Wang Yang-ming?” 205.

¹²² Wing-tsit Chan, “How Buddhist Is Wang Yang-ming,” 203.

¹²³ Wing-tsit Chan, “How Buddhist Is Wang Yang-ming,” 206–208.

¹²⁴ Wing-tsit Chan, “How Buddhist Is Wang Yang-ming,” 204.

¹²⁵ Wing-tsit Chan, “How Buddhist Is Wang Yang-ming,” 205.

¹²⁶ Wing-tsit Chan, “How Buddhist Is Wang Yang-ming,” 209.

¹²⁷ Wing-tsit Chan, “How Buddhist Is Wang Yang-ming,” 210.

¹²⁸ Wing-tsit Chan, “How Buddhist Is Wang Yang-ming,” 211.

fulfill a moral duty without any personal preference is real non-attachment, whereas to avoid moral responsibility is really attachment to selfishness.”¹²⁹

In “Confucianism and Buddhism in the Late Ming,” Araki Kengo also offers a subtle analysis of conceptual differences between Wang Yangming’s learning of the mind and Buddhism, placing it in the context of a general interpretation of the development of Neo-Confucian thought in late imperial China. A graduate and then professor of Chinese philosophy at Kyushu University, Araki had written extensively about Chinese Buddhism and Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism in the mode of intellectual history. This article, which was translated and published in the *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism* (1975), made some of the insights in his extensive Japanese-language publications visible to an English-reading audience. Those publications included, most notably, *Bukkyō to jukyō* 仏教と儒教 (Buddhism and Confucianism) (1963) and the chapter on “Yangming Learning and Ming dynasty Buddhism” he contributed to the *Yōmeigaku nyūmon* 陽明學入門 (Yangming Learning Primer) (1972).¹³⁰ Thereafter, in 1979, he further published *Bukkyō to Yōmeigaku* 仏教と陽明學 (Buddhism and Yangming Learning) and, in 1984, *Yōmeigaku no kaiten to bukyō* 陽明学の開展と仏教 (The development of Yangming Learning and Buddhism).

In his chapter in *The Unfolding*, Araki asks whether the development of the school of Wang Yangming played a role in what he perceived as a revival of Buddhism during the late Ming. His research led him to conclude this was the case, and he proffered a complex theory regarding an internal logic in the development of Neo-Confucianism from the Song to the Ming dynasties. Araki found one reason for the revival in certain philosophical predicaments that Wang Yangming and his followers had overcome. The Chan (Zen) School of Mind had stressed the emptiness and unitary nature of mind and becoming enlightened to it as the foundation for intuitively and naturally functioning in the world. However, this school lacked meaningful criteria for making moral judgements and taking action. The Neo-Confucian School of Principle, however, understood mind so conceived but insisted that there is real principle objectively present in the world giving it coherence and providing a standard and structure for moral action. Thus, the source of authority is not to be found in the dictates of the one mind but rather in the principle inherent in each thing or matter.

However, this elevation of the authority of principle, Araki believed, held the danger of diminishing self-examination, producing inflexibility, and

¹²⁹ Wing-tsit Chan, “How Buddhist Is Wang Yang-ming,” 212.

¹³⁰ For the arguments in this article, see Araki Kengo, “Yōmeigaku to mindai no bukyō,” 291–302.

suppressing the vitality and spontaneity of the mind. He explains how some Song Confucians addressed this issue of the relation between mind and principle by giving primacy to mind and claiming its identity with principle, thus initiating a new School of Mind. During the early Ming, when the School of Principle dominated as orthodoxy, the discrepancy between mind and principle posed a significant challenge for serious students, one in need of resolution. The solution to the problem would be one that transcended the Chan School of Mind and the School of Principle. This is what Wang Yangming achieved with his doctrine of “innate knowledge” (*liangzhi*).¹³¹ Because the innate knowledge creates real principle autonomously in an ever-present moment of awareness it both escapes the dangers of a disregard for moral judgment that would seem to be implicit in Chan’s formless self and the frustrations of the inflexibility of established rules towards which the self is directed by the School of Principle.

Nevertheless, having posited an independent source of moral judgment, Wang Yangming laid the foundation for redefining the boundaries between orthodoxy and heterodoxy, which now must be judged according to the dictates of the innate knowledge, as opposed to conventional definitions. That is why he could argue that if Confucians were more degenerate than Buddhists, then Confucians are the heretics. Furthermore, while innate knowledge is on account of people’s inborn nature fundamentally good, because it creates its own rules as the occasion demands it is also in some sense beyond good and evil. As such, Wang’s tenet comes closer to the Chanist idea that mind is ultimately neither good nor evil, and hence further erodes the embankment between Buddhism and Confucianism. In the hands of certain of his followers, the liberating quality of the idea that mind (innate knowledge) and individual awakening holds priority over authority and tradition was further developed, imbuing their movement with the potential for popularization and syncretism, and providing the theoretical framework for closer dialogue between adherents of the different traditions. Thus, Araki concludes, “It may not be wrong to state that for the development of the School of Wang Yangming Buddhism was necessary, and for the popularization of Buddhism the School of Wang Yangming was indispensable.”¹³²

The Canadian emeritus professor of philosophy Wing-cheuk Chan found even more “profound similarities” between Wang Yangming’s theory of mind and the Buddhist *tathagatagarbha* (Buddha-embryo; lit. “womb of the thus come one”) system.¹³³ Both posit an originally pure mind possessed by all

¹³¹ Araki Kengo, “Confucianism and Buddhism,” 43.

¹³² Araki Kengo, “Confucianism and Buddhism,” 54.

¹³³ Wing-Cheuk Chan, “How Is Absolute Wisdom Possible?,” 341.

human beings as the basis for achieving the spiritual ideal—sagehood or Buddhahood. For Wang, “everyone can become a sage”; in the *tathagatagarbha* system, “All sentient beings have Buddha-nature.”¹³⁴ This originally pure mind is the mind of the Tathagata and, for Wang, the original substance of the innate knowing (*liangzhi bentì* 良知本體). In both cases, this mind is the source of ultimate wisdom and as such is the independent self-arising cause, the *a priori* or metaphysical ground for the possibility of acquiring wisdom and hence of becoming a Buddha or sage.¹³⁵ However, for most people it is obscured at some level—by the *alaya-vijnana* (storehouse-consciousness) or, for Wang, the human mind (*renxin* 人心). Realizing the spiritual ideal requires having a mind intent on the goal and taking moral action. Ultimately, Chan writes that “just as sagehood culminates in an experience of oneness with Heaven, earth, and all things, so Buddhahood culminates in an experience of oneness with the whole Dharmadhatu [the dharma realm or absolute reality].”¹³⁶

Finally, given his persistent interest in showing how Buddhist ideas impacted Wang Yangming’s philosophy, Philip Ivanhoe should also be discussed here. This theme goes back to his 1987 dissertation, which was first published as a book in 1990 and then issued as a revised edition in 2002. In *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mengzi and Wang Yangming*, Ivanhoe states that a principal goal is “sketching the main features of Mengzi’s and Wang’s moral philosophy and showing how the latter transformed the former’s earlier vision under the influence of Buddhism.”¹³⁷ He argues that “Wang looked back to Mengzi and other early texts for his inspiration, but he saw these texts differently. He was not fully aware of how much Chinese thought had changed since the time of Mengzi and, most important, how deeply Buddhism had influenced the way in which Chinese thinkers approached certain issues in moral philosophy. Wang saw Mengzi through a Buddhist filter, and he transformed Mengzi’s moral philosophy as he sought to understand it, altered by this filter.”¹³⁸ However, Ivanhoe’s book is primarily devoted to explaining and comparing the moral philosophies of these two influential Confucians with reference to a few key themes: the nature of morality, human nature, evil, self-cultivation, and sagehood. Less attention is paid both to the mediating influence of Zhu Xi’s commentaries on the *Four Books*, with whom Wang Yangming was primarily in dialogue, and to textual evidence for the influence of Buddhism found in Wang Yangming’s use or criticism of Buddhist concepts.

¹³⁴ Wing-Cheuk Chan, “How Is Absolute Wisdom Possible?,” 337.

¹³⁵ Wing-Cheuk Chan, “How Is Absolute Wisdom Possible?,” 340–341.

¹³⁶ Wing-Cheuk Chan, “How Is Absolute Wisdom Possible?,” 329–344.

¹³⁷ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, ix.

¹³⁸ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, xvi–xvii.

Two examples offer a window to how Ivanhoe went about advancing his general argument. Regarding the nature of morality, he states that Mengzi adopted Confucius's traditional vision of the moral life, including a system of rituals and a set of norms and obligations. But he grounded these in a theory of human nature. For Mengzi, morality develops from the four nascent moral sprouts (*si duan* 四端) that are a component of our human nature. By developing these sprouts, which are primarily natural feelings of affection, we are able to realize our human nature and find our place in the Heavenly order. As opposed to following an external standard, Mengzi calls us to follow the properly cultivated mind as the guide to moral action.¹³⁹ On the other hand, Wang Yangming, writes Ivanhoe, “had a very different notion of morality”:

He saw a universe united by “principle” or “pattern” (*li*), which gives the world both its form and meaning. Wang believed that the human mind itself is principle and that the mind’s “pure knowing” is this very principle in its active, knowing aspect. The universe is structured and informed by principle, and the human mind is endowed with an innate ability to know exactly how the various parts of the universe do and should fit together. Everything should go according to principle. Wang’s new vision extended both the range and quality of Mengzi’s notion of the nature of morality. The concern of Wang’s new Confucian sage extended beyond anything Mengzi had ever conceived. Wang’s moral paragon was to see the entire universe as his body or, more precisely, to see himself as part of the universal body. His great challenge was to eliminate the selfish thoughts which separated him from this universal embrace.¹⁴⁰

Ivanhoe notes that the forces that shaped this transformation—“from a morality grounded in human nature to one grounded in a comprehensive metaphysical theory”—were complex.¹⁴¹ But the principal factors were Zhu Xi’s metaphysics and metaphysical systems developed by schools of Mahayana Buddhism. Most importantly, Ivanhoe believes that by Wang Yangming’s time, the dominant view of human nature held by Confucian thinkers was essentially Buddhist in origin. According to this view, all people possess an original, pure, and fully formed inner nature that has been obscured in some way by an outer, defiled physical nature.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 35.

¹⁴⁰ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 35.

¹⁴¹ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 36.

¹⁴² Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 57.

This different understanding of human nature had important consequences for Mengzi's and Wang Yangming's differing understandings of the notion of sagehood. For Mengzi, states Ivanhoe, "sagehood, though remote, was the developed and refined expression of human nature. Each and every person possessed the power to work toward sagehood."¹⁴³ Of course, the principal method of self-cultivation entailed nourishing the "moral sprouts" of the mind, but "its development and growth was aided by the influence of the classics, rites, and sages."¹⁴⁴ Thus, a person in pursuit of sagehood "needed to practice the rites and study and reflect upon the classics and the sages of the past in order to realize their ideal in the present."¹⁴⁵ To a degree, then, moral self-cultivation was guided by tradition. Ivanhoe calls Mengzi's understanding of the route to sagehood a developmental model: "this goal was attained by the development of an innate capacity, brought to fruition through a long process of nurture and growth."¹⁴⁶

Wang Yangming, on the other hand, put forward a discovery model of sagehood: "the goal of sagehood was the discovery of a lost endowment, an awakening to the moral guidance of one's pure knowing."¹⁴⁷ Ivanhoe writes that:

Wang Yangming granted each individual a remarkable level of independence and power. Every person not only could become Yao or Shun; every person was a Yao or Shun. All that separated one from the realization of sagehood was the interference of selfish thoughts. Moral self-cultivation became the removal of selfish thoughts, and this activity could be carried out only in the actual events of one's own life. There was no special place for the classics, rites, or sages in Wang's thought. Pure knowing was his teacher, his own actions provided the lessons he needed to learn, and the exercise of pure knowing was the beginning and the end of his spiritual practice.¹⁴⁸

Thus, for Wang Yangming, sagehood was attained by eliminating the interference of selfish desires and allowing one's original mind to respond "spontaneously, effortlessly, and flawlessly to every situation it encounters."¹⁴⁹ For Ivanhoe, unlike what is the case for Mengzi, this is a model of self-cultivation and sagehood that is remarkably "free from the pressure of tradition."¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 134.

¹⁴⁴ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 136.

¹⁴⁵ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 135.

¹⁴⁶ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 109.

¹⁴⁷ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 109.

¹⁴⁸ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 135.

¹⁴⁹ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 121.

¹⁵⁰ Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition*, 136.

In elaborating on models, however, Ivanhoe does not return in any detail to his thesis that a Buddhist filtering of Mengzi's ideas led to these notable differences in their moral philosophies. However, as mentioned in chapter 4, in *Readings from the Lu-Wang School of Neo-Confucianism*, Ivanhoe develops these themes in a lengthy introduction. He even begins his selection of documents from Lu Jiuyuan and Wang Yangming with the *Platform Sutra* "primarily because of the tremendous, poorly understood, and often overlooked influence Chinese Buddhism in general and this text in particular has had upon neo-Confucian thought."¹⁵¹ What are some of those influences? They include the Buddhist notion of "Buddha-nature," "an original and perfectly pure and innocent nature shared by all people"; the idea that Buddhahood is obscured by selfish desires and by a mistaken view of the self that fails to see it as sharing an underlying connection with the universe; a style of teaching through master-disciple interactions; and a method of pointing beyond words in characterizing the highest spiritual attainment. Ivanhoe develops these comparisons in some detail. According to the *Platform Sutra*, Ivanhoe writes, "as long as our Buddha-nature is not impeded by selfish desires, we all will act like the Buddhas we really are. According to Lu and Wang, if we simply manifest the full and unadulterated functioning of our original nature, we all will be in fact the sages we really are."¹⁵² Wang Yangming, of course, gave these ideas a distinctly Confucian garb by identifying the natural functioning of our original nature with the unobstructed operation of pure knowing, our innate moral sense.¹⁵³

Conclusion

Looking back over roughly a century of writing about the religious dimensions of Wang Yangming's thought in English-language scholarship, a few salient characteristics stand out. Some of this scholarship was written by committed Christians who, for personal and historical reasons, wished to know if their faith shared common ground with Confucianism, as well as how these traditions could be reconciled. They believed comparative study of prominent representatives of each tradition could advance interfaith dialogue in modern times. This scholarship demonstrates that Wang Yangming's ideas were religious in nature because they aimed for a fundamental change in the individual in relation to a transcendent reality. His description of the human predicament, elaboration of a path to sagehood, and conception of

¹⁵¹ Ivanhoe, *Readings from the Lu-Wang School*, 3.

¹⁵² Ivanhoe, *Readings from the Lu-Wang School*, 10–11.

¹⁵³ Ivanhoe, *Readings from the Lu-Wang School*, 11.

mind and Heavenly principle provide fertile ground for comparison to the work of theologians.

Just a few scholars, however, wrote about the religious characteristics of Wang Yangming's life experiences and ideas without necessarily invoking comparisons to Christianity. David Nivison, Julia Ching, Rodney Taylor, and Tu Weiming did so in their publications. Tu Weiming, of course, was one among a group of scholars who sought to promote the idea that not only Confucianism but also Neo-Confucianism should be interpreted as a spiritual tradition with relevance to people all over the world in our time. While the religious dimensions of Neo-Confucianism have been broached in the literature, exploration of this topic as it pertains to Wang Yangming and his followers remains a promising line of inquiry that has yet to be fulfilled. The same holds true for further comparison between the religious ideas of Wang Yangming and his school and those of other religious traditions around the world. Future research on the relation between Buddhism, Daoism, and Wang Yangming and his school of the learning of mind will be able to avail itself of a substantial East Asian literature on this subject.

CHAPTER 7:

Philosophical and Comparative Studies of Wang Yangming

Most English-language literature published on Wang Yangming since the 1980s consists of comparative philosophy and analysis of his central philosophical tenets, such as the unity of knowledge and action or the extension of the innate knowledge of the good. His teachings have been studied in relation to philosophers belonging to one of China's intellectual traditions, Western philosophers, or schools of philosophy East and West. He has also come to the West indirectly through research on modern New Confucians.

When the first *Collected Works of Wang Yangming* (*Wang Yangming wenji* 王陽明文集) reached the French Royal Library, Étienne Fourmont catalogued it by describing the type of literature he had in hand as a philosophical miscellany. In his *Description of China*, Jean-Baptiste Du Halde included selections from Wang Yangming's works that resonated with Jesuit moral philosophy. In the entry for Wang Yangming in his *Guide to the Tablets in a Temple of Confucius*, Thomas Watters proposed resemblances to René Descartes' philosophy. In the early twentieth century, Frederick Henke noted that "this subtle something he calls nature is so profound, so rich, so all-inclusive, that viewed as a whole, [F. H.] Bradley, [E. F.] Taylor, or [Josiah] Royce would probably greet it as their old friend the absolute, even though it be in Chinese garb."¹ Lyman Cady found ideas congruent with ones held by Plato, Stoicism, Descartes, Spinoza, Shaftesbury (Anthony Ashley Cooper), and Henri Bergson. German scholars, such as Heinrich Hackmann and Alfred Forke, regarded Wang's philosophy as a type of German idealism or *identitätsphilosophie*. In post-1960s publications, comparative study was only broadened and deepened. Together with analytic expositions of Wang Yangming's major concepts, this is the type of work that has dominated the literature since the 1980s.

"Comparative philosophy," David Wong explains, "brings together philosophical traditions that have developed in relative isolation from one another and that are defined quite broadly along cultural and regional lines—Chinese versus Western, for example."² Ronnie Littlejohn identifies this type of scholarship as a

¹ Henke, "Study in the Life and Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming," 56.

² David Wong, "Comparative Philosophy: Chinese and Western," *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/comparphil-chiwes/>.

subfield of philosophy “in which philosophers work on problems by intentionally setting into dialogue various sources from across cultural, linguistic, and philosophical streams.”³ It is to be distinguished from doing philosophy within a particular tradition, as well as from world philosophy, where the goal is to bring different traditions together into a new philosophical system. Rather, comparative philosophy “intentionally compares the ideas of thinkers of very different traditions, especially culturally distinct traditions.”⁴

According to Littlejohn, the comparative approach comes with a set of challenges.⁵ One problem is descriptive chauvinism, referring to recreating a tradition in the image of one’s own tradition. The early Jesuit approach to Chinese traditions, for example, was to favor those elements of it that appeared to prepare the way for revelation. In fact, the dangers here run deep. For many years now, scholars conducting such research have been pointing out how the asymmetric encounter between the West and China biased interpretations of Chinese philosophy, consigning it to a type of “area studies.” In “Wang Yangming and the Way of World Philosophy,” Hwa Yol Jung criticizes what he calls a Eurocentric mindset. According to this mindset, what is particular to the West is universal whereas what is particular to other parts of the world will forever remain parochial. He calls for decentering Europe “as the singular site of universal truth” and for developing methods for negotiating between different philosophical traditions.⁶ As things stand, he believes, European philosophy is still treated as the universal standard, whereas philosophies in other parts of the world are regarded as having limited significance.

However, Jung claims that when the playing field is leveled, Wang Yangming’s philosophy “performs well on the stage of world philosophy and makes an invaluable contribution to it in three areas of philosophical inquiry.”⁷ First, his relational ontology, as articulated in such doctrines as the unity of knowledge and action and *liangzhi*, makes better sense of how human beings actually engage with the lifeworld. Second, his articulation of the idea that “Heaven, earth, and myriad things are one body” can overcome Cartesian dualism and establish for human beings a more direct relation with the world. Last, the practical significance of these first two is that Wang Yangming’s philosophy can address the current environmental crisis.⁸

³ Ronnie Littlejohn, “Comparative Philosophy,” *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, accessed May 20, 2020, <https://iep.utm.edu/comparat/>.

⁴ Littlejohn, “Comparative Philosophy.”

⁵ Littlejohn, “Comparative Philosophy.”

⁶ Jung, “Wang Yangming,” 465.

⁷ Jung, “Wang Yangming,” 481.

⁸ Jung, “Wang Yangming,” 481–482.

Descriptive chauvinism is also a hidden danger to the act of translation. Chang Tzu-li, for example, has argued that some widely used translations of Wang Yangming's concepts are misleading. These mistranslations have led not only to misinterpretation but also to philosophical conundrums caused by the mistranslation itself. For instance, he believes that most translations of *liangzhi*—including Wing-tsit Chan's "innate knowledge of the good," Ivanhoe's "pure knowing," and Nivison's "innate moral sense"—present it as overly cognitive and epistemological in meaning. However, Chang claims that *liangzhi* is primarily ontological in significance, a "dynamic, all-encompassing, ontologically creative power that works in the universe."⁹ Translating *zhi liangzhi* 致良知 as "extending the innate knowledge of the good" puts the implication of mistranslation on display by suggesting that one is acquiring or extending objective knowledge, when what is implied is self-transformation or self-actualization through heeding *liangzhi*'s guidance and making it effective in one's acts. Furthermore, *zhi liangzhi* is a precept directed at connecting with the metaphysical dimension of the universe—the ontological ground making the universe vibrant and dynamic—through acting morally. For Wang Yangming, moral practice leads to the metaphysical realm of the universe. By naturally acting on *liangzhi*, we can ascend into the ideal state of the unity of heaven and people (*tian ren heyi* 天人合一).¹⁰

Chang Tzu-li extends this line of argument to some of Wang Yangming's other concepts. He demonstrates that English-language scholarship has significantly erred in its choice of terms and proposes that the transliteration be left intact for some. Wing-tsit Chan, for instance, translates *ge wu* 格物 as "the investigation of things" when it really means, with respect to an act or behavior given in the act of willing, doing what is good and ridding what is evil by heeding the guidance of *liangzhi*.¹¹ He thus raises the specter that Wang's ideas have never been properly understood and appreciated by an English-reading audience. Indeed, Littlejohn also warns of the dangers of radical incommensurability to the comparative approach. If two traditions are radically different in their concepts and arguments, finding a shared point of reference for carrying on a dialogue is a tall order.¹² This aligns with Wong's claim that some forms of life may be so far removed from a person's experience and philosophical traditions that he is unable to understand and appreciate them.¹³

⁹ Chang Tzu-li, "Re-exploring Wang Yangming's Theory," 1198.

¹⁰ Chang Tzu-li, "Re-exploring Wang Yangming's Theory," 1198–1199.

¹¹ Chang Tzu-li, "Re-exploring Wang Yangming's Theory," 1200.

¹² Littlejohn, "Comparative Philosophy."

¹³ Wong, "Comparative Philosophy."

These are just some of the challenges that scholars face when writing about Wang Yangming's philosophical concepts or approaching his ideas comparatively. Yet, even in the face of these, substantial literature has been published over the last four decades. That is the subject of this chapter. First, we consider scholarship pertaining to concepts in his moral philosophy, as well as the comparative perspectives that have been brought to bear upon it. This scholarship is organized according to the concept on which it focuses. Second, comparative scholarship of a general nature is introduced. Last, this chapter concludes by showing how scholarship on modern (or contemporary) New Confucianism has also been a major conduit for the introduction of Wang Yangming to the West.

Liangzhi and Wanwu yiti

Most scholarship on Wang Yangming published since the 1980s concerns his moral philosophy. According to one framework, moral philosophy can be categorized into three areas: meta-ethics, normative ethics, and applied ethics.¹⁴ In general, meta-ethics investigates the origins and meaning of ethical principles, asks why we should be moral, and connects morality to other fields of philosophy, such as metaphysics and epistemology. Normative ethics investigates what we ought to do and aims to establish a framework or principles for deciding right and wrong. The most common theories are virtue ethics, deontology, and utilitarianism. Wang's moral philosophy is widely regarded as a type of virtue ethics. Applied ethics analyzes specific moral issues. For example, some scholars believe that Wang's ethics are an important resource for addressing environmental problems in our time.

Publications about Wang Yangming's moral philosophy provide analysis that is relevant to all these subject areas but primarily to normative ethics and meta-ethics. His doctrines of *liangzhi* and the unity of knowledge and action are the central focus of this scholarship, while his other major concepts—such as his theory of mind and the one substance of humanity—are usually explained in relation to them. Comparative approaches include clarifying his moral philosophy by comparison to or utilizing the methods or insights of a particular Western moral philosopher, analytic philosophy, classical virtue ethics, or phenomenology.

One scholar who wrote extensively about Wang Yangming's moral philosophy was Antonio S. (A.S.) Cua (1932–2007). Born to a Filipino Chinese family living in Manila, Cua obtained a BA in Philosophy and Psychology at

¹⁴ James Fieser, "Ethics," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <https://iep.utm.edu/ethics/>.

Far Eastern University in 1952. He then went to the United States for graduate school, finishing a PhD at the University of California, Berkeley, in 1958. After teaching at Ohio University and SUNY, the College of Oswego, Cua served as a professor of philosophy at the Catholic University of America from 1969 to 1995.

Throughout his academic career, Cua's main interests were Western moral philosophy, moral psychology, and Confucian ethics. His first book, published in 1966, was a study of the eighteenth-century British moral philosopher Richard Price. His last book, published in 2005, was an edited collection of essays on Xunzi and other topics in Chinese ethics. Between those years, Cua published four other books and numerous articles, all of which were wide-ranging explorations of moral philosophy East and West with an emphasis on Confucian ethics and sharing his insights into the nature of the moral life. He also edited the *Encyclopedia of Chinese Philosophy* (2003), providing the entry on Wang Yangming.

In the following section, which addresses research on the unity of knowledge and action, we shall discuss Cua's monograph *The Unity of Knowledge and Action: A Study in Wang Yang-ming's Moral Psychology*. According to Vincent Shen, this publication was the most personally meaningful to Cua; in an inspired state of mind, he wrote it in just six weeks.¹⁵ Years later, in *Philosophy East and West*, Cua also published "Between Commitment and Realization: Wang Yangming's Vision of the Universe as a Moral Community." Cua believes that Wang's ideas "resist systematic formulation" and are perhaps best understood as succinct statements of what he experienced and found in his quest for the spirit of Confucian learning.¹⁶ Yet he attempts a systematic analysis of concepts pertaining to Wang's moral philosophy, albeit while deemphasizing metaphysics. He believes that although metaphysical ideas were present, "his insights are best understood in a preliminary way without this focus."¹⁷

Cua elucidates how Wang set forth his vision of the universe as a moral community by developing the classical Confucian virtue of *ren* 仁 (humanity or benevolence) and the ideal of the harmony of man and nature with the Song Neo-Confucian ideal of the man of *ren* (the sage) who "forms one body (*yi ti* 一體) with all things without differentiation."¹⁸ It is this ideal or vision that serves as the object of ethical commitment for one decided upon sagehood. It is a vision that can only be attained by extending the mind/heart to its utmost

¹⁵ Shen, "Introduction," 4.

¹⁶ Cua, "Between Commitment and Realization," 611.

¹⁷ Cua, "Between Commitment and Realization," 614.

¹⁸ Cua, "Between Commitment and Realization," 614.

reaches so that *ren* is realized in the actual world. Fortunately, the ability to discern moral distinctions and a moral consciousness are native to us, inborn. Such capacities are our *liangzhi* (“a native ability to distinguish the right from the wrong, as well as the good from the bad”), which is inherently volitional, mediating between the vision and the realities of our present world.¹⁹ *Liangzhi* is the seat of our moral agency, of our self-reliance. Extending it enables us to realize the vision of *ren* animating our moral minds.²⁰

In 1998, while serving as professor of East Asian Studies at the University of Calgary, Lloyd Sciban published an article on “Essential Characteristics of Moral Decision in Wang Yangming’s Philosophy.” It reads like a *liangzhi* primer. *Liangzhi* is our natural capacity to know how to make a moral decision. Wang found this idea in Mengzi, and although later Confucians did not do much with it, he developed the concept in revolutionary ways. By recounting his intellectual struggles with Zhu Xi’s method of investigating things, Sciban helps the reader understand how Wang came to his most important doctrine. Wang felt that his moral life should be more natural, undisturbed by the dividedness he felt within. Zhu Xi’s philosophy failed to give him the answers he sought. Through much personal struggle he finally found them for himself.²¹

Sciban explains that *liangzhi* is “very difficult to translate and no one term has been established for doing so.”²² Wing-tsit Chan translates it as “innate knowledge of the good,” Thomé Fang as “conscientious wisdom,” David Nivison as “intuitive knowledge of the good,” Tang Junyi as “conscientious consciousness,” and others as the “good conscience.” Sciban proposes leaving it untranslated, instead identifying essential features of this “keystone to his [Wang’s] moral philosophy.”²³ *Liangzhi* is innate. It is spontaneous, arising naturally from within us. It is universal—everyone has it, and hence the capacity to be moral. It has the ability to distinguish selfish desires from universal principles. *Liangzhi* is not defined by absolute rules that we must obey nor by precedents or social norms. Like a mirror, it has “the ability to reflect the affairs of the world as they are.”²⁴ It is fundamentally performative; “thus, it manifests itself as a process of constant, morally correct adaptation to changing situations. Moral decision is essentially active.”²⁵ Moral decisions must

¹⁹ Cua, “Between Commitment and Realization,” 629. Cua does not translate *liangzhi*, rather using the transliteration.

²⁰ Cua, “Between Commitment and Realization,” 630–631.

²¹ Sciban, “Essential Characteristics,” 53.

²² Sciban, “Essential Characteristics,” 54.

²³ Sciban, “Essential Characteristics,” 55.

²⁴ Sciban, “Essential Characteristics,” 58.

²⁵ Sciban, “Essential Characteristics,” 64.

be constantly performed, for *liangzhi* is maintained through its exercise. The moral truth that it knows includes the impetus to action, the desire to realize the goal it envisions. Thus, moral knowledge naturally leads to action. These are just some of the characteristics of *liangzhi* that Lloyd Sciban highlights.

In “A Neo-Confucian Conception of Wisdom: Wang Yangming on the Innate Moral Knowledge,” Huang Yong states outright that “*liangzhi* is the single most important idea in Wang’s mature philosophy.”²⁶ Huang explains that it is a type of moral knowledge innate to everyone’s heart/mind, contrasting it with nonmoral knowledge that one has to learn. Wang does not downplay the latter but believes that it should be guided by our *liangzhi*, which Huang says “literally means good or moral (*liang*) knowledge (*zhi*)”.²⁷ Huang also examines why it is that if all have this *liangzhi*, sages and common people differ. That is, why do people fail to act morally or choose to do evil? Much scholarship has looked into Wang’s claim that should we follow the natural functioning of *liangzhi*, then we will accord with the *dao* and *tianli* (“heavenly principle”). Failure to do so can be attributed to the obscuration of *liangzhi* by selfish desires or a turbid *qi*. The metaphors Wang employs, such as clouds clouding out the shining sun or dust covering a bright mirror, are commonly cited. But Huang Yong explains in detail the different types of *qi* discussed by Wang and which ones are responsible for evildoing (such as *keqi* 客氣 [alien or guest *qi*]). To conquer such *qi* and our selfish desires, so that the mirror and sun may shine, establishing the will (*li zhi* 立志) is the critical starting point.

Huang Yong also explores whether Wang’s conception of an innate moral knowledge is credible from a contemporary philosophical point of view. John Locke, for example, has offered a devastating attack on theories of innate knowledge. Is there really a consensus on what is universal in matters of morality? Anyone can say that a moral claim is true because it is originally in our minds and only forgotten and in need of rediscovery. Nevertheless, Huang believes that these objections can be addressed by taking Wang’s theories of the original goodness of the heart/mind and human perfectibility as objects of belief. By acting according to our belief or faith in the innate moral knowledge, we will come to see its truth and become moral persons.²⁸

Huang Yong has published several articles and book chapters about Wang Yangming. In the field of Chinese philosophy, he is certainly a well-established figure on the international stage. He has held professorships in both the United States and Hong Kong, produced a staggering volume of publications in both

²⁶ Yong Huang, “Neo-Confucian Conception,” 393.

²⁷ Yong Huang, “Neo-Confucian Conception,” 396.

²⁸ Yong Huang, “Neo-Confucian Conception,” 402–403.

English and Chinese, and both launched and serves as editor of the journal *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy*. He writes widely on ancient Confucianism, neo-Confucianism, and modern Chinese philosophy. Thus, he calls to mind those Chinese scholars in the age of de Bary and Wing-tsit Chan who published about Wang Yangming for both the Chinese and English-language academic worlds. Other articles include but are not limited to “Moral Luck and Moral Responsibility: Wang Yangming on the Confucian Problem of Evil” (2018), “Knowing-that, Knowing-how, or Knowing-to: Wang Yangming’s Conception of Moral Knowledge” (2017), “Confucian Environmental Ethics [Focusing on Wang Yangming]” (2016), “Empathy with ‘Devils’: Wang Yangming’s Contribution to Contemporary Moral Philosophy” (2015), and “Is Wang Yangming’s Notion of Innate Moral Knowledge [*liangzhi*] Tenable?” (2006).

Professor of philosophy Yang Guorong has written extensively about Wang Yangming in China, beginning with his *Wangxue Tonglun* 王學通論 (Comprehensive discussion of Wang learning), which was published in 1990, just two years after he completed his PhD at East China Normal University and then took a faculty position there. He has since published a substantial corpus of philosophical work primarily in Chinese but also in other languages. In fact, since 2013, three of his major works have been translated into English and published by Brill, introducing Wang Yangming’s name indirectly through his grand project of synthesizing Chinese and European philosophy.

In 2010, Yang published an article titled “Wang Yangming’s Moral Philosophy: Innate Consciousness and Virtue.” This too is something of a primer for facets of Wang Yangming’s philosophy. Although the main subject is *liangzhi* (“innate moral consciousness”), Yang explains how it is related to Wang’s theory of the unity of knowledge and action, will, and *tianli* (“principle of Heaven”). He also gets across to the reader a fairly simple but important point. Zhu Xi conceives of Heaven and the principle of Heaven as external to the moral agent. *Liangzhi* too, insofar as it comes from Heaven, also possesses this external dimension. Thus, universal moral principles are something out there in the world that must be discovered through objective intellectual inquiry and then obeyed voluntarily. Consequently, the moral agent is separated from universal moral norms.²⁹ This explains why, at times, even when people know what they ought to do they don’t necessarily do it. Wang Yangming asks that we shift from intellectualized knowledge of morality to direct knowledge of virtue. We are inherently moral beings, inherently virtuous. Our authentic self is the innate moral consciousness, which possesses an internal criterion for distinguishing right and wrong, as well as the emotional impetus and willpower

²⁹ Yang Guorong, “Wang Yangming’s Moral Philosophy,” 71.

to do good and rid evil. As I understand Yang Guorong's argument, we are fundamentally virtue—rightness/oughtness posed for action.

JeeLoo Liu's scholarly career is also relevant here. Just recently, in 2018, she published a book titled *Neo-Confucianism: Metaphysics, Mind, and Morality*. Her goal was "to extract the philosophical core of Neo-Confucianism in the Song-Ming and to make it relevant to contemporary philosophical discourse."³⁰ To do so, she proposes using analytic philosophy to interpret Neo-Confucianism, thereby liberating the tradition from particular historical contexts and making it relevant to contemporary readers. She does recognize, however, that many Chinese scholars are entirely opposed to using Western philosophical methods to explicate Chinese thought, "thinking that its essence might be maimed."³¹ Liu even suspects that some might accuse her of "epistemological colonization." As she sees it, however, such an attitude is just "philosophical nationalism or essentialism that takes Chinese philosophy to be exclusively of Chinese intellectual lineage, and intelligible only to Chinese readers."³² But so long as one remains true to the text and makes every effort not to distort the philosophical ideas, "the comparative angle can serve as a bridge." "By reconstructing neo-Confucianism with the terminology of contemporary analytic philosophy," she explains, "I hope to render these philosophical ideas accessible."³³

Liu says that Neo-Confucianism has always been her passion, one instilled by her mentor Zhang Yongjun (Chang Yung-chun 張永儁) while she was completing her undergraduate and master's thesis at National Taiwan University. "When I was an undergraduate at National Taiwan University," Liu writes, "I loved reading neo-Confucian writings on the rooftop balcony at my parents' apartment. Watching the sunset and beautiful clouds, I often thought that this was the same sky that these neo-Confucians shared hundreds of years ago and felt connected with them."³⁴ After completing a PhD at the University of Rochester in 1994, Liu first taught at SUNY Geneseo (1994–2005) and then at California State University.

Neo-Confucianism contains two chapters that focus on Wang Yang-ming's moral philosophy. In "Wang Yangming's Intuitionist Model of Innate Moral Sense and Moral Reflexivism," Liu analyzes Wang's philosophy as a form of intuitionism.³⁵ Since this faculty is an innate capacity to immediately

³⁰ Liu, *Neo-Confucianism*, ix.

³¹ Liu, *Neo-Confucianism*, ix.

³² Liu, *Neo-Confucianism*, ix.

³³ Liu, *Neo-Confucianism*, x.

³⁴ Liu, *Neo-Confucianism*, xi.

³⁵ Liu, *Neo-Confucianism*, 246.

perceive right and wrong, without the aid of reasoning and reflection, she designates it “*a priori* intuitionism.” Thus, through self-examination, we are able to directly perceive moral truth. Because Wang regarded these truths as independent of personal or cultural experiences, and therefore as not socially constructed or empirically conditioned, Wang can also be regarded as a moral realist.³⁶ Liu calls his theory of *liangzhi* “humanistic moral realism.” We have an inner moral compass, although we might need to retrieve it, concealed as it is by self-centeredness. We can do so through incessant self-monitoring and self-correction, through which *liangzhi*’s capacity to discern Heavenly principle (“ultimate moral reality”) is realized.

Liu also looks at *liangzhi* in light of some contemporary evolutionary and social theories of morality. Are we really born with a moral sense or innate faculty that makes us moral creatures? How are we to explain the fact that all human societies have developed moral systems, even if they differ?³⁷ Jonathan Haidt, for example, is a contemporary social psychologist who has put forward a model of social intuitionism to explain human beings’ capacity for moral judgment. The evolutionary biologist Francisco Ayala and philosopher Richard Joyce have also proposed an evolutionary origin for our moral sense, our disposition to make value judgments of right and wrong. However, Liu is careful to differentiate Wang Yangming’s theory of *liangzhi*, because none of these theories claim that intuition is *a priori*, having the capacity to perceive an objective moral reality accessible through introspection.

Last, we consider research on *liangzhi* in light of phenomenology. In fact, there does seem to be a natural affinity between phenomenology—a movement in the history of twentieth-century continental philosophy—and the Ming School of Mind. Both philosophical traditions study experience closely, describing it so as to understand its essential features. While phenomenology encompasses the entirety of experience, the School of Mind focuses on moral experience. Phenomenology studies the stuff of mental life and how it appears to the experiencing person; the School of Mind more specifically focuses on the phenomena of moral life and the functioning of moral awareness from the perspective of the goal of moral self-perfection. Both traditions analyze objects or events in terms of how they are perceived and understood by human consciousness.

In his dissertation, “To the Effort Itself: A Phenomenological Study of Wang Yangming’s 王陽明 Theory of Moral Effort,” which was completed at Duquesne University in 2018, Dong Minglai bring the similarities out even

³⁶ Liu, *Neo-Confucianism*, 252.

³⁷ Liu, *Neo-Confucianism*, 245.

more clearly with respect Edmund Husserl, the German philosopher who was a principal founder of the school of phenomenology. Dong states that prior to his time a common strategy adopted by scholars to elucidate Wang Yang-ming's philosophy of mind had been to elucidate it by comparison to Husserl's transcendental phenomenological analysis of the structures of consciousness, that is, his phenomenology of intentionality. He explains that three central concepts in Wang's philosophy—heart (*xin* 心), intention (*yi* 意), and thing (*wu* 物)—can be regarded as structurally similar to Husserl's ego as subject of consciousness, acts of consciousness, and objects of consciousness.³⁸

Already, in the 1960s, Hwa Yol Jung and Julia Ching explored the marked similarities between the project of existential phenomenology and Wang Yang-ming's learning of the mind (see Chapter 3). But this comparative approach remained subdued and perhaps dominated by analytic philosophy until the last decade, when Iso Kern published his massive German tome and Lu Yinghua began to publish his phenomenological studies of Wang Yangming's moral philosophy. Such research has since become an academic trend in the Chinese-language scholarship, including its offshoots in English publications.

With publication of *Das wichtigste im leben: Wang Yangming (1472–1529) und seine nachfolger über die "verwirklichung des ursprünglichen wissens* (The most important thing in life: Wang Yangming [1472–1529] and his successors on the "realization of original knowing"), Iso Kern has achieved a certain recognition among related academic circles in East Asia and Europe. It is a big book whose focus is the development and interpretations of *zhi liangzhi* 致良知 (realizing original knowing) by Wang Yangming and among his disciples. This is indeed the doctrine that Wang Yangming saw as the crystallization of the entire course of his spiritual development, and it served as the core of his teaching. Part I is devoted to Wang Yangming's intellectual trajectory. It begins with a substantial introduction to the social and political milieu of mid-Ming China, providing much insight into the setting in which Wang Yangming and his first-generation disciples' debates took place. Kern follows by thoroughly documenting three periods in the development of this doctrine, an early (to 1506), middle (1507–1518), and late one (1519–1529). He also meticulously describes three major meanings *liangzhi* held for Wang Yangming. Early on, Wang Yangming spoke of *liangzhi* as an emotional disposition and capacity to act morally that should be cultivated. Such, for example, is our natural love for family members. From 1519, he also spoke of *liangzhi* as a morally critical awareness of the rightness or wrongness of one's intentions, an awareness that is immediately present without reflection. *Liangzhi* knows

³⁸ Dong Minglai, "To the Effort Itself," 5.

good and evil. Last, especially in the final period, the religious dimensions of *liangzhi* became prominent. It is the non-empirical, transcendent, and universal Absolute. It is unerring, immutable, and beyond life and death. It is the pure origin of all that transpires in the human mind. These are the different dimensions of *liangzhi* taught by Wang Yangming.³⁹

Part II is devoted to his first-generation disciples—Wang Gen, Nie Bao, Zou Shouyi, Liu Bangcai, Ouyang De, Qian Dehong, Wang Ji , and Luo Hongxian. Kern carefully reconstructs the social and political background to their debates over the correct interpretation of their master’s key teaching. They were strong personalities who understood and developed his theory in different directions. Kern explains their arguments with one another in some detail.

Das wichtigste im leben is in some sense Iso Kern’s crowning achievement after a lifelong engagement with phenomenology and Chinese philosophy. In 1961, he completed a dissertation on Husserl at KU Leuven, where he also studied Chinese at the Sinology Institute. From 1962 to 1971 he worked at the Husserl Archives Leuven, publishing Husserl’s works. From 1972 to 1979 he taught philosophy at the University of Heidelberg but terminated his contract so as to devote himself to the study of Chinese philosophy. He did so all over the world—National Taiwan University, Columbia University, and Nanjing and Beijing University. In 1985, he returned to Switzerland and took a series of teaching positions at the University of Zurich and the University of Fribourg, eventually settling into the University of Bern, where he remained as a professor of Chinese philosophy until 1995. In general, reviewers have highly praised *Das wichtigste im leben*. It is recognized as the first comprehensive study of Wang Yangming and his first-generation disciples in a European language. Kern also provides much newly translated material and a useful index of Chinese terms with German equivalents. No doubt, Iso Kern has advanced this field of study in the West.

Lu Yinghua is another scholar who writes about Wang Yangming using the tools of German phenomenology. After completing his MA at Zhengzhou University, he pursued his doctoral research in the Department of Philosophy at Southern Illinois University. He credits the school’s Phenomenology Research Center and its director, Anthony Steinbock, with guiding him into this twentieth-century philosophical movement. Lu Yinghua’s dissertation, “The Heart Has Its Own Order: The Phenomenology of Value and Feeling in

³⁹ I have especially benefited from the reviews by Kai Marchal (*Philosophy East and West* 63, no. 4 [Oct. 2013]: 676–680); Jean François Billeter (*T’oung Pao* 96 [2011]: 562–564); and Yongling Bao (*Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 42, no. 21 [Mar-Jun 2015]: 259–262).

Confucian Philosophy,” was completed in 2014. Since 2014, he has built on this research to publish articles in both English- and Chinese-language journals. English-language publications pertaining directly to Wang Yangming include “The *a priori* Value and Feeling in Max Scheler and Wang Yangming,” “Wang Yangming’s Theory of the Unity of Knowledge and Action Revisited: An Investigation from the Perspective of Moral Emotions,” and “Pure Knowing as Moral Feeling and Moral Cognition: Wang Yangming’s Phenomenology of Approval and Disapproval.”

Lu Yinghua believes that Wang Yangming’s philosophy can be fruitfully illuminated through comparison with the thought of the German phenomenologist Max Scheler. Scheler is not so well known as Husserl but was in fact a pioneer in the phenomenology movement and one of the most prominent German intellectuals in his time. In general, as a consequence of his phenomenological inquiry into value and feeling, Scheler rejected several widely held approaches to ethics. He agreed with Kant’s rejection of utilitarianism and eudemonism. Like Kant, he believed we have *a priori* moral obligations that are not relative to consequences or future happiness. But he profoundly disagreed with Kant that a *a priori* obligation can be established as a universal categorical imperative, as these are too abstract, formal, and impersonal. Rather, although ethical imperatives are not only given as what we ought to do, they are also experienced as what I ought to do, not just anyone. In phenomenological intuition, value is found to be inherent to experience. Grasping the world through valuing composes our most fundamental relationship with the world, and this valuing is primarily done through feeling and emotion. It is through feeling and emotion that we come to moral judgments. The feelings of love and hate, for example, are acts through which the world first comes to have meaning for us. Preference shapes the meaning that life has for us. We are attracted to that which is of greater or positive value and are repelled by that which is of lesser or negative value. Thus, present in every experience is a ranking of values, a preference of certain values to others, and Scheler believes that this ranking is ultimately objective.

The similarities here to Wang Yangming’s rejection of the formalism and rule-boundedness of Zhu Xi’s ethics, his teaching of *liangzhi* (“pure knowing”) as the heart/mind’s sense approval and disapproval when responding to the world, his emphasis on the role of feeling and emotion in moral decision, and his insistence that the objective order of *tianli* is identical to the heart/mind’s preferences, as given by the pure knowing, seem evident. These are the kinds of comparisons Lu Yinghua explores, albeit in much detail, for the purpose of mutually illuminating two philosophical projects worlds apart.

As opposed to aiming at an interpretation of *liangzhi*, other scholars have made Wang Yangming’s concept of *wanwu yiti* (“the one substance of myriad

things”) the center of their analysis. Yu Jiangxia undertook the task of comparing this Neo-Confucian concept with the Stoic notion of *oikeiōsis* (“appropriation”). This seems eminently sensible given some recent scholarship. Stephen Angle finds that virtue ethics dominated the landscape of classical antiquity in the West, but that this tradition of moral philosophy was later overshadowed by deontological and utilitarian moral theories.⁴⁰ Only during the last half century has there been a revived interest in classical virtue ethics. At the same time, important developments in the study of Confucianism were taking place in the West, where a “burgeoning secondary literature and quality translations seems to have passed a critical threshold.”⁴¹ Both specialists and non-specialists could now engage with this tradition of thought seriously, Angle explains. Virtue ethicists in the West, in particular, took an interest in Confucianism because “so much Confucian thinking seems virtue ethical or close to virtue ethical in character.”⁴² Conferences on this topic were even held in the United States in 2008 and 2010. Their goal was to place Confucianism in dialogue with contemporary virtue ethics. Papers submitted from both Chinese and American participants were edited as a volume titled *Virtue Ethics and Confucianism*. In “Virtue Ethics and the Chinese Tradition,” for example, Philip Ivanhoe explains why Wang Yangming should be regarded as a virtue ethicist. He succinctly describes his moral philosophy and its metaphysical basis in the heart/mind and principle, as well as differentiating it from other types of virtue ethics.⁴³ His article is just one example of many that treat Confucianism and Wang Yangming’s moral philosophy as a type of virtue ethics.

Stoicism is surely a good candidate for comparison. Both Wang Yangming’s learning of the mind and Stoicism are fundamentally moral philosophies with a practical focus. For both, philosophy is a way of life with self-perfection as the goal. That perfection requires developing virtue and achieving a measured calm, making one immune to fortune and misfortune, praise and blame. Stoic *eudaimonia* might be compared to Neo-Confucian notions of *le* 樂 (happiness), and Stoic notions of the cosmos as a rationally organized and well-ordered system might be compared to the Neo-Confucian concept of *tianli* 天理 (Heavenly principle, or Heaven’s pattern); in both cases, there is the sense that one must conform to or accord with this higher order.

Yu Jiangxia compares conceptions of selfhood. She explains that although the Stoics and Wang Yangming have different ideas about who we are (selfhood) and how we relate to others (self-other relation), nevertheless, they

⁴⁰ Angle and Slote, “Introduction,” 1.

⁴¹ Angle and Slote, “Introduction,” 2.

⁴² Angle and Slote, “Introduction,” 4–5.

⁴³ Ivanhoe, “Virtue Ethics,” 28–55.

both claim an “original unity between self and world.”⁴⁴ This original unity acts as the teleological force for self-development. Our circle of concern—our moral consideration—begins with our self and those around us. Stoics proposed the idea that we are born with a primordial awareness or perception of our self. This is our first object of concern. Through a process of moral growth known as *oikeiôsis* we can expand our circle of moral concern and awareness to include family, household, city, and all humanity. Similarly, Wang Yang-ming speaks of our innate moral consciousness, *liangzhi*. The root of *liangzhi* is a fundamental intuition of being at one with all other beings and the cosmos. Beginning with the practice of filial piety, we can extend *liangzhi* from our father to all fathers, and from our older brother to all brothers, and so on, until all humanity is encompassed.

Last, in his article, “Nerve/Nurses of the Cosmic Doctor: Wang Yang-ming on Self-Awareness as World Awareness,” philosophy professor Joshua M. Hall provides a creative interpretation of Wang Yangming’s theory that the noble man embodies Heaven, earth, and the ten thousand things. For Wang Yangming, self-awareness is, ideally, cosmic awareness, an awareness that transcends the self. Drawing on Wang Yangming’s medical metaphors, Hall believes that Wang has envisioned the entire cosmos as being like a doctor engaged in self-diagnosis. He argues that “the world for Wang could be meaningfully understood as a mindful, self-healing body within which humans are the sensitive nerves, using our mindful awareness to direct attention to the affected areas when injury or disease occurs” and “working for the continuous healing of all that we are and share.”

Zhi xing heyi

Among Wang Yangming’s major concepts, the unity of knowledge and action has received the most attention in the West since the 1980s. A. S. Cua was the first to devote a monograph solely to a philosophical interpretation of this doctrine, laying the foundation for the growth of a body of English scholarship. Of course, almost every publication about Wang Yangming in the West touches on this teaching that he unveiled in 1509, while in virtual exile in Guizhou and just after his enlightenment at Longchang. On the one hand, on a more superficial level, the unity of knowledge and action might be understood as a kind of maxim, an effort to arouse conscience, a call to action. Merely talking about morality and justice is not the same as making oneself and the world a better place through conducting oneself morally. On the other hand,

⁴⁴ Yu Jiangxia, “Moral Development,” 150.

on a deeper level, philosophers have puzzled over Wang's claim that knowledge and action are identical. Just what kind of knowledge does he have in mind, and what does it mean to say that it is identical with action? Is there not a sequence? These more strictly philosophical issues have been the subject of research by, in chronological order, A. S. Cua, John E. Smith, Warren G. Frisina, Amy Ihlán,⁴⁵ Chi Wan-hsien,⁴⁶ Stephen Angle,⁴⁷ Yang Xiaomei, William Day, Lu Yinghua, Shi Weimin,⁴⁸ Zheng Zemian⁴⁹ and, most recently, Harvey Lederman.⁵⁰ Some of this research can be briefly introduced here.

In *The Unity of Knowledge and Action: A Study of Wang Yang-ming's Moral Psychology*, Cua aims at providing a plausible explanation of Wang's doctrine in light of contemporary discussions of the relation between moral thought and action. His goal is to provide a close description and analysis of Wang Yangming's account of how moral decisions happen, including explaining the role of volitional and cognitive aspects and the role of a Confucian vision in guiding the moral life. Cua believes that he can do this independent of considerations of Wang's metaphysics, and thus he largely leaves aside Wang's philosophy of mind. Rather, he believes, Wang Yangming's theory of the unity of knowledge and action pertains to the realm of practical knowledge of moral significance. Practical knowledge is knowledge that has a moving power, an actuating force or import.

Cua's analysis extends over about one hundred pages and includes a substantial apparatus of endnotes connecting the analysis to the literature on moral philosophy. In sum, as a type of practical knowledge that is based on moral ideals and a moral vision, moral knowledge has an actuating import and thus compels a committed agent to taking action. Furthermore, as action is undertaken, our understanding of the meaning and force of the ideal vision changes and deepens. Thus, moral knowledge is both prospective and retrospective, two

⁴⁵ Ihlán, "Wang Yangming: A Philosopher of Practical Action," 451–463.

⁴⁶ Chi Wan-hsien, "The Notion of Practicality in Wang Yangming's Thought."

⁴⁷ Angle, "Sagely Ease and Moral Perception," 113–131.

⁴⁸ Shi Weimin, "The Quest for Ethical Truth: Wang Yangming on the Unity of Knowing and Acting," 46–64.

⁴⁹ Zheng Zemian, "An Alternative Way of Confucian Sincerity: Wang Yangming's 'Unity of Knowing and Doing' as a Response to Zhu Xi's Puzzle of Self-Deception," 1345–1368.

⁵⁰ Harvey Lederman has just begun publishing articles on Wang Yangming's moral psychology and epistemology, so his work lies outside the timeline for this monograph. Interestingly, although his dissertation research lay outside the field of sinology, in the areas of the philosophy of common knowledge and epistemic game theory, among others, he subsequently turned his attention to Ming Neo-Confucian texts, bringing to their study his broad-ranging knowledge of contemporary philosophy. See his forthcoming publication "The Introspective Model of Genuine Knowledge in Wang Yangming."

key terms that Cua uses to explain the sequence extending from knowledge to action. This is how we can make sense of Wang's statement that "Knowledge is the beginning of action and action the completion of knowledge." Filial piety, for instance, is moral knowledge with an actuating force, such that being committed only to the intention to act on it is insufficient; knowledge of this moral ideal is only deepened through acting on it in our treatment of parents.

Thus, Wang's doctrine does contain an intellectual or cognitive dimension. If action is not to be blind and impulsive, it must be informed by careful thinking and inquiry. Such reflection is necessary to make progress towards moral achievement. Cua also links the relation between knowledge and action to Wang's analysis of our intentions and moral principle, explaining how they mediate the sequence running from prospective to retrospective moral knowledge. He also explains how the relation between moral knowledge and action is governed by the Confucian ideal of harmony, as expressed by such terms as the Way and *ren*. The doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action explains how, through continual progress from prospective to retrospective moral knowledge, a committed agent gains a deeper understanding of Confucian ideals and becomes ever more effective in realizing them in his life and the world.

In his article "Some Pragmatic Tendencies in the Thought of Wang Yang-ming," the philosopher John E. Smith explains similarities between the American pragmatist tradition and the ideas of Wang Yangming. While studying the writings of Wing-tsit Chan and A. S. Cua, among others, he discovered pleasantly surprising convergences of opinion between these two different traditions. Smith believes studying these convergences is important because they attest to a certain continuity to human experience and support a universal humanistic ethic. Smith explains that pragmatism has been mistakenly considered nothing more than expedient calculation pursued out of self-interest. But this is not the case. There are three key features in pragmatism, and elements of Wang Yangming's thought align with each of them. First, there is the idea that thought is purposeful, directed towards the attainment of goals that a person considers valuable. Second, there is the idea that thought is not inert but rather transformative, having the power to change one's life and the world. Third, there is the conviction that the actions a person takes serve to verify the authenticity of the beliefs they hold. Clearly, Wang Yangming's doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action contains all three of these characteristics.

In "Are Knowledge and Action Really One Thing? A Study of Wang Yangming's Doctrine of Mind," Frisina disagrees with A. S. Cua's claim that Wang Yangming is primarily talking about practical knowledge, or knowledge that precedes and issues into action. He believes Cua's theories about prospective and retrospective knowledge are one variation of representational theories

of knowledge commonly encountered in philosophy today. According to these theories, our minds “represent” the world in images and symbols, and then we somehow command ourselves to act accordingly. Thus, there is a division or sequence between mental image and physical action. But such dualistic theories fail to explain Wang Yangming’s epistemological claim that knowledge and action are one.

To explain his theory, unlike A. S. Cua, who believes metaphysics is not directly relevant to interpreting how practical knowledge works, Frisina believes we have to take Wang’s metaphysics seriously. Like his Neo-Confucian predecessors, Wang Yangming espoused a type of process or organismic ontology with elements that are not unlike the philosophy of A. N. Whitehead. A process ontology fits better with Wang Yangming’s belief that we should not experience a sense of separateness or division between what we have learned and know and what we do. According to his metaphysics, the universe is fundamentally dynamic activity manifested by a creative matrix. In this matrix, everything is internally related through patterned change. Because of the ontological continuity between human life and nature, the mind’s movements are simply a subset of this dynamic activity.

Wang’s conceptual apparatus explains the patterning of this dynamic activity, which develops as harmonies, as well as our role in it, which is to create those harmonies. Each individual’s mind is a single instance of the overall creative activity operating throughout the universe. Thus, a fundamental function of mind is to create harmonic patterns, that is, patterns (*li* 理) that, internally speaking, hold a certain relation and bring order to everyone and everything around us. *Liangzhi* (innate knowledge) is the primordial activity of mind, the key component of Wang’s metaphysical structure, extending the Confucian organismic ontology to our innermost being. It transcends the division between inner and out, individual and universe, and knowledge and action. *Liangzhi* is primordial experience and awareness, similar to a primordial mode of experience that Whitehead referred to as causal efficacy and Dewey as primary experience; it is the immediate precognitive response of a person that is both affective and volitional. It is primordially aware of and responsive to the dynamic patterning of the universe and the harmonious unity underlying it.

In “How to Make Sense of the Claim ‘True Knowledge is What Constitutes Action’: A New Interpretation of Wang Yangming’s Doctrine of the Unity of Knowledge and Action,” Yang Xiaomei says that no one would deny the importance of applying knowledge to action. However, Wang Yangming claims that the two are identical, which is quite another matter, since it seems clear that knowledge does not always lead to action. Thus, we need to understand what type of knowledge Wang is referring to. Likewise, his theory implies that if a person fails to act on what they know, then they lacked knowledge. Yet it

seems false to suggest that ignorance is the only cause of moral failure. Other scholarship on the unity of knowledge and action has yet to provide satisfying answers to these contradictions.

Yang clarifies that the knowledge in unity of knowledge and actions means *liangzhi*, “moral knowledge or knowledge of moral principles that we possess innately.”⁵¹ Thus, she agrees with Cua that we are speaking primarily of such moral knowledge and disagrees with Frisina that *liangzhi* is a primordial awareness foundational to all forms of knowledge. She rules out interpretations of *liangzhi* as a pre-reflective and natural emotional response, nonconceptual intuition, or a moral disposition. Comparisons to John Dewey and Alfred N. Whitehead are misguided. Whereas they give metaphysical accounts of the structure of empirical knowledge, Wang Yangming is simply trying to teach people how to become sages. For Wang, *liangzhi* is perfect knowledge of moral principles, a knowledge of right and wrong that is at once cognitive, affective, and motivational.

On the issue of the weakness of will, and what prevents people from translating moral knowledge into action, Yang disagrees with both Cua and Frisina. Cua’s elaborate explanation of how practical knowledge functions never really adds up to the kind of unity Wang had in mind. Cua claims that Wang Yangming was speaking of our commitment to prospective knowledge of moral obligations, which we recognize as having direct relevance to our life, as having an actuating import. But he never quite explains how or why that knowledge unfailingly leads to concrete action. Frisina’s metaphysical reconceptualization of Wang’s doctrine in the terms of process ontology still does not guarantee that people will not fail to act on their knowledge of filial piety or humaneness (and so on), and it does not explain why failure happens. In fact, Julia Ching and Tu Weiming, both of whom believed the unity of knowledge and action was expressing a moral ideal rather than an epistemological claim or an empirical fact, were closer to the truth. The moral ideal is the sage who never fails to act on what he knows is right, who unfailingly extends his moral knowledge. Wang was speaking to issues in his time, and this was his prescription.

However, Yang Xiaomei believes that she can add to their approach by explaining why Wang Yangming can indeed be taken literally when he states that knowledge and action are one, and that one who does not act does not know. His doctrine was both prescriptive and descriptive. For Wang Yangming, *liangzhi* is indeed innate, perfect moral knowledge possessed by everyone at birth, the extension of which unfailingly leads to action. However, this

⁵¹ Yang Xiaomei, “How to Make Sense,” 176.

knowledge is obscured by selfish desires and feelings, like clouds blocking the sun or dirt obscuring a mirror. Thus, *liangzhi* does not so much need to be developed as it does rediscovered, by overcoming selfish desires and feelings. This act of overcoming, of ridding desiring and preserving moral principle, is the extension of *liangzhi*. By overcoming selfish desires, we remove the motivation to act wrongly and unleash the motivating force for right action. Consequently, it is not strange to say that knowledge and action are the same and that if one does not act on what one claims to know, one does not yet know. For if having true moral knowledge means *liangzhi* is shining through, and *liangzhi* shining through always leads to taking action, then extending *liangzhi* by overcoming desires or rectifying the mind is indeed identical to action.⁵²

In “Wang Yangming’s Theory of the Unity of Knowledge and Action Revisited: An Investigation from the Perspective of Moral Emotion,” Lu Yinghua also revisits contradictions in Wang Yangming’s statements regarding his unity of knowledge and action. On the one hand, Wang Yangming clearly states that if one really knows something to be morally correct, then they will act on that knowledge. People who really know act, and people who don’t act didn’t really know. Yet Wang also states that people who behave badly really do know that they have done wrong. But that is contradictory because he is suggesting that even when the pure knowing was functioning, people behaved as evildoers.

Lu believes that the answer lies in clarifying the motivational nature of pure knowing. First, some have claimed that the solution to the contradiction lies in some form of the “weakness of will” explanation, such as one given by Yang Xiaomei. Wang states that by overcoming selfish desires, moral principle will be preserved and pure knowing extended. When selfish desires and feelings obstruct, that is because the willpower to overcome them is insufficient. Thus, failure to unify knowledge and action is a consequence of weakness of will. We know what is right but don’t have the willpower to overcome the selfishness that prevents us from doing it.

Lu disagrees with this approach, rather looking at the phenomenology of pure knowing itself. Does the exercise of willpower explain why we choose to overcome selfish desires and act morally? Willpower is morally neutral. Consequently, when we exercise it we have already identified a moral law or norm, and if we fail to fully take action, then we just lacked sufficient willpower. However, for Wang Yangming, Lu believes, moral principles are not external rules we want to obey because we rationally assent to their validity. Rather, the

⁵² Yang Xiaomei, “How to Make Sense,” 186.

motivating force is inherent to pure knowing itself, and not willing, because willing can be exercised to do good or evil.

Lu affirms the correctness of Tu Weiming and Stephen Angle's emphasis on the central role of commitment to becoming a sage in Wang Yangming's thought. Commitment motivates us to become morally good. In *Sagehood: The Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, Stephen Angle explains why commitment makes the unification of knowledge and action possible, so that, as Confucius says of himself, he could "follow his heart's desire without overstepping the line" (*Analects* 2.4). Wang Yangming believed we should pursue a commitment to developing a humane disposition, as well as a disposition to bring about harmony in whatever situation we find ourselves. With a mature commitment to sagehood, we do not merely notice that the world can be understood in moral terms but are also actively looking for ways to actualize the harmonious possibilities in what lies before us. This is how moral perception is linked to action through our having the virtue or disposition of commitment.⁵³

However, Lu argues that the reason commitment works is that we already possess *a priori* moral feelings that serve as the foundation for that commitment. These feelings, which intuit moral value, are a manifestation of *liangzhi*. "Through moral emotion," Lu states, "pure knowing forms moral judgments and motivates moral action at the same time."⁵⁴ The reason some fail to act on pure knowing must be understood in terms of the degree to which it is present, that is, in terms of its weakness and strength or its shallowness and depth. The key lies with quantity and not quality, for the quality never varies—the pure knowing is always perfect, fully formed, intrinsically motivational, and self-sufficient. However, it can be more or less present, and it is only weakly present to those who fail to act on what they know is right. Otherwise, why did Wang Yangming come up with so many metaphors for describing and methods for engaging moral self-cultivation? Our realization of it must be deepened through vigilant practice, by taking action.

The degree of *liangzhi*'s presence might also be measured in terms of whether it has been properly acknowledged. This is what an article written by professor of philosophy William Day seems to suggest. In "*Zhenzhi* and Acknowledgment in Wang Yangming and Stanley Cavell," Day explains that these two moral philosophers similarly distinguish two different ways by which people know others.⁵⁵ On the one hand, there is an ordinary way of

⁵³ Angle, *Sagehood*, 130.

⁵⁴ Lu Yinghua, "Wang Yangming's Theory," 203.

⁵⁵ Day, "*Zhenzhi* and Acknowledgment," 174–191.

knowing others that insufficiently recognizes their existence as human beings and thus their pain and suffering. We see ourselves as inescapably separate and deny that we can really feel what someone else feels. This is a form of self-deception that leads to an abdication of responsibility in the world and thus to a failure to act.

On the other hand, however, there is a different way of knowing others that erases these limitations. This order of knowing requires a fundamental shift in how we perceive others. It is what Wang Yangming refers to as “real knowing” (*zhenzhi* 真知) and what Cavell refers to as acknowledgment. Our ability to sympathize with others does not require that we directly feel what they feel. Also, real knowing is not, as Cua seems to suggest, a matter of acknowledging that existing moral principles of which we are aware really must become our guide for moral conduct and therefore be carried out in action and performed. Rather, both real knowing and acknowledgment mean recognizing that we have a certain kind of internal relationship to others, one that is intrinsically responsive, eventuating in action. In sum, there is a fundamental difference between abstract, cognitive knowledge of right and wrong, and truly seeing it and acknowledging it when engaged with another human being.

These are just some of the ideas discussed in what is a small sampling of the literature in English on Wang Yangming’s theory of the unity of knowledge and action. Most of the recent publications about him are of this nature, that is, philosophical analyses of major concepts pertaining to his moral philosophy, especially the innate knowing and the unity of knowledge and action. These are powerful yet difficult tenets because they make such profound claims about the nature of moral life. Wang Yangming is not always consistent in the way that he explains them, so it is not surprising that they have generated such interest and debate.

Other Comparative Research on Wang Yangming

Much miscellaneous research on Wang Yangming is not so readily placed in a category because there is little Western scholarship on the specific topics addressed. These publications include, for example, research on Wang Yangming and law, a particular Western philosopher, and environmentalism, as well on other components of his philosophy, such as his theory of *ge wu* 格物 (the investigation of things).

Some articles examine the significance of Wang Yangming’s philosophy for jurisprudence (legal theory). In 2017, for example, Norman P. Ho, then a professor of law at Peking University’s School of Transnational Law, published the article “Natural Law in Chinese Legal Thought: The Philosophical

System of Wang Yangming.” Many scholars believe natural law theory can also be found in Chinese philosophy, such as in Confucian notions of *li* (“ritual propriety”), or as a concept of natural order belonging to one of China’s philosophical traditions, such as *dao* (the Way), *tianming* (Mandate of Heaven), or *tianli* (“Heavenly principles”). However, Ho finds that although “Neo-Confucianism (and not classical Confucianism) is the most promising source for natural law thinking,” most of the substantial body of scholarship both concerns pre-Qin Confucianism and other traditions and rarely engages in systematic comparison with Western law theorists.⁵⁶ That is why he chose to focus on the philosophical system of Wang Yangming. He argues that it contains a coherent natural law theory bearing fruitful comparisons to those of Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas.

In general, according to natural law theory, Ho asserts that there are objective and universal moral principles deriving from the nature of the universe and discoverable by reason. These provide a rational foundation for moral judgment. In Wang’s system, Ho argues, “the natural law and its norms are not only in, but actually are, the human ‘heart-mind’ (*xin*) itself, equivalent to Heavenly principle. They are discoverable via human reason, as seen through Wang’s concept of ‘pure knowing’ (*liangzhi*).”⁵⁷ In his system, principle is the metaphysical foundation. It is what gives the world form and meaning, a clear structure and patterns. It is also normative, a plenitude of moral goodness in which we participate, and is indicative of how things should be. Since the heart-mind is identical to principle, it “possesses an innate, natural ability to know what is good, to learn how to be good, and to do good.”⁵⁸ That ability is pure knowing, the source of our capacity to know natural law. Ho elaborates on these arguments in some detail, suggesting interesting comparisons to Aquinas’s conceptions of God’s eternal law and human reason.

Some publications closely examine concepts that are central to Wang Yangming’s theory of the practice of moral self-cultivation, especially his interpretation of *ge wu* 格物 (“the investigation of things”). In “Wang Yang-ming, Chu Hsi, and the Investigation of Things,” Lee Jig-Chuen notes that Wang Yangming’s understanding of it is quite different from Zhu Xi’s, so much so that Wing-tsit Chan had claimed that the fundamental difference between their philosophies is best exemplified by these different

⁵⁶ Ho, “Natural Law,” 7.

⁵⁷ Ho, “Natural Law,” 8. For a study of the implication of Wang Yangming’s philosophy for conceptualizing the relationship between ethics and the law, see Mayeda, “The Wisdom behind the Law: The Implications of Yang-ming Philosophy for the Law,” 235–256.

⁵⁸ Ho, “Natural Law,” 17.

interpretations.⁵⁹ That is why Lee found it important to get a firm grasp on how they differed. In sum, Zhu believed that we are indeed born with some moral knowledge. A small child knows to love his or her parents. However, this knowledge must be expanded and increased. We need to find out more before we act. We need to discover the moral principles that serve as guidelines for taking action. This is possible because each thing (*wu*) or event (*shi* 事) contains a principle that determines what ought to be the case for it. To obtain this knowledge, we must extend knowledge, and we extend our knowledge by investigating things. To investigate things is to investigate systematically and exhaustively the principles inherent in things and events. In doing this, we can become morally awakened.

Wang Yangming, on the other hand, does not believe that extending knowledge requires generating new moral knowledge or broadening the knowledge that we already have. Rather, he has far more confidence in our innate knowledge of the good (*liangzhi*), believing it to be self-sufficient. In its original state, the innate knowledge can provide all moral knowledge, as it is not acquired from external sources but rather through its natural operation. For the innate knowledge to function naturally, we have to clear up whatever clouds it (such as self-centered desires), and then moral knowledge will translate directly into action. Such is the practice of extending knowledge and investigating things, both of which are directed more inwardly than was the case for Zhu Xi. For Wang Yangming, a thing is essentially an intentional object, a matter towards which our intentions are directed. Suppose innate knowledge tells us that doing something is the right thing to do, that our intentions are correct. How will that knowledge then be translated into action? The object of one's moral intentions must be actualized, the knowledge carried out. This is what *ge wu* entails.

Lee Jig-chuen, by the way, was preparing to publish a book on Wang Yangming's philosophy before his life was cut short by his untimely death. Born in Hong Kong in 1943, he majored in philosophy at the New Asia College of the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Paul Wienpahl met him while teaching a seminar there and invited him to complete his graduate studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Although his dissertation concerned action theory, and hence Western philosophy, Lee eventually turned to Chinese philosophy and published research on Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming. Two papers were to be the basis for a book, but he was incapacitated by a brain tumor and died in 1989 at the young age of forty-five.⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Lee Rig-Chuen, "Wang Yang-ming, Chu Hsi, and the Investigation of Things" 24–35.

⁶⁰ Charles Crittendon, "Jig-Chuen Lee 1943–1989," *Proceedings and Address of the American Philosophical Association* 64, no. 7 (June 1991): 31–32.

The other article was “Wang Yang-ming, Mencius, and Internalism,” which was published in the *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*.⁶¹ Lee examines how the philosophers Wang and Mengzi explain the connections between recognizing that something is the right thing to do and having the kind of motivation necessary to accomplish it. It might seem that Wang Yangming is an internalist, meaning he believes that when we see that something is right, the motivation necessary to bring about the action will also be present. Nivison seems to hold this interpretation of Wang’s theory of the unity of knowledge and action and innate knowledge of good; for the minds of the unobscured, knowing what is right, desiring to do what is right, and doing what is right happen together as a unified, natural, spontaneous, and effortless process. However, Lee believes that Wang Yangming also suggests that knowledge of an obligation or duty might not be motivation enough to get it done. Most people are controlled by selfish desires that weaken their motivation. Hence, we must nourish virtues and habits that help us maneuver into place *liangzhi*’s knowledge of the good and the corresponding motivation to realize that good in practice. Wang is not entirely internalist.

Last, in “Wang Yang-ming on Self-Cultivation in the *Daxue*,” a paper written while he was still teaching in the Department of Philosophy at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shun Kwong-loi analyzes Wang Yang-ming’s concepts as they pertain to self-cultivation, including “heart/mind is pattern” (*xin ji li* 心即理), unity of knowledge and action, the four aspects of self-cultivation in the *Great Learning*, and his four-sentence teaching (*si ju jiao* 四句教). One point he makes is that all these concepts revolve around Wang Yangming’s understanding of the nature of the “original substance of the heart/mind” (*xin zhi bentu* 心之本體), which is identical with *liangzhi* (“truly good knowledge”). The identity of heart/mind and pattern means that when the heart/mind is in its original state, its response to all things will be in accord with pattern, and knowledge and action will be unified. Thus, the four components of self-cultivation in the *Daxue*—*ge wu* 格物, *zhi zhi* 致知 (“the process of allowing one’s truly good knowledge to reach out”), *cheng yi* 誠意 (“making one’s thoughts whole”), and *zheng xin* 正心 (“rectifying the heart/mind”)—are really just one process whose goal is to correct problematic activities of the heart/mind so that it returns to its original state where the good knowledge is clear.

Other scholars have undertaken comparisons between various facets of Wang Yangming’s School of Mind and a Western thinker’s philosophical or religious thought. The lengthiest publication in this category of scholarship is

⁶¹ Lee Jig-Chuen, “Wang Yang-ming, Mencius, and Internalism,” 63–74.

David Bartosch's "*Wissendes Nichtwissen*" oder "gutes Wissen"? *Zum philosophischen Denken von Nicolaus Cusanus und Wang Yangming* ("Knowing non-knowingness" or "good knowledge"? On the philosophical thinking of Nicolaus Cusanus and Wang Yangming). This is the first book to compare systematically Wang Yangming with Nicholas of Cusa (Nicholas Cusanus, 1401–1464).⁶² It is a revised version of a dissertation Bartosch completed at Oldenburg University. Because each of these philosophers are the heirs to and in some sense the pinnacle of philosophical traditions with a long history, Bartosch's work is more broadly a comparative study of Renaissance Christian theology and Neo-Platonism with Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, especially the school of the School of Mind. He identifies fundamental philosophical problems that both Wang and Nicholas of Cusa address and tries to explain their different approaches and solutions. Since these two philosophers were working in unconnected historical traditions, Bartosch found it necessary to think about a systematic method for comparison, one that is ultimately transcultural in its aspirations.

The title of the book refers to two concepts central to each philosopher's system—for Nicholas of Cusa "Knowing non-knowingness" (Latin: *docta ignorantia*) and for Wang Yangming "good knowing" (*liangzhi*). Bartosch's analysis, however, is not limited to these concepts, for in the course of his research he discovered that both philosophers devoted themselves to at least eight transculturally comparable philosophical problems. Hence, the eight body chapters of his book each pose a philosophical problem and then explore how both Wang and Nicholas of Cusa approached and answered it.

In the first chapter, "Creativity" (*Kreativität*), Bartosch explains that although they do so differently, both thinkers speak of an all-encompassing creativity, describing it and its mode of operation, its origins, and its relation to humankind. Whereas Cusanus speaks of the dialectical relationship of creature and creator, Wang speaks of the creative changing of things. The second chapter, "Consciousness and Creativity" (*Bewusstheit und Kreativität*), contrasts Wang and Cusanus's reflections on the relationship between consciousness and creativity. Against this background of all-encompassing creativity, how does the structure of consciousness reflect and comprehend it? How is consciousness to be understood? This is the problem of the horizon of consciousness addressed by both thinkers. The third chapter, "Generativity and Creativity" (*Generativität und Kreativität*), asks what the significance and role of human family life and sexuality is in the context of the creativity of the

⁶² I would like to thank Dr. David Bartosch for kindly helping me understand the content of his major work.

universe and structure of human consciousness. Whereas for Cusanus bodily generativity should be absorbed into the intellect's generativity, in order to reflect the all-creating principle, for Wang Yangming human procreation is bound to the self-transformation of the heart-mind. The fourth chapter, "Ineffability" (*Ineffabilität*), explores the problem of speaking about the horizon of the indescribable. The unlimited reality of the all-encompassing, all-conditioning creativity is conceptually ineffable. So how can it be characterized linguistically? Bartosch found that both Wang and Cusanus employed a succinct terminology to express the inexpressible and the dialectical relation between the expressible and it.

The fifth chapter, "Consciousness" (*Bewusstheit*), returns to the philosophical problem of the structure of consciousness. Cusanus's concepts of *geist* (spirit/mind) and *vernunft* (rationality) are systematically compared to Wang Yangming's notions of mind and nature (*xing* 性). The sixth philosophical problem pertains to epistemology. In the chapter titled "Knowledge and Insight" (*Erkenntnis und Einsicht*), Bartosch asks, what did each regard as true knowledge? How is it acquired? Here, Cusanus's discussions of "knowing non-knowing," "vision," and "knowledge," are compared with Wang's tenets of the "investigation of things" and "knowing-taking action, together as one" (knowing as actively going through).

The seventh chapter, "Self-Perfection" (*Selbstperfektion*), addresses the philosophical issue of the ideal personhood and how that is to be achieved. How is the human being to perfect himself or herself? What stands in the way of this? Whereas for Wang the goal is to become a sage, for Cusanus it is the ascent to being a son of god. The eighth chapter, "Morality and Love" (*Moralität und Liebe*), concerns the problem of universal love. How can a general human love be philosophically justified? What is its starting point, and how is the individual to orient himself/herself in this regard? In other words, how does one become a truly loving person? This chapter compares Wang and Cusanus's reflections on the problem of good and evil and the requisite moral practices necessary to address it.

Thus, these eight problem horizons form the starting point for comparative work and the structure of the book. Yet, although there are eight of these, Bartosch believes that there is an inherent logic, or form of thinking, that is common to all of them. In all cases, both Wang Yangming and Nicholas of Cusa understand unity as a unity of sameness and difference. Unity, or oneness, can only be thought of if it contains all differences at the same time. This pattern pertains to all of their important philosophical reflections. Such is the foundational logic that makes the whole project of comparison possible from the beginning. Bartosch's book is in every sense a "big" book. It is a major contribution to the comparative study of philosophy East and West, as seen

through the window of Wang Yangming's School of Mind and Nicholas of Cusa's Neo-Platonic Christian mysticism.

In "McDowell, Wang Yangming, and Mengzi's Contribution to Understanding Moral Perception," Philip Ivanhoe explores the views of several philosophers on the metaphysical status of moral qualities, as well as how we come to perceive and appreciate these qualities.⁶³ Some believe that moral qualities are fashioned by human beings and projected onto the world. These qualities do not possess an ontological status, and thus there are not any natural moral facts in the world waiting to be discovered. For Wang Yangming, on the other hand, "moral qualities are out there in the world and available to us through a special faculty of moral sapience."⁶⁴ These moral qualities are shaped by principles (*li* 理) that determine the underlying normative patterns of the universe. The special faculty is pure knowing (*liangzhi*), which, when unobscured, spontaneously responds to the world in a seamless process of perceiving, understanding, judging, willing, and acting. Obviously, these are two very different approaches to morality, one highly subjective and in danger of moral relativism and the other highly eclectic in its claim for mind-independent moral qualities. John McDowell's moral realism argues for a middle way. His theories explain how a moral quality can be out there in the world and yet at the same time dependent on and shaped by the mind. Ivanhoe explains and compares all these different arguments, arguing for important parallels between Wang Yangming and McDowell's moral philosophies and showing how they are mutually beneficial.

In "Philosophy of Learning in Wang Yangming and Francis Bacon," Yao Xinzong compares these two philosophers' differing ideas on learning. He argues that the different criteria they have for measuring the advancement of learning exemplify the different philosophical orientations that came to dominate China and Europe at the dawn of the modern era. Wang Yangming's learning of the mind marks the apex of China's idealistic humanism, reinforcing a worldview where the goal of learning is primarily the inward journey to sagehood, or moral perfection. His learning is a learning of self-realization. Bacon's empirical learning, on the other hand, was a philosophy aimed at enabling humans to be the masters of nature, for the purposing of "relieving man's estate." The purpose of learning is to explore and control the world through investigating the natural laws that make it work. It was this kind of empiricism that eventually underlay the modern worldview. Yao further explains that Wang and Bacon were both reacting against existing philosophies

⁶³ Ivanhoe, "McDowell," 273–290.

⁶⁴ Ivanhoe, "McDowell," 274.

in their time and also left important legacies in their respective parts of the world. Now, today, their differing approaches to knowledge should be viewed as mutually complementary. The scientific, objective, and positive approach to knowledge advocated by Bacon should be harmonized with the moral, subjective, and intuitive approach of Wang Yangming. Such a synthesis would signal the dawn of a new day of learning.⁶⁵

Last, a few scholars have published articles that apply Wang Yangming's philosophy to environmental issues, thereby bringing the topic of environmentalism in Asian philosophical traditions to the attention of the English-reading world. The Japanese philosopher Tomosaburō Yamauchi contributed a chapter on Wang Yangming to *Fifty Key Thinkers on the Environment*,⁶⁶ the Chinese professor of philosophy Zhang Xuezhi included a translation of one of his articles in *Frontiers of Chinese Philosophy*,⁶⁷ and American professor of philosophy Samuel Cocks published an article on Wang Yangming and environmental ethics.⁶⁸ In each case, of course, a shared point for reflection is that Wang Yangming's articulation of the Neo-Confucian concept of the one body of myriad things (*wanwu yiti* 万物一體), according to which we are capable of realizing a sense of oneness with the cosmos, provides a meaningful foundation for relating to the world in a personally meaningful and ethical way. *Liangzhi*, our most primordial moral intuition, is an intuition of the oneness of all things that endows us with a natural empathy not only for humanity but also for the environment. We are naturally attuned to the natural order, and can sense whether or not it is flourishing, as an essential part of our own existence. Thus, by discovering fundamental unity with all things, we will naturally wish to act for the benefit of Mother Earth.

These are just some representative examples of research on Wang Yangming from a variety of different perspectives. Not surprisingly, the richness of his philosophy, which is of universal significance, means that it is potentially relevant and beneficial to people in any time and place. In the twentieth century, some influential Chinese intellectuals believed this to be the case and have made this point forcefully, by incorporating Wang Yangming's ideas into their own philosophies. These intellectuals have also served as a channel through which the Ming Confucian has become known to people living outside East Asia. It is to them that we now turn in the concluding section of this chapter.

⁶⁵ Yao Xinzong, "Philosophy of Learning," 417–435.

⁶⁶ T. Yamauchi, "Wang Yang-ming, 1472–1528," 27–33.

⁶⁷ Zhang Xuezhi, "From Life State to Ecological Consciousness: On Wang Yangming's 'natural principles of order within the realm of *liangzhi*,'" 222–236.

⁶⁸ Cocks, "Wang Yangming, Moral Promise, and Environmental Ethics," 70–81.

Modern New Confucianism and the Contemporary Meaning of Wang Yangming

In 1949, Father O. Brière published a lengthy article in the *Bulletin de l'Université l'Aurore* with the title “Les courants philosophique en Chine depuis 50 ans (1898-1950).” Laurence Thompson translated it into English and published it as a book in 1954. In his preface to *Fifty Years of Chinese Philosophy, 1898-1948*, Thompson explains that because of the dearth of materials on Chinese philosophy, this book will be very important. “There are wide gaps in our acquaintance with the whole story,” he writes, “leaving long ages completely blank to the non-Orientalist, and vague enough to the student who reads Chinese.”⁶⁹ Thompson also finds it odd that “one of the periods on which there is the least available is our own.”⁷⁰ After all, he surmises, without knowledge of recent trends in thought, it would be impossible to understand the social and political history of China.

O. Brière begins his short survey by explaining that for many centuries Chinese thought was dominated by Neo-Confucianism, and that the two dominant figures in this “intellectual renaissance” were Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming. While Zhu Xi was the “most orthodox interpreter of Confucian thought,” his authority “was often breached by that of Wang Yangming, leader of the idealist school.”⁷¹ O. Brière explains that Wang was devoted to the study of the human heart and the life of the mind. He also exercised great influence in China, especially for a century after his death, after which he profoundly influenced the intellectual world of Japan. Lately, O. Brière notes, Wang had seen a renewed interest in China, “perhaps by reaction against the influence of Occidental materialism.”⁷²

O. Brière’s opinion was that during the second half of the nineteenth century, “major Chinese thinkers were profoundly under the influence of the ideas of Wang Yangming.”⁷³ Those thinkers included Kang Youwei 康有为, Zhang Taiyan 章太炎, and Tan Sitong 譚嗣同. On the one hand, they all knew that something in the governmental machine needed to change and that it was necessary to

⁶⁹ O. Brière, S.J., *Fifty Years*, v. In his review, Wing-tsit Chan notes that the author relied heavily on He Lin’s *Dangdai Zhongguo zhexue* 當代中國哲學 (Contemporary Chinese philosophy). See Wing-tsit Chan, “Review of *Fifty Years of Chinese Philosophy, 1898-1950* by O. Brière,” *Philosophy East and West* 6, no. 3 (October 1956): 264.

⁷⁰ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, v.

⁷¹ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 14.

⁷² O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 17.

⁷³ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 14. Wing-tsit Chan believes that Brière has exaggerated this influence (“Review,” 264).

borrow the scientific spirit from the Occident. On the other, they all wanted “to conserve at all costs the Confucian morality which had in the past brought about the strength and greatness of China.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, they believed that the “welfare of humanity depended upon putting this morality into practice throughout the world.” In this regard, their principal inspiration was Wang Yangming, who had articulated an “intuitive, immanentistic idealism.”⁷⁵

O. Brière believed that the dominant intellectual trend from 1898 to 1927 was a “positivist, scientific current,” while from 1927 to 1949 China was “plainly under the sway of Marxist ideas.” Nevertheless, no fan of these trends, he devotes space in his work to philosophers who understood the enduring importance of Chinese philosophical traditions. “Beside these two principal currents,” he writes, “there co-existed various idealistic systems whose authors, as we shall see by the following, are often more profound and more original than their materialist colleagues. These, however, are only brilliant individuals who do not represent the main currents of opinion.”⁷⁶ Included in his chapters on “The Systems of Oriental Derivation,” these individuals are Liang Shuming 梁漱溟, Feng Youlan, He Lin 賀麟, and Xiong Shili 熊十力. He also included Sun Yat-sen, Chiang Kai-shek, and Chen Lifu 陳立夫, a group of thinkers “greatly influenced by Confucianism” who were “theoreticians of the Nationalist Party.”⁷⁷

With the exception of Feng Youlan, who “rarely draws on Wang Yangming and hardly cites him except to attack him,”⁷⁸ O. Brière stresses the special role that Wang played in this intellectual current. “Despite the high authority of Zhu Xi, and despite the official esteem which he has enjoyed during the centuries,” he explains, “yet he does not seem to us to express the dominant tendency among Confucian thinkers. The greater number seems to us still to follow the interpretation of Wang Yangming.”⁷⁹

Liang Shuming was one important example. O. Brière explains that this defender of Confucianism believed that civilizations pass through three stages. In the first stage, because people are occupied with fulfilling basic needs, they focus on striving, making progress, and getting ahead. The Occident exemplifies this approach to life. In the second stage, because people see that excessive desires are harmful to happiness, they seek balance and harmony. Chinese civilization exemplifies this approach. In the third stage, because people discover

⁷⁴ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 14.

⁷⁵ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 50.

⁷⁶ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 19.

⁷⁷ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 57.

⁷⁸ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 52.

⁷⁹ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 53–54.

that it is impossible to satisfy desires and find happiness in this world, they give it all up. Hindu wisdom exemplifies this approach to life.

In Liang's judgment, because it provides a happy medium, people should ultimately adopt the Chinese approach to life. Consequently, the world civilization of the future will be a renovated Chinese civilization. This civilization will retain science and democracy, but only properly understood, for science must be purged of its "disastrous utilitarianism." O. Brière explains Liang's thinking: "In order to take up 'science' completely afresh, and to prevent it from committing new crimes, it is necessary to imbue it with the Confucian spirit of Wang Yangming, which is essentially benevolent, a source of unselfish actions, without distinctions of mine and thine."⁸⁰

Xiong Shili was another intellectual important to this intellectual trend. O. Brière dubs him "a neo-Buddhist eclectic," who attempted to reconstruct the consciousness-only philosophical system (Weishi zong 唯識宗) with the aid of Wang Yangming and Henri Bergson. In his judgment, however, "Among all the disciples of the great idealist thinker [that is, Wang Yangming], He Lin may be the most eminent."⁸¹ Having studied Hegel in Germany, He Lin syncretized German and Confucian idealism and can be regarded as "one of the best representatives of Sino-Occidental idealism."

In China, on the other hand, He Lin is best known for his commentaries on Wang Yangming and Sun Yat-sen. He had even written them to support Chiang Kai-shek. Both Sun Yat-sen and Chiang Kai-shek were influenced by Wang's doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action.⁸² For historical reasons, Sun slightly modified the theory. In the wake of the failed Republican revolution, Sun was left bitterly disillusioned. Reflecting on the cause of the debacle, he "was persuaded that the root of the difficulty was ignorance, rather than the incapacity to act."⁸³ Thus, Sun emphasized the difficulty of acquiring true knowledge and even asserted that while taking action is easy, acquiring knowledge is difficult. Chiang, on the other hand, saw Wang's doctrine primarily as a call to action. At the academy, O. Brière states, "he commented to cadets on many occasions on the motto of Wang Yangming and the correction given to it by Sun Yat-sen."⁸⁴

Regardless of the accuracy of O. Brière's brief survey, research on advocates for Confucianism in modern times has been a crucial channel for the introduction of Wang Yangming's ideas to the West. A student of modern

⁸⁰ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 28.

⁸¹ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 54.

⁸² O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 54.

⁸³ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 59.

⁸⁴ O. Brière, *Fifty Years*, 59.

China's history will surely know that although the Republican Period (1912–1949) opened with the May Fourth intelligentsia launching a salvo against the tradition, many astute intellectuals and politicians insisted it was still relevant. They believed that Confucianism could contribute to modernizing China, advancing twentieth-century philosophical debates, ending China's revolutionary upheavals, and improving the moral and spiritual condition of humanity. Furthermore, some believed Wang Yangming's ideas in particular were a treasure trove for achieving these goals, which is why he had a special status in their theoretical discussions. Thus, research on prominent twentieth-century Chinese intellectuals who indirectly drew on his ideas—especially scholarship on modern New Confucians—brings him to the reader's attention.⁸⁵

However, the scholarly literature about modern New Confucianism is substantial, certainly beyond the scope of this historiography. Furthermore, although it is well known that Wang Yangming's thought is important to modern New Confucians, most of this scholarship only peripherally touches on his influence. For example, in *New Confucianism: A Critical Examination*, John Makeham introduces twentieth-century debates between modern New Confucians residing in mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. While they all agreed that New Confucianism grows out of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, they disagreed over the correct interpretation of that spiritual legacy. Makeham explains how Mou Zongsan 牟宗三, through reconstructing the *daotong* 道統 (“interconnected thread of the Way”), defined that legacy and claimed it. Mou identified Song and Ming Confucians who had correctly transmitted the ethico-religious core of Confucianism. His key criteria was whether or not they had obtained genuine insight into *de xing zhi zhi* 德性之知 (“learning of the moral nature”) and the *dao ti* 道體 (“ultimate meaning” or “the transcendent”).⁸⁶

Two genealogical lines were particularly important, one running from Zhou Dunyi to Liu Zongzhou, and another from Lu Xiangshan to Wang Yangming. In the twentieth century, Mou believed, his teacher Xiong Shili had most effectively inherited and transmitted this spiritual legacy.⁸⁷ He and his students did so by reshaping the School of Mind using Buddhist and Kantian terminology. Makeham suggests that they saw their achievement as a kind of victory over mainland New Confucians. Thus, in a sense, Wang Yangming became a football in twentieth-century intellectual debates.

⁸⁵ In *Religious Trends in Modern China* (1953), Wing-tsit Chan also states that most writers on contemporary Chinese thought agree that the revival of the Lu-Wang School is “one of the most remarkable intellectual developments in China in the last half century.” (31)

⁸⁶ Makeham, “The New Daotong,” 61–62.

⁸⁷ Makeham, “Introduction,” 5.

Another example is *Confucianism for the Contemporary World: Global Order, Political Plurality, and Social Action* (2017), a collection of articles that examines the Confucian revival as a cultural force for modernization. This book consists of studies of modern New Confucians who tried to prove that “Confucianism can be a vital force for a diverse and pluralistic society,” that is, for liberal democracy.⁸⁸ Introducing the volume, Tze-ki Hon notes that concomitant with economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s, Confucianism enjoyed a robust revival, becoming “a theory of modernization that supported economic development, individual growth, and social progress.”⁸⁹ Observers believed that it played a critical role in the economic success of Japan and the four mini-dragons. Furthermore, Hon states, this revival “was also considered to be a strategy for modernizing China that would preserve the country’s cultural heritage on the one hand and enable the country to catch up with advanced nations on the other.”⁹⁰ Finally, one strand of Confucianism gained widespread attention. This strand combined Lu Xiangshan’s and Wang Yangming’s theories of moral cultivation with “creative interpretation of Kantian and Hegelian philosophies.”⁹¹ Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi were largely responsible for this.

Only Sheng Ke’s chapter, “A Mission Impossible? Mou Zongsan’s Attempt to Rebuild Morality in the Modern Age,” explains the importance of Wang Yangming’s thought to this intellectual current. Sheng believes that Mou “is the most systematic and creative philosopher” among the New Confucians. On “a moral mission to give meaning to life,” Mou believed he could address modern predicaments by reviving elements of Song-Ming moral metaphysics.⁹² Mou rejected ethical relativism, according to which morality is determined by history and social context. Rather, he believed that if particularistic elements are removed, Confucianism could offer the world a universally valid moral philosophy. In his reconstruction of Neo-Confucianism, Mou deemphasizes moral norms and codes, focusing instead on innate moral capacities. This innate moral capacity is what Wang Yangming referred to as *liangzhi* (“human consciousness”). *Liangzhi* is a type of inner intuition rooted in the heart-mind. It is also the metaphysical foundation of morality. For Mou, Sheng explains, “*liangzhi* determines that the human being ‘must’ be a moral being because the only way a person can find meaning in his life is to follow *liangzhi*.”⁹³ This is why Wang Yangming’s ideas are so important in modern times.

⁸⁸ Tze-ki Hon, “Introduction: Confucianism for the Contemporary World,” xix.

⁸⁹ Tze-ki Hon, “Introduction: Confucianism for the Contemporary World,” xi.

⁹⁰ Tze-ki Hon, “Introduction: Confucianism for the Contemporary World,” xii.

⁹¹ Tze-ki Hon, “Introduction: Confucianism for the Contemporary World,” xi.

⁹² Sheng Ke, “A Mission Impossible?” 118.

⁹³ Sheng Ke, “A Mission Impossible?” 123.

Other articles in the book are also devoted to examining Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan's ethics and political thought. Some authors discuss whether Confucian ethics is more suited to liberal democratic societies or authoritarian regimes. In fact, the issue of Confucianism and democracy is much discussed in the scholarly literature these days. It is well known that although Tang and Mou believed that Neo-Confucian moral philosophy was a critical resource for modern times, they also found Neo-Confucian political philosophy to be highly problematic and unsuited to the needs of the political in our modern age. However, *Confucianism for the Contemporary World* does not specifically address these issues.

Other scholars have addressed them, especially Lee Ming-huei and Stephen Angle. These two authors seriously doubt that Neo-Confucianism has a political message that is relevant to the modern world. To demonstrate this, they draw on a body of both Chinese- and English-language scholarship that criticizes this tradition from a liberal perspective. In the twentieth century, Joseph Levenson,⁹⁴ Thomas Metzger,⁹⁵ and William Theodore de Bary⁹⁶ have all written about what they see as the limitations of the Song-Ming School of Principle when it comes to political philosophy. In *Sagehood: The Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, Angle summarizes some of these arguments about "the trouble with sagehood."⁹⁷ In general, overly confident in human nature and its potential for moral perfection, Neo-Confucians maintained that a political system could be constructed around sage-rulers under the guidance of a wise, meritocratic elite. Consequently, their thinking was inherently elitist, and this elitism was antithetical to democracy. Hence, Neo-Confucians perpetuated the Confucian idea that rule by men is superior to rule by law. As a corollary, Neo-Confucians were simply too optimistic and lacked awareness of the extent and implications of human depravity. The darkness of human nature is one reason why liberal traditions regard law and institutions as essential for keeping imperfect humans in check.

As for his own opinion about Neo-Confucian political ideas, Angle states that "the approaches of Zhu and Wang fall significantly short."⁹⁸ Like Mou Zongsan, he believes that although sagehood (morality) and politics were intricately interwoven in traditional China, they must be distinguished in modern times. If Confucians want to realize their aims, they must adopt a different

⁹⁴ Levenson, *Confucian China and Its Modern Fate*.

⁹⁵ Metzger, *Escape from Predicament*.

⁹⁶ De Bary, *The Trouble with Confucianism*.

⁹⁷ Angle, *Sagehood*, 180.

⁹⁸ Angle, *Sagehood*, ix.

understanding of law and political authority.⁹⁹ Much of Angle's work is in fact devoted to explaining how this might happen. Similarly, in *Confucianism: Its Roots and Global Significance*, Lee Ming-huei states that while Confucianism is still relevant to daily life and can serve as a resource "for the education, formation, and cultivation of self and society," it is less relevant to governing a country. Lee is suspicious of any attempts to restore Confucianism to the status of a national ideology, believing that would be impractical and dislocated in time. Thus, the concept of "inner sagehood and outer kingliness" must be reconfigured and adapted to modern times.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, in the chapter "Wang Yangming's Philosophy and Modern Theories of Democracy: A Reconstructive Interpretation," Lee does make the case that elements of Wang Yangming's thought are compatible with the requirements of modern democracy. According to him, the principal problem is the relation between the practical moral subject and the political subject of democracy. In general, scholars of a liberal persuasion generally do not want to make moral knowledge the foundation of democracy. "From a liberal perspective," Lee explains, "once we acknowledge that motives (or ends) possess distinctions between true and false, and between important and unimportant, this will inevitably lead to the recognition that value choices have objective standards. Such objective standards can provide a country or society with the opportunity to use the pursuit of true ends as a pretext for interfering with people's actions, giving rise to the collective suppression of the individual."¹⁰¹ For this reason, from a liberal perspective, the role of the state should be very limited, primarily to secure negative liberties, that is, to secure the individual's freedom from interference by others.

However, Lee points out, in the American community, several scholars have written communitarian critiques of liberalism, such as Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor. They argue for the importance of positive liberty and insist that there is no necessary logical connection between positive liberty and authoritarianism. They argue that the state must also play some role in securing positive liberties. Having positive liberties means that the individual has the conditions necessary to take control of his/her life and to realize fundamental purposes. Lee argues that this conception of the pursuit of liberty is closer to Wang Yangming's philosophy. Wang's conception of *liangzhi* ("original knowing") and *yiti wanwu* ("unity of all things and the self") can provide a foundation for positive liberty because it connects people together, striking a

⁹⁹ Angle, *Sagehood*, ix.

¹⁰⁰ Lee, *Confucianism*, 3.

¹⁰¹ Lee, *Confucianism*, 89.

balance between the independent subject of negative liberties, one who seems to have no relation to the community, and the communal self.¹⁰²

Having taken a detour into scholarship that touches on Wang Yangming's relevance to debates over modern politics, we can now turn to publications that go into more depth regarding his philosophical influence on New Confucianism. One groundbreaking English-language work was written by Umberto Bresciani, a retired professor of Italian who lived and taught for many years in Taiwan. His *Reinventing Confucianism: The New Confucian Movement* (2001) introduces the so-called three generations of New Confucians, scholars who wished "to build a bridge with western thought from a Confucian platform."¹⁰³ Those include, in the first generation, Liang Shuming, Ma Yifu, Xiong Shili, Zhang Junmai (Carsun Chang), Feng Youlan, He Lin, and Qian Mu; in the second, Thomé Fang (Fang Dongmei), Tang Junyi, Xu Fuguan, and Mou Zongsan; and in the third, Yu Yingshi, Cheng Zhongying, and Tu Weiming. Bresciani also provides a chapter on "The New Confucian Movement in Mainland China" where he briefly introduces several prominent academics. Based on his research, Bresciani confidently asserted that, "Far from being, as Western people have often thought in the past, a mere hodge-podge of rules and etiquette and cheap moral sayings, Confucianism is a complex philosophical world with very deep insights into almost all branches of traditional philosophy."¹⁰⁴

Like O. Brière, Bresciani stresses the importance of Wang Yangming's thought to this strand of China's twentieth-century intellectual history. "Contemporary New Confucians are for the most part spiritual descendants of the Neo-Confucian Wang Yangming," he writes. Most "have in common a penchant for the Wang Yangming tradition of thought, and consequently emphasize the importance of the moral mind."¹⁰⁵ In the first generation, Xiong Shili was especially important because some modern New Confucians regard him as the founder of their movement. He is venerated as "the illustrator in our age of the true doctrine of Confucius-Wang Yangming, the doctrine of the moral self."¹⁰⁶ Many of the core elements of his metaphysical system were influenced by the school of Wang Yangming. Concerning his method for obtaining knowledge, Xiong "upheld the meta-rational (intuition) as the only one suitable for the knowledge of the ultimate truth, i.e., of the substance, as opposed to reasoning, which is suitable only for rational knowledge."¹⁰⁷ He believed

¹⁰² Lee, *Confucianism*, 90.

¹⁰³ Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism*, 16.

¹⁰⁴ Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism*, 37.

¹⁰⁵ Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism*, 458.

¹⁰⁶ Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism*, 137.

¹⁰⁷ Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism*, 17.

that while Western learning contributed a superior knowledge of rationality as it applied to scientific knowledge, Chinese learning offers superior insight into the transcendent and human nature.

In fact, Bresciani's book repeatedly indicates that although modern New Confucians of the "mind-heart orientation" had distinct philosophies, they almost all believed that Wang Yangming's special contribution was to direct people to the highest truths. For example, Liang Shuming endowed direct intuition (*zhijue* 直覺) with a special capacity to see the silent inner core of reality. This was a type of insight most clearly articulated by the Neo-Confucian school of Wang Yangming.¹⁰⁸ Western culture, he argued, worships rational activity, founding science and capitalism on it. However, this level of learning will be surpassed by a higher way of learning nourished in the cultures of the East, one based on intuition and a kind of existential mystical experience.¹⁰⁹ Liang's spiritualistic philosophy holds that the highest expression of life is the human mind-heart, which is the substance of the universe.

Other examples of this influence abound. He Lin's "new philosophy of mind," according to Bresciani, "was the product of a match between the thought of Hegel and the doctrine of the school of Wang Yangming."¹¹⁰ His ontology of mind, epistemological theory of intuition, and ethical thought were all heavily influenced by Lu Xiangshan's and Wang Yangming's learning of mind ("Lu-Wang School of Mind"). For He Lin, this school's emphasis on the self-consciousness and intuition of the individual was better suited to a new age, one calling for individual freedom and the nation's awakening. As for Carsun Chang, "a philosophical figure who gave an important contribution to the birth and development of the New Confucian movement," Bresciani explains, "the main sources of his thought are Wang Yangming and Kant."¹¹¹ This scholar and politician had modeled himself on great Confucians like Wang Yangming, Zhu Xi, and Wen Tianxiang, "men who were equally dedicated to personal moral cultivation, the scholarly search for truth, and active involvement in social and political issues."¹¹² As for other New Confucians who extol Wang Yangming and the School of Mind, they share the idea that the discovery of the moral self is the first axiom of New Confucian metaphysics. Through the experience of conscience—of the sense of right and wrong—and taking moral action, the individual becomes aware of his existence as a moral self.

¹⁰⁸ Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism*, 79.

¹⁰⁹ Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism*, 75.

¹¹⁰ Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism*, 18.

¹¹¹ Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism*, 168.

¹¹² Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism*, 176.

This moral awareness is the gateway to transcendent metaphysical realities, such as original substance of mind or the oneness of all things.¹¹³

More recently, in-depth studies of individual New Confucians have been published in English, as well as one book that introduces the entire second generation. Tang Junyi and Mou Zongsan have received the most attention, and it is clear from reading about them that Wang Yangming's ideas played an important role in their philosophical projects. In *Rebirth of the Moral Self: The Second Generation of Modern Confucians and their Modernization Discourses*, Slovenian Professor of Sinology Jana S. Rosker touches on the influence of Wang Yangming's philosophy on Tang Junyi. Modern Confucians like Tang firmly believed that traditional Confucianism could be renewed and adapted to meet the needs of the modern era, serving "as the foundation for an ethically meaningful modern life" and providing a spiritual antidote to the sense of alienation and isolation that many individuals experience.¹¹⁴ Neo-Confucianism provided the main inspiration for attaining this goal. The question revolves around how human beings find meaning and value in life. Tang asserted that human beings ultimately do so through attaining intuitive knowledge of Heaven, a higher, transcendent reality. This intuitive knowledge is what Wang Yangming spoke of as innate knowledge. Similar to Wang, Tang distinguished between the empirical self—a self limited by space and time—and the moral and spiritual self, which is essentially free, innately good, and capable of transcending the empirical self. The latter is the true self, as well as the original heart-mind, "the universal metaphysical reality possessed by every human being."¹¹⁵ Through acting on the guidance provided by intuition, human beings can bring forward this spiritual reality and merge with the creative power of Heaven. That is how meaning is bestowed upon life.¹¹⁶

In *Tang Junyi: Confucian Philosophy and the Challenge of Modernity*, Swiss sinologist Thomas Fröhlich also explains the importance of Wang Yangming's ideas to Tang Junyi. Believing that Tang was "one of modern China's most prolific thinkers," Fröhlich sought to make his work accessible to those interested in contemporary philosophy and intellectual history.¹¹⁷ Tang was aware that, in the early decades of the twentieth century, some presented

¹¹³ Bresciani, *Reinventing Confucianism*, 473.

¹¹⁴ Rosker, *Rebirth of the Moral Self*, 29.

¹¹⁵ Rosker, *Rebirth of the Moral Self*, 155.

¹¹⁶ Rosker is referring to the ninth and highest of Tang's nine horizons of the mind-heart. This is the horizon of the flow or manifestation of Heaven's virtue (*tiande liuxing jing* 天德流行境). Wang Yangming's teaching was ultimately directed towards this horizon. See Ng, "T'ang Chun-I," 318-319.

¹¹⁷ Fröhlich, *Tang Junyi*, vii.

Confucianism as a panacea for many social and political ills, while others considered it a vestige of imperial times with no relevance to modern times. However, Tang believed that a critical reinterpretation of Confucian thought, combined with careful assessment of the successes and failures of modern societies, would show Confucianism's enduring relevance.¹¹⁸ In particular, he believed that the Neo-Confucian theory of mind and nature, and especially Wang Yangming's philosophy, could contribute to solving problems inherent to modern subjectivity and the quest for individual self-fulfillment. For Tang, Neo-Confucianism reached its climax in the work of Wang Yangming.¹¹⁹

According to Fröhlich, Tang's study of mind and human nature was based on three assumptions. First, the foundation of life is a cosmic process referred to as Heaven. Like his Confucian and Neo-Confucian predecessors, "Tang placed the human being at the center of a cosmic order which he referred to as 'Heaven' (tian 天)."¹²⁰ Second, human beings are able to elevate themselves to the point where they can partake of the way of Heaven. Similar to Wang Yangming, Tang singled out a passage from Mencius (7A:1) that states, "For a man to give full realization to his heart (*jin qi xin*) is for him to understand his own nature (*zhi qi xing*), and a man who knows his own nature will know Heaven (*zhi tian*)." Tang took this to mean that a human being has the potential to fully actualize himself or herself. This actualization is an awakening allowing the human mind access to "the ultimate source of the universe and human life."¹²¹ At this moment, the individual will apprehend Heaven, the spiritual source of all reality. This leads to Tang's third assumption, that through insight into the absolute reality, the individual achieves a unity with Heaven. All of these assumptions were influenced by a line of Confucian thinking running from Mengzi through Wang Yangming. Most importantly, the capacity through which mind attains knowledge of Heaven is an inner, moral intuition of the type discussed by Wang Yangming—that is, *liangzhi*.¹²²

Recently, Mou Zongsan's philosophy has also been the subject of much scholarship, more so than Tang Junyi's, and authors who have published about him consistently highlight the central role of Wang Yangming's philosophy in the development of his philosophical system. The two most outstanding recent monographs are Sebastian Billioud's *Thinking through Confucian Modernity: A Study of Mou Zongsan's Moral Metaphysics* and N. Serina Chan's *The Thought of Mou Zongsan*. Both were published in Brill's Modern Chinese

¹¹⁸ Fröhlich, *Tang Junyi*, 6.

¹¹⁹ Fröhlich, *Tang Junyi*, 47.

¹²⁰ Fröhlich, "'Philosophy' Reconsidered," 395.

¹²¹ Fröhlich, *Tang Junyi*, 8.

¹²² Fröhlich, *Tang Junyi*, 126–127.

Philosophy series in 2011. These studies explain in detail how Mou Zongsan constructed his philosophy synthetically in dialogue with Kant, Hegel, Mahayana Buddhism, and Neo-Confucianism. Mou believed that Kant's philosophy was the pinnacle of Western thought. Yet it was flawed in that Kant denied humanity access to the *noumenon*, the thing-in-itself. Hence, Western philosophy was lacking in reflection on the possibility that human beings can within their own subjectivity access the ultimate source of the universe, Heaven, and transcendent moral principles.

Yet, as Mou saw it, individual moral autonomy can only be realized by accessing just such higher realities: the infinite dimensions of existence and the universe's unceasing creativity. Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism effectively showed how this was possible by pointing to the heart-mind that is both at the root of human subjectivity and the gate to Heaven. Wang Yangming asserted that heart-mind is principle. By this, he meant that the moral mind has the capacity to realize objective necessity in daily life. The human being achieves this by acting upon his innate moral consciousness in deeds, especially empathetic compassion. Through acting on *liangzhi*, the moral subject is able to communicate with a higher onto-cosmological order, the ultimate reality of the universe. This is a paradigm of immanent transcendence, according to which, by acting on one's moral intuition, the individual can bring forward a moral or spiritual self (their sagehood), one bestowed by and enabling the person to unite with Heaven. Through this intuition, human beings are able to actualize the metaphysical dimensions of the universe and realize sagehood. This is a principle of ontological actualization. Mou's moral metaphysics, including his central concept developed late in life—intellectual intuition—was deeply influenced by Wang Yangming's articulation of these profound philosophical insights.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to introduce recent research on Wang Yangming's major philosophical ideas, most of which is comparative, as well as research on modern new Confucians deeply influenced by him. As for which Western philosophical traditions provided the most fruitful comparisons or analytical approaches, those include classical virtue ethics, Stoicism, moral realism, analytic philosophy, pragmatism, process ontology, phenomenology, and natural law theory. Actually, Wang Yangming's thought has been studied primarily as a type of moral philosophy, which is why the Western literature is rich with comparisons to a number of individuals known for their contributions to ethics. However, phenomenology and analytical philosophy have become increasingly important over the last decade, especially among mainland Chinese scholars.

EPILOGUE

Recent publications and signs on the horizon suggest that the growing flow of publications on the subject matter under study in this book will continue over the next few years. Chapter 4 presented factors mitigating against research and publication in this area in the West as well as pointing to ones that may encourage it. On the one hand, academic trends deemphasizing Ming intellectual history, the job market, and the relative absence of the conditions necessary for nurturing the skills requisite to conducting such research tend to constrict that flow. On the other, the importance and richness of Ming Confucianism to the history of philosophy in China and East Asia necessarily means that graduate students and academics working in related fields of study might easily find themselves pulled towards revisiting Wang Yangming and the School of Mind or other Ming Confucians, including his critics.

Indeed, by searching academic databases for publications that fall within the parameters of 2020 to the present, one will find a substantial number of new publications, most of which are written by academics working in their field of Chinese philosophy and residing in East Asia, but some of which are being written by academics whose national, cultural, and educational backgrounds are rooted in Europe and North America. Furthermore, in 2016, I published an article in *Philosophy East and West*—“The Renaissance of Wang Yangming Studies in the People’s Republic of China”—for the purpose of explaining the political, cultural, intellectual, educational, and economic reasons for the revival of Chinese scholarship on Wang in China.¹ That scholarship has been accompanied by robust central and local government funding for related conferences, formation of study societies, restoration of historical sites, and publication of both educational materials for K-12 students and training materials for governmental employees. Although the policies behind this long predate the Xi Jinping era, public statements made by him affirming his fondness for Wang Yangming have only intensified the funding and furthered the activity. Naturally, it can be taken for granted that as such, Wang Yangming has been politicized in China, giving academics who publish in this area a unique set of challenges and concerns, depending on their scholarly and political agendas. Regardless, however, critical scholarship must go on, for the purpose of bringing diverse perspectives to this

¹ Israel, “Renaissance of Wang Yangming.”

matter, and to work towards establishing truer historical and philosophical understandings of Wang Yangming and his school.

More broadly, since Reform and Opening, China has supported scholarship on Confucianism, for the purposes of promoting pure scholarship on Chinese traditions, placing tradition in the service of political policies and ideological legitimation, and increasing the global presence of knowledge about Chinese history and philosophy. With regard to the latter, various funds have been set up to support translation of important scholarly works into other languages, such as the Chinese Fund for the Humanities and Social Sciences. It was this funding that provided the support necessary to make two important books available to an English-reading audience in 2020 and 2021: Chen Lai's *You wu zhi jing: Wang Yangming zhexue de jingshen* (The Spirit of Wang Yangming's Philosophy: The Realms of Being and Non-Being) and Zhang Xuezhi's *History of Chinese Philosophy in the Ming Dynasty*. Such major works of scholarship as these, as well as a forthcoming literature, including biographies, can be expected to substantially alter the appearance and development of scholarship on Wang Yangming and his School of Mind in the English-reading world, adding to our understanding of the historical, philosophical, and religious dimensions to his life and thought discussed throughout this literature survey.

REFERENCE WORKS

- Allsen, Thomas B. "Current Ming Bibliography in Western Languages." *Ming Studies* 1 (1975): 60–5.
- Anesaki, M. Review of *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming* by Frederick Godrich Henke, *The American Journal of Theology* 22, no. 4 (1918): 594–600.
- Angle, Stephen C. "A Fresh Look at Knowledge and Action: Wang Yangming in Comparative Perspective." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 33, no. 2 (2006): 287–298.
- Angle, Stephen C. *Sagehood: The Contemporary Significance of Neo-Confucian Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002.
- Angle, Stephen C. and Michael Slote. *Virtue Ethics and Confucianism*. New York and London: Routledge, 2013.
- Angle, Stephen C. "Wang Yangming as a Virtue Ethicist." In *Dao Companion to Neo-Confucian Philosophy*, 315–335. Edited by John Makeham. London: Springer, 2010.
- Angle, Stephen C. and Justin Tiwald. *Neo-Confucianism: A Philosophical Introduction*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.
- Araki Kengo 荒木見悟. *Bukkyō to jukyō 仏教と儒教* (Buddhism and Confucianism). Tokyo: Daisen Bunmeisha, 1979.
- Araki Kengo. "Confucianism and Buddhism in the Late Ming." In *The Unfolding of Neo-Confucianism*, 39–66. Edited by William Theodore de Bary. New York: Columbia University Press, 1975.
- Araki Kengo 荒木見悟. *Mindai shisō kenkyū: Mindai ni okeru jukyō to bukkyō no kōryū* 明代思想の研究: 明代における儒教と仏教の交流 (Research on Ming dynasty thought: Interaction of Confucian and Buddhist teachings during the Ming dynasty). Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1972.
- Araki Kengo 荒木見悟. *Yōmeigaku no isō* 陽明學の位相 (The status of Yangming learning). Tokyo: Kenbun Shuppan, 1992.
- Armstrong, Robert Cornell. *Light from the East: Studies in Japanese Confucianism*. New York: Gordon Press, 1974.
- Bartosch, David. "Explicit and Implicit Aspects of Confucian Education." *Asian Studies* 5, no. 2 (2017): 87–112.
- Bartosch, David. "*Wissendes Nichtwissen*" oder "*gutes Wissen*"?: *Zum philosophischen Denken von Nicolaus Cusanus und Wang Yangming*. Paderborn: Wilhem Fink, 2015.
- Bartosch, David. "*Wissendes Nichtwissen*" oder "*gutes Wissen*"?: *Zum philosophischen Denken von Nicolaus Cusanus und Wang Yangming*. PhD Diss., Oldenburg University, 2013.

- Bauer, Wolfgang. *Geschichte der chinesischen Philosophie: Konfuzianismus, Daoismus, Buddhismus*. München: C.H. Beck, 2001.
- Bays, Daniel. *A New History of Christianity in China*. Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012.
- Benesch, Oleg. "Wang Yangming and Bushidō: Japanese Nativization and its Influences in Modern China." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 36, no. 3 (2009): 439–54.
- Berling, Judith. *The Syncretic Religion of Lin Chao'en*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980.
- Bernard, Henri. *Sagesse chinoise et philosophie chrétienne: Essai sur leurs relations historiques*. Tianjin: Henricus Lécroart, 1935.
- Berthrong, John. *All Under Heaven: Transforming Paradigms in Confucian-Christian Dialogue*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1994.
- Berthrong, John. "From Xunzi to Boston Confucianism." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 30, no. 3–4 (Sept. 2003): 433–50.
- Betty, L. Stafford. "Liang-chih: Key to Wang Yang-ming's Ethical Monism." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 7, no. 2 (1980): 115–129.
- Billioud, Sébastien. *Thinking Through Confucian Modernity: A Study of Mou Zongsan's Moral Metaphysics*. Leiden: Brill, 2012.
- Billioud, Sébastien and Joe Theraval. *The Sage and the People: The Confucian Revival in China*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- Black, Alison. *Man and Nature in the Philosophical Thought of Wang Fu-Chih*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1989.
- Bloom, Irene. *Knowledge Painfully Acquired: The K'un chih chi of Lo Ch'in-shun*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987.
- Bloom, Irene. "Wing-tsit Chan, 1901-1994: Excerpts from an Oral Autobiography." *China Review International* 2, no. 2 (1995): 327–347.
- Bol, Peter K. *Neo-Confucianism in History*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008.
- Boulger, Demetrius Charles. *A History of China*, vol. 1. London: W.H. Allen, 1881.
- Bresciani, Umberto. *Reinventing Confucianism: The New Confucian Movement*. Taipei: Taipei Ricci Institute, 2001.
- Bresciani, Umberto. *Wang Yangming: An Essential Biography*. Passerino Editore, 2016.
- Brière, O. *Fifty Years of Chinese Philosophy, 1898-1950*. Translated by Lawrence G. Thompson. New York: Macmillan, 1956.
- Brook, Timothy. *The Confusions of Pleasure: Commerce and Culture in Ming China*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.
- Brook, Timothy. "What Happens when Wang Yangming Crosses the Border?" In *The Chinese State at the Borders, 74–90*. Edited by Diana Lary. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007.

- Brown, Roger H. "A Confucian Nationalist for Modern Japan: Yasuoka Masahiro, the Nation-State, and Moral Self-Cultivation, 1898-1983." PhD Diss., University of Southern California, 2004.
- Bruya, Brian. "Emotion, Desire, and Numismatic Experience in Rene Descartes, Zhu Xi, and Wang Yangming." *Ming Qing Yanjiu* (2001): 45–75.
- Bruya, Brian. "The Tacit Rejection of Multiculturalism in American Philosophy Ph.D. Programs: The Case of Chinese Philosophy." *Dao* 14, no. 3 (2015): 369–389.
- Busch, Heinrich. "The Tung-lin Academy and its Political and Philosophical Significance." *Monumenta Serica* 14, no. 1 (1949): 1–163.
- Cady, Lyman V. "Wang Yang Ming's Doctrine of Intuitive Knowledge." *The Monist* 38, no. 2 (1928): 263–291.
- Cady, Lyman Van Law. *Wang Yang-ming's "Intuitive Knowledge": A Study*. Jinan and Beijing, 1936.
- Carus, Paul. 1902. *Chinese Philosophy: An Exposition of the Main Characteristic Features of Chinese Thought*. Chicago: Open Court, 1902.
- Cayley, John and Ming Wilson, eds. *Europe Studies China: Papers from an International Conference on European Sinology*. London: Han-Shan Tang Books, 1995.
- Chai, Shaojin. "Enlightened Compassion and Global Governance with Chinese Characteristics: Oneness, Care, and Cosmopolitanism in the Political Philosophy of Wang Yangming (1472-1529)." PhD Diss., University of Notre Dame, 2014.
- Chan, Albert. *The Glory and Fall of the Ming Dynasty*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1982.
- Chan, Jonathan K. L. and Sumner B. Twiss. "Wang Yang-ming's Ethics of War." In *Chinese Just War Ethics: Origins, Development, Dissent*, 153–78. Edited by Ping-Cheung Lo and Sumner B. Twiss. London and New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Chan, N. Serina. *The Thought of Mou Zongsan*. Leiden: Brill, 2011.
- Chan, Wing-Cheuk. "How is Absolute Wisdom Possible? Wang Yang-ming and Buddhism." In *Wisdom in China and the West: Chinese Philosophical Studies*, 329–44. Edited by Vincent Shen and Willard Oxtoby. Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2004.
- Chan, Wing-tsit. "Biography of Wang Yang-ming." In *Dictionary of Ming Biographies, 1368-1644*. Edited by L. Carrington Goodrich and Chaoying Fang. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.
- Chan, Wing-tsit. "Chan Jo-shui's Influence on Wang Yang-ming." *Philosophy East and West* 23, no. 1–2 (1973): 9–30.

- Chan, Wing-tsit. "The Ch'eng-Chu School of the Early Ming." In *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, 29–53. Edited by William Theodore de Bary. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- Chan, Wing-tsit. "How Buddhistic is Wang Yang-ming." *Philosophy East and West* 12, no. 3 (Oct. 1962): 203–216.
- Chan, Wing-tsit. Review of *Wang Yang-ming: Idealist Philosopher of Sixteenth-Century China* by Carsun Chang. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 82, no. 3 (1962): 458–9.
- Chan, Wing-tsit. *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Chan, Wing-tsit. "Wang Yang-ming: A Biography." *Philosophy East and West* 12, no. 1 (1972): 63–74.
- Chan, Wing-tsit. "Wang Yang-ming: Western Studies and an Annotated Bibliography." *Philosophy East and West* 22, no. 1 (1972): 75–92.
- Chang, Carsun. *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, vol. 1. New York: Bookman Associates, 1957.
- Chang, Carsun. *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*, vol. 2. New York: Bookman Associates, 1962.
- Chang, Carsun. *Wang Yang-ming: Idealist Philosopher of Sixteenth Century China*. New York: St. John's University Press, 1962.
- Chang, Carsun. "Wang Yang-ming's Philosophy." *Philosophy East and West* 5, no. 1 (1955): 3–18.
- Chang, Chung-yuan. "The Essential Source of Identity in Wang Lung-chi's Philosophy." *Philosophy East and West* 23, no. 1-2 (Jan.-Apr. 1973): 31-48.
- Chang, Peter T. C. *Bishop Joseph Butler and Wang Yangming: A Comparative Study of their Moral Vision and View of Conscience*. Bern: Peter Lang, 2014.
- Chang, Peter T. C. "A Comparative Study of Bishop Butler's and Wang Yang-ming's Conception of Conscience." PhD Diss., Harvard Divinity School, 2011.
- Chang, Tzu-li. "Personal Identity, Moral Agency, and *Liang-zhi*: A Comparative Study of Korsgaard and Wang Yangming." *Comparative Philosophy* 6, no. 1 (2015): 3–23.
- Chang, Tzu-li. "Re-exploring Wang Yangming's Theory of *Liangzhi*: Translation, Transliteration, and Interpretation." *Philosophy East and West* 66, no. 4 (Oct. 2016): 1196–2017.
- Chang Yü-ch'uan. "Wang Shou-jen as a Statesman." *Chinese Social and Political Science Review* 23, no. 1-4 (1939–1940): 30–99, 155–252, 319–374, 473–517.
- Chang, Yü-ch'uan. *Wang Shou-jen as a Statesman*. Peking: The Chinese Social and Political Science Association, 1946.

- Chen Lai 陳來. *You wu zhi jing: Wang Yangming zhexue de jingshen* 有無之境: 王陽明哲學的精神 (The realm between being and nonbeing: the spirit of Wang Yangming's philosophy). Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 1991.
- Chen Lisheng. "Research on the Issue of 'Evil' in Wang Yangming's Thought." *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 2, no. 2 (Apr. 2002): 172-87.
- Cheng, Anne. *Histoire de la pensée chinoise*. Paris: La Seuil, 1997.
- Cheng, Chung-ying. "Consistency and the Meaning of the Four Sentence Teaching in the *Ming-ju hsueh-an*." *Philosophy East and West* 29, no. 3 (1979): 275-94.
- Cheng Chung-ying. "Practical Learning in Yen Yuan, Chu Hsi, and Wang Yang-ming." In *Principle and Practicality: Essays in Neo-Confucianism and Practical Learning*, 37-68. Edited by Wm. Theodore de Bary and Irene Bloom. New York: Columbia University Press, 1979.
- Cheng, Chung-ying. "Unity and Creativity in Wang Yang-ming's Philosophy of Mind." *Philosophy East and West* 23, no. 1-2 (1973): 49-72.
- Cheng, Yu-yin. "The Taizhou School (*Taizhou xuepai*) and the Popularization of *Liangzhi* (Innate Knowledge)." *Ming Studies* 60 (2009): 45-65.
- Chi Wan-hsien. "The Notion of Practicality in Wang Yangming's Thought." PhD Diss., University of Pennsylvania, 2001.
- Ch'ien, Edward T. *Chiao Hung and the Restructuring of Neo-Confucianism in the Late Ming*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.
- Chin, Ann-ping. "Chan Kan-ch'uan and the Continuing Neo-Confucian Discourse on Mind and Principle." PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1984.
- Ching, Julia. "To Acquire Wisdom: the 'Way' of Wang Yang-ming." PhD Diss., Australian National University, 1971.
- Ching, Julia. *To Acquire Wisdom: The Way of Wang Yang-ming*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.
- Ching, Julia. "All in One: The Culmination of the Thought of Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529)." *Oriens Extremus* 20, no. 2 (1973): 137-159.
- Ching, Julia. "'Authentic Selfhood': Wang Yang-ming and Heidegger." *The Monist* 16, no. 1 (1978): 3-27.
- Ching, Julia. "Beyond Good and Evil: The Culmination of the Thought of Wang Yang-ming (1472-1529)." *Numen* 20, no. 2 (1973): 125-34.
- Ching, Julia. *The Butterfly Healing: A Life between East and West*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998.
- Ching, Julia. *Confucianism and Christianity: A Comparative Study*. Tokyo: Kodansha, 1977.
- Ching, Julia, trans. *The Philosophical Letters of Wang Yang-ming*. Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971.

- Ching, Julia. "The *Records of the Ming Philosophers*: An Introduction." *Oriens Extremus* 23 (1976): 191-211.
- Ching, Julia. *The Records of Ming Scholars*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987.
- Ching, Julia. "Some Notes on the 'Wang Yang-ming Controversy'." *Journal of the Oriental Society of Australia* 9 (1972-73): 14-20.
- Ching, Julia. "Truth and Ideology: The Confucian Way and Its Transmission," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 35 (1974): 371-378.
- Chou Hsiang-kuang. "The Significance of Wang Yang-ming." *Chinese Culture* 2, no. 3 (1961).
- Chow, Joseph Kuang-su. "Detachment in the Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming: The Concept of 'Liang-Chih'." Ph.D. Diss., Drew University, 1981.
- Chow, Kai-wing. *Publishing, Culture, and Power in Early Modern China*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.
- Chow, Kai-wing. *The Rise of Confucian Ritualism in Late Imperial China: Ethics, Classics, and Lineage Discourse*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994.
- Chu, Hung-lam. "The Debate over Recognition of Wang Yang-Ming." *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 48, no. 1 (Jun. 1988): 47-70.
- Chu Hung-lam. "The 'Colby Collection' of Rare Chinese Books." *The Gest Library Journal* 1, no. 1 (1986): 7-10.
- Chu, Hung-lam. "Huang Zuo's Meeting with Wang Yangming and the Debate over the Unity of Knowledge and Action." *Ming Studies* 35, no. 1 (Jul. 1995): 53-73.
- Chung, Edward Y. J. *The Great Testament of Wang Yangming Neo-Confucianism in Korea: The Chonŏn (Testament) of Chŏng Chedu (Hagok)*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2020.
- Chung, Paul S. "Interpretation as Conflict and Creativity: Retrieval of Wang Yangming." In *The Hermeneutical Self and an Ethical Difference: Intercivilizational Engagement*, 230-47. Cambridge: James Clarke & Co, 2012.
- Chung, So-yi. "Korean Yangming Learning." In *Dao Companion to Korean Confucian Philosophy*, 253-284. Edited by Young-chan Ro. Springer, 2019.
- Chung Tsai-chun 鍾彩鈞. *Wang Yangming sixiang zhi jinzhan 王陽明思想之進展* (The progression of Wang Yangming's thought. Taipei: Wen Shi Zhe, 1993.
- Cleary, J. C. *Worldly Wisdom: Confucian Teachings of the Ming Dynasty*. Boston: Shambhala, 1991.
- Cocks, Samuel. "Wang Yangming, Moral Promise, and Environmental Ethics." *Dialogue and Universalism* 3, no. 1 (2012): 70-81.

- Cocks, Samuel. "Wang Yangming on Spontaneous Action, Mind as Mirror, and Personal Depth." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 42, no. 3-4 (Sept.-Dec. 2015): 342-358.
- Cordier, Henri. 1968. *Bibliotheca Sinica: Dictionnaire bibliographique des ouvrages relatifs à l'empire chinois*, vol. 1. New York: Burt Franklin. 1968.
- Creel, H. G. *Chinese Thought from Confucius to Mao Tse-tung*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1953.
- Cua, A. S. "Between Commitment and Realization: Wang Yang-ming's Vision of the Universe as a Moral Community." *Philosophy East and West* 43, no. 4 (Oct. 1993): 611-647.
- Cua, A. S. *The Unity of Knowledge and Action: A Study in Wang Yang-ming's Moral Psychology*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1982.
- Cui Yujun 崔玉軍. *Chen Rongjie yu Meiguo de Zhongguo zhexue yanjiu* 陳榮捷與美國的中國哲學研究 (Chen Rongjie [Wing-tsit Chan] and research on Chinese philosophy in the United States). Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2010.
- Dardess, John W. *Ming China, 1368-1644: A Concise History of a Resilient Empire*. Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2012.
- Dardess, John W. *A Ming Society: T'ai-ho County, Kiangsi, in the Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.
- Day, William. "Zhenzhi and Acknowledgment in Wang Yangming and Stanley Cavell." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 39, no. 2 (Jun. 2012): 174-191.
- De Bary, William Theodore. "Individualism and Humanitarianism in Late Ming Thought." In *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, edited by William Theodore de Bary, 145-248. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- De Bary, William Theodore. "The Ming Project and Ming Thought." *Ming Studies* 2, no. 1 (1976): 19-25.
- De Bary, William Theodore. *Neo-Confucian Orthodoxy and the Learning of the Mind-and-Heart*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.
- De Bary, William Theodore. *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, vol. 1. New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.
- Deng, Aimin. "Wang Yangming's Idealist Pantheistic Worldview." *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 17, no. 4 (1986): 35-83.
- Deng Hong 鄧紅. *Riben de Yangmingxue yu Zhongguo yanjiu* 日本的陽明學與中國研究 (Japan's Yangming learning and China research). Guilin: Guangxi Daxue Chubanshe, 2018.
- Dening, Walter. "The Philosophy of the School of Wang Yang-ming." In "Confucian Philosophy in Japan: Reviews of Dr. Inoue Tetsujiro's Three Volumes on this Philosophy." *Transactions of the Asiatic Society in Japan* 36, no. 2 (1908): 111-118.

- Dilworth, David A. *Philosophy in a World Perspective: A Comparative Hermeneutic of the Major Theories*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- Dimberg, Ronald G. "The Life and Thought of Ho Hsin-yin, 1517-1579: The Sage and Society, A Sixteenth Century View." PhD Diss., Columbia University, 1970.
- Dimberg, Ronald. *The Sage and Society: The Life and Thought of Ho Hsin-yin*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1974.
- Dong Minglai. "Correcting Things as Correcting Feelings: A Phenomenological Study of Wang Yang-ming's Doctrine of *Ge-Wu*." *Comparative Philosophy* 10, no. 1 (2019): 18-37.
- Dong Minglai. "To the Effort Itself: A Phenomenological Study of Wang Yangming's 王陽明 Theory of Moral Effort." PhD Diss., Duquesne University, 2018.
- Dong Ping 董平. *Wang Yangming de shenghuo shjie* 王陽明的生活世界 (The world in which Wang Yangming lived). Beijing: Zhongguo Renmin Daxue Chubanshe, 2009.
- Du Halde, Jean-Baptiste. 1735. *Description géographique, historique, chronologique, politique, et physique de l'empire de la Chine et de la Tartarie chinoise*, vol. 2. Paris: chez P.G. Lemerancier. 1735.
- Duyvendak, J. J. L. *China Tegen de Westerkim*. Haarlem: Bohn, 1927.
- Edema, Wilt L. "Dutch Sinology: Past, Present, and Future," In *Europe Studies China: Papers from an International Conference on the History of European Sinology*, 88-93. Edited by Wilson Ming and John Cayley. London: Han-Shan Tang Books, 1995.
- Elman, Benjamin. *From Philosophy to Philology: Intellectual and Social Aspects of Change in Late Imperial China*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984.
- Erkes, Eduard. "Alfred Forke." *Artibus Asiae* 9, no. 1-3 (1946): 148-149.
- Fang, Thomé. "The Essence of Wang Yang-ming's Philosophy in a Historical Perspective." *Philosophy East and West* 23, no. 1-2 (1973): 73-90.
- Fang Zhiyuan 方志遠. *Kuang shi da ru: Wang Yangming 曠世大儒—王陽明* (A peerless great Confucian—Wang Yangming). Shijiazhuang: Hebei Renmin Chubanshe, 2000.
- Farmer, Edward L. "News of the Field." *Ming Studies* 1 (Fall 1975): 1-13. "Fifty Years of the Department of Philosophy, University of Hawai'i." *Philosophy East and West* 38, no. 3 (1988): 224-230.
- Forke, Alfred. *Geschichte der neueren chinesischen philosophie*. Reprint, Hamburg: Cram, De Gruyter, 1964.
- Foss, Theodore N. "A Jesuit encyclopedia for China: A Guide to Jean-Baptiste Du Halde's *Description – de la Chine* (1735)." PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 1979.

- Fourmont, Étienne. *Linguae Sinarum mandarinicae hieroglyphicae grammatica duplex, latine et cum characteribus Sinensium. Item sinicorum regiae bibliothecae librorum catalogus*. Lutetiae Parisiorum: H. L. Guérin, 1742.
- Frisina, Warren G. "Are Knowledge and Action Really One Thing? – A Study of Wang Yangming's Doctrine of Mind." *Philosophy East and West* 39, no. 4 (Oct. 1989): 419-447.
- Frisina, Warren G. *The Unity of Knowledge and Action: Toward a Nonrepresentational Theory of Action*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002.
- Fröhlich, Thomas. *Confucian Philosophy and the Challenge of Modernity*. Leiden: Brill, 2017.
- Fröhlich, Thomas. "'Philosophy' Reconsidered: The Theological Accentuation in Tang Junyi's Modern Confucianism." In *Concepts of Philosophy in Asia and the Modern World*, vol. 1: *China and Japan*, 394-427. Leiden: Brill, 2018.
- Fukuda Shigeru 福田殖. "Okada Takehiko sensei no shyogai to gakumon 岡田武彦先生の生涯と學問 (Mr. Okada Takehiko's life and scholarship)," *Chugoku tetsukagu lonbunshyu* 30 (2004): 92-132.
- Fung, Yu-lan. *A History of Chinese Philosophy*. Translated by Derk Bodde. 2 vols. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.
- Fung, Yu-lan. *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy*. Edited by Derke Bodde. New York: The Free Press, 1948.
- Gabelentz, Georg von der. *Thai-kih-thu, des Tschou-tsi Tafel des Urprinzipes, mit Tschu-Hi's Commentare nach dem Hoh-pi-sing-li*. Dresden: im Commissions-Verlag bei R. v. Zahn, 1876.
- Gernet, Jacques. *China and the Christian Impact: A Conflict of Cultures*. Translated by Janet Lloyd. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985.
- Gernet, Jacques. *A History of Chinese Civilization*. Translated by J.L. Foster and Charles Harmon. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982.
- Giles, Herbert A. *A Chinese Biographical Dictionary*. Shanghai: Kelly and Walsh, 1898.
- Giles, Herbert A. *Confucianism and its Rivals: Lectures Delivered in the University Hall of Dr. William's Library*. London: Williams and Norgate, 1915.
- Gong Daoyun 龚道运. *Jinshi jidujiao he rujiao de jiechu 近世基督教和儒教的接触* (The encounter between Christianity and Ruism in early modern times). Shanghai: Shanghai Renmin Chubanshe, 2009.
- Goodrich, L. Carrington and Chaoying Fang, eds. *Dictionary of Ming Biography*. 2 vols. New York: Columbia University Press, 1976.
- Gregor, James A. and Maria Hsia. "Wang Yang-ming and the Ideology of Sun Yat-sen." *The Review of Politics* 42, no. 3 (Jul. 1980): 388-404.

- Grousset, René. *Histoire de la philosophie orientale, Tome II: L'Inde et la Chine*. Paris: Nouvelle Librairie Nationale, 1923.
- Grube, Wilhelm. *Ein Beitrag zur Kenntnis der Chinesischen Philosophie: T'ung-shu des Ceu-tsi, mit Cu-his Kommentare*. Wien: Holzhausen, 1880.
- Gützlaff, Karl Friedrich August. *A Sketch of Chinese History, Ancient and Modern*, 2 vols. London: Smith and Elder & Co., 1834.
- Hackmann, Heinrich. *Chinesische philosophie*. München: Ernst Reinhardt, 1927.
- Hall, Joshua M. "Nerve/Nurses of the Cosmic Doctor: Wang Yangming on Self-Awareness as World Awareness." *Asian Philosophy* 26, no. 2 (2016): 149-65.
- Hammond, Kenneth J. and Jeffrey L. Richey. *The Sage Returns: Confucian Revival in Contemporary China*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015.
- Handlin, Joanna F. *Action in Late Ming Thought: The Reorientation of Lü K'un and Other Scholar-Officials*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983.
- Harris, Eirek Lang. "Manifesto on Behalf of Chinese Culture Respectfully Announced to the People of the World: Our Joint Understanding of Sinological Study and Chinese Culture with Respect to the Future Prospects of World Culture." Hackett Publishing Company. Accessed October 3, 2020. https://www.hackettpublishing.com/mou_zongsan_manifesto.
- Hart, Roger. *Imagined Civilizations: China, the West, and Their First Encounter*. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2013.
- Hastings, James, ed. *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 1. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1908.
- He Fabi 何乏筆 [Volker Heubel] and Gu Xinpeng 谷心鵬 [Herausgegeben von Fabian]. "Deyu zhi Zhongguo zhexue yanjiu shumu 德語之中國哲學研究書目 [Bibliography of German-language Research on Chinese Philosophy]." *Deyu zhi Zhongguo zhexue yanjiu zhuanji* (2006): 53-146.
- Handler-Spitz, Rivi, Pauline C. Lee, and Haun Saussy, eds. *The Objectionable Li Zhi: Fiction, Criticism, and Dissent in Late Ming China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020.
- Hauf, Kandice. "'Goodness Unbound': Wang Yang-ming and the Redrawing of the Boundary of Confucianism." In *Imagining Boundaries: Changing Confucian Doctrines, Texts, and Hermeneutics*, 121-146. Edited by Kai-wing Chow, On-cho Ng, and John B. Henderson. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999.
- Heijdra, Martin J. "Ming History: Three Hundred Years of History still Searching for Recognition." In *A Scholarly Review of Chinese Studies in North America*, 79-98. Edited by Zhang Haihui et al. Ann Arbor, MI: Association for Asian Studies, 2013.

- Henderson, Harold. *Catalyst for Controversy: Paul Carus of Open Court*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993.
- Henderson, John B. *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1984.
- Henke, Frederick G. *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*. LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1916.
- Henke, Frederick G. "A Study in the Life and Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming," *Journal of the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 44 (1913): 46-63.
- Henke, Frederick G. "Wang Yang-ming: A Chinese Idealist." *The Monist* 24, no. 1 (1914): 17-34.
- Ho, Norman P. "Natural Law in Chinese Legal Thought: The Philosophical System of Wang Yangming." *Yonsei Law Journal* 8, no. 1-2 (2017): 1-64.
- Hon, Tze-ki and Kristin Stapleton. *Confucianism for the Contemporary World: Global Order, Political Plurality, and Social Action*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017.
- Hong, Seok Hwan. "Ultimate Human Transformation: *Liang-chih* in Wang Yang-Ming and the Imago Dei in John Calvin." PhD Diss., Boston University, 2002.
- Huang Chin-shing. *Philosophy, Philology, and Politics in Eighteenth-Century China: Li Fu and the Lu-Wang School under the Ching*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Huang Chun-chieh. *Taiwan in Transformation, 1895–2005*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publisher, 2007.
- Huang, Siu-chi. *Essentials of Neo-Confucianism: Eight Major Philosophers of the Song and Ming Periods*. London: Greenwood Press, 1991.
- Huang Wenshu 黃文樹. "Yangming houxue yu Li Madou de jiaowang ji qi hanyi" 陽明後學與利瑪竇的交往及其含義 (The association between the Yangming school and Matteo Ricci and its implications). *Hanxue yanjiu* 漢學研究 27, no. 3 (2010): 127-158.
- Huang Yong. "Confucianism: Confucian Environmental Ethics [Focusing on Wang Yangming]." *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology*. New York: Routledge, 2016: 52-58.
- Huang Yong. "Empathy with 'Devils': Wang Yangming's Contribution to Contemporary Moral Philosophy." In *Moral and Intellectual Virtues in Western and Chinese Philosophy*: 214-234. Edited by Michael Mi, Michael Slote, and Ernest Sosa. New York: Routledge, 2015.
- Huang Yong. "Knowing-that, Knowing-how, or Knowing-to: Wang Yang-ming's Conception of Moral Knowledge." *Journal of Philosophical Research* 42 (2017): 65-94.

- Huang Yong. "Moral Luck and Moral Responsibility: Wang Yangming on the Confucian Problem of Evil." In *Why Traditional Chinese Philosophy Still Matters*: 68-81. Edited by Gu Mingdong. New York: Routledge, 2018.
- Huang Yong. "A Neo-Confucian Concept of Wisdom: Wang Yangming on the Innate Moral Knowledge." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 33, no. 3 (Sept. 2006): 393-408.
- Huang Yong. "Is Wang Yangming's Notion of Innate Moral Knowledge [*liang-zhi*] Tenable?" In *Confucian Ethics in Retrospect and Prospect*: 149-171. Edited by Vincent Shen and Kwong-loi Shun. The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2008.
- Hucker, Charles O. *China's Imperial Past: An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975.
- Hui, Wang. *Translating Chinese Classics in a Colonial Context: James Legge and His Two Versions of the Zhongyong*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.
- Idema, Wilt L. "Dutch Sinology: Past, Present, and Future." In *Europe Studies China: Papers from an International Conference on the History of European Sinology*, ed. Wilson Ming and John Cayley, 88-93. London: Han-Shan Tang Books.
- Ihlan, Amy. "Wang Yang-ming: A Philosopher of Practical Action." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 20, no. 4 (Dec. 1993): 451-463.
- Iki, Hiroyuki. "Wang Yang-ming's Doctrine of Innate Knowledge of the Good." *Philosophy East and West* 11, no. 1-2 (1961): 27-44.
- Isomae, Jun'ichi. *Religious Discourse in Modern Japan: Religion, State, and Shinto*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Israel, George L. "To Accommodate or Subjugate: Wang Yangming's Settlement of Conflict in Guangxi in Light of Ming Political and Strategic Culture." *Ming Studies* 60 (Nov. 2009): 4-44.
- Israel, George L. "Discovering Wang Yangming: Scholarship in Europe and North America, 1600-1950." *Monumenta Serica* 66, no. 2 (Nov. 2018): 357-389.
- Israel, George L. *Doing Good and Ridding Evil in Ming China: The Political Career of Wang Yangming*. Leiden: Brill, 2014.
- Israel, George L. "On the Margins of the Grand Unity: Empire, Violence, and Ethnicity in the Virtue Ethics and Political Practice of Wang Yangming (1472-1529)." PhD Diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2008.
- Israel, George L. "The Renaissance of Wang Yangming Studies in the People's Republic of China." *Philosophy East and West* 66, no. 3 (Jul. 2019): 1001-1019.
- Israel, George L. "The Transformation of the Wang Yangming Scholarship in the West." *Asian Philosophy* 28, no. 2 (Apr. 2018): 135-156.

- Israel, George L. "Wang Yangming in Beijing, 1510-1512: 'If I do not awaken others, who will do so?'" *Journal of Chinese History* 1, no. 1 (Jan. 2017): 59-91.
- Israel, Larry. "The Prince and the Sage: Concerning Wang Yangming's 'Effortless' Suppression of the Ning Princely Establishment." *Late Imperial China* 29, no. 2 (2008): 68-128.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yang-ming*. Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1990.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. "'Existentialism' in the School of Wang Yangming." In *Chinese Language, Thought, and Culture: Nivison and His Critics*, 250-264. Edited by Philip J. Ivanhoe. La Salle: Open Court Publishing, 1996.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. "McDowell, Wang Yangming, and Mengzi's Contributions to Understanding Moral Perception." *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 10, no. 3 (Sept. 2011): 273-290.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. "Mencius in the Ming Dynasty: The Moral Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming." PhD Diss., Stanford University, 1987.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. *Oneness: East Asian Conceptions of Virtue, Happiness, and How We are All Connected*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. *Readings from the Lu-Wang School of Neo-Confucianism*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2009.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. *Three Streams: Confucian Reflections on the Moral Heart-Mind in China, Korea, and Japan*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.
- Ivanhoe, Philip J. "Virtue Ethics and the Chinese Tradition." In *Virtue Ethics and Confucianism*, 28-55. Edited by Stephen C. Angle and Michael Slote. New York and London: Routledge, 2013.
- Jennings, J. Nelson. "Transition in Taishō: From Uemura Masahisa to Takakura Tokutarō." *Japan Christian Review* 63 (1997): 47-67.
- Ji Wenfu 嵇文甫. *Wan Ming sixiangshi lun* 晚明思想史論 [Research on the intellectual history of the late Ming]. Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2017.
- Jiang, Paul Yun-ming. *The Search for Mind: Chen P'ai-sha, Philosopher, Poet*. Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1980.
- Jung, Hwa Yol. "Jen: An Existential and Phenomenological Problem of Inter-subjectivity." *Philosophy East and West* 16, no. 3-4 (1966): 169-188.
- Jung, Hwa Yol. "The Unity of Knowledge and Action: A Postscript to Wang Yangming's Existential Phenomenology." *Journal of Chinese Studies* 3 (1986): 19-38.
- Jung, Hwa Yol. "Wang Yang-ming and Existential Phenomenology." *International Philosophical Quarterly* 5 (1965): 621-636.

- Jung, Hwa Yol. "Wang Yangming and the Way of World Philosophy." *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 12, no. 4 (2013): 461–487.
- Keenan, Barry C. *Neo-Confucian Self-Cultivation*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii, 2011.
- Kelleher, M. Theresa. *The Journal of Wu Yubi: The Path to Sagehood*. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2013.
- Kern, Iso. *Das wichtigste im leben: Wang Yangming (1472-1529) und seine nachfolger über die "verwirklichung des ursprünglichen wissens"* (Wang Yangming (1472-1529) and his successors on the "realization of original knowledge"). Basel: Schwabe Verlag, 2010.
- Kim, Heup Young. "Christianity's View of Confucianism: An East Asian Theology of Religions." In *Religions View Religions: Explorations in Pursuit of Understanding*, 265-282. Edited by Jerald Gort, Henry Janesen, and Hendrik Vroom. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2006.
- Kim, Heup Young. "Liang-chi and Humanitas Christi: An Encounter of Wang Yang-ming and Karl Barth." *Korea Journal of Systematic Theology* 4 (2001): 130-188.
- Kim, Heup Young. "Sanctification and Self-cultivation: A study of Karl Barth and neo-Confucianism (Wang Yang-ming)." PhD Diss., Graduate Theological Union, 1992.
- Kim, Heup Young. *A Theology of Dao*. New York: Orbis Books. 2017.
- Kim, Heup Young. *Wang Yangming and Karl Barth: A Confucian-Christian Dialogue*. University Press of America, 1996.
- Kim, Youngmin. "Political Unity in Neo-Confucianism: The Debate between Wang Yangming and Zhan Ruoshui." *Philosophy East and West* 62, no. 2 (Apr. 2012): 246-263.
- Kim, Youngmin. "Rethinking the Self's Relation to the World in the Mid-Ming: Four Responses to Cheng-Zhu Learning." *Ming Studies* 44, no. 1 (Jan. 2000): 13-47.
- Knox George. "A Japanese Philosopher." *Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan* 20 (1893): 10–15.
- Koh, Khee Heong. *A Northern Alternative: Xue Xuan (1389-1464) and the Hedong School*. Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2011.
- LaFleur, William. "Heart/Mind's Purity vs. Utilitarianism: Mencius, Wang Yang-ming, and Nishida Kitaro." In *Polishing the Chinese Mirror: Essays in Honor of Henry Rosemont Jr.*, 227-243. Edited by Martha Chandler and Ronnie Littlejohn. New York: Global Scholarly Publications, 2007.
- Le Gall, Stanislas. *Le Philosophe Tchou Hi: sa doctrine, son influence*. Chang-Hai: Imprimerie de la Mission Catholique. 1894.

- Lee, Hsin-yi. "The Moral Philosophies of H. Richard Niebuhr and Wang Yang-ming." PhD Diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2007.
- Lee, Jig-chuen. "Wang Yang-ming, Chu Hsi, and the Investigation of Things." *Philosophy East and West* 37, no. 1 (Jan. 1987): 24-35.
- Lee, Jig-chuen. "Wang Yang-ming, Mencius, and Internalism." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 12, no. 1 (1985): 63-74.
- Lee, Junghwan. "Wang Yangming Thought as Cultural Capital: The Case of Yongkang County." *Late Imperial China* 28, no. 2 (Mar. 2008): 41-80.
- Lee, Ming-huei. "Wang Yangming's Philosophy and Modern Theories of Democracy: A Reconstructive Interpretation." *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 7, no. 3 (Sept. 2008): 283-294.
- Lee, Pauline C., Rivi Handler-Spitz, and Haun Saussy, eds. *The Objectionable Li Zhi: Fiction, Criticism, and Dissent in Late Ming China*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020.
- Leung, Cecile. *Étienne Fourmont (1683-1745): Oriental and Chinese Languages in Eighteenth-Century France*. Louvain: Leuven University Press, 2002.
- Liang, Ch'i-ch'ao. *Intellectual Trends in the Ch'ing Period*. Translated by Immanuel C.Y Hsu. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1959.
- Liang, Hongsheng. "Motivations for, and Consequences of, Village and Lineage Development by Jiangxi Scholars of the Wang Yangming School: The Case of Liukeng." *Chinese Studies in History* 35, no. 1 (2001): 61-95.
- Lidén, Johanna. "The Taizhou Movement: Being Mindful in Sixteenth Century China." PhD Diss., Stockholm University, 2018.
- Liu Yilin 劉義林 and Luo Qingfeng 羅慶豐. *Zhang Junmai ping zhuan 張君勱評傳* (Critical biography of Zhang Junmai). Nanchang: Baihua Zhou Wenyi Chubanshe, 1996.
- Liu, JeeLoo. "Lu Xiangshan and Wang Yangming's Doctrine of Mind is Principle." In *Neo-Confucianism: Metaphysics, Mind, and Morality*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018.
- Liu, JeeLoo. "Wang Yangming's Intuitionist Model of Innate Moral Sense and Moral Reflexivism." In *Neo-Confucianism: Metaphysics, Mind, and Morality*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2018.
- Liu, Lydia. *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity – China, 1900-1937*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995.
- Lü Miaw-fen. "Practice as Knowledge: Yang-ming Learning and Chiang-hui in Sixteenth-century China." PhD Diss., UCLA, 1997.
- Liu Shu-hsien. "Confucianism as a World Philosophy: A Response to Neville's Boston Confucianism from a Neo-Confucian Perspective." *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 40, no. 1-2 (2003): 59-73.

- Liu, Shu-hsien. "How Idealistic is Wang Yang-ming." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 10, no. 2 (Jun. 1983):147-168.
- Liu, Shu-hsien. "Neo-Confucianism (II): From Lu Jiu-yuan to Wang Yang-ming." In *The Routledge History of Chinese Philosophy*. Edited by Bo Mou. New York: Routledge, 2009.
- Liu, Shu-hsien. "On Chu Hsi as an Important Source for the Development of the Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 11, no. 1 (Mar. 1984): 83-107.
- Liu, Shu-hsien. "On the Final Views of Wang Yang-ming." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 25, no. 3 (1998): 345-360.
- Lu Yinghua. "The *a Priori* Value and Feeling in Max Scheler and Wang Yang-ming." *Asian Philosophy* 24, no. 3 (2014): 197-211.
- Lu Yinghua. "The Heart has its Own Order: The Phenomenology of Value and Feeling in Confucian Philosophy." PhD Diss., Southern Illinois University, 2014.
- Lu Yinghua. "Pure Knowing as Moral Feeling and Moral Cognition: Wang Yangming's Phenomenology of Approval and Disapproval." *Asian Philosophy* 27, no. 4 (2017): 309-323.
- Lu Yinghua. "Wang Yangming's Theory of the Unity of Knowledge and Action Revisited: An Investigation from the Perspective of Moral Emotion." *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 69, no. 1 (Jan. 2019): 197-214.
- Liu Yong 劉勇. "Cong men ren dao pipanzhe: Ming ru Wang dao yu Yangmingxue zhi shuli 從門人到批判者：明儒王道與陽明學之疏離 (From follower to critic: Ming Confucian Wang Dao's alienation from the Yangming school)." *Taida Wenshizhe Xuebao* 90 (2018): 77-114.
- Lundbaek, Knud. "The Image of Neo-Confucianism in *Confucius Sinarum Philosophus*," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 44, no. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1983): 19-30.
- Macgowan, John. *A History of China: From the Earliest Days down to the Present*. London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co. Ltd, 1897.
- Makeham, John. *New Confucianism: A Critical Examination*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Mayeda, Graham. "The Implications of Yangming Philosophy for the Law." In *Wisdom in China and the West: Chinese Philosophical Studies*, 197-214. Edited by Vincent Shen and Willard Oxtoby. Washington, D.C.: The Council for Research in Values and Philosophy, 2004.
- Mayers, William Frederick. *The Chinese Reader's Manual*. Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1874.
- McMorran, Ian. "Late Ming Criticism of Wang Yang-ming: The Case of Wang Fu-Chih." *Philosophy East and West* 23, no. 1-2 (Jan.-Apr. 1973): 91-102.

- Meadows, Thomas Taylor. 1856. *The Chinese and Their Rebellions: Viewed in Connection with Their National Philosophy, Ethics, Legislation, and Administration*. London: Smith, Elder, and Co. 1856.
- Meskill, John. *Academies in Ming China*. Monographs of the Association for Asian Studies. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982.
- Mote, Frederick. *Imperial China 900-1800*. Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2000.
- Mote, Frederick. "The Limits of Intellectual History." *Ming Studies* 19 (1984): 17-25.
- Mou Tsung-san. "The Immediate Successor of Wang Yang-ming: Wang Lung-hsi and his Theory of ssu-wu." *Philosophy East and West* 23, no. 1-2 (1973): 103-120.
- Moyriac de Mailla, Joseph Anne-Marie de. *Histoire générale de la Chine, ou annales de cet empire; traduites du Tong-Kien-Kang-Mou*, vol. 10. Paris: P.D. Pierres, 1779.
- Mullins, Mark R. *Christianity Made in Japan: A Study of Indigenous Movements*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2000.
- Mungello, David E. "Confucianism in the Enlightenment: Antagonism and Collaboration between the Jesuits and Philosophes." In *China and Europe: Images and Influences in the Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries*, 99-127. Edited by Thomas H.C. Lee. Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 1991.
- Mungello, David E. *Leibniz and Confucianism: The Search for an Accord*. Honolulu: The University of Hawaii Press, 1977.
- Murch, Jerom. *Memoir of Robert Hibbert, Esquire, Founder of the Hibbert Trust, with a Sketch of Its History by Sir Jerom Murch*. Bath: William Lewis, 1874.
- Myers, Constance. "Paul Carus and the Open Court: The History of a Journal." *Midcontinent American Studies Journal* 5, no. 2 (Fall 1964): 57-68.
- Neville, Robert. *Boston Confucianism: Portable Tradition in the Late-Modern World*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000.
- Neville, Robert. "Wang Yang-ming and John Dewey on the Ontological Question." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 12, no. 3 (Sept. 1985): 283-95.
- Ng, On-Cho. *Cheng-Zhu Confucianism in the Early Qing: Li Guangdi (1642-1718) and Qing Learning*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001.
- Ng, William. "T'ang Chun-I on Transcendence: Foundations of a New-Confucian Religious Humanism." *Monumenta Serica* 46 (1998): 291-322.
- Nitobe, Inazo. *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. Author's Edition, 1908.
- Nivison, David S. "Moral Decision in Wang Yangming: The Problem of Chinese Existentialism." In *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in*

- Chinese Philosophy*, 233-248. Edited by Bryan W. Van Norden. Chicago: Open Court, 1996.
- Nivison, David S. "The Philosophy of Wang Yangming." In *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese Philosophy*, 217-231. Edited by Bryan W. Van Norden. Chicago: Open Court, 1996.
- Nivison, David S. "The Problem of 'Knowledge' and 'Action' in Chinese Thought since Wang Yang-ming." In *Studies in Chinese Thought*, 112-145. Edited by Arthur F. Wright. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.
- Nivison, David S. Review of *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming* by Frederick Goodrich Henke. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 84, no. 4 (1964): 436-42.
- Noordam, Barend. "The Soldier as Sage: Qi Jiguang (1528-1588) and the neo-Confucianization of the Military in Sixteenth-Century China." PhD Diss., Leiden University, 2018.
- Ogyū Shigehiro 荻生茂博. "The Construction of 'Modern Yōmeigaku' in Meiji Japan and Its Impact on China." Translated, with an introduction, by Barry D. Steben. *East Asian History* no. 20 (December 2000): 83-120.
- Okada Takehiko. "The Chu Hsi and Wang Yang-Ming Schools at the End of the Ming and Tokugawa Period." *Philosophy East and West* 23, no. 1-2 (1973): 139-62.
- Okada Takehiko 岡田武彦. *Ō Yōmei to Minmatsu no jūgaku* 王陽明と明末の儒學. Tokyo: Meitoku, 1971.
- Okada Takehiko. "Wang Chi and the Rise of Existentialism." In *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, 121-44. Edited by William Theodore de Bary. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- Okada Takehiko 岡田武彦. *Yōmeigaku no seikai* 陽明學の世界 (The World of Wang Yangming). Tokyo: Meitoku, 1986.
- Ōshima Akira, "Japanese Studies on Neo-Confucianism." *Acta Asiatica* 52 (Mar. 1987): 86-109.
- Pauthier, Guillaume. *Esquisse d'une histoire de la philosophie chinoise*. Paris: Imprimerie de Schneider et Langrand. 1844.
- Peng Guoxiang. "Contemporary Chinese Studies of Wang Yangming and his Followers in Mainland China." *Dao* 2, no. 2 (2003): 311-29.
- Peng Guoxiang. "Dangdai Zhongguo de Yangmingxue yanjiu: 1930-2003 當代中國的陽明學研究: 1930-2000 (Present-day research in China on Yangming studies: 1930-2003)," *Zhexue men* 5, no. 1 (2004): 200-21.
- Peterson, Willard J. *Bitter Gourd: Fang I-chih and the Impetus for Political Change*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1979.
- Pfister, Lauren. "A Bio-Philosophical Profile of Chung-ying Cheng." In *The Imperative of Understanding: Chinese Philosophy, Comparative Philosophy,*

- and Onto-hermeneutics*, 61-72. Edited by On-Cho Ng. New York: Global Scholarly Publications, 2008.
- Qian Ming 錢明. *Ruxue zhengmai: Wang Shouren zhuan* 儒學正脈: 王守仁傳 (The orthodox line of the Confucian school: Biography of Wang Yang-ming). Hangzhou: Zhejiang Renmin Chubanshe, 2006.
- Qian Ming 錢明. *Wang Yangming ji qi xuepai lun kao* 王陽明及其學派論考 (Verification of theories of Wang Yangming and his school of thought). Beijing: Renmin Chubanshe, 2009.
- Reinsch, Paul S. *Intellectual and Political Currents of the Far East*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911.
- Ricci, Matteo. *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*. Revised edition by Thierry Meynard, S.J. Translated by Douglas Lancashire and Peter Hu Kuo-chen, S.J. Boston: Institute of Jesuit Sources, 2016.
- Romano, Carlin. "Chinese Philosophy Lifts off in America." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 60, no. 4 (2013): b6–b9.
- Rosker, Jana. *The Rebirth of the Moral Self: The Second Generation of Modern Confucians and their Modernization Discourses*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2016.
- Sciban, Lloyd. "Essential Characteristics of Moral Decision in Wang Yang-ming's Philosophy." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 25, no. 1 (Mar. 1998): 51-73.
- Sciban, Lloyd. "Wang Yangming on Moral Decision." PhD Diss., University of Toronto, 1994.
- Scott, James Brown. "The Chinese Social and Political Science Association." *American Journal of International Law* 10 (Apr. 1916): 375–376.
- Shen, Vincent. "Introduction: In Memory of and in Dialogue with Antonio Cua." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 35, no. 4 (2008): 3–8.
- Shi Changyu. "Wang Yangming's Neo-Confucian School of Mind and the Growth of the Ancient Chinese Popular Novel." *Frontiers of Literary Studies in China* 3, no. 2 (2009): 195–217.
- Shi Weimin. "The Quest for Ethical Truth: Wang Yangming on the Unity of Knowing and Acting." *Comparative Philosophy* 8, no. 2 (2017): 46–64.
- Shimada Kenji. *Die neo-Konfuzianische philosophie: die schulrichtungen Chu Hsis und Wang Yang-mings*. Übersetzt von Monika Übelhör. Hamburg: Gesellschaft für Natur- und Völkerkunde Ostasiens, 1979.
- Shimada Kenji. *Pioneer of the Chinese Revolution: Zhang Binglin and Confucianism*. Translated by Joshua A. Vogel. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990.
- Shin, Leo K. "The Last Campaigns of Wang Yangming." *T'oung Pao* 92, no. 1–3 (2006): 101–28.

- Shu Jingnan 束景南. *Wang Yangming nianpu changbian* 王陽明年譜長編 (Extended chronological biography of Wang Yangming). 4 vols. Shanghai: Shanghai Guji Chubanshe, 2017.
- Shun, Kwong-Loi. "Wang Yangming on Self-Cultivation in the *Daxue*." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38, supplement (2011): 96–113.
- Smith, John. "Some Pragmatic Tendencies in the Thought of Wang Yang-ming." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 13, no. 2 (Jun. 1986): 167–83.
- Soothill, William E. *The Three Religions of China: Lectures Delivered at Oxford*. London: Hodder and Stoughton. 1913.
- Standaert, Nicholas, ed. *Handbook of Christianity in China, Volume 1: 635-1800*. Leiden: Brill, 2001.
- Standaert, Nicholas. *Yang Tingyun: Confucian and Christian in Late Ming China*. Leiden: Brill, 1988.
- Steben, Barry D. "Nakae Tojū and the Birth of Wang Yang-ming Learning in Japan." *Monumenta Serica* 46 (1998): 233–263.
- Sun, Anna Xiao Dong. *Confucianism as a World Religion: Contested Histories and Contemporary Realities*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. 2013.
- Suzuki, D. T. *A Brief History of Early Chinese Philosophy*. London: Probsthain. 1914.
- Tang Chün-i. "The Criticism of Wang Yang-ming's Teachings as Raised by His Contemporaries." *Philosophy East and West* 23, no.1–2 (Jan.-Apr. 1973): 163–86.
- Tang Chün-i. "The Development of the Concept of Moral Mind from Wang Yang-ming to Wang Chi." In *Self and Society in Ming Thought*, 93–120. Edited by William Theodore de Bary. New York: Columbia University Press, 1970.
- Tanner, Harold M. *China: A History*, 2 vols. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2010.
- Taylor, Rodney. *The Confucian Way of Contemplation: Okada Takehiko and the Tradition of Quiet-Sitting*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1988.
- Taylor, Rodney. *The Religious Dimensions of Confucianism*. Albany: State University of New York Press. 1990.
- Tetsujiro Inoue. *Sur le développement des idées philosophiques au Japon avant l'introduction de la civilisation européenne*. Paris: Imprimerie Orientale G. Maurin, 1897.
- Tetsujiro Inoue. 1909. "Die japanische philosophie." In *Allgemeine geschichte der philosophie*. Edited by Wilhelm Wundt et al. Berlin: B.G. Teubner. 1909.
- Tschanz, Dietrich. "Doctoral Dissertations on Ming Topics, 1980-Present." *Ming Studies* 38, no. 1 (1997): 86–112.

- Tschanz, Dietrich. "Ming Dissertations: An Update. *Ming Studies*." *Ming Studies* (1998): 111-116.
- Tschanz, Dietrich. "Ming Dissertations: An Update." *Ming Studies* (2000): 10-15.
- Tu Weiming. *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Chung-yung*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1976.
- Tu Weiming. *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.
- Tu Weiming. *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985.
- Tu Weiming. *Humanity and Self-Cultivation: Essays in Confucian Thought*. Berkeley: Asian Humanities Press, 1979.
- Tu Weiming. *Neo-Confucian Thought in Action: Wang Yang-ming's Youth (1472-1509)*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.
- Tu Weiming. "The Question for Self-Realization: A Study of Wang Yang-ming's Formative Years." PhD Diss., Harvard University Press, 1968.
- Tu Weiming. "Subjectivity and Ontological Reality: An Interpretation of Wang Yang-ming's Mode of Thinking." *Philosophy East and West* 23, no. 1-2 (1973):187-205.
- Tu Weiming. "The Unity of Knowledge and Action: A Study of Wang Yangming's Formative Years (1472-1509)." PhD Diss., Harvard University, 1971.
- Tu Weiming. "Wang Yang-ming's Youth: A Personal Reflection on My Method of Research." *Ming Studies* 1 (1976): 11-18.
- Übelhör, Monika. *Wang Gen (1483-1541) und seine lehre: eine kritische position im späten konfuzianismus*. Berlin: Dietrich Riemer, 1986.
- Uchimura Kanzo. *Representative Men of Japan*. Tokyo: Keiseisha, 1908.
- Weber, Ralph. "A Bibliography on 'Chinese Philosophy' in Europe." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38, no. 3-4 (2015): 397-418.
- Wang Hui. *Translating Chinese Classics in a Colonial Context: James Legge and His Two Versions of the Zhongyong*. New York: Peter Lang, 2008.
- Wang Tch'ang-Tche. *La philosophie morale de Wang Yang-ming*. Paris: Imprimerie de T'ou-se-we, 1936.
- Wang Yangming. *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings*. Translated by Wing-tsit Chan. New York: Columbia University Press, 1963.
- Watters, Thomas. *A Guide to the Tablets in a Temple of Confucius*. Shanghai: American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1879.
- Wieger, Léon. *Histoire des croyances religieuses et des opinions philosophiques en Chine*. Imprimiere de Hien-Hien, 1917.

- Wieger, Léon. *A History of the Religious Beliefs and Philosophical Opinions in China from the Beginning to the Present Time*. Translated by Edward Chalmers Werner. Hsien-hsien Press, 1927.
- Wienpahl, Paul. "Spinoza and Wang Yang-ming." *Religious Studies* 5, no. 1 (1969): 19–27.
- Wienpahl, Paul. "Wang Yang-ming and Meditation." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 1, no. 2 (1974): 199–227.
- Williams, Samuel Wells. *The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Education, Social Life, Arts, Religion, &c., of the Chinese Empire and its Inhabitants*, vol. 1. New York and London: Wiley and Putnam, 1848.
- Williams, Samuel Wells. *The Middle Kingdom: A Survey of the Geography, Government, Literature, Social Life, Arts, and History of the Chinese Empire and its Inhabitants*, vol. 2. London: W.H. Allen & Co., 1883.
- Williamson, Raymond. *An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy of Religion*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984.
- Wills, John E. *Mountains of Fame: Portraits in Chinese History*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.
- Wu Wennan. "Li Zhi in English-Language Scholarship." *Journal of East-West Thought* 9, no. 4 (2019): 75–88.
- Wu Wennan 吳文南. "Yangming xue zai Meiguo de yijie yu chuanbo 陽明學在美國的譯介與傳播 (The translation and dissemination of Yang-mingism in the United States)." *Chongqing Sanxia Xueyuan Xuebao* 2 (2019): 27–35.
- Wright, Arthur F. "Introduction." In *Studies in Chinese Thought*, 1–19. Edited by Arthur F. Wright. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953.
- Yamasaki, Beatrice. "Opening Remarks." *Philosophy East and West* 23, no. 1–2 (1973): 7–8.
- Yamauchi, T. "Wang Yang-ming, 1472-1528." In *Key Thinkers on the Environment*. Routledge, 2017.
- Yang Guorong. "Moral Philosophy: Innate Consciousness and Virtue." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 37, no. 1 (2010): 62–75.
- Yang, James Z. "Life is Education and Unity of Knowledge and Action: Tao Xingzhi's Transformation of the Educational Philosophies of John Dewey and Wang Yangming." *Journal of Philosophy and History of Education* 67, no. 1 (2007): 65–84.
- Yang, Xiaomei. "How to Make Sense of the Claim 'True Knowledge is What Constitutes Action': A New Interpretation of Wang Yangming's Doctrine of Unity of Knowledge and Action." *Dao* 8, no. 2 (Jun. 2009): 173–88.

- Yao Xinzhong. *An Introduction to Confucianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Yao Xinzhong. "Philosophy of Learning in Wang Yangming and Francis Bacon." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 40, no. 3–4 (September 2013): 417–435.
- Yen, Kai-lok. Review of *The Philosophy of Wang Yang-ming*, edited and translated by Frederick Goodrich Henke. *International Journal of Ethics* 27, no. 2 (Jan. 1917): 241–244.
- Yong Chen. *Confucianism as a Religion: Controversies and Consequences*. Leiden: Brill, 2013.
- Yu Jiangxia. "The Moral Development of Stoic *oikeiōsis* and Wang Yang-ming's 'wan wu yi ti,'" *Asian Philosophy* 27, no. 2 (2017): 150–173.
- Yu Liu. *Harmonious Disagreement: Matteo Ricci and his Closest Chinese Friends*. New York: Peter Lang, 2015.
- Yü Ying-shih. "The Intellectual World of Chiao Hung Revisited." *Ming Studies* 25 (1988): 24–66.
- Yü Ying-shih. "Reorientation of Confucian Social Thought in the Age of Wang Yang-ming." In *Chinese History and Culture: Sixth Century B.C.E. to Seventeenth Century*, 273–330. Edited by Yü Ying-shih, Josephine Chiuduke, and Michael S. Duke. New York: Columbia University Press, 2016.
- Yu Yingshi. *Song Ming lixue yu zhengzhi wenhua* 宋明理學與政治文化 (Song-Ming learning of principle and political culture). Taipei: Yunnong Wenhua, 1994.
- Zhang Haihui et al., eds. *A Scholarly Review of Chinese Studies in North America*. Ann Arbor: Association for Asian Studies, 2013.
- Zhang Junmai 張君勱. *Bijiao Zhong Ri Yangmingxue* 比較中日陽明學 (Comparing Yangming learning China and Japan). Taipei: Zhonghua wenhua shiye weiyuanhui, 1955.
- Zhang Kunjiang 張崑將. *Yangmingxue zai dongya: quanshi, jiaoliu yu xingdong* 陽明學在東亞: 詮釋, 交流與行動 (Yangming learning in East Asia: interpretation, exchange, and action). Taipei: Guoli Taiwan Daxue Chuban Zhongxin, 2011.
- Zhang Xuezhi. *History of Chinese Philosophy in the Ming Dynasty*. Springer, 2021.
- Zhang Xuezhi 張學智. *Mingdai zhexueshi* 明代哲學史 (*History of Chinese Philosophy in the Ming Dynasty*). Beijing: Beijing Daxue Chubanshe, 2000.
- Zhang Xuezhi and Min Wu. "From Life State to Ecological Consciousness: On Wang Yangming's 'Natural Principles of Order within the Realm of *Li-angzhi*.'" *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 1, no. 2 (Jun. 2006): 222–236.
- Zhang Yonghang 張永航. "Zhang Yuquan rensheng da shi ji 張煜全人生大事紀." Unpublished papers.

- Zheng Dahua 鄭大華. *Zhang Junmai xueshu sixiang ping zhuan* 張君勳學術思想評傳 (Critical biography of Zhang Junmai's scholarly thought). Beijing: Beijing Tushuguan Chubanshe, 1999.
- Zheng Zemian. "An Alternative Way of Confucian Sincerity: Wang Yang-ming's 'Unity of Knowing and Doing' as a Response to Zhu Xi's Puzzle of Self-Deception." *Philosophy East and West* 68, no. 4 (Oct. 2018): 1345–1368.
- Zurndorfer, Harriet T. "The State of Ming Studies in Europe: Current Trends and Recent Publications." *Ming Studies* 64 (2011): 1–6.

INDEX

- Analytic philosophy 204, 209, 211
Anesaki Masaharu 姉崎正治 38-39
Angle, Stephen C. 108-109, 113-114, 214, 216, 221, 235
Araki Kengo 荒木見悟 65-66, 194-195
Armstrong, Robert 30-32
Barth, Karl 186-187
Bartosch, David 226-227
Bernard, Henri 22, 47
Berthrong, John 176-178
Bloom, Irene 96-97, 134-135, 137
Bodde, Derk 52-54
Bol, Peter K. 116-117
Boston Confucianism 182-183, 188
Bresciani, Umberto 123-124, 237-239
Buddhism 6, 8, 12, 14, 24-27, 36, 40, 49, 66, 73-74, 105, 119, 122, 149, 192-198
Bushidō 23-24, 27-28
Cady, Lyman V. 21-22, 39-41, 170, 201
Calvin, John 188-189, 186
Carus, Paul 9-11, 35-37
Chan, Wing-cheuk 195-196
Chan, Wing-tsit 61, 62, 66-67, 73-75, 83, 90, 91-96, 101, 114, 117-118, 132
Chen Xianzhang 陳獻章 13, 55, 104-105, 116, 118, 121
Chang Tzu-li 203
Chang Yü-ch'uan 21-22, 43-44
Cheng Chung-ying 成中英 60, 96, 100-101, 108-109
Chiang Kai-shek 63, 231-232
Ching, Julia 61, 67, 70-72, 78-87, 99, 106, 114, 127, 137, 172, 200, 211, 219
Chow, Kai-wing 2, 163
Christianity 7, 9, 47, 166, 183, 186-192, 200, 226-228
Chu Hung-lam (Zhu Honglin 朱鴻林) 120-121, 136
Chuan xi lu 傳習錄 27, 34, 37, 64, 74, 74-77, 106
Confucius 1, 6, 8-9, 13-14, 27, 29, 40, 50, 54, 81, 86, 88, 112, 117, 121, 148, 158, 160, 166, 172, 178, 197, 201, 221, 237
Critics of Wang Yangming 130-137
Cua, A. S. 108, 204-206, 215-219, 222
Dardess, John 95, 155-157
Day, William 216, 221
De Bary, William Theodore 66, 68, 75-77, 94-95, 98-103, 107, 137, 150-151, 159, 208, 235
Democracy 100, 232, 234-236
Dictionary of Ming Biography 98-99
Du Halde, Jean-Baptiste 17-18, 201
Dutch sinology 21, 44-45
Duyvendak, J. J. L. 21, 32, 44-45, 53
East-West Philosophers' Conference Program 60-61
Ethnic groups (minority, non-Chinese) 123, 130, 128-129
Existentialism 60, 69, 71
Fang, Thomé (Fang Dongmei 方東美) 60, 101, 237
Feng Youlan (Feng Yu-lan 馮友蘭) 22, 52-56, 231, 237
Followers (disciples) of Wang Yang-ming 137-156
Forke, Alfred 22, 33, 48-49, 52, 139, 201
Fourmont, Étienne 19, 201
Frisina, Warren 216-219
ge wu 格物 52, 77, 86, 132-133, 135, 157, 203, 222-225
Giles, Herbert A. 7-9, 13
Grousset, René 21-22, 33, 47-48

- Gu Yanwu 顧炎武 157-161
 Hackmann, Heinrich 22, 48-52, 201
 Hauf, Kandice 122-123, 154-155
 Heidegger 70-72, 83, 149
 Henke, Frederick Goodrich 22, 28, 30, 32-37, 40-41, 44, 47, 52, 56, 77, 93, 168-170, 201
 Hervieu, Julien-Placide 18, 20
 Huang Yong 黃勇 207-208
 Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 76, 104-106, 118, 137-138, 154
 Huang Zuo 黃佐 136
 Husserl 70-71, 211-213
 Idealism 28, 31, 35, 39, 41, 47, 49, 52, 56, 62, 74, 91, 159, 161, 169, 201, 231-232
 Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 24-25, 30-33, 27, 89
 Ivanhoe, Philip J. 104, 109, 114, 196-199, 214
 Jesuits 5, 15-19, 166-167
 Jiangyou school 江右學派 104, 138, 154-155
 Jung, Hwa Yol 70-72, 202, 211
 Kantianism 10, 36-37, 42, 49, 64, 213, 233-234, 238, 241
 Keenan, Barry C. 112-113
 Kern, Iso 211-213
 Kim, Heup-Young 186-187
 Kim Youngmin 131-132, 135
 Knox, George William 24-26
kaozheng 考證 157-161
 Lederman, Harvey 216
 Lee Jig-chuen 223-225
 Lee Ming-huei 235-236
 Legge, James 12, 14, 166-172
 Leibniz 15, 40
Li zhi 立志 207
 Li Zhi 李贄 2, 16, 97, 102, 105, 151-152, 157
 Lidén, Johanna 153-154
 Liu, JeeLoo 109, 209-210
 Liu Shu-hsien 劉述先 63, 101, 111, 183
 Lü Miaw-fen 104, 146-148
 Lu Yinghua 71, 211-213, 216, 220-221
 Luo Qinshun 56, 97, 105, 131, 133-136, 155
 Macgowan, John 12
 Mayers, Frederick 11, 13
 Meadows, Thomas Taylor 11
 Meditation 31, 38, 77-78, 119, 132, 157, 169, 179
 Meiji Japan 22-24, 28, 30, 56, 65, 93
 Mengzi (Mencius) 1, 31, 40, 56, 87, 91, 125, 152, 175, 196-198, 206, 225, 228, 240
 Military thought and campaigns 119, 43-45, 63, 115, 119, 123-130
 Ming dynasty 1, 19, 20, 52, 60, 66, 84, 95, 104, 115-116, 118, 126-127, 130-131, 137-138, 159, 164, 194
 Ming studies 95-98, 102-107, 111, 137, 154
 Mou Zongsan 牟宗三 60, 63, 78, 83, 88, 148, 176, 233-235, 237-241
 Moyriac de Mailla, Joseph 17
 North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society 34, 37
 Nationalism 209
 Natural law 47, 51, 191, 222-223, 228, 241
 Neville, Robert 176-184
 Ng, On-cho 106-108, 159, 162
 Niebuhr, H. Richard 189-191
 Nitobe Inazō 27-28
 Nivison, David 37-38, 60, 67-70, 77, 96, 109, 170-171, 203, 206, 225
 O. Brière, Father 230-232
 Ogyū Shigehiro 2, 23, 28

- Okada Takehiko 61, 64-66, 83, 96, 132, 141-144, 146, 148, 184, 186
- Pauthier, Guillaume 12
- Phenomenology 42, 69-72, 204, 210-213, 241
- Pragmatism 179, 182-183, 217, 241
- Qian Dehong 錢德洪 37, 51-52, 84, 99, 138-139, 157, 212
- Qing dynasty 9, 16, 20, 98, 106, 157-162
- Reinsch, Paul 28-30, 43
- Republican period 22, 43, 59, 232-233
- Ricci, Matteo 16-17
- Sciban, Lloyd 206-207
- Shimada Kenji 島田虔次 99, 105, 150
- Shin, Leo K. 128-129
- Spinoza 34, 40-41, 77-78, 201
- Song dynasty 1, 5-6, 12, 15, 25, 49, 54, 91, 107-108, 115, 117
- Soothill, William E. 6-7, 172
- Stoicism 201, 214, 241
- Sun Yat-sen 43, 63, 231-232
- Suzuki, D. T. 6, 36-37
- Taizhou School 泰州學派 153-157
- Takase Takejirō 高瀨武次郎 31, 33, 52, 89
- Tang Junyi (Tang Chün-i 唐君義) 60-63, 83, 88, 101, 131-132, 136, 176, 206, 234-235, 237, 239
- Taylor, Rodney 64-65, 96, 137-138, 176, 183-186
- Tian 天 9, 31, 168, 174, 184, 203, 240
- Tianli 天理 86, 116, 132, 145, 168, 170, 175, 181, 188, 190, 207-208, 213-214, 223
- Tiwald, Justin 113-114
- Tu Weiming (Du Weiming 杜維明) 60, 78-79, 96, 176, 180, 193, 200, 219, 221, 237
- Uchimura Kanzō 内村鑑三 31
- Van Norden, Bryan W. 68, 108-109, 114
- Virtue ethics 204, 214, 241
- Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 97, 104-105, 159-161
- Wang Gen 王艮 56, 99, 105, 139, 151-154, 212
- Wang Ji 王畿 136, 138-143, 149, 157, 212
- Wang Tch'ang-tche 22, 33, 41-43
- Wanwu yiti 万物一體 132, 204-214, 229, 236
- Watters, Thomas 13-15, 201
- Wieger, Léon 21-22, 32, 45-47, 170
- Wienpahl, Paul 77-78, 224
- Williams, Samuel Wells 11-12
- Wu Yubi 吳與弼 116-118
- Xin 心 26, 31, 52, 54, 71-71, 85-86, 113, 133, 143-144, 149, 175, 188, 211, 223, 225
- Xin zhi benti 心之本體 86, 120, 144, 175, 225
- Xiong Shili 熊十力 231-233, 237
- Yang Guorong 208-209
- Yang Xiaomei 216, 218-219
- Yao Xinzong 228-229
- Yōmeigaku 23-24, 28, 66, 194
- Yu Yingshi 103, 154, 161, 237
- Zenker, Ernst Viktor 21-22, 33, 48-52
- Zhan Ruoshui 湛若水 55, 60, 76, 84, 97, 104, 131-136, 139-142, 237-238
- Zhang Junmai (Carsun Chang 張君勱) 61, 67, 78, 87, 91, 113, 131-132, 137
- Zhi liangzhi 致良知 38, 86, 90, 114, 132, 144-145, 203, 211
- Zhi xing heyi 知行合一 24, 44-45, 85, 124, 129, 136, 170, 189, 201, 205, 208, 213, 215-221, 225, 232

Zhu Chenhao (Prince of Ning) 12,
117, 119

Zhu Xi 朱熹 1, 5-6, 8-16, 24-26, 30,
33, 47-48, 50, 54-55, 65-66, 73-
74, 80, 84, 86, 90, 96, 104-105,
112, 117, 119, 159, 177, 185,
208, 224