

Introduction

It is often asked what Chinese metaphysics is in Chinese philosophy. To answer this question, one has to beware of the Greek connotations of the term *metaphysics*. The Greek idea is that there is a world of study beyond physics. Perhaps the Chinese philosophical distinction in the *Great Appendix* (系辞, *Xici*) of the *Yijing* (易经) between what is below form (形而下) and what is the above form (形而上) could reflect the Greek idea of metaphysics versus physics. However, this reflection cannot be taken too seriously or too exactly. The relationship between the metaphysical and the physical in the Greek tradition assumes an ontological difference and duality, whereas the Chinese distinction between above form, which is called the *dao* (道, the way), and below form, which is called the *qi* (气, the vital force), does not necessarily imply dualism or separation. On the contrary, the distinction in the Chinese traditions suggests mutual identity and interpenetration.

However, we can still talk about Chinese metaphysics in both Greek and Chinese senses because we can recognize a world of being and reality that is not a matter of change and transformation and a world of changing reality and changing appearance that is not a matter of being and reality. This is the philosophy that the *Yijing* presents to our understanding. Thus, it is interesting and important to see how metaphysical views in the Western tradition could contrast with the Chinese metaphysical view of the *Yijing*.

The differences between the two suggest profound understanding on the part of both traditions regarding life and cultural experiences. Philosophically, it can be said that the Greek sees ontology as prior to or independent of cosmology, whereas the Chinese sees ontology as inseparable and inherent in cosmology. In this light, the Western philosophy tradition as derived from the Greek, and also perhaps the Jewish

culture, can be said to seek permanent being as reality and truth on the one hand. The Chinese philosophy, on the other hand, takes change and transformation as ultimate reality and truth. This of course bespeaks of the uniqueness and essential importance of *Yijing* and its philosophy.

Given the above understanding, it is clearly important to explore how Chinese philosophy gives rise to the philosophy of *Yijing* and how its onto-cosmology (the unity of being and change) differentiates from the ontological characteristics of the Western philosophical thinking. This also means the Western approach would form a strong background against which *Yijing* philosophy stands out and presents a new perspective of understanding ultimate reality. For this purpose, I have collected eight essays of my comparative studies between some Western approaches and the *Yijing* approach or the general Chinese philosophical approach. I have concluded that the *Yijing* onto-cosmology would often provide a better solution to ontological issues in philosophy because it can be seen as being closer to what we really experience as reality. In the following I summarize each essay in order.

In chapter 1, I investigate the question of origins of Chinese philosophy and suggest that Chinese philosophy begins with observation and reflection of birth, change, formation, and transformation of things in the universe; and that leads to development of a cosmology of change with a system of symbols that have been used for divination. I mentioned three factors to do with the beginning of a philosophy tradition. Each represents recognition of unity of actual being and the becoming of the being, and the importance of non-being of what has become from being. We see early Chinese texts indicate an intrinsic reverence for heaven and ancestral spirits that provide the source of meaning for ethical, social, and political life of the Chinese people. These involve ideas of *li* (礼, propriety), *shen* (神, spirit), *de* (德, virtue), and *shangdi* (上帝 the Lord/source on high), which on analysis arises from non-being to being in the becoming of human being. Second, there are reflections on the dialectical and bipolar onto-cosmological elements in reality that provide the backbone for a methodology implicitly guiding and conditioning the way of perception and thinking in Chinese philosophy. These are seen, for example, in the accounts of the relationship between yin and yang. Finally, there is also a timely awakening to potentiality and creativity of the human subject, which provides the basis for a cosmic naturalism and an intrinsic humanism, whether collective or individual, and whether political or moral.

As a result of the political breakup of the central kingdom of the Zhou (周), there arose the humanism (in the form of Confucianism) and naturalism (in the form of Daoism) that could be said to issue from the philosophy of change that was formed at the beginning of Zhou. After a philosophy of Yi (阴阳家), Confucianism (儒家, *rujia*), and Daoism (道家, *daoja*), subsequently, several other important schools arise in the Chunqiu period (春秋时代), including Moism (墨家, *mojia*), Legalism (法家, *fajia*), and Logicism (名家, *mingjia*).

The second chapter concerns the question of reality and divinity in Chinese philosophy. Reality and divinity are first addressed in the *Yizhuan* 易传, which is the commentary to the divinatory text of the *Yijing*. There onto-cosmology is discussed in terms of *taiji* 太极 and *dao* 道. The appearance/reality distinction is denied in this text, because *taiji* is presented as a source that is not a changeless being behind the myriad events. Instead, it is the totality, or organic unity, of changes that continuously unfold in the world. In this sense, changes and the constant and continuous regeneration of things in reality are what reality is made of. The *dao* is how things come into being and how they grow and develop in a process of time.

Yijing metaphysics is reconsidered as cosmogony and cosmography, and *yin-yang* theory is expanded to explain a field of multi-interactive harmony. Consequently, the *Yizhuan*'s view on reality argues for reality as a recursive but limitless regenerativity, not like a circle, but like a spiral.

On this basis a critical comparison of Daoist and *Yizhuan* notions of *Dao* is presented. Daoistic understanding of this key concept includes 1. *Dao* is essentially immanent, even though displaying facets of transcendence-within-immanence; 2. *Dao* is equated with *wu* 无 and *xu* 虚 ("non-being" and "void," respectively); that is, it is indescribable and non-substantial. On this point, *Dao* incorporates being and non-being (有 *you* and 无 *wu*); 3. The first principle of the *dao* is reversion and return (反 *fan* and 复 *fu*); 4. People can embody the *dao*. On the basis of these four points, it is indicated how the Daoist philosophy of *wu* contrasts with the *Yizhuan* critical realism, which emphasizes the importance of both *wu* and *you* and their interaction in the form of the *yin-yang*. Besides, whereas Daoism tends to deemphasize the role of humans in creative reality, *Yizhuan* underscores the creativity of cultivation in human action and knowledge. It is further pointed out that the onto-cosmology of the *Dao* is different from the theo-ontological metaphysics that is promoted within mainline philosophical and religious accounts in Western philosophy contexts.

Chapter 3 raises three questions. First, is there a different formulation or understanding of humanism that might moderate its human-centeredness? Second, are there criteria according to which things in nature and in the human world can be equally and properly treated, based on considerations of the world of nature and humanity together rather than merely on considerations of a single human being or on the human world alone? Finally, if any such criteria exist, how might a human apply such criteria so that he or she might act morally within the world of nature and develop an ethical attitude or habit that would preserve such criteria?

In response to these three questions, two types of humanism are distinguished. One is “exclusive humanism,” which exalts the human species, placing it in a position of domination over the universe, and another is “inclusive humanism,” which stresses coordination between powers of nature and humanity. Confucianism is a form of “inclusive humanism.” Even though the *Analects* (论语 *Lunyu*) appears to consist primarily of virtue ethics and its political application, one cannot ignore the broad underlying onto-cosmological discourse of the *Zhouyi* 周易, *Yizhuan* 易传, *Mencius* (孟子 *Mengzi*), and *Zhongyong* 中庸 that gives vitality and spirit to the values and ideals of classical Confucianism.

This view of Confucianism can be seen in the quintessential triadic interactions of heaven, humans, and earth, the foundation of ethical principles. In light of this, human beings can carry out their activities in a way similar to the onto-cosmological activities of heaven and earth. In this way, an ecological ethics can be constructed. This is done not through striving to dominate or exploit one’s environment, but through recognizing the interrelations of all elements of the cosmos. This chapter closes with the account of the distinctions in the approach to environment and nature found in mainline Confucian and Daoist traditions, on the one hand, and between contemporary Confucian and modern technological discourses, on the other.

Chapter 4 addresses the issue of Integrative Pluralism of Religions, which embodies *Yijing*, Whitehead, and Cobb. First of all, three forms of religious pluralism are distinguished. The first form is differential pluralism, which recognizes the difference between all existing religions or even future religions. The second form is complementary pluralism (attributed to Cobb and Griffin), which sees all existing religions or future religions as complementary forms of religious practice or believing. The third form, then, is integrative pluralism, which is intent on showing that all

religions are to be regarded as integral parts of a holistic developmental process of humanity and its understanding of the world. This integrative form of pluralism is important because it would provide a philosophical basis for harmonizing different religious worldviews while also offering an open and creative vision for relating their differences to a creative whole for mutual learning and growth. The third option is advanced to avoid relativism while preserving uniqueness, for the other two forms seem to be confronted with the problem of relativism.

The primary model of integrative pluralism comes by way of Whitehead's philosophy of process and creativity, and the *Yijing's* onto-cosmological framework of the great ultimate (太极 *taiji*), the principle of creativity (生生 *shengsheng*), *dao* (道 the way), *yi* (易 change), and the opposite of feminine and masculine (阴阳 *yin-yang*).

With this model, Whitehead's notion of God is onto-hermeneutically reinterpreted in terms of *taiji* and *yin-yang*. Indeed, this discussion as a whole draws heavily upon metaphysical onto-cosmology and creativity as a justification and source for onto-hermeneutic reinterpretation of religious thought into novel terms, which are extended, enriched, reevaluated, and expanded outside of their original, intra-systemic, contextual meanings.

In the history of Chinese thought, many models can be found for integrative religious pluralism. Even Confucius himself advocates a principle of "harmony and difference at the same time." It can be therefore claimed that genuine harmony requires a creative unity to bind all different parts into oneness. Then we have to say that each part would have to contribute to the maintaining of the central harmony as its universal principle and value. In this case, one can have both plurality and unity, existing in the form of unity in plurality and plurality in unity.

This notion of the harmony of complementary differences further leads into the idea of ontological interdependence, found in both Whitehead's ontological principle of relativity and *Yijing's* system of hexagrams as displayed in their interconnectivity. A distinction is then made between an ontologically creative (non-personal) god and an ethical (personal) god. It is maintained that all religions share in the ideals of a primordial creator or onto-creativity, but they differ in their depictions of salvation and ethical ideals attributed to a personal god. As a consequence, there is a means for interrelating religions on a common onto-cosmological ground, while yet recognizing its ethical plurality.

In chapter 5, I am especially concerned with Robert Neville's understanding of Chinese philosophy. There are three areas of his contri-

butions: the area of ontological creativity, the area of systematic creativity, and the area of creativity in the cultivation of the human person and human society. The way Neville develops his philosophy is perhaps best understood in light of an underlying system of the *Yijing*. To support this claim, five points are made. First of all, Neville's concern with the argument of *creatio ex nihilo* is implicitly presented in the *Zhouyi* 周易, where the "Active Originator" (乾元 *Qianyuan*) is the beginner, creator, and ruler of the ten thousand things. Second, we must see the symbolism of *Qian* (乾, active and strong) and *Kun* (坤, receptive and soft) as limiting archetypal symbols abstracted from all creative relationships and thus applicable to all creative relationships. Next, the primary cosmology of the *yi* (易, transformative) as explained in terms of the great ultimate is no doubt a demonstration of the process of cosmological differentiation and the ramification with its implicit order derived from the ontological creativity. Subsequently, in the *Yizhuan* one can see a framework of thinking that integrates reality and values in a single onto-cosmology of creativity. Finally, the *Yizhuan* philosophy of change could also be understood as a "theorizing of theories," as Neville describes it.

On the basis of these insights, a thoroughgoing comparison of Confucian and Christian traditions is presented, highlighting the normative and regulative roles that propriety expresses as experienced through ritual practices.

In chapter 6, I come to deal the concept of *shi* (time) in Chinese philosophy. Because change and transformation always involve a process of becoming in time, it is important to recognize time as a basic cornerstone of onto-cosmology of the *Yijing* in particular and in Chinese philosophy in general. I began with alternative accounts of time as it is worked out in three phases of cultural development in the European West. In Greek philosophy, time has been concocted as appearance but not as reality. The truth and the real have been construed in terms of the timeless or eternal; truth has been particularly conceived as being time-transcendent since its emergence in Platonic philosophy in the fifth century BCE. With Aristotle, time was given a further teleological dimension. This "transcendent-teleological theory of time" was played out through the Medieval Age and eventually came to culminate in the European enlightenment from which two divergent notions of time arose: the objective scientific theory à la Newton and the Kantian transcendental philosophy of time as a necessary form of intuition of mind. This comprises the second phase of Western philosophy with regard to time.

Within Heidegger's writings one finds a third phase of Western philosophy. According to Heidegger, time is neither a transcendental condition, nor an objective entity, nor a natural state of motion or movement of objects, but instead a sense of care and anxiety with regard to the pure possibilities of human existence. Heidegger's account, however, with its emphasis on the human existence, is still essentially subjectivistic.

Against this philosophical background, it is proposed that we move toward an account of the intersubjectivity and interobjectivity of time, not just the subjectivity of time or just the objectivity of time, no matter how sophisticated each may appear. The total integration of time in terms of human existence and in terms of an enlarged unity of man and the world would be the next important task for our enterprise of understanding time. This is where Yi-philosophy comes in as totalistic and configurational theory of time as change. Change is the unifying thread or core concept throughout this discussion. *Taiji* and *dao*, for example, are explained as two sides of change. Moreover, time is here equated with change, and itself is explained in terms of *taiji* and *dao*. It is recognized that people participate in change, being affected by it as well as initiating it, and thus it is argued that people similarly participate in time. With regard to human activity, time is considered as timeliness (*shizhong* 时中 or simply as *shi* 时 in the sense of timing), or timely activity, which is a characteristic of *ren* (仁, benevolence), and so is an aspect of moral activity in Confucianism.

In chapter 7, we are confronting the "Hierarchical Theory of Time with Reference to the Chinese Philosophy of *Dao* and *Qi* (气, vital force)." It is argued that time must be times or concrete processes and events whose beginnings and endings must be concretized, where each beginning can be further considered an ending and vice versa. Furthermore, an event or a process constitutes a whole and is based on a whole entity or a nexus of related entities. Time is necessarily embodied in a structured and many-leveled hierarchy of motions and changes, which are reflected in the integration and disintegration of the individual whole and related things.

Consequently, this chapter argues for a "hierarchical theory of time," which is a comprehensive notion of time in general conceived as composed of sequential stages or levels, nested in concrete occurrences of events. This theory is based on the onto-cosmological principles and considerations of harmony and change, as well as the creative interaction of opposites and polarities. Apart from explicit references to the *Yijing*,

various relevant concepts of *dao*, *qi*, and *yin-yang* can be drawn from Daoist and Neo-Confucian sources.

The last chapter analyzes Leibniz's notion of a universal characteristic and symbolic realism in the *Yijing*. Leibniz has argued for improvements of science based on reason, which means that we can reason to truths by way of using a good system of symbols, which he calls characteristic symbols (CS). An essential requirement for such symbols is that they correspond to precise concepts that allow demonstration and demonstrative certainty. His study of mathematical analysis enabled him to believe in a universal calculus or general analysis of human ideas, which is to be founded on two principles: the principle of contradiction and the principle of sufficient reason. However, I propose to have two kinds of systems of characteristic symbols: one is used for inferential and analytical purposes, the other for interpretative and decision-making purposes. The former would provide a system of preestablished principles or axioms of consistency, whereas the latter would suggest or invite us to recognize a system of post-established norms or actions of harmonization. We can therefore move from a universe defined by a closely set rationality to a universe opened up by a dialectical rationality, which is adaptive to an ever-developing universe. We can even come to a better appreciation of onto-cosmology, like the one proposed in the Neo-Confucian Zhou Dunyi's 周敦颐 *Taiji Tushuo* (太极图说 Explanations of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate). This becomes particularly attractive once we take into account both the strength and limitations of Leibniz's metaphysics of God and the contingent truths in his *Monadology*.

Apart from the chapters, this book also includes an appendix that considers some important ways related to the main themes of this book as introduced above. In the appendix I provide a short but significant comparison between Greek and Chinese philosophical views of time and timeless. In the Greek view, time is represented as images and appearances as distinguishable from the timeless as forms and numbers in a transcendent relationship between the two (the timeless transcending time). In the Chinese view on the contrary, time has no such transcendence. Time is exemplified in the notions of change and transformation in terms of *dao* 道 and *qi* 气. If one can speak of transcendence of time at all, it is only to mean to identify oneself with the source of change or the power of change. This notion is then extended and expanded to explain the notions of immortality in Daoism and Confucianism.

In conclusion, this book has introduced many important issues and concepts that I believe are worth being elaborated so that it may continue to deepen our understanding of Chinese and Western traditions of metaphysics. Theoretically speaking, this comparative study would conduce to an important recognition of the distinction between a theory of being namely ontology and a theory of being-becoming namely onto-cosmology, the former belonging to the Western and the latter belonging to the Chinese. The future is to see how ontology and onto-cosmology can be integrated such that being must always involve becoming and thus ontology has to be understood in contexts of cosmology. Finally, the studies in this book presuppose an understanding of the philosophy of the *Yijing* as initially presented in my first book, titled *The Primary Way: Philosophy of Yijing*.