

Wang Yang-ming's Theory of *Liang-zhi*

——A New Interpretation of

Wang Yang-ming's Philosophy

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ABSTRACT

The most important term in Wang Yang-ming's 王陽明 (1472-1528) philosophy, "*liang-zhi* 良知," has been interpreted in various different ways. However, these different interpretations have failed to provide a satisfactory understanding of Wang Yang-ming's philosophy. To give a reasonable interpretation of Wang Yang-ming's idea of *liang-zhi* that coheres with his philosophy, we have to move beyond the approach of mentalism, no matter whether it be of a transcendental or non-transcendental type. In this paper, I elaborate the deep structure of *liang-zhi* and demonstrate that *liang-zhi* cannot simply be described as non-empirical, more importantly, I show that **it cannot be identified as any kind of knowledge or knowing capacity, enlightenment or enlightening capacity, intellectual intuition or mystical feeling**. *Liang-zhi* is not an *epistemic* concept in any sense. To treat *liang-zhi* as some kind of knowing faculty or mental capacity is to stray from Wang Yang-ming's main philosophical train of thought.

The major purpose of this paper is to give a new and coherent interpretation of *liang-zhi* which is consistent with the doctrines of "*xing-ji-qi* 性即氣," "*xin-wai-wu-wu/shi* 心外無物／事" (no things/events outside the mind), "*xin-wai-wu-li* 心外無理" (no orders/principles outside the mind) and "*zhi-xing-he-yi* 知行合一"¹ (the unity of

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¹ Here I define "*zhi-xing-he-yi* 知行合一" as "the unity of [the implicit and original state of mind which is stored with *li* 理 or *xing* 性 and is able to activate] enlightenment and action/act."

enlightenment and action/act). In this paper, I use the concepts of “realization” and “supervenience” to explain the relationship between *xing* and *qi*, on the one hand, and the relationship between *zhi* and *xing*, on the other. Based on this preliminary study, I conclude that Wang Yang-ming viewed all the things/events in the organic universe as being endowed with a (emergent) power or (functional) property of cosmic vitality or universal spirituality, i.e., the (functional) property of *sheng-sheng* 生生 (the cycling order of natural production). This universal power or property by itself is invisible, without trace, and does not have an independent ontological status. However, the actual function of the power or property can be found in phenomena because certain responsive mental events made by human beings can be recognized as the realization of this power or property. In turn, certain related physical events initiated by human beings can be understood as the bases on which the mental events are supervenient. Based on these two distinct relationships: realization and supervenience, we can elaborate a framework of three layers consisting of the layer of cosmic spirituality, the layer of the mental, and the layer of the physical. This framework of three layers is moreover situated in two domains: the internal domain of the human body and the external domain of human action. Based on this framework of three layers and two domains, I elaborate a theory concerning “heaven’s production” (*tian-cheng* 天成), or “accomplishment and assistance in the universal process of production and reproduction,” concluding that it can be understood as an important component of Wang Yang-ming’s philosophy.

Key words: *liang-zhi* 良知, *ling-qiao* 靈竅, *tian-cheng* 天成, *xing-ji-qi* 性即氣, *xin-wai-wu-wu/shi* 心外無物／事, *zhi-xing-he-yi* 知行合一.

“Human beings are born with *qi* on which *ling* supervenes.”

「人得氣以生而靈隨之」

(太傅王文恪公傳——王陽明全集)²

² Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji* (The Complete Works of Wang Yang-ming) (Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publisher, 1992), p. 946.

1. Question: What Does “*Liang-zhi*” Mean?

The most important term in Wang Yang-ming's philosophy, “*liang-zhi*,” has been interpreted in different ways. Most scholars regard *liang-zhi* as some kind of non-empirical knowledge or non-empirical knowing capacity because it is not *jian-wen zhi zhi* (見聞之知 perceptual knowledge) or *zhi-jue si-lü* (知覺思慮 perception and thinking). But in what sense is it “non-empirical”? Some scholars who harbor a transcendental perspective try to explain the non-empirical nature of *liang-zhi* by asserting that it is neither a sensible intuition nor a discursive intellect, and they speculate that it must be some kind of non-sensible intuition or mystic experience. Other scholars of a less transcendental inclination stress *liang-zhi*'s capacity to generate moral practice, and they thus interpret the term as referring to the ability of “knowing-how” rather than “knowing-that.” It is reasonable to doubt the accurateness of the former interpretation because it is too close to mysticism, which maintains that there is a kind of mystical mental power or state in the mind that is ineffable, or which can only be described as paradoxical. It is also reasonable to doubt the correctness of the latter interpretation because it cannot explain why Wang Yang-ming believes that *liang-zhi* is “*wu-zhi er wu-bu-zhi*” (無知而無不知 no knowing but without not knowing) and “*cao-mu-wa-shi ye you liang-zhi*” (草木瓦石也有良知 plants, trees, tiles and stones also have *liang-zhi*), let alone shed light on the relationship between *liang-zhi* and Wang Yang-ming's concepts of “*zhi xing he yi*” (the unity of *zhi* and action) and “*xing/xin ji qi*” (nature [or functional property] /mind is inseparable from vital force). Put simply, neither interpretation can adequately explain the relationships found among different concepts in Wang's thought.

I regard these different interpretations as incorrect not only because they fail to provide a satisfactory understanding of Wang Yang-ming's philosophy, but also because they adopt a flawed approach. To give a reasonable interpretation of Wang Yang-ming's concept of *liang-zhi* that coheres with his philosophy, we have to move beyond the approach of mentalism, no matter whether it be of a transcendental or non-transcendental type. It is a consensus that *liang-zhi* does not denote empirical knowledge or an empirical knowing capacity. But the most important point is not, or not merely, based on its non-empirical character, but rather is based on the hidden, if not inscrutable, deep structure of his idea. In discovering or recovering this deep structure, we can discern the meaning of *liang-zhi*, and more plausibly answer the questions raised from Wang's writings. In the following discussion, I elaborate this deep structure and demonstrate that *liang-zhi*

cannot be simply described as non-empirical, and, most importantly, that it cannot be identified as any kind of knowledge or knowing capacity, enlightenment or enlightening ability, intellectual intuition or mystical feeling. *Liang-zhi* is not an *epistemic* concept in any sense. To treat *liang-zhi* as some kind of knowing faculty or mental capacity is to stray from Wang Yang-ming's main philosophical train of thought.

2. Answer: *Liang-zhi* Is a Cosmic Spirituality

The major purpose of this article is to give a new interpretation of Wang Yang-ming's concept of *liang-zhi* that coheres with his overall philosophy. That is, using this interpretation, Wang's notion of *liang-zhi* will be consonant with, and not contradict, the theses of "*xing ji li*" (性即理 nature is identical with order/principle), "*xing ji qi*", "*xin wai wu wu/shi*," "*xin wai wu li*" (心外無理 no orders/principles outside the mind), and "*zhi xing he yi*" (the unity of the dominating power of enlightenment [which is the cosmic power realized in the mind in its original state that is stored with *li* or *xing* and is able to be realized in the internal and external objects and events] and act/action).³ In this article, I borrow the concepts of "realization"⁴ and "supervenience"⁵ from the contemporary

³ *Zhi* or *liang-zhi* as a cosmic spirituality realized or embodied in human mind is the dominating power of enlightenment, but it is not the equivalent of enlightenment or enlightening ability. When this power functions in a mental act, it can make the mental act enter into a mental state that can be called "enlightenment."

⁴ In the philosophy of mind, the notion of realization is typically employed to express the thesis of physical realization (i.e., all properties are realized by physical properties) and the thesis of multiple realization (i.e., disparate sets of physical properties can realize the same mental properties). In this paper, my concept of "constitutive realization" as discussed below is similar to the notion used in contemporary philosophy of mind, but my concept of "causal realization" is different from that notion. The latter is more akin to the usage found in the arts. In the sense of the former, the mental is just like software that can be realized in different physical bodies or objects (the hardware). As a functional state, the mental, or the software, is constitutive of the realizer; they are distinct but not separated. I call this "constitutive realization." This concept of realization can be used to explain the relation between the mind and the body, but it cannot be used to explain the relation between the mental and the behavioral. My use of the latter concept is different from this use, but similar to the usage current in the arts and literature as depicted in the following description: "We saw that in order for aesthetic experience to be possible it is not sufficient to observe the object in which beauty is manifest. Looking at a painting or sculpture, or listening to a piece of music, we may not even feel its aesthetic value. Beauty has to be experienced, lived through in an extraordinary act of perception. That is why aesthetic experience is directly accessible only to the experiencing subject himself. To others it can be communicated only in an indirect way - by words..." Vasily Sesemann, *Aesthetics*, in

philosophy of mind, with some minor modifications, to explain the relationships between *xing* (nature/functional property) and *qi* (氣 vital force), between *xin* and *wu*, and between *zhi* and *xing* (act/action).

Based on this preliminary study, I conclude that all the objects and events in the organic universe as envisioned by Wang Yang-ming can be understood as being endowed with a (emergent) power or (functional) property of cosmic vitality, or universal spirituality, i.e., the (functional) property of (natural) production and reproduction (生生之性 *sheng-sheng zhi xing*) or the (cycling) order/principle of (natural) production and reproduction (生生之理 *sheng-sheng zhi li*). This universal power or property by itself is invisible, above form, without trace and, most importantly, does not have an independent ontological status in terms of actuality. In its potentiality, it is just “*sheng-sheng-bu-xi zhi ren*” (生生不息之仁 the benevolence of ceaseless production and reproduction), “*sheng-wu zhi ren*” (生物之仁 the benevolence of creating things), or “*tian-ji-bu-xi-chu*” (天機不息處 the place of ceaselessness in heaven’s mechanism)⁶. However, the actual function of the power or property has no independent location or presence; it can only be found in the internal and external phenomena of human bodies, i.e., in mental acts and behaviors. This is because certain responsive mental (or intentional) events made by human beings

Leonidas Donskis ed., trans. Mykolas Drunga (Amsterdam: Editions Rodopi B. V., 2007), p. 8. I think this use of the concept is similar to that found in some of Davidson’s publications, particularly as seen in the following passage: “Beliefs and desires conspire to cause, rationalize, and explain intentional actions. We act intentionally for reasons, and our reasons always include both values and beliefs. We would not act unless there were some value or end we hope to achieve (or some supposed evil we hope to avoid), and we believed our course of action was a way of *realizing* [my italics] our aim.” Donald Davidson, *Subjective, Intersubjective, Objective* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2001), p. 125. I call this concept “causal realization” which presupposes that what is realized (i.e., the realizee) is causally derived from something outside the realizer; just like the intention-in-action is causally derived from an agent’s original intentionality, which is outside the physical movement (behavior).

⁵ The notion of supervenience was first introduced into the philosophy of mind by Davidson as follows: “[M]ental characteristics are in some sense dependent, or supervenient, on physical characteristics. Such supervenience might be taken to mean that there cannot be two events alike in all physical respects but differing in some mental respect, or that an object cannot alter in some mental respect without altering in some physical respect.” Donald Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: University of Oxford Press, 2001), p. 214. Thus defined, it seems that supervenience is a concept concerned with the relationship between the mental and physical characteristics of an event. Nevertheless, Davidson sometimes does not use the concept in this way, i.e., he does not use the concept to explain the relationship between the mental and physical characteristics of an event, but uses it to explain the relationship between the mental description and physical description of an event. See Davidson, *Essays on Actions and Events*, p. 253. Basically, I follow the latter use in this article.

⁶ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 26, 36, 91, 976.

can be recognized or identified as the realization of the power or property, and, simultaneously, because certain related physical (or neural) events initiated by human beings can be understood as the bases on which the mental events are supervenient.⁷ Based on these two distinct relationships, that of realization and that of supervenience, we can elaborate a framework consisting of three layers: the layer of *tian-li* 天理 (i.e., cosmic spirituality), the layer of the mental cum physical, and the layer of *qi*. This three-layered framework is not only situated in the internal domain of the human body, but also in the external domain of human actions, which includes the external objects related to mental acts and the external events activated in actions. Furthermore, on the basis of this framework of three layers and two domains, I elaborate from the text a theory of “heaven’s creation/production” (天成 *tian-cheng*),⁸ or a thesis concerning “accomplishment and assistance in the universal process of production and reproduction” (裁成輔相 *cai-cheng fu-xiang*).⁹ I conclude that this idea or thesis should be understood as being implicitly embedded in Wang Yang-ming’s philosophy.

3. The Ideas of *Li* and *Xin* in an Organic Universe

According to Wang Yang-ming’s world-view, the world or universe is not static and mechanic under physical laws, but rather is seen as possessing a dynamic and organic normative order. *Tian* (天 heaven) or *tai-xu* (太虛 the great void)¹⁰ is a cosmic field endowed with normative order or principled direction, i.e., *tian-li* or *dao* (道), which regulates all the objects and events situated within the field. Because it is *xu* (void), it can embrace all the objects and events within it by virtue of the *realization* of *tian-li* within them, i.e., through the emerging (發生 *fa-sheng*) and flowing (流行 *liu-xing*) of *tian-li*. When the emerging and flowing of *tian-li* occurs, nothing can obstruct the processing in *tai-xu* (無一物能為太虛之障礙).¹¹

Tian-li, or *dao*, as the universal power or property of the cosmic field is able to

⁷ Or, put more accurately, it is the mental description of an event which is supervenient or dependent on the physical description of the event.

⁸ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 30, 254, 267, 801, 805, 844-845, 871, 976, 978, 1338-1339, 1347, 1361.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 29, 243, 257.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp. 95-96, 106, 211, 1299, 1306.

¹¹ Ibid., pp. 106, 211, 1299.

emerge in and flow to heaven,¹² earth and all the objects and events nurtured in between. That is, *tian-li* is naturally able to be realized in particular entities which are constituted of a specific type of *qi*. This *tianli*, which is immanent in a particular entity, can be called the “*xing*” of *ren* (人 human beings) or *wu* (物 things/objects/events). *Tian-li* can be **directly** realized in the human body; however, it can only be **indirectly** realized in the external world through the participation (參 *can*) or assistance (贊 *zen*) of human beings, which reveals or activates its function.¹³ This is because, for Wang Yang-ming, humans are the *xin* (心 center or heart/mind) of *tian-di* (天地 heaven and earth) and only humans have *xin*.¹⁴ *Xin* is a *ling-neng* (靈能 spiritual capacity) or *xu-ling ming-jue* (虛靈明覺 clear enlightening power of void and spirit) inside the human body. It is **constituted** of the most clear and intelligent *qi*, and it is able to store the power or property of *sheng-sheng* (i.e., the creativity of creation or the property of (natural) production and reproduction). When the *xin* is in operation, it can transfer or emit the power or property to objects and events in both the internal and external domains, inside and outside the human body. In other words, *xin* as a spiritual capacity is originally or primordially given the power or property which is able to transfer or emit its function into the objects and events of the external world. When the functional property is exposed or revealed by a mental act issued from *xin* or by an intentional action caused by the mental act in a consistent state of *xu* and *ming* (明 clarity), this is referred to variously by Wang Yang-ming as, “the exposing, revealing, emerging, functioning, practicing, flowing or filling of *liang-zhi*” (良知之呈現 *cheng-xian*, 發見[現] *fa-xian*, 發生 *fa-sheng*, 發用 *fa-yong*, 運用 *yun-yong*, 妙用 *miao-yong*, 流行 *liu-xing*, 充塞 *chong-sai*). It is the enlightening power (or, rigorously speaking, the power which is able to make enlightenment happen) of the mind in its original state that is stored with *li* or *xing* and that is able to be realized in internal and external objects and events.¹⁵ What is implicitly stored in *xin* is *tian*’s normative order, or its principled direction, in a tranquil (寂 *ji*), non-awakened (未發 *wei-fa*) or original state (本體 *ben-ti* or 本來體段 *ben-lai-ti-duan*). What is realized or instantiated in the mental events activated or produced by *xin* is the normative order or principled direction in a perceived (感 *gan*), awakened (已發 *yi-fa*) or functioning state. In the former case, *tian-li* is stored in *xin* in a non-awakened state; in the latter case, *tian-*

¹² This is not the heaven as a cosmic field but as one of the collective entities in the field, i.e., the sky.

¹³ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 861.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 214, 336.

¹⁵ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 6, 15, 21, 26, 35-36, 69, 71-72, 85, 101, 106, 111, 118, 145, 971, 978, 1176, 1361...etc.

li is in the state of emerging or flowing into the world. In short, *tian-li*, *xing* and *liang-zhi* are nothing but different perspectives on the same entity or entities of a continuum;¹⁶ they represent the natural and normative order or principled direction of production and reproduction in the universe, the emergent power or functional property of the universe, and the power or property stored in the individual mind as an implicit and original state. This power or function can activate enlightenment, and be realized, or revealed, in both humans' mental acts and the moral practice/intentional actions caused by such acts.

Xin as *ling-neng* is a spiritual channel, hollow or pore (靈竅 *ling-qiao* or 發竅 *fa-qiao*)¹⁷ which can transfer or emit the *tian-li* of *tai-xu* from humans' individual small cosmos (小宇宙 *xiao-yu-zhou*) to the great cosmos (大宇宙 *da-yu-zhou*) by virtue of some kind of interaction between humans and the objects and events of the world. Through this interaction, each individual human can perceive (*gan*) and respond (應 *ying*) to objects and events through her/his *ling-neng* and thereby expose and assist *tian-li*'s emerging and flowing into the world as reflected in her/his mental acts (which are supervenient on the neural events inside her/his body) and intentional actions (which are supervenient on her/his physical movements).¹⁸ Looking at the physical aspect, this transference or emitting can be recognized as the flowing through or circulation of the

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. 15, 84, 86, 95-6, 254, 263, 266-7, 1303.

¹⁷ As far as I know, this series of concepts, such as *xu-ling* 虛靈, *jing-ling* 精靈, *ling-ming* 靈明, *ling-neng* 靈能, *ming-jue* 明覺, *xu-ling-ming-jue* 虛靈明覺, *zhao-ming-ling-jue* 昭明靈覺, *tian-zhi-ling-gen* 天植靈根, *zao-hua-de-jing-ling* 造化的精靈, *ling-zhao-bu-mei-chu* 靈昭不昧處, *fa-qiao-zhi-zui-jing-chu* 發竅之最精處 and *yuan-ming-qiao* 圓明竅, which frequently appear in Wang Yang-ming and his disciples' writings, had never been used by earlier Confucians. However, similar concepts had been used previously in some of the major texts of religious Daoism, especially in texts of the School of Nei-dan (內丹 Internal Medicine). For example, the concept of "*yuan-ming-qiao*" (the perfect clear hollow), recorded in Wang Ji's 王畿 collected works comes from the Nei-dan tradition (see Wu Zhen 吳震 ed., *Wang Ji Ji* 王畿集 (Collected Essays of Wang Ji) (Nanjing: Phoenix Publisher, 2007), p. 460). Following this line of thinking, Wang's disciples, Wang Ji and Qian De-hong (錢德洪), often use terms like "*ling-qiao*," "*ling-qi* 靈氣," "*ling-ji* 靈機," "*xuan-ji* 玄機," "*tian-gen* 天根," "*xing-zhi-ling-yuan* 性之靈源," "*ren-shen-ling-qi* 人身靈氣," "*yi-dian-xu-ming* 一點虛明," "*yi-dian-ling-ji* 一點靈機," "*zhen-yang-zhong-zhi* 真陽種子," "*di-yi-qiao* 第一竅," "*tian-ran-zhi-ling-qiao* 天然之靈竅," "*xian-tian-ling-qiao* 先天靈竅" and "*xu-qiao-ling-ming-zhi-ti* 虛竅靈明之體" in their writings. All these have meanings similar to Daoist terms like "*ling-qiao*," "*xuan-qiao* 玄竅," "*ling-guan-yi-qiao* 靈關一竅" or "*xuan-guan-yi-qiao* 玄關一竅". A detailed argument concerning the influence of Nei-dan on Wang Yang-ming's thought can be found in Yiu-ming Fung, "A New Interpretation of Wang Yang-ming's Thesis of 'No Wu (Things) outside Xin (Mind)' (王陽明「心外無物」說新詮)," *Tsing Hua Journal of Chinese Studies*, 32.1(2002), pp. 65-85.

¹⁸ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 50, 64, 77, 114, 124, 801, 853-854, 978, 1176, 1281, 1295, 1587, 1600.

one *qi* (一氣流通 *yi-qi liu-tong*).¹⁹ On the other hand, if we look at the mental aspect of this process, the transference or emitting can be understood as the mental interaction of perceiving and responding that occurs between humans and the external world.

In regard to the world in its physical aspect, from a macro view, all individual entities (including human bodies) that appear in *tian-di* can be recognized as objects of physical form. However, from a micro view, the same objects can be understood as entities constituted of some kind of vital force or energy. When this kind of force or energy is in a flowing or circulated state, it is called “*qi*,” when it is in a static or consolidated state, it is called “*jing*” (精 quintessence); and when it is condensed into a physical form, it is called “*wu*.”²⁰ In regard to the world in its mental aspect, all the individual entities can be transformed as the content of intentional events and thus enlivened or activated by means of humans’ *liang-zhi* through *liang-zhi*’s realization in the intentional events. In other words, based on the **supervenience** of the mental on the physical of an event, *liang-zhi* can also be realized in an individual entity and thus enliven, or reveal, a spirit in that entity.²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 124.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 62.

²¹ Roughly speaking, a mental event inside a human body is supervenient on a neural event while an intentional action is supervenient on a physical movement. In the former case, the realization of *liang-zhi* in the internal event can be called “constitutive realization;” in the latter case, the realization of *liang-zhi* in the external action can be called “causal realization.” It is because the intentional action is (mentally) caused by the mental event and simultaneously the physical movement is (physically) caused by the neural event. In Wang Yang-ming’s terms, “constitutive realization” is the “*fa-sheng*” (emerging/activating) or “*fa-yong*” (functioning/awakening) of *liang-zhi*; “causal realization” is the “*liu-xing*” or “*chong-sai*” (filling) of *liang-zhi*. Sometimes Wang Yang-ming uses terms like “*fa-zai*” (發在 [耳目] issuing in [the ears or eyes]), “*fa-qiao-yu*” (發竅於 [耳目] issuing within the channels of [the ears or eyes]) (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 36, 119) and “*ren-ren tong ju*” (人人同具 endowed within all humans) (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 62, 93, 95, 109, 279, 1278) to express the idea that *liang-zhi* is inseparable from an individual person or a physical body (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 35). It means that the realization of *liang-zhi* in the internal domain is constitutive. He also describes the body as “*chong-sai-chu*” (充塞處 the place that is filled in) of *liang-zhi* (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 90-1) and *xin* as “*zhu-yu-shen*” (主於身 a master in the body) (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 47, 155, 1295), whereas he labels external things as the “*she-zhuo-chu*” (涉著處 that which is attached to) of *yi* (意 [念 *nian*] intention/idea) (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 217) issued from *liang-zhi* (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 24, 90-1, 1175) and the *li* of objects and events outside body as “*chu*” or “*chu-yu*” (出於 issuing/coming from) *liang-zhi* (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 15, 45, 104, 267, 1295). In contrast to the “constitutive realization” of the former, the latter can be called a “causal realization.”

4. The Framework of One *Qi*, Two Domains and Three Layers

I think both the internal domain (the small cosmos) and the external domain (the great cosmos) consist of three layers. The first layer is the phenomenal dimension of the world which is full of flowing or condensed *qi*. The second layer is the sub-phenomenal dimension of the world composed of mental content (including mental power, property and function), which is supervenient on physical content constituted of *qi*. The third layer is the invisible super-phenomenal dimension of the world, which is the functional power of *sheng-sheng* or the natural production of cycling order. *Sheng-sheng* does not have its own independent ontological status in terms of actuality. Its actualization cannot be separated from the entities or events of the first and second layers; it has to be realized, or manifest itself, in the flowing of *qi* and, simultaneously, in the emergence of mental acts and actions. If they are not blocked by selfish desires (私欲間斷 *si-yu jian-duan*), mental acts as *zhi-jue-yun-dong* (知覺運動 the activation of the faculty of knowing and perceiving) can function with *liang-zhi* and can be identified as having the constitutive realization of *tian-li* in the internal realm. In turn, the intentional actions caused by the mental acts can be recognized as the causal realization of *liang-zhi* or *tian-li* in the external realm. This second type of realization occurs by means of mental causation from the original intentionality of the mind to the derived intentionality of the action. The original intentionality is supervenient on the physical event, which is constituted of *qi* inside human body, while the derived intentionality is supervenient on the physical event, which is also constituted of *qi* and appears in human behavior.

These two kinds of realization (i.e., constitutive and causal realization) can be explicated by the following analogies:

- (1) The connection of software and hardware in a computer: We can say that the software as formal program is distinct from the hardware as physical equipment though the former has to be installed in the latter to make the computer function. In terms of the computer language of AI, we can also say that the software makes sense or provides semantic content for the computer user by means of working (i.e., physical movement) in the hardware. Although in some sense we may say that the program runs when the computer is in operation, actually, the program cannot run, or more correctly, it is a category mistake to say “running” or “not running,” “moving” or “not moving,” regarding the program. Only the computer’s hardware can be

described as “running” or “not running.” Similarly, we may say that the realization, embedding or embodiment of *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* in human beings’ mental acts or events is just like the constitutive realization of the software in the hardware. For *tian-li* or *liang-zhi*, we cannot use “motion” or “motionless” to describe its original state, just like that we cannot use “running” or “not running” to describe the program.²² However, since the hardware’s operation can make the software function, we may indirectly say that the program is “running.” For the same reason, we may metaphorically say that, by means of moral practice both in the mind and in behavior, *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* can be described as “emerging” or “flowing.” The constitutive realization of software in hardware is similar to that of *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* in mental acts, but different from that of *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* in intentional actions or behaviors. It is because in the former case the realizee (i.e., what is to be realized) is a constituent of the realizer (i.e., what is to realize), while in the latter case the realizee is not a constituent of the realizer. Instead, what is to be realized in the realizer is not the original realizee, but the realizee in a derived sense. As a derived realization, the realization of *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* in actions or behaviors is done by means of the actions or behaviors caused by the mental acts or events in which *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* is constitutively realized. In comparison with the “constitutive realization” in the mind, this derived sense of realization can be called the “causal realization” in behavior. Wang Yang-ming’s statements that, “it is never the case that *liang-zhi* does not exist” 良知未嘗不在 and “*liang-zhi* is innate” 良知本有 concern the “embodiment” or “embedding” of *liang-zhi* in human beings, inside the body. His statements about “the flowing of *liang-zhi*” 良知流行 or “the filling of *liang-zhi*” 良知充塞 concern the “presentation” or “materializing” of *liang-zhi* in human actions and affairs. The former is *liang-zhi*’s **constitutive realization** in the human body, while the latter is *liang-zhi*’s **causal realization** in human actions and affairs.

(2) Magnetism: we may say that magnetism is realized or exhibited in some objects

²² For Wang Yang-ming, it is wrong to use “inner or outer” (*nei-wei* 內外) (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 76, 92, 1526), “front and behind” (*qian-hou* 前後) (pp. 64, 109), “moving or not moving” (*dong-jing* 動靜) (pp. 31, 61-63), “going or coming” (*chu-ru* 出入) (pp. 18, 1526), or “rising or not rising” (*qi yu bu-qi* 起與不起) (pp. 61-62) to describe the original state of *liang-zhi*.

(magnets), and, by means of its attractive or repulsive force (i.e., causal effect) on other objects (such as those made of iron or nickel), the magnetic property is also realized or exhibited in these other objects. The magnetic property or power realized in the magnets can be understood as a constitutive realization, whereas the magnetic property or power realized in other objects through the causal relation with the magnets can be recognized as a causal realization.

- (3) The intelligent power of reason: When a great scientist like Newton elaborated his idea of physics within his mind, we may say that his elaboration exhibited a great rational power, or that rationality was fully realized in his mind. When he later wrote down his ideas for publication, we may also say that his writing exhibited a great rational power, or that rationality was fully realized in his writing. In this example, we can see there are two (of the three) layers and both of the domains, i.e., the layer of rationality or rational power and the layer of the mental cum physical, as well as the domains of internal and external. Based on this framework, we can say that rationality can be realized in the internal events of the mind which are supervenient on the neural events of the head. We can also say that rationality, or rational power, is also realized in intentional actions by means of mental causation from the mental events of the mind (i.e., thinking) to intentional actions (i.e., writing), which are supervenient on physical movements. As mentioned above, the former realization is constitutive, while the latter is causal.

To use Wang Yang-ming's own words, realization, especially constitutive realization, can be understood as the relation between *ti* (體 substance) and *yong* (用 function): *ti* is inside *yong* and *yong* is inside *ti* 體在用中，用在體中.²³ In some sense, this is just like G.E. Moore's idea of "goodness." Moore thinks that goodness is a "simple non-natural" property, where by "simple" he means indefinable and by "non-natural" inaccessible through normal sensory experience. But goodness cannot be identified without reference to some relevant natural properties found in sensory experience.²⁴ In a

²³ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 31, 61, 266.

²⁴ George E. Moore, "The Conception of Intrinsic Value," in George E. Moore ed., *Philosophical Studies* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co. Inc., 1922), p. 261. Here most scholars think that the relationship between goodness and natural properties is supervenience, but I think it can also be interpreted as realization.

similar sense, we may say that *liang-zhi*, or *xing* in itself as *ti*, is above form (i.e., “not in the form of physical presentation” 形而上 *xing-er-shang*), but its functions cannot be identified apart from physical events. For the same reason, *tian-li* is above form but has to be realized in events with form.

Based on this three-layer-framework, all of the apparent odd or incongruent expressions in Wang Yang-ming's writings can be explained in a way that makes sense. For example, the theses identifying *liang-zhi* as “*wu-zhi er wu-bu-zhi*”, “*xing ji qi*”, and “*xin wai wu li*”, can be explained using the concept of constitutive realization, while his doctrines of “*cao-mu-wa-shi ye you liang-zhi*”, “*xin wai wu wu*”, and “*xin wai wu shi*”, can be explained using the concept of causal realization. Moreover, the question of why he stresses that nothing is separated from *qi* when he discusses humans' mental power over the external world, can be explained using the relation of supervenience between the mental and the physical (including *qi* and the physical objects constituted of *qi*).²⁵

²⁵ For Wang Yang-ming, *xin* is not merely constituted of *qi*. So, in some sense, he agrees with Zhu Xi's idea that, “*Xin* is the spirituality of *qi* 心者氣之靈.” Metaphorically speaking, it is just like the case of Jesus in the sense that he was not only a human being but an incarnation of God in human form. In other words, he not only possessed a body of flesh; his body of flesh also realized God's essential nature, i.e., the (holy) spirit. In a similar sense, *xin* is inside the body of flesh which is constituted of *qi*; however, *xin* is also able to realize cosmic spirituality. *Xin* as the spirituality of *qi* is a faculty of making mental acts or events which are supervenient on the physical acts or events inside the body. This is the first sense of *xin*. Since *xin* is the only faculty able to store (or directly realize) the cosmic spirituality, we can transfer the sense of what is able to store to what is stored (i.e., *li*, *xing* or *liang-zhi*). This is the second sense of *xin*, which is not a mental faculty but that which the mental faculty realizes. Based on these two senses of mind (i.e., the individual faculty of mental acts and the universal spirituality stored in the mind), Wang claims that *liang-zhi* is omnipresent (無所不在) (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 217), that “*Liang-zhi* is the formless aspect of *tai-xu*. ... Heaven, earth and all the myriad things are in the functioning and flowing of my *liang-zhi*.” 良知……便是太虛之無形。……天地萬物俱在我良知的發用流行中。(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, pp. 106, 1306), and that “*Liang-zhi* is the *jing ling* of creation and transformation. 良知是造化的精靈” (Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 104) Based on these statements, I conclude that to identify *liang-zhi* or the original mind (本心, *ben-xin*) (i.e., *xin* in the second sense) as a kind of intellectual intuition similar to that of the Kantian conception (or any other kind of knowing capacity) is totally wrong. Furthermore, *liang-zhi* cannot be identified as a mental act. The reason why Wang Yang-ming describes it as “not knowing but without not knowing 無知無不知” (Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, pp. 109, 113, 1360), is because *liang-zhi* as such cannot directly know anything. However, as realizee it can indirectly know all external things by means of its realizer, such as thinking and perceiving. So, all mental acts, including thinking, knowing, perceiving, pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy 喜怒哀樂之與思與知覺, are the functioning or emerging of *liang-zhi* (or *ben-xin*) (Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 146); but *liang-zhi* as such is not a mental act or mental entity. The textual evidence indicates that the seven emotions (*qi-qing* 七情) (Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 111), perceptual knowledge (*jian-wen* 見聞) (Wang Yang-ming

We can also use the concepts of realization and supervenience to explain two senses of the thesis concerning the “unity of *zhi* and *xing*” in Wang Yang-ming’s thought. It seems to me that, when Wang says that, “where there is one intention/idea in the process of being activated, this is *zhi*, it is also *xing*.” 一念發動處，便是知，便即是行，²⁶ he is talking about the first sense of “unity” in the internal domain (the mental act). On the other hand, when he says that, “when the final state of [*liang*]-*zhi* has been reached, it is *zhi*[-*zhi*-cheng 知之成]; to reach [the final state] is to extend [*liang*]-*zhi*. This is the reason why *zhi* and *xing* are united.” 知至者，知也；至之者，致知也。此知行之所以一也，²⁷ he is talking about the second sense of the idea in the external domain (behavior).

5. The Theses of “*Xing Ji Qi*” and “*Xin Wai Wu Wu/Shi*”

Xing is not (identical with) *qi* and also is not what is constituted of *qi* (i.e., *wu*) because the former is above form while the latter is of physical form or can be consolidated into form. According to Wang Yang-ming, however, they are not separable though they are distinct from each other. Thus, he claims that, “The beginning of *xing*’s goodness must be found in *qi*; without *qi* nothing can be found. The feeling of commiseration, shame and dislike, modesty and yielding, and right and wrong are *qi*.” 然性善之端須在氣上始見得，若無氣亦無可見矣。惻隱、羞惡、辭讓、是非即是氣²⁸ He also claims that, “*liang-zhi* is not external to pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy. ... Without pleasure, anger, sorrow and joy, how can *liang-zhi* be found?” 良知不外喜怒哀樂，……除卻喜怒哀樂，何以見良知？²⁹ The reason why *xing* or *liang-zhi* can only be found in *qi* or in what is constituted of *qi* is because *xing* or *liang-zhi* as a functional property can emerge or function in an empirical event’s supervenient property (i.e., the mental property). In addition to the emerging or functioning of *xing* or *liang-zhi* in a

Quan-ji, pp. 71, 1300), thinking (*si* 思) (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 72) and deliberation and (physical) movement (*si-lü yun-yong* 思慮運用) (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 18) are the functioning, or flowing, of *liang-zhi*.

²⁶ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 96, 1172.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 189, 278, 971, 999.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 61.

²⁹ Minoru Mizuno, Seiji Nagatomi, Michio Misawa (eds.), Wenchao Chang (trans.), “Record of Master Yang-ming’s Lost Words 陽明先生遺言錄,” *Bulletin of the Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy*, 8.3 (1998), p. 35.

mental act or event, *xing* or *liang-zhi* is also able to flow to, or fill in, an intentional action. Based on the fact that the action is caused by the mental act or event, and that *xing* or *liang-zhi* is functioning in the mental act or event, we may say that the occurrence of the action is in accordance with *xing* or *liang-zhi*. So Wang Yang-ming concludes that, "If we know the master of the mind and speak and act on the basis of our *liang-zhi*, it will be all right. But *liang-zhi* is just this mouth speaking and this body acting; how can there be another thing that acts and speaks outside of *qi*? ... *Qi* is *xing* and *xing* is *qi*. But it is necessary to know rightly what the master of the mind is." 若曉得頭腦，依吾良知上說出來，行將去，便自是停當。然良知亦只是這口說，這身行，豈能外得氣，別有個去行去說？……氣亦性也，性亦氣也，但須認得頭腦是當³⁰

As mentioned above (footnote 25), there are two senses of *xin* in Wang Yang-ming's writings. In regard to the second sense, he claims that "*xin* is not a piece of flesh" (心不是一塊血肉). Wang explains his reasons for making this claim as follows: ³¹

What is called 'your *xin*' does not specifically refer to a lump of flesh. If it were simply a lump of flesh, then why is it the case that a man presently deceased who still has this lump of flesh cannot see, hear, speak and move? What is called 'your *xin*,' however, is that which can see, hear, speak and move; this is *xing*, this is *tian-li*. It is only by having this *xing* that one can create. The creative *li* of this *xing* is called *ren*. This creative *li* of *xing* issues forth to the eyes and one sees, it issues forth to the ears and one hears, it issues forth to the mouth and one speaks, and it issues forth to the limbs and one moves. These capacities are all the issuing forth of *tian-li*. Because it is the master of the body, it is called "*xin*." The original state of this *xin* in fact is

³⁰ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 101.

³¹ Ibid., p. 121. A similar point is also made in the following paragraphs: "One's capacity is just *liang-zhi*. 能處正是良知" (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 109), and "All these [capacities of] seeing, hearing, speaking and moving are your *xin*. Your *xin*'s seeing issues through the channel of the eyes, hearing through the channel of the ears, speaking through the channel of the mouth, and moving through the channel of the limbs. If there were no *xin* of yours, there would be no [functional] ears, eyes, mouth and nose. What is called 'your *xin*' is not only that lump of flesh. If it were just that, why would it not be the case that dead people, who still have that lump of flesh, cannot see, hear, speak and move?" 這視聽言動皆是汝心。汝心之視，發竅於目；汝心之聽，發竅於耳；汝心之言，發竅於口；汝心之動，發竅於四肢。若無汝心，便無耳目口鼻。所謂汝心，亦不專是那一團血肉。若是那一團血肉，如今已死的人那一團血肉還在，緣何不能視聽言動？ (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 35-36)

tian-li, it originally is not in violation of ritual. This is your true self; this true self is the master of the corporeal form. If there is no true self, there is no corporeal form. It is truly the case that to have a true self is to have life; to have no true self is to have death.

所謂汝心，亦不專是那一團血肉。若是那一團血肉，如今已死的人那一團血肉還在，緣何不能視聽言動？所謂汝心，卻是那能視聽言動的，這個便是性，便是天理。有這個性才能生。這性之生理便謂之仁。這性之生理，發在目便會視，發在耳便會聽，發在口便會言，發在四肢便會動，都只是那天理發生。以其主宰一身，故謂之心。這心之本體，原只是個天理，原無非禮。這個便是汝之真己，這個真己是軀殼的主宰。若無真己，便無軀殼。真是有之即生，無之即死。³²

If a physical body is only a piece of flesh, then it cannot see, hear, speak and move. This is because it lacks a true/real self (真己 *zhen-ji* or 真吾 *zhen-wu*) as its master (or master of the mind 頭腦). It is just like a computer. If it has hardware but no software, we can say that it is not a real computer. Similarly, a lump of flesh that lacks *xin*, *liang-zhi*, *xing* or *tian-li*, cannot have perception and action. In other words, without the true self there is no true thing. Wang believes that through the rectification of things (格物 *ge-wu*) the true self extends its *liang-zhi* to be realized in bodies and behaviors. The things become transformed via this process; they move from the status of “dead things” to that of “true/real things” (真物 *zhen-wu*). This is the result of the response from *liang-zhi* (as the base [根] 本 *ben*) to things (as the traces of phenomena 跡 [象] *ji*). (此處致得，方是真知。此處格得，方是真物。今日雖成此事功，亦不過一時良知之應跡。) ³³ When people hear, see, speak and move in accordance with ritual (i.e., *tian-li* expressed or exemplified in a normative form), each part of their physical body is conducted (成得 *cheng-de*) to be the ears, eyes, mouth and four limbs, and functions for (為著 *wei-zhuo*) them. (若為著耳目口鼻四肢時，便須思量耳如何聽，目如何視，口如何言，四肢如何動，必須非禮勿視聽言動，方才成得個耳目口鼻四肢，這個才是為著耳目口鼻四肢。) ³⁴ It means that, without the realizee (i.e., what is to be realized), there is no realizer to realize anything. On the other hand, without the realizer, there is also no

³² Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 36.

³³ Ibid., p. 1600.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 35-36.

realizee realized in anything. So, in answering his disciple's question concerning why external things (*wu*) are united with *xin*, *yi*, and *zhi* into one entity or event (知是一件 *zhi-shi yi jian*), Wang asserts that, "The ears, eyes, mouth, nose and limbs are [parts of] the body. Without the *xin*, how can they see, hear, speak and move? The *xin* wants to see, hear, speak and move, but, without the ears, eyes, mouth, nose and limbs, the *xin* cannot [see, hear, speak and move]. Hence without the *xin*, there is no body; without the body, there is no *xin*." 九川疑曰：「物在外，如何與身心意知是一件？」先生曰：「耳目口鼻四肢，身也，非心安能視聽言動？心欲視聽言動，無耳目口鼻四肢亦不能，故無心則無身，無身則無心。」³⁵

Nevertheless, the following paragraph seems to express an idea of subjective idealism similar to the type proposed by Berkeley:

The Teacher was roaming in Nan-chen. 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 these flowers, they and your mind are in the state of silent vacancy. As you come to look at them, their colors at once show up clearly. From this you can know that these flowers are not external to your mind."³⁶

先生游南鎮，一友指巖中花樹問曰：「天下無心外之物，如此花樹，在深山中自開自落，於我心亦何相關？」先生曰：「你未看此花時，此花與汝心同歸於寂。你來看此花時，則此花顏色一時明白起來。便知此花不在你的心外。」

If we look carefully at the text, I think that this paragraph does not profess a view of subjective idealism. What Wang Yang-ming wants to express in this passage is that, without people's perceiving as an intentional action, the *xing* of *sheng-sheng* cannot be realized in the flowers, and the flowers cannot be revealed or activated their functional spirituality, though the external bare objects are still out there. It is obvious that what he means by "*ji*" (寂 silent vacancy or tranquil) is a "sleeping" or "non-awaking" state of

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 90-91.

³⁶ Ibid., pp. 107-108. Translation is from Wing-tsit Chan 陳榮捷, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), p. 685.

something potentially able to realize the spirituality, or life, of the universe. But why does the spirituality, or life, have to be revealed, activated or awakened by humans' mental acts and actions? Generally speaking, it is because humans are the *xin* of heaven, earth and the myriad things of the universe. Only humans have a *ling-qiao* to transfer spirituality (i.e., *tian-li*) to the external by means of its emerging or flowing outwards. Speaking more specifically, it is because humans and other objects and events in the external world are united in terms of the circulation of *qi*.³⁷ Based on the circulation of *qi* of the first layer (i.e., the phenomenal dimension of the world), the mental acts of the second layer (i.e., the sub-phenomenal dimension of the world) can cross from the internal domain (i.e., inside the body) to the external domain (i.e., outside the body) by extending the spirituality of the third layer (i.e., the super-phenomenal dimension of the world), which is originally realized in the internal, to activate or enlighten the derivatively realized spirituality in the external. The spirituality realized in the internal is just like the origin, or seed, of a fire, while the spirituality activated by means of an interaction (in a subtle state (幾 *ji*) of *gan* and *ying*) between the internal and the external is akin to a fire ignited by the original fire. In this sense, we can say that, although all the external objects and events are endowed with the "spiritual fire" of the organic universe, this "spiritual

³⁷ The idea of "*yi-qi-liu-tong*" can be found in the following paragraphs: "Separated from my clear intelligence, there will be no heaven, earth, spiritual beings, or myriad things, and separated from these, there will not be my clear intelligence. Thus they are all permeated with one material force. How can they be separated?" 天地鬼神萬物離去我的靈明，便沒有天地鬼神萬物了。我的靈明離卻天地鬼神萬物，亦沒有我的靈明。如此，便是一氣流通的，如何與他間隔得？(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 124. Translation is from Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, pp. 690-691); and "Chu Pen-ssu (朱本思 Zhu Ben-si) asked, 'Man has innate knowledge because he possesses pure intelligence. Have such things as plants and trees, tiles and stones innate knowledge also?' The Teacher said, 'The innate knowledge of man is the same as that of plants and trees, tiles and stones. Without the innate knowledge inherent in man, there cannot be plants and trees, tiles and stones. This is not true of them only. Even Heaven and Earth cannot exist without the innate knowledge that is inherent in man. For at bottom Heaven, Earth, the myriad things, and man form one body. The point at which this unity manifests in its most refined and excellent form is the clear intelligence of the human mind. Wind, rain, dew, thunder, sun and moon, stars, animals and plants, mountains and rivers, earth and stones are essentially of one body with man. It is for this reason that such things as the grains and animals can nourish man and that such things as medicine and minerals can heal diseases. Since they share the same material force, they enter into one another.'" 朱本思問：「人有虛靈，方有良知。若草木瓦石之類，亦有良知否？」先生曰：「人的良知，就是草木瓦石的良知：若草木瓦石無人的良知，不可以為草木瓦石矣。豈惟草木瓦石為然，天地無人的良知，亦不可為天地矣。蓋天地萬物與人原是一體，其發竅之最精處，是人心一點靈明，風雨露雷，日月星辰，禽獸草木，山川土石，與人原只一體。故五穀、禽獸之類皆可以養人，藥石之類皆可以療疾，只為同此一氣，故能相通耳。」(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 107. Translation taken from Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, p. 685)

fire” exists in a **flammable but not yet flaming** state. Only when humans’ “first spark” starts to kindle these flammable objects, can these objects be transformed from the flammable into the flaming state.

Based on this framework of three layers and two domains, we can assert that there is no distinction between internal and external for *xin* or *xing* (*xin/xing-wu-nei-wai* 心／性無內外),³⁸ because they are constitutively realized in internal objects and events, and also causally realized in external objects and events through the mental causation that proceeds from the internal to the external domain. Only when external objects realize the spirituality of the organic universe by virtue of the awakening initiated through internal acts can there be true/real things in the world. Before such awakening, there are only bare objects, i.e., dead things, out there.³⁹

In conclusion, it can be said that the establishment of the thesis of “*xin wai wu wu/shi*” is based on the thesis of “*xing ji qi*.” The latter thesis includes the following two kinds of relationships:

- (1) In the internal domain, *liang-zhi* (cosmic mind or cosmic spirituality stored in the mind) is able to be realized itself in the feelings of the four beginnings, thinking, knowing and perceiving (i.e., mental acts and events) which are supervenient on some neural events that are constituted of *qi*. Or, to put it somewhat differently, *liang-*

³⁸ Wang Yang-ming says that, “When people feel they have to describe a distinction between internal and external for *xin*, they have actually not perceived the substance/original state of *xin*. Besides, the view that *xin* has no distinction between internal and external did not originate from my doctrine. In the ‘Letter on Settling *Xing*,’ [Cheng] Ming-dao said, ‘If one considers *xing* as something that follows things outside, what is there on the inside?’ This entry is the most exciting one.” 人必要說心有內外，原不曾實見心體。……況心無內外，亦不自我說。明道《定性書》有云：「且以性為隨物於外，則當其在外時，何者為在內？」此一條最痛快。(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 1173)

³⁹ Wang Yang-ming says that, “If a human does not obtain *dao*, s/he cannot be a [true/real] human; and if a thing does not obtain *dao*, it cannot be a [true/real] thing. 人不得[道]焉，不可以為人；而物不得焉，不可以為物。” (Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 861) He also says that, “Having this intention/ idea means having this thing event; not having this intention/idea means not having this thing/event.” 有是意即有是物；無是意即無是物。(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, pp. 47, 1295) I think these passages illustrate two points: first, without prior intention there would be no intention-in-action and thus no action; second, without the realization of *liang-zhi* or *tian-li* in an intention/idea, there would be no realization of *liang-zhi* or *tian-li* in an action by means of mental causation, and thus an external thing/event could not be recognized as a true/ real thing. Since the real/sincere state (誠之體) of mind is *liang-zhi*, without the real/sincere state of mind, there would be no realization of *liang-zhi* in external things. Wang thus follows the *Zhong-yong* (中庸 *The Doctrine of Means*) in asserting that, “Without the real/sincere state, there would be no [real] thing.” 不誠無物(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 35)

- zhi* is able to be realized itself in the physical body's neural events which are supervened by some mental events. This is "*xing ji qi*" in an original sense.
- (2) In the external domain, *liang-zhi* is able to be realized in intentional actions which are supervenient on some physical movements, or *liang-zhi* is able to be realized in physical objects by means of humans' mental causation. This is "*xing ji qi*" in a derived sense.

6. The Thesis of the Unity of *Zhi* and *Xing*

According to Wang Yang-ming, in order to reveal or expose one's original bright virtue (*ming-de* 明德 or *liang-zhi*), one must first remove the selfish ideas and desires that act to block, hinder or obstruct one's original state of mind. After doing this, one can return to a spiritual state which is free from selfish obstructions and which embodies the normative order of cycling production (i.e., *tian-li* or the order with the spiritual or functional property of *sheng-sheng*).

But how can one remove one's selfish ideas and desires? The answer is simply to engage in moral practice. For the ruler or great man, the most important kind of moral practice consists of loving the people, i.e., all his/her actions must be identified by himself/herself, and the people, as loving the people. If one can extend this love to everything from the ruler, minister, husband, wife, and friends to mountains, rivers, spiritual beings, birds, animals, and plants, one will enter a state of unity (or forming one body) with heaven, earth, and the myriad things (以天地萬物為一體 *yi tian-di wan-wu wei yi-ti*).⁴⁰

Through the mental causation proceeding from mental acts to behaviors, the *ren* of *sheng-sheng* (i.e., *tian-li*) as the universal spiritual power is able to be realized in moral practice, or actions which affect one's mind, in the sense that one can strengthen and stabilize one's spiritual state of *liang-zhi*. Before engaging in moral practice, one's *liang-zhi* is partly revealed in deliberation and thus one can construct a prior intention by removing selfish ideas or desires.⁴¹ This is what Wang Yang-ming calls "*xing-zhi-shi*"

⁴⁰ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 220, 968.

⁴¹ Wang Yang-ming says that, "What is called 'knowing/consciousness' means merely to have this *li* [to be realized in the mind]. It has not yet attached to a thing/event; hence it is still in a tranquil state." 所謂有知覺者，只是有此理，不曾著在事物，故還是靜。(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 1174) I think this is

(行之始 the beginning of action). This prior intention, which is embodied with the partially revealed *liang-zhi*, causes one to perform moral acts. This process can be called “*gan-wu er dong*” (感物而動 after knowing the situation of external things or events, one activates one’s mind to take action). The precedent process from the external to the internal is “*gan*,” which is a necessary condition for making a prior intention, whereas the subsequent process from the internal to the external is “*ying*,” which is the sufficient condition for taking action. These two interrelated processes can be called “*sui-gan-sui-ying*” (隨感隨應 simultaneous interaction between *gan* and *ying*). When there is *ying*, *liang-zhi* can be fully realized in one’s mental state and be extended to one’s action. This is what Wang Yang-ming calls “*zhi-zhi-cheng*” (知之成 the completion of *liang-zhi*), “*zhi-zhi*” (知至 entering a final state of *liang-zhi*’s presentation) or *jin-xing* (盡性 full development of one’s nature, i.e., one’s spiritual property endowed by *tian*).

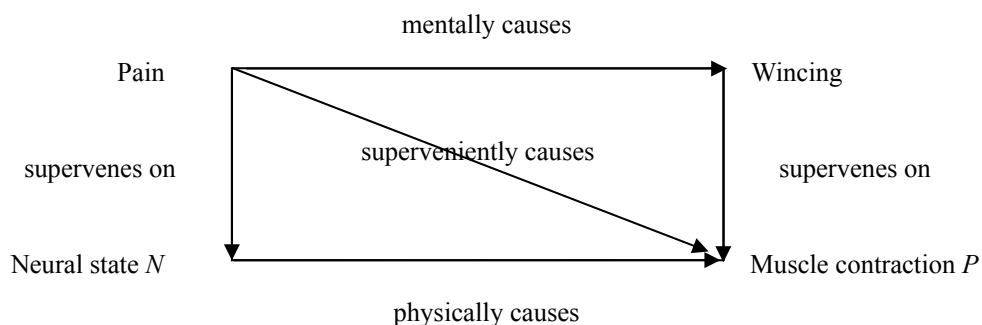
At the level of intentional action, the prior intention constituted of beliefs and desires causes the action. In addition to the imposition of derived intentionality on the behavior as a constitutive element (i.e., intention-in-action)⁴² of the action from the original intentionality of the cognitive mind, at the cosmic level, *liang-zhi* or the *tian-li* of *sheng-sheng*, is not only able to be realized itself in one’s cognitive mind, but also, through the causal process of taking intentional action, it is able to be realized in one’s action. According to this interpretation, we can say that nothing is outside the [cosmic] mind (i.e., *liang-zhi*), no *li*[s] is outside the [cosmic] mind, and that the mind is *qi* (*xin ji qi*). This is because *liang-zhi*, as a universal spiritual power, does not have the ontological status of actuality; yet via the two steps of realization described above, it can be revealed in *qi* - first in the *qi* of internal mental events, and then in the *qi* of external intentional actions and their relevant objects. This is called the “emerging and flowing of *liang-zhi* or *tian-li*.”

The emerging or flowing of *liang-zhi* or *tian-li* can be explicated as follows:

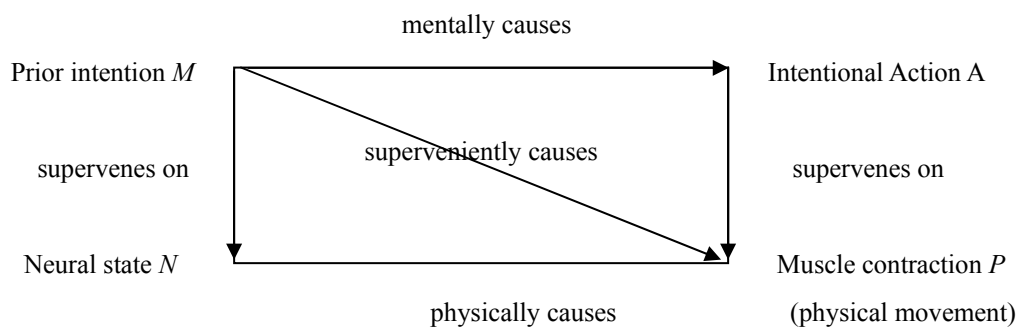
about the intention/idea before taking action, or what Wang Yang-ming means by “not yet connected to things” (未與物接 *wei yu wu jie*) (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-jí*, p. 21). It can be called “prior intention.”

⁴² The notion of “intention-in-action” used here is different from that used by John Searle in his *Intentionality: An Essay in the Philosophy of Mind* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1983), pp. 84. Searle regards intention-in-action as a kind of experience of acting while I recognize any physical movement caused by any prior intention (as a reason for it) as imposed or assigned with a derived intentionality by which an action is constituted as other than mere movement.

Example 1:



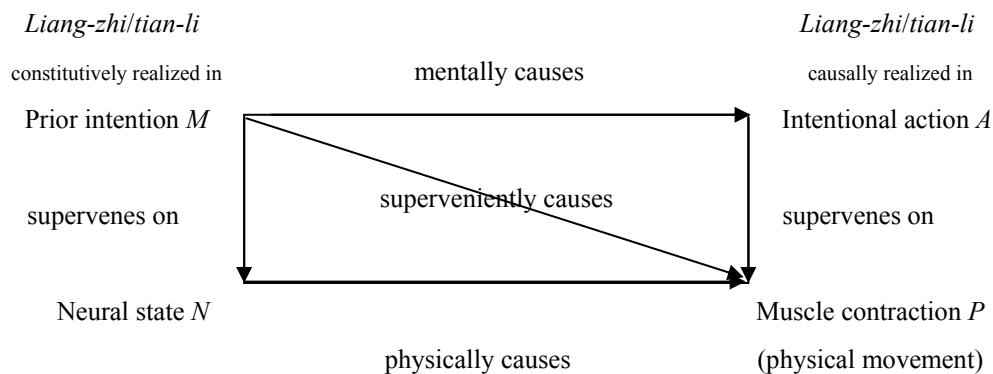
Example 2:



Example 3:

Xing-zhi-shi (行之始)
 (the beginning of *xing*)
 (the revelation of *liang-zhi* in mind)

Zhi-zhi-cheng (知之成)
 (the completion of *zhi*)
 (the extension of *liang-zhi* in action)



In Wang Yang-ming's thought, the emerging and flowing of *liang-zhi* or *tian-li* are connected to the thesis of the unity of *zhi* and *xing*.⁴³ For Wang Yang-ming, *zhi* and *xing* are not separable from each other. They are mutually nourishing, mutually activated, and in their status as internal and external, beginning and end, they can be integrated into one thread (交養互發，內外本末一以貫之). This is what Wang Yang-ming means by "the mutual advance of *zhi* and *xing* 知行並進." On the other hand, he also says that the stages of moral practice cannot be without difference in priority (工夫次第能不無先後之差). Gu Dong-qiao 顧東橋 regards these two points as mutually contradictory.⁴⁴ But Wang Yang-ming does not think that there is a real contradiction because this seeming contradiction can be explained away by his division of mental processes into two levels: one is the process of mental acts and the other is that of intentional actions. He explains this point with the following example: "The mind that desires to eat is an intention [i.e., a prior intention to eat]; this is the beginning of *xing* (action)." 欲食之心即是意，即是行之始矣。⁴⁵ But, "one has to put the food into one's mouth before one knows the good or bad taste of the food. 食味之美惡待入口而後知" In other words, the taste targeted by one's prior intention is not substantiated; only the taste experienced by actual eating can be fully grasped. In this sense, we can say that this final stage of eating is the completion of *zhi* (知之成). On the basis of similar logic, Wang maintains that this is "Just like the case where someone knows filial piety and someone knows brotherly respect. They must have actually practiced filial piety and brotherly respect before they can be said to know them." 就如稱某人知孝，某人知弟。必是其人已曾行孝行弟，方可稱他知孝知弟。⁴⁶ He also claims that, "Without the filial mind directed towards one's parents, there

⁴³ In regard to the examples mentioned by Wang Yang-ming, including seeing and loving a beautiful color, smelling and hating a bad odor, and the occurrence of being hurt and the experience of pain, I think all of these analogies are intended to demonstrate that knowing and acting are united. However, these analogies are not comparable to his main thesis. It is because "*zhi*" in these examples does not mean "the power of [the cosmic] mind which is able to be realized in mental acts and actions" or "the dominating power functioning in mental enlightenment," but rather "the knowing of the empirical mind." The first two examples are used to demonstrate that a mental disposition is constituted of perceptive knowing, and the last one is used to explicate that painful experience is embedded in the occurrence of being hurt in the physical body.

⁴⁴ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 41-42.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 42. Here, the word "*xin*" in "*yu shi zhi xin*" (欲食之心 an intention/desire of eating) is not used to refer to the cosmic mind, *dao-xin* (道心), *ben-xin*, *zhen-wo* (真我 true self), *zhen-ji* or *zhen-wu* (i.e., *liang-zhi*), but to *si-wu* (私吾 the selfish self), *qu-ke di ji* (軀殼的己 the physical self) or the human mind (人心 *ren-xin*) of mental acts (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 35-36, 187, 250, 1282).

⁴⁶ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 4.

is no filial *li*.” 無孝親之心，即無孝之理矣。⁴⁷

When *liang-zhi* is manifest in a human being's mental act, the mental act can have a causal power to make a moral action happen. For example, deliberation with the intention of reading the truth in the *Analects* causes a Confucian scholar to pick up the *Analects* and read it. In this regard, according to Wang Yang-ming, *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* is not only realized in the mental act of intending to read, but it is also realized in the action of reading. When the mental act happens, the *liang-zhi* is simultaneously realized in the mental act. Here, the mental act as an activity (the first sense of *xing*) that is tied to the realization of *liang-zhi* can be called the “extension of *liang-zhi*” (*zhi-liang-zhi* 致良知) to the intention of reading. So, by means of the mental act, *liang-zhi*'s state of revelation cannot be separated from the activity of its extension; they (*zhi* and *xing*) are united together. This is the first sense of the “extension of *liang-zhi*.” In addition, when the mental act happens with sufficient effort, it will spontaneously cause one to engage in the act of reading. And when this happens, through the imposition of intentionality from the mental act to the action, *liang-zhi* is able to be realized in the action. The action as a moral practice thus aims at rectifying the behavior. This is Wang Yang-ming's idea of “*ge-wu*” or “*zheng-wu*” (正物). *Ge-wu* as an action (the second sense of *xing*) leading to the realization of *liang-zhi* can be understood as an indicator identifying (the second sense of) the “extension of *liang-zhi*.” However, in comparison with the first sense, this second sense of the “extension of *liang-zhi*” not only reveals *liang-zhi* in the mind, it also concerns the functioning of *liang-zhi* in action. In the second sense, we can say that one is in the final stage of the flowing of *liang-zhi*, i.e., “*zhi-zhi-cheng*” (the completion of *liang-zhi*) or “*zhi-zhi*” (reaching the final stage of *liang-zhi*'s revelation), while the revelation of *liang-zhi* in the mental act can be recognized as “*xing-zhi-shi*” (the beginning of action). In the first sense of the “extension of *liang-zhi*,” we can say that there is the emerging of *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* in the internal mind; in the second sense, we can say that there is the flowing of *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* to the external world. If we posit a monism to bridge the gap between the mental and the physical, we can say that the mental act of intending to read is supervenient on some neural event inside human body, and that the action caused by the mental act is supervenient on the physical movement of reading (a physical event with such and such muscle contraction and eye movement, etc).

Wang Yang-ming does recognize that, before humans initiate an action, they originally have *liang-zhi* [to make itself be realized] in their [psychological] mind, and that before its extension, *liang-zhi* is unstable in the sense that it could be present in

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 42, 45, 1294.

consciousness or hidden in sub-consciousness. However, when humans extend their *liang-zhi*, their *liang-zhi* must be in the state of revelation; otherwise, there would be no (inner) power to promote itself, just like a plant cannot grow without a seed. In the sense that A is composite of B, we can say that A and B are united (the first sense of the unity of *zhi* and *xing*).

Xing is not something internal or external (無內外 *wu nei wai*): *xing* as the property of *sheng-sheng*, the essence of mental creativity, is able to be realized in humans' mental acts. By means of the mental acts' causation on humans' intentional actions, *xing* is also able to be realized in the actions.⁴⁸ A mental act or event that does not cause external action remains in a state where the realization of *xing*, *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* is only in an internal act or event (which supervenes on some neural event). Merely to pursue something from this internal domain, according to Wang, is to play with shadows (玩弄光景 *wan-nong guang-jing*).⁴⁹ Nevertheless, if a human's mental power is sufficiently strong, then *liang-zhi* or *xing* is not only able to be realized in a mental act or event, it can also be realized in an intentional action or event (which supervenes on some physical event of bodily movement) caused by the mental act or event. This means that *liang-zhi* or *xing* not only becomes manifest in a mental act or event, it also becomes manifest in an intentional action or event in terms of mental causation. In this sense, we can say that *xing* is neither internal nor external. Because we can say that *liang-zhi* is united with mental practice in that *liang-zhi* is able to be constitutively realized in the mental act of *zhi-liang-zhi* (the first sense of the unity of *zhi* and *xing*), and, in turn, through the causation from the mental act to the intentional action, we can also say that *liang-zhi* is able to be causally realized in the intentional action (the second sense of the unity of *zhi* and *xing*).

Wang Yang-ming does not think that only external behaviors can be understood as practice. In response to one of his disciples stating, "Now, only when one can practice

⁴⁸ Wang Yang-ming mentions that, "Practice is not separated from the original state [of mind]. Originally, the original state [of mind] does not have [the distinction of] internal and external; it is only due to people's later practice that they make this distinction. Thus they cannot grasp the original state. Now, I want to say clearly that practice does not need to have this distinction; this is practice in the original state." 功夫不離本體，本體原無內外。只為後來做功夫的分了內外，失其本體了。如今正要講明功夫不要有內外，乃是本體功夫。(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 92) I think what Wang Yang-ming means here is that real moral practice has to be done both internally and externally. No matter if it is practice in the mental act or practice in intentional action, the original state of mind, i.e., *liang-zhi*, is able to be realized in both activities.

⁴⁹ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 1170, 1279.

filial duty, can one be described as knowing filial duty.” 如今能行孝，方謂之知孝⁵⁰ Wang replies, “Of course, what you say is right. But you need to know that where one intention/idea is activated/moved, this is *zhi*, which is also *xing*.” 爾說固是。但要曉得一念發動處，便是知，便即是行。⁵¹ Based on this statement, we can say that, in addition to the moral practice of external behavior, in the internal domain, what is functioning or revealing in the mental act of an intention/idea is *liang-zhi*, and what is activated or moving in the mental act of intention/idea is *xing*. This is the first sense of the unity of *zhi* and *xing*, and this *xing* is *xing-zhi-shi*. In regard to the external domain, we can say that the successful practice of *ge-wu* enables one to reach the final state of *liang-zhi*. This is evident in the following passage: “When the final state of [*liang*]-*zhi* has been reached, this is *zhi*[-*zhi*-cheng]; to reach [the final state] is to extend [*liang*]-*zhi*. This

⁵⁰ In addition to saying that, “Only when one can practice filial duty, can one be described as knowing filial duty,” Wang Yang-ming also asserts that, “*Xin* can spontaneously know. When seeing one’s father, one spontaneously knows filial duty. 心自然會知，見父自然知孝” (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 6) These two sayings seem to be contradictory but actually they are not. Because, here, knowing is a mental act; it is not *zhi* as such, or what is to be realized in the mental act of knowing. Wang thus says that, “When *xin* is in the state of functioning/issuing, dealing with a father is called being filial. 心之發也，遇父便謂之孝。” (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 2) In other words, *xin* is the dominating power (主宰 *zhu-zai*) (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 34) or master of the mind (頭腦 *tou-nao*). The so-called “knowing” of *xin* or *liang-zhi* is nothing but its realization in the mental acts of knowing and perceiving. For *liang-zhi* itself, its *zhi* is not the mental act of knowing, it is what Wang Yang-ming describes as “dominating” as used in “*zhi-zhou*” (知州 prefectural magistrate) and “*zhi-xian*.” (知縣 district magistrate) (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 5, 43) *Zhi* in terms of “*zhi-zhou*” or “*zhi-xian*” means nothing but master of the mind or dominating power.

⁵¹ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 96, 1172. Here, two points mentioned by Wang Yang-ming seem to contradict each other. The first point is that, “The mind that desires to eat is an intention/idea; this is the beginning of *xing*.” (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 42) The second point is that, “*Zhi* is the beginning of *xing*, and *xing* is the completion of *zhi*.” (知是行之始，行是知之成。) (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 4, 1229) I think that these two statements do not present a real contradiction, because Wang also mentions that, “where there is one intention/idea to activate/move, there is *zhi*, there is also *xing*.” (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 96, 1172) So, when the mental act of desiring to do *xing* (i.e., the beginning of *xing*) happens, it simultaneously reveals the realization of *liang-zhi* in the act (i.e., *zhi*). In this sense, we can say that, “*Zhi* is the beginning of *xing*.” On the other hand, in order to attain full realization of *liang-zhi*, one has to extend *liang-zhi* to one’s behavior by means of *ge-wu*. I think that this is what Wang Yang-ming means by “*xing* is the completion of *zhi*.” Based on these two senses of *xing* and two levels of realization, he can assert without contradiction that, “In only speaking of one *zhi*, there is already *xing* there; in only speaking of one *xing*, there is already *zhi* there. 只說一個知，已自有行在；只說一個行，已自有知在。” (*Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 4) Thus, the apparent conflict between the “temporal difference” of knowing and acting, and the unity of *zhi* and *xing*, can be solved by invoking these two levels of realization.

is the reason why *zhi* and *xing* are united.” 知至者，知也；至之者，致知也。此知行之所以一也。⁵² This passage describes the second sense of the unity of *zhi* and *xing*, and this *zhi* is *zhi-zhi-cheng*.⁵³

Wang Yang-ming challenges Zhu Xi's theory of *zhi* and *xing* and complains that, “To search for *li* outside of *xin* is the reason why *zhi* and *xing* have been treated as two separated things.” 外心以求理，此知行之所以二也。On the basis of this reasoning, Wang asks, “Is [i.e., the *li* of commiseration] really inside the body of a child [seen falling into a well]? Or does it issue from the *liang-zhi* of my mind?” [惻隱之理] 是果在於孺子之身歟？抑果出於吾心之良知歟？⁵⁴ In other words, without the mind's mental causation, the emerging and flowing of *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* cannot be accomplished in action. Without the constitutive realization in the individual mind, there would be no causal realization in actions; and without such causal realization, *liang-zhi* would stay merely in the internal domain and would be unstable, not strong enough to activate actions, and most importantly, it would not be fully presented or revealed.⁵⁵

7. The Idea of *Tian-Cheng*

On the surface, it seems that the human mind has a causal power to make something happen in the world. However, at a deeper level, all events from the perspective of *liang-zhi* are nothing but the emerging or flowing of *tian-li*, i.e., they are ultimately the “creation/production of *tian*” (*tian-cheng* 天成). In other words, from the point of view of human beings, the realization of *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* in external objects and events is imposed or assigned by human beings. However, from the perspective of *tian*, what is

⁵² Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 189, 278, 971, 999.

⁵³ When Wang Yang-ming states that, “In saying that, ‘One may have *zhi* to attain one's goal,’ this refers to *xing*. But, one cannot constantly engage in *xing*, because, in this case, it has been blocked by selfish desires and thus one cannot preserve *ren*.” 說及之已是行了，但不能常常行，已為私欲間斷，便是仁不能守。(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 121)., the first *xing* should be understood as the mental act, while the second *xing* should be understood as the moral action.

⁵⁴ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 43, 45.

⁵⁵ To explain why the realization of *liang-zhi* in the internal domain is unstable, Wang Yang-ming states that, “All human *xings* are good. ...But, ordinary people's minds are sometimes dusky and obscured. Although their mind's original state is still revealed from time to time, in the end it is only sometimes bright and sometimes extinguished. It does not achieve the mind's full state and great function.” 人性皆善。……但常人心之既有所昏蔽，則其本體雖亦時時發見，終是暫明暫滅，非其全體大用矣。(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 23)

realized is actually the functioning of *tian*, though this function can only be materialized by means of the channel of *ling-qiao*, which operates through humans' mental acts on external objects and events. This is the notion of *tian-cheng* that is implicitly embedded in Wang Yang-ming's world-view.

The following two passages can be used to illustrate this point:

In responding to *tian*, the great man tacitly meets what has not yet been done by *tian* and explicitly observes what has been done by *tian*. ... From the point prior to *tian*'s working, when the time has not arrived and *dao* is hidden in a state of non-functioning, *tian* has not yet acted. The great man acts before heaven. He must order something [i.e., what has not yet been done by *tian*] to initiate its commencement, and the desire of his mind implicitly coincides with *dao*. He also accomplishes something to create a beginning, and the action from his intention tacitly meets *dao*. ... From the point posterior to *tian*'s working, when the time has arrived and *li* is exposed in events, *tian* has already acted. The great man observes what *tian* has done. He must try his best to follow *tian*'s mind, and what is originally present in terms of *li* is simply accorded with and not violated. He also uses his knowledge of creation to interpret *tian*'s events, and what should be done in terms of *li* is respected by him without deviation. ... And what he has done is nothing but what has been done by *tian-di*. Therefore, we can say that, "If one follows *li*, one will be united with *tian*."

大人於天，默契其未然者，奉行其已然者。……自其先於天者言之，時之未至，而道隱於無，天未有為也。大人則先天而為之，蓋必經綸以造其端，而心之所欲，暗與道符；裁成以創其始，而意之所為，默與道契。……以其後於天者言之，時之既至，而理顯於有，天已有為也。大人則後天而奉之，蓋必窮神以繼其志，而理之固有者，祇承之而不悖；知化以述其事，而理之當行者，欽若之而不違。……而其所以為之者，莫非天地之所為也；故曰：「循理則與天為一。」⁵⁶

⁵⁶ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 844-885.

However, without my mind, heaven, earth and the myriad things would be without spirituality. If the spirituality of my mind were destroyed, the sound, color, taste and other changes in the universe would almost disappear. Therefore we can say that, "Humans are the *xin* of heaven and earth and the spirituality of the myriad things, which is the determining/dominating power of heaven, earth and the myriad things." Although my mind is deemed the spirituality of heaven, earth and the myriad things, it is not the case that I can make them have spirituality. As one person, my seeing is with such a color; all people in the world with eyes share the same clear color. One person's hearing is with such a sound; all people with ears share the same clear sound. One person's sense is with such a taste, all people with mouths share the same taste. One person's thinking is with such a movement, all people with mental cognition share the same intelligence. ... However, the clear color is not from my eyes, it is seen by *tian*; the clear sound is not from my ears, it is heard by *tian*; the taste is not from my mouth, it is sensed by *tian*. The movement is not from my mental cognition, the intelligence is made by *tian*. Hence, if the eyes see by virtue of *tian*, they can exhaust the clear colors; if the ears hear by virtue of *tian*, they can exhaust the clear sounds; if the mouth senses by virtue of *tian*, all tastes would not be lost; if thinking moves by virtue of *tian*, it can achieve intelligence. This is the creation of *tian*, it is the production of *tian* which is not interfered with by humans. So it is called "heaven's power" (天能 *tian-neng*); it is called the "spirituality" of heaven, earth and the myriad things.⁵⁷

⁵⁷ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 1338. This paragraph appeared in the *Chronological Biography of Wang Yang-ming* (陽明先生年譜 *Yang-ming Xian-sheng Nian-pu*), written by his disciple Qian De-hong 錢德洪, which is included in an essay titled "An Essay on Heaven's Creation (天成篇 *Tian-cheng Pian*)."⁵⁸ Qian De-hong did not indicate the author of the essay in the *Chronological Biography*. However, based on the fact that the *Chronological Biography* was written by Qian, some later Chinese Confucians and Japanese scholars have identified it as having been written by Qian himself in their collections of Qian's writings. But the essays that appeared in the *Chronological Biography*, or that were exhibited in the academies Qian or Wang Ji dedicated to the memory of their teacher, usually declared their authors' name. Why was this essay an exception? (For example, essays written by Qian or Wang for these purposes usually indicated that they were "written by Hong" (洪作) or "written by Ji" (畿作)). Another question is: if this is really Qian's writing, why did Huang Zong-xi 黃宗羲 not put this

然則天地萬物也，非吾心則弗靈矣。吾心之靈毀，則聲、色、味，變化不得而見矣。聲、色、味變化不可見，則天地萬物亦幾乎息矣。故曰：「人者，天地之心，萬物之靈也，所以主宰乎天地萬物者也。」吾心為天地萬物之靈者，非吾能靈之也。吾一人之視，其色若是矣，凡天下之有目者，同是明也；一人之聽，其聲若是矣，凡天下之有耳者，同是聰也；一人之嘗，其味若是矣，凡天下之有口者，同是嗜也；一人之思慮，其變化若是矣，凡天下之有心知者，同是神明也。……然則明非吾之目也，天視之也；聰非吾之耳也，天聽之也；嗜非吾之口也，天嘗之也；變化非吾之心知也，天神明之也。故目以天視，則盡乎明矣；耳以天聽，則竭乎聽乎；口以天嘗，則不爽乎嗜矣；思慮以天動，則通乎神明矣。天作之，天成之，不參以人，是之謂天能，是之謂天地萬物之靈。

In my opinion the idea of *tian-cheng* described in the above passages originated in religious Daoism, and thus it was not a concept created by Wang himself. According to both the philosophy of traditional Chinese medicine and religious Daoism, especially *Nei-dan* Daoism (內丹道家), the external great cosmos and the internal small cosmos were interconnected through the channel of *ling-qiao* or *yuan-shen* (元神 primordial/original spirit) inside the human body. Some *Nei-dan* thinkers believed that the perfect and clear *qiao* (the small intelligent channel) inside the human body was the same as, or similar to, the great *xu* of the universe because both were receptacles of unlimited capacity. This is what Wang Yang-ming means by the statement, “The human mind is the abyss of *tian*.” 人心是天淵⁵⁸ The great religious Daoist, Bai Yu-chan 白玉蟾, thought that *tian-di* and human beings were originally united in an organic whole through the regulation of the circulation of *qi*. He maintained that this was because “the [channel] point of perfectness

important work in the *Academic Records of Ming Confucians* (明儒學案 *Ming-ru Xue-an*)? It seems that Huang was sceptical of the authorship of this piece. I think that one of the reasons he was sceptical is that it contains a strong flavour of the school of *nei-dan*, and Qian thought that it would give the impression that his teacher was influenced by religious Daoism if he openly declared that Wang wrote it. So, although the essay may have been written by Qian, the possibility that Wang Yang-ming was the author of the essay cannot be excluded. Besides, it is obvious that this Daoist idea of heaven's production frequently appeared in the writings of Wang and his disciples, and their thought was significantly influenced by the school of *nei-dan*.

⁵⁸ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, p. 95.

and clearness is the same as the great void.” 一點圓明等太虛 However, after birth people lost sight of this original oneness because, “They have [a posterior] idea that makes up the physical body.” 只因念起結成軀⁵⁹ This is similar to Wang's idea that, “to give rise to ideas from the physical body” (軀殼起念 *qu-ke qi nian*) obstructed people's ability to realize the original state of oneness. When people's minds deviate from the original state of oneness and cannot reveal or assist the realization of *tian-li* in the physical body, they are dominated by selfish ideas and desires that obstruct the unifying state (私欲間／隔斷 *si-yu jian/ge-duan*). For both religious Daoists and Wang Yang-ming, in order to remove such obstructions and make the *qi* circulate in an orderly manner (i.e., with *dao* or *tian-li* realized in the internal and external domains), one has to open up the channel of *ling-qiao*. Only *ling-qiao* can help the human body realize *dao* or *tian-li* and thereby enter the original state of oneness.

Without *ling-qiao*, there is no realization of *dao*, *tian-li* or *liang-zhi* in the internal and external domains, and also no revelation or activation of such realization. Based on this idea, religious Daoists can say that: “There is no other *dao* outside *xin*; there are no other things outside *dao*.” 心外無別道，道外無別物; and “There is nothing outside *xin*.”⁶⁰ Wang Yang-ming's ideas of “*xin ji li*” and “*xin wai wu wu*” were derivative and not originally created by him. Although Wang Yang-ming's ultimate concern is different from that of the religious Daoists, their conceptual frameworks are basically the same. Wang Yang-ming's conceptions of *ling-qiao*, *fa-qiao* or *yuan-ming-qiao* are definitely painted with a Daoist color, and they had never appeared in earlier Confucian writings. Wang Yang-ming's notion of the assimilation of *tai-xu* and *ling-qiao* is also borrowed from the religious Daoists. Most importantly, his concept of “*tian-cheng*” had never been advanced by earlier Confucians. This idea definitely came from the religious Daoists. For example, Li Dao-chun 李道純, another great thinker of religious Daoism, claimed that, “This body is just like a puppet, the dark gate (玄關 [一竅] *xuan-guan* [*yi-qiao*] or 靈關 [一竅] *ling-guan* [*yi-qiao*]) is like a silk string... However, what makes the thing move is the master.” 傀儡比此一身，絲線比玄關，弄傀儡底人比主人公。一身手足舉動，非手足動，是玄關使動；雖是玄關動，卻是主人公使教玄關動。⁶¹ He moreover

⁵⁹ Bai Yu-chan, *Song Bai-zhen-ren Yu-chan Quan-ji* (宋白真人玉蟾全集 *The Complete Works of the Daoist Bai Yu-chan of the Song Dynasty*)(Taipei: The Editorial and Printing Committee of *Song Bai-zhen-ren Yu-chan Quan-ji*, 1976), p. 504.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 415.

⁶¹ Dao-chun Li, *Zhong-he Ji* (中和集 *Collected Essays on the Mean and Harmony*), vol. 2, no. 11, in *Orthodox Daoist Canons* (正統道藏 *Zheng-tong-dao-cang*), vol. 7 (Taipei: Shin Wen Feng Print Co., 1985), p. 201.

identified this master as the original true *xing* (本來真性 *ben-lai zhen-xing*), i.e., *xin* or *dao*. In other words, as real things in an organic whole, all the entities in the universe realize *dao*, *tian-li*, or the true *xing* or *liang-zhi*. Without this realization, all things would not be activated by the functional property of universal spirituality, and thus they would be isolated in a chaotic state and be nothing but dead things. In one sense, we can say that all the real things in the universe are created by *tian* in *tai-xu*. Since the creation of *tian* has to proceed through humans' *ling-qiao* by means of the activities of humans' *ling-qi*, i.e., the mental causation of the human mind and the physical causation of the human body from internal to external, what is thereby created is not done by *tian* directly, but accomplished with the assistance and participation of humans. In this sense, we can say that creation at the deep or profound level is *wu-wei er cheng* (無為而成 production without doing),⁶² while at the surface level it is *ren-wei er zuo* (人為而作 production through artifice). What is done by *tian* is nothing but the realization of its functional property of universal spirituality; what is produced by human beings is nothing but the human mind's mental causation, and, simultaneously, the human body's *qi*-causation.⁶³

⁶² Wang Yang-ming describes this production without doing as follows: "What is issued from the original state of *xin* is done without intention. This is as it is." 出乎心體，非有所為而為之者，自然也。(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, pp. 190-191); "Liang-zhi produces without doing." 良知無為而成(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 1361); and "the [original state of] mind does not activate and produce; ... its movement [in thinking, feeling, etc.] is based on *tian*." 心無起無作，……動以天也(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 1363)

⁶³ This dual causation can be understood as two aspects of the same process. The following quotations can help us understand the relationship between these two aspects:

- (1) "*Jing* and *shen* are able to flow and connect together. *Zhi* and *qi* are able to penetrate and reach out.... *yuan-qi* is able to fill up and go around. The blood vessel is able to circulate thoroughly." 精神流貫，志氣通達。……元氣充周，血脈條暢 (Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 55)
- (2) "The *jing* of *jing-yi* is understood in terms of *li*. The *jing* of *jing-shen* is understood in terms of *qi*. *Li* is the order of *qi* and *qi* is the function of *li*. Without order there cannot be function and without function there would be no way to discern such order." 精一之精以理言，精神之精以氣言。理者氣之條理，氣者理之運用。無條理則不能運用，無運用則亦無以見其所謂條理者矣。(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 62)
- (3) "As regards *liang-zhi*, it is a single entity, but its mystic function can be called '*shen*,' its flowing can be called '*qi*,' and its consolidated state can be called '*jing*.'" 夫良知一也，以其妙用而言謂之神，以其流行而言謂之氣，以其凝聚而言謂之精。(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 62)
- (4) "*Liang-zhi* is the *jing-ling* of creation. These *jing-lings* create *tian* and *di*, and produce ghosts and kings. Everything issues forth from these. It is really without parallel among things. If humans can revive it completely without loss, then they would dance unconsciously with their hands and feet. I do not know of any other happiness that could replace this one." 良知是造化的精靈，這些精靈，生天生地，成鬼成帝，皆從此出，真是與物無對。人若復得他完完全全，無少虧欠，自不覺手舞

Employing both perspectives, we can achieve an organic view of the universe in which the non-doing of *tian*'s movement and the doing of humans' production (天動與人為 *tian-dong yu ren-wei*) can be combined together without conflict or contradiction. Thus, Wang Yang-ming asserts that, "[All the things in the universe are] not the same, but there is a reason they are made in the same way. In regard to things, no matter whether they are big or small, long or short, or in different situations, *tian* creates them in the same way." 不一，所以一之也。天之於物也，巨微修於之殊位，而生成之，一也。He also states, "It does not exist but has never not existed. Hence people's seeing, hearing, speaking and moving cannot cease according with *tian*'s regularity even though they want to stop. It exists but has never existed. Hence *tian*'s regularity is bright yet invisible; people want to follow but have no way to do so." 無而未嘗無，故視聽言動於天則，欲罷而不能。有而未嘗有，故天則穆然，無方無體，欲從而未由。This relates Wang Yang-ming's idea that, "The human mind and *tian-di* are united in oneness; all things above and below flow together in the same stream as *tian-di*." 人心與天地一體，上下與天地同流。⁶⁴ This view is shared by the Nei-dan Daoists and Wang Yang-ming.⁶⁵

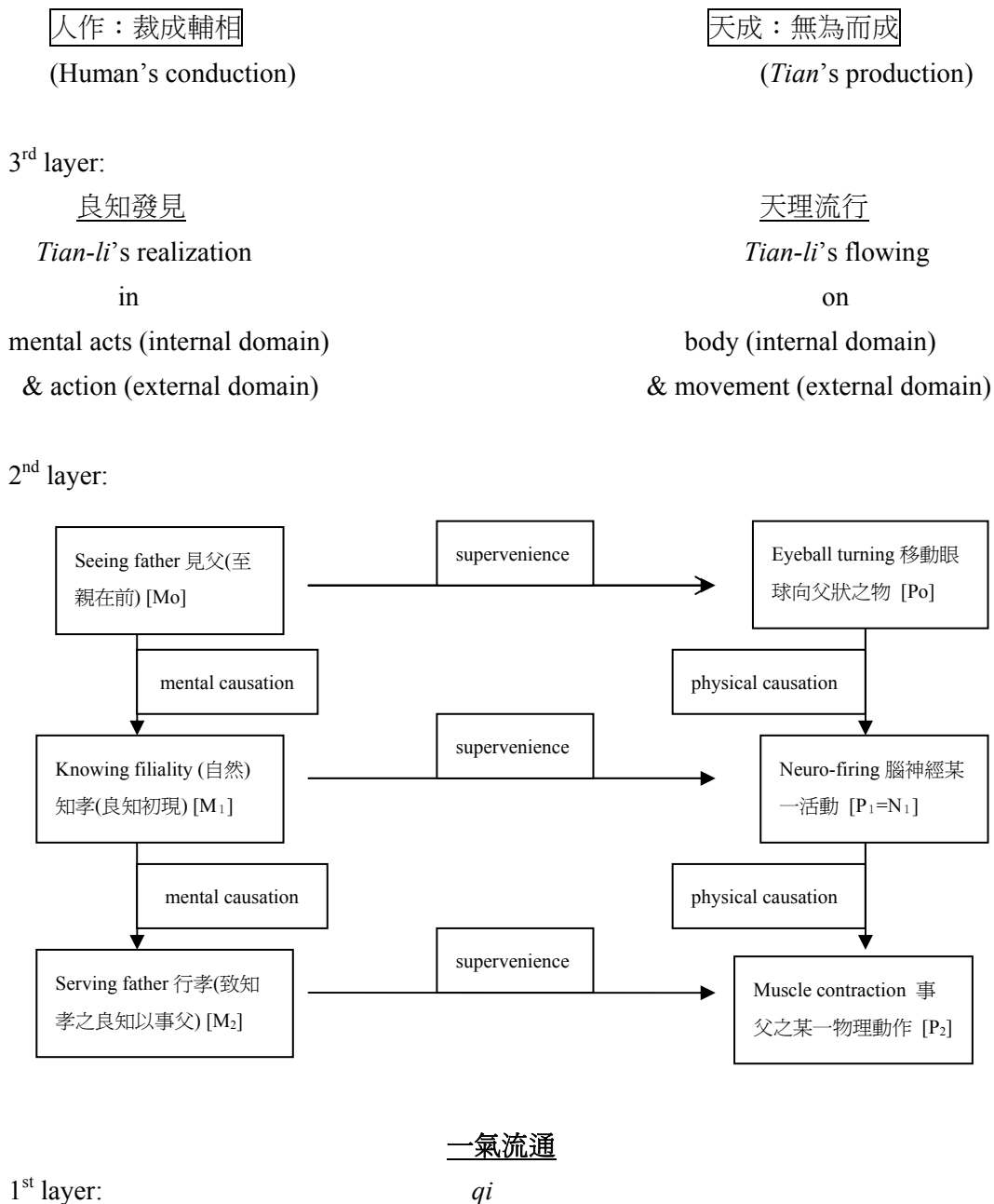
足蹈，不知天地閒更有何樂可代。(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 104)

- (5) "The *sheng-sheng* of *tai-ji* is the *sheng-sheng* of *yin-yang*. In regard to the content of its *sheng-sheng*, its ceaseless mystic function is called 'movement/activity' and 'the *sheng* of *yang*.' It is not called 'creating *yang* after movement.' In regard to the content of *sheng-sheng*, its changeless constant state is referred to as 'quiescence/tranquility' and 'the *sheng* of *yin*.' It is not called 'creating *yin* after quiescence.' If it is really the case that *yin* is created after quiescence and that *yang* is created after movement, then *yin* and *yang*, movement and quiescence would become two distinct things. [In fact] *yin* and *yang* are one *qi*. The expansion and contraction of one *qi* is *yin* and *yang*. Movement and quiescence are [based on] one *li*. This *li* remains hidden or becomes manifest and thereby produces movement and quiescence." 太極之生生，即陰陽之生生。就其生生之中，指其妙用無息者而謂之動，謂之陽之生，非謂動而後生陽也；就其生生之中，指其常體不易者而謂之靜，謂之陰之生，非謂靜而後生陰也。若果靜而後生陰，動而後生陽，則是陰陽動靜，截然各自為一物矣。陰陽一氣也，一氣屈伸而為陰陽；動靜一理也，一理隱顯而為動靜。(Wang Yang-ming *Quan-ji*, p. 64)

⁶⁴ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 106, 232, 680, 1347.

⁶⁵ The first draft of this paper was presented at the 83rd Annual Meeting of the American Philosophical Association, Pacific Division [APA Panel, April 8 - 12, 2009, Westin Bayshore, Vancouver].

Appendix 1: Diagram 1(天成人作圖一)



Explanation of Diagram 1:

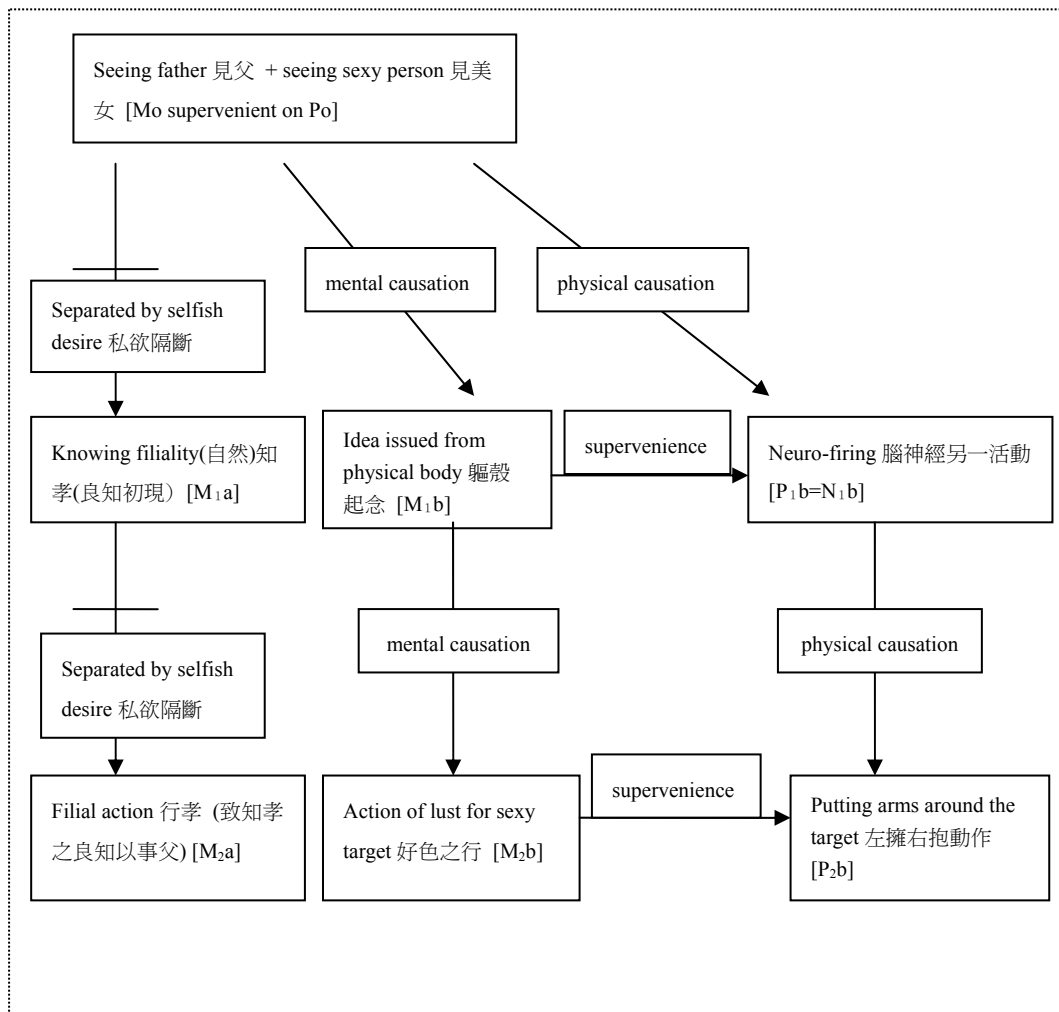
The perception of seeing one's father (見父) (Mo), which is supervenient on a

physiological reaction in the brain (P_o), mentally causes the mental act of knowing filial love (知孝：一念之發動處) (M_1) which, in turn, is supervenient on a neural state ($P_1=N_1$). At the mental level, there is a mental causation from M_o to M_1 , while, at the physiological level, the causation from P_o to P_1 is physical. This is causation of the internal. The mental causation from M_1 to M_2 (filial action 行孝：致知在格物) is supervenient on the physical causation from P_1 to P_2 . This represents the causation from internal to external.

Appendix 2: Diagram2 (天成人作圖二)

私欲間斷

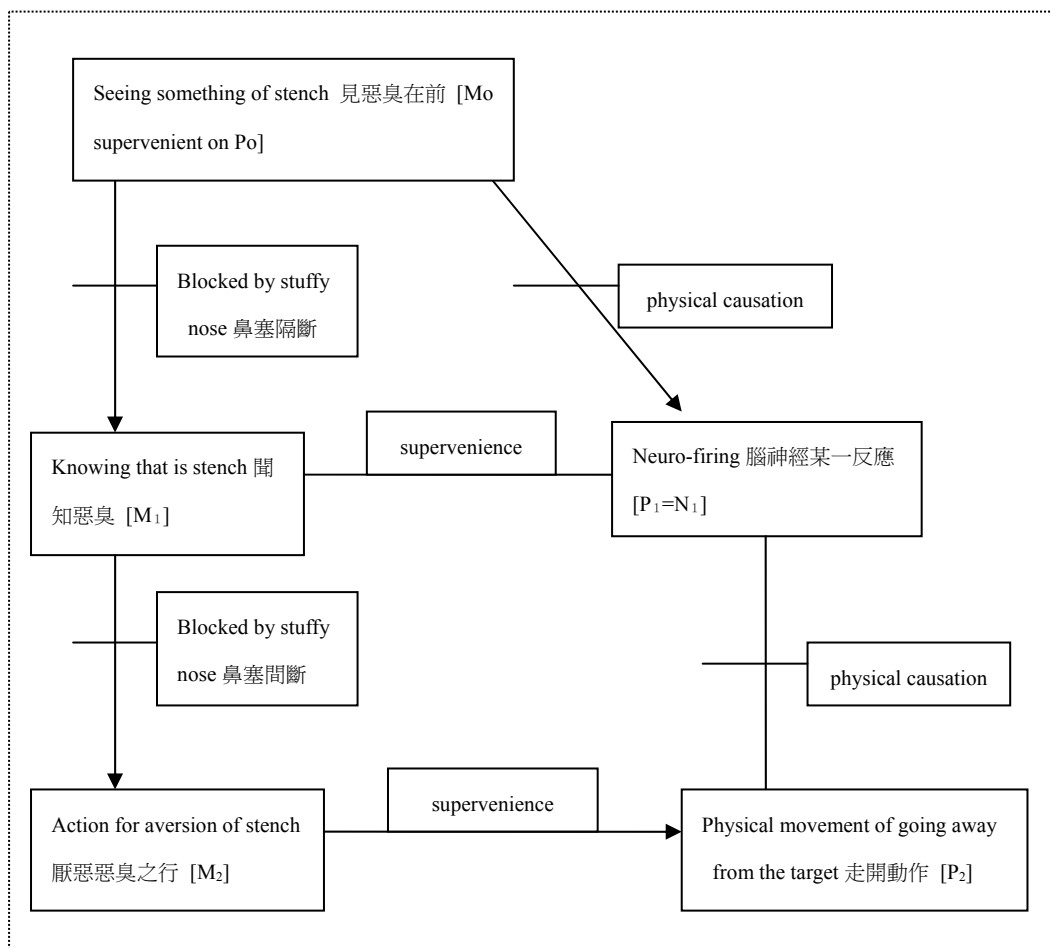
No Realization of *Liang-zhi* or *Tian-li*



Appendix 3: Diagram3 (天成人作圖三)

鼻塞人之例

(Person with a stuffy nose)



Text Reference for the Diagrams 2 and 3:

[Xu] I [Oi] said, “For example, there are people who know that parents should be served with filial piety and elder brothers with respect but cannot put these things into practice. This shows that knowledge and action are clearly two different things.” The teacher said, “The knowledge and action you refer to are separated by selfish desires and are no longer knowledge and action in their original substance. There have never been people who know but do not act.

Those who are supposed to know but do not act simply do not yet know. When sages and worthies taught people about knowledge and action, it is precisely because they wanted them to restore the original substance, and not simply to do this or that and be satisfied. Therefore the *Great Learning* points to true knowledge and action for people to see, saying, they are 'like loving beautiful colors and hating bad odors.' Seeing beautiful colors appertains to knowledge, while loving beautiful colors appertains to action. However, as soon as one sees that beautiful color, he has already loved it. It is not that he sees it first and then makes up his mind to love it. Smelling a bad odor appertains to knowledge, while hating a bad odor appertains to action. However, as soon as one smells a bad odor, he has already hated it. A person with his nose stuffed up does not smell the bad odor even if he sees a malodorous object before him, and so he does not hate it. This amounts to not knowing bad odor. Suppose we say that so-and-so knows filial piety and so-and-so knows brotherly respect before they can be said to know them. It will not do to say that they know filial piety and brotherly respect simply because they know them in words. Or take one's knowledge of pain. Only after one has experienced pain can one know pain. The same is true of cold and hunger. How can knowledge and action be separated? This is the original substance of knowledge and action, which have not been separated by selfish desires. In teaching people, the sage insisted that only this can be called knowledge. Otherwise, this is not yet knowledge. This is serious and practical business."

[徐] 愛曰：「如今人盡有知得父當孝、兄當弟者，卻不能孝、不能弟，便是知與行分明是兩件。」先生曰：「此已被私慾隔斷，不是知行的本體了。[天成人作圖二與三] 未有知而不行者，知而不行，只是未知。聖賢教人知行，正是安復那本體，不是著你只恁的便罷。故《大學》指個真知行與人看，說『如好好色，如惡惡臭』。見好色屬知，好好色屬行，只見那好色時已自好了，不是見了後又立個心去好。聞惡臭屬知，惡惡臭屬行，只聞那惡臭時已自惡了，不是聞了後別立個心去惡。如鼻塞人，雖見惡臭在前，鼻中不曾聞得，便亦不甚惡，亦只是不曾知臭。就如稱某人知孝、某人知弟，必是其人已曾行孝行弟，方可稱他知孝知

弟，不成只是曉得說些孝弟的話，便可稱為知孝弟。又如知痛，必已自痛了方知痛；知寒，必已自寒了；知饑，必已自饑了。知行如何分得開？此便是知行的本體，不曾有私意隔斷的。聖人教人，必要是如此，方可謂之知，不然，只是不曾知。此卻是何等緊切著實的工夫！」⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Wang Yang-ming, *Wang Yang-ming Quan-ji*, pp. 3-4. Translation is from Wing-tsit Chan, *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy*, pp. 668-669

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王陽明的良知理論：王陽明哲學新詮

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摘 要

「良知」是王陽明哲學中的一個至為重要的概念，但歷來對此一概念之解說紛紜，且缺乏善解。要給王陽明的良知說一個融貫而完備的解釋，筆者認為必須擺脫心靈主義的進路，不管是超越主義或非超越主義的類型。筆者嘗試展示良知說背後一深層結構，並論證良知不能只描述為非經驗的或非感性的，更重要的是不能被界定為任何種類的知識和認知能力、覺悟和體悟能力，或智的直覺和神秘感受等。究其實，「良知」並不是一知性概念。將之理解為一種知性的機能或心靈能力，將會遠離王陽明哲學列車的軌道。

基於文本上的證據，筆者嘗試以一個三層二域的架構，對文本中所有看似弔詭、反常及不可理解的王陽明觀點提出一融貫而合理的解釋。例如他說的「無知而無不知」，「性即氣」，及「心外無理」都可理解為「構成體現」；而「草木瓦石也有良知」，「心外無物」及「心外無事」都可理解為「因果體現」。此外，王陽明之所以認為人心之作用於外在世界不能無氣，亦可理解為心靈活動或心靈事件是「隨附於」物理活動或物理事件之上的。至於「知行合一」的問題，我認為亦可以用「體現」和「隨附」這一雙概念來加以說明。

關鍵詞：良知，靈竅，天成，性即氣，心外無物／事，知行合一

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