

清代思想的异调：王船山政治哲学再探

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摘要：近代以来人们对于船山的理解，往往受到两个前见的影响：一是重视船山的民族论，将之作为排满革命的理论宣传；一是将船山看作启蒙的思想家。特别是后者，即启蒙的论调一直是中国明末至清代思想史的一个主流论调。但我们稽诸《船山全书》，并不能发现很多真正的“启蒙”思想；反而，在这样一个准启蒙的思想潮流中，船山显得不免“反动”。阳明后学与清代考据学，虽然形态不同，乃至相互对立，但他们都是传统等差结构的消解者；而船山恰恰是这样一个结构的维护者。船山的人性论、伦理学，都是基于此而展开的。

关键词：日生日成 蠲等 政治哲学 王船山 清代思想

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DOI:10.16349/j.cnki.52-5035/c.2016.04.010

一、近代以来诠释船山的脉络 [见英文版第91页，下同]

清末人们对于船山学，特别是对其政治思想的理解，往往受到谭嗣同的影响。比如梁启超说：“我读船山书，都是壮飞教我。”^①谭嗣同如是评价船山：

君统盛而唐虞后无可观之政矣，孔教亡而三代下无可读之书矣！乃若区玉检于尘编，拾火齐于瓦砾，以冀万一有当于孔教者，则黄梨洲《明夷待访录》，其庶几乎！其次，为王船山之遗书。皆于君民之际有隐恫焉。黄出于陆、王，陆、王将纘庄之彷彿。王出于周、张，周、张亦缀孟子之坠遗。辄有一二闻于孔之徒，非偶然也。若夫与黄、王齐称，而名实相反，得失背驰者，则为顾炎武。顾出于程、朱，程、朱则荀学之云初也；君统而已，岂足骂哉！^②

谭氏将船山的思想与黄宗羲《明夷待访录》并列，同时贬低顾炎武。他判断的标准即是民权思想。又如他谓：“唐虞以后，无可观之政，三代以下，无可读之书。更以论国初三大儒，惟国初船山先生，纯是兴民权之微旨；次则黄梨洲《明夷待访录》，亦具此义；顾亭林之学，殆无足观。”^③船山有哪些

① 梁启超：《中国近三百年学术史》，上海：三联书店，2006年，第75页。

② 谭嗣同：《仁学》，《谭嗣同全集》，北京：三联书店，1954年，第56页。

③ 谭嗣同：《上欧阳瓣菴师书》，《谭嗣同全集》，第323页。

具体的批判君权、伸张民权的言论呢？谭嗣同并未加以指明或引用。如果考虑到其他学者的归纳，《黄书》《噩梦》《读通鉴论》等集中论述政治问题的书或有涉及疑似“民权”的段落。下面一段即常为人引用：

中国财足自亿也，兵足自强也，智足自名也。不以一人疑天下，不以天下私一人，休养厉精，士佻粟积，取威万方，濯秦愚，刷宋耻，此以保延千祀，博衣弁带、仁育义植之士眈，足以固其族而无忧矣。^①

船山常批评“孤秦”“陋宋”，认为统治者私心太重，这与黄宗羲所谓君主将天下看作“莫大之产业”^②的批评有相似之处。他反对“万方统于一人，利病定于一言”^③的政治形态。这些批评君主专制的言论，在清季受到反清革命家的认同，且更为后来强调平等和民主的革命家所推崇。

与政治思想相关联的，是他的理欲观。比如船山曾说过：

礼虽纯为天理之节文，而必寓于人欲以见；（饮食，货。男女，色。）虽居静而为感通之则，然因乎变合以章其用。（饮食变之用，男女合之用。）唯然，故终不离人而别有天，（礼，天道也，故中庸曰“不可以不知天”。）终不离欲而别有理也。

船山反对将人类欲望加以否定并试图灭弃的做法，与此相应，政治安排需要能满足人民的合理欲望，保障民生。在此基础上，不少研究者将船山的这种理欲观与明后期以来情欲的解放运动联系在一起。在哲学史的构建中，船山常常被与戴震相提并论。然而，情况果真如此吗？

二、理的解构与絜矩之道：清代理欲观之基调^[92]

在哲学史的叙述中，明末以来思想界已经对宋明理学中天理人欲之辨厌倦乃至反动。在社会上，情欲解放运动风行一时；而在思想界，“理在欲中”等对于人欲正视甚至高扬的思潮也越来越盛。可以说，清代思想界的理欲观主要是对于欲的肯定，其中的代表是戴震。

戴震哲学在近代以来可谓之显学，我们此处不欲探究戴震的系统思想，只是考察一下他对于理学批评的思路，及其现实的政治指向。戴震批评理学家对于理的看法是“如有物焉，得于天而具于心”，然真正的理是寓于气之中，即寓于情之中而非独立的：

理也者，情之不爽失也；未有情不得而理得者也……天理云者，言乎自然之分理也。^④

从本体的层面而言，戴震讲“理在气中”是要反对理的独立性和统一性。这与伦理层面的“理在情中”一致。这里的人情，是每一个人的人情，既包括在上者的人情，也包括贩夫走卒的人情，所谓：

“心之所同然始谓之理。谓之义；则未至于同然，存乎其人之意见，非理也，非义也。凡一人以为然，天下万世皆曰‘是不可易也’，此之谓同然。”^⑤如果不能达到同然，而是由某一精英或某类群体执持某一“理”来判事，后果是很严重的：

圣人之道，使天下无不达之情，求遂其欲而天下治。后儒不知情之至于纤微无憾是谓理；

① 王夫之：《黄书》，《船山全书》（十二），长沙：岳麓书社，2011年，第519页。

② 沈善洪主编：《明夷待访录》，《黄宗羲全集》（一），杭州：浙江古籍出版社，2012年，第2页。

③ 王夫之：《尚书引义》，《船山全书》（二），第401页。

④ 戴震：《孟子字义疏证》，《戴震全集》（六），合肥：黄山书社，2010年，第150页。

⑤ 戴震：《孟子字义疏证》，《戴震全集》（六），第151页。

而其所谓理者，同于酷吏之所谓法。酷吏以法杀人，后儒以理杀人。浸浸乎舍法而论理。死矣，更无可救矣。^①

批评宋明儒“以理杀人”，这指责可谓异常严厉，又如他说：

今之治人者，视古贤圣体民之情，遂民之欲，多出于鄙细隐曲，不措诸意，不足为怪；而及其责以理也，不难举旷世之高节，著于义而罪之。尊者以理责卑，长者以理责幼，贵者以理责贱，虽失，谓之顺；卑者、幼者、贱者以理争之，虽得，谓之逆。于是下之人不能以天下之同情、天下所同欲达之于上；上以理责其下，而在下之罪，人人不胜指数。人死于法，犹有怜之者；死于理，其谁怜之！^②

戴震的批评可以归纳为几个要点：第一，不存在独立的、至高为一的理；第二，既然理在事中，是“分理”，则不应当具有宰制性、压迫性；第三，任何人都不能宣称自己独立获得了“全体大用”的理，并执持此理来压制别人。宣称自己获得整全之理的人，他获得的只是“意见”，所谓意见，就是师心自用塑造的话语霸权。在宋明理学那里，天理具有普遍性和必然，因而理在展开自身的时候，就显示出“不得不然”的特色。戴震则认为，既然不存在这种“天理”，则理学家及信奉理学的人们在宣称“天理”的时候，只是假借这种普遍性和必然性来贯彻自己对他人的压迫和宰制。儒学是要维护共同体生活的，那么戴震将统一性的理消解掉之后，又如何保证共同体的统一性呢？他只好求诸“絜矩之道”：

凡有所施于人，反躬而静思之：“人以此施于我，能受之乎？”凡有所责于人，反躬而静思之：“人以此责于我，能尽之乎？”以我絜之人，则理明。天理云者，言乎自然之分理也；自然之分理，以我之情絜人之情，而无不得其平是也。^③

戴震所解读的絜矩之道，是一种在平等基础上建立的交往与对话关系。可以说，对“絜矩”的重视，是清代思想的一个特色。对戴震的《孟子字义疏证》不以为然的钱大昕，在对“絜矩”的重视上亦与戴震一致：

予读《大学》书，与“忠恕”“一以贯之”之旨，何其若合符节也。……天子修其身于上，庶人修其身于下，不敢尊己而卑人，不敢责人而宽己。不以己之所难者强诸人，不以己之所恶者加诸人。……絜矩之道，即修身之道也。由身推之而至于家，由家推之而至于国，由国推之而至于天下。“吾道一以贯之”而已矣，“忠恕”而已矣。^④

钱大昕这种说法，有其现实的指向，这其中或许如牟润孙先生所言，是隐微地批评了乾隆皇帝以理学标榜却不能自我修身，^⑤但这多少带有猜测的成分。可以明确判断的是，钱的说法有针对当时惨苛吏治的用意。戴震对此感受尤为强烈，他正是因为与宗族后辈发生纠纷而被县级司法机关迫害，不得已避走京师^⑥。在戴震的眼中，这些基层的宗族和政治势力压迫民众的时候，不但绳之以酷法，还责之以“天理”。程瑶田虽然维护程朱，对戴震有所批评，但也说：“人之言曰：‘天下止有一理。’余以为此亦一是非，彼亦一是非，乌在其一理也。各是其是，是人各有其理也。安见人之理必是，而我之理

① 戴震：《与某书》，《戴震全集》（六），第479页。

② 戴震：《孟子字义疏证》，《戴震全集》（六），第159页。

③ 戴震：《孟子字义疏证》，《戴震全集》（六），第150页。

④ 钱大昕：《潜研堂文集》，《嘉定钱大昕全集》（九），南京：凤凰出版社，2016年，第45页。

⑤ 牟润孙：《钱大昕著述中论政微言》，《注史斋丛稿》，北京：中华书局，第641-661页。

⑥ 段玉裁《戴东原先生年谱》记载：“先生是年讼其族子豪者侵占祖坟，族豪倚财结交县令，令欲文致先生罪，乃脱身挟策入都，行李衣服无有也，寄旅于歙县会馆。饘粥或不继，而歌声出金石。”（戴震：《戴震全集》（七），第146页。）

必非也？而于是乎必争。”^①戴震的弟子焦循更是引申其师说曰：“格物者，旁通情也。情与情相通，则自不争，所以使无讼者在此而已。听讼者以法，法愈密而争愈起，理愈明而讼愈烦。吾犹人也，谓理不足持也，法不足恃也。旁通以情，此格物之要也。”^②又说：“格物者，絜矩也。絜矩者，恕也。”^③可见絜矩是情的旁通，即忠恕之道，亦即人与人之间由对话建立的判断标准。另外，焦循精于易学，他对《周易》的解释，也以六十四卦之间的旁通、时行等关系来寄托社会中不同群体和阶层的絜矩、通情^④。

清儒对于情的重视，对于理的反，在明代不乏先声，其杰出的代表是李贽。李贽与清儒之间，似乎存在着某种思想上的关联，比如沟口雄三就曾指出“李卓吾的这一辨别，到了戴震才得以体系的展开”。^⑤然而清儒对李贽是持批判态度的，他们的言论也有不同之处。李贽的学说是强调人人可以作圣，有现成的良知和现成的圣人；而清儒则恰恰强调人之不完美性，强调不能躐等。它们又何以成为一致的呢？其实看似相反的言论背后，分享了一种与汉唐儒学乃至程朱理学完全不同的态度，即平等的诉求。阳明后学强调“满街都是圣人”，意味着将下层抬高到与圣人一个层面上；而戴震反对宰制之理，则是把圣贤降低到与庶人一个层面上。

汉唐儒学强调圣、贤、士、庶之间的等差和秩序；宋代理学兴起则是强调在不改变这种等差秩序的前提下，人们在各个等级之间的流动。正如周敦颐提出的“圣希天，贤希圣，士希贤”，^⑥士人可以凭借自己的努力，变化气质，涵养德性，从而达到不同的位阶。但到了阳明后学特别是泰州学派那里，圣贤士庶的等级和秩序本身都已经被打破，庶人即现成的圣人，而不是说通过学习才能渐渐成就。戴震哲学则隐含了这样的想法：现实中的每一个人都有可错性，都不可能是全善的；因此谁也无法单独宣称自己拥有真理去压制其他人。人们对于事情的判断，是在交往的过程中产生的，这种交往又要建立在絜矩，亦即平等对话的基础上。由此可见，阳明后学与戴震哲学，一左一右，在消解古典等差结构的问题上达到了吊诡的统一。

三、生成与等差^[94]

如果我们将以上戴震等人的思路视作清代思想的基调，那么船山显然是与此格格不入的。近代以来的解释将船山放在这一脉络中，难免要对船山的说法进行揉斫。与戴震等相比，船山与理学家的思想更近一些。

船山对于太极图是非常重视的，尽管他的解读未必与朱子全然相同。比如《思问录外篇》前几条皆是在讨论太极图。他是将太极与横渠的太虚相会通，指出“太极虽虚而理气充凝”^⑦，也就是将太极看作理气的统一体。在《周易外传》中，船山还提出过“太极有于易以有易”^⑧的命题；张学智指出，

① 程瑶田：《让室卮言》，《程瑶田全集》（一），黄山：黄山书社，2010年，第97-98页。

② 焦循：《焦循诗文集》，扬州：广陵书社，2009年，第170页。

③ 焦循：《焦循诗文集》，第162页。

④ 陈居渊：《焦循儒学与易学思想研究》，济南：齐鲁书社，2000年，第192页。

⑤ 沟口雄三：《中国前近代思想的演变》，索介然译，北京：中华书局，1997年，第271页。

⑥ 周敦颐：《周敦颐集》，北京：中华书局，1990年，第21页。

⑦ 王夫之：《思问录》，《船山全书》（十二），第430页。

⑧ 谷继明：《王船山周易外传笺疏》，上海：上海人民出版社，2016年，第225页。

这受到了朱子理一分殊的影响。^①这里的太极必然不会仅仅消解为“多”的条理而已。他对于太极的强调，恰恰与戴震“发狂打破宋儒家中《太极图》”^②“自得之义理，非《西铭》《太极》之义理也”^③形成鲜明对照。因为对太极的关注，其实就是对本体之“一”的重视。

当然，船山“理在气中”的说法及其相关联的性情论、理欲论，往往令人感觉与戴震相似。但这种相似只是表面的，需要我们仔细分辨。船山最核心的人性论学说，即“性生日成”说。比如他说：

夫性者，生理也，日生则日成也。则夫天命者，岂但初生之顷命之哉……夫天之生物，其化不息，初生之顷，非无所命也。何以知其有所命？无所命，则仁、义、礼、智无其根也。幼而少，少而壮，壮而老，亦非无所命也。……形日以养，气日以滋，理日以成；方生而受之，一日生而一日受之。受之者有所自授，岂非天哉？故天日命于人，而人日受命于天。故曰：性者生也，日生而日成之也。^④

其《读四书大全说》亦曰：

未死之前统谓之生，刻刻皆生气，刻刻皆生理；虽绵连不绝，不可为端，而细求其生，则无刻不有肇造之朕。若守定初生一日之时刻，说此为生，说此为始，则一受之成型，而终古不易，以形言之，更不须养，以德言之，更不待修矣。^⑤

船山不离开气而论性，气是日赋于人，人之性便日生而日成。易言之，人性呈现为一种动态的结构。这几段论述，对于了解中国哲学史的人来说算是“习闻之论”。但是我们需要进一步思考，其意义究竟在哪里呢？

程朱之人性论，如果不是一种性二元论，那我们至少也能说，他们是在两个角度来探究人性的。纯善之性是天命之性，是理；而后天的恶，则可归咎于气质。就至善之性而言，自涂人以至于尧舜，是一样的；但因为气质之差异，现实中的人仍是有等差的。学者需要通过变化气质和明理，来逐渐达到圣人的境地。阳明学不赞同这种分说，一定要混而一之，即气言性，将理气心性贯通起来。阳明后学一方面同于程朱，认为天命之性是人人皆同的；另一方面又要即气言性，则气也是人人皆同的，于是便会得出“见在圣人”或“满街都是圣人”的结论来。

船山即气言性，这一点与阳明同；但是他立足于气，认为气是时时刻刻灌注与人的，那么人的性，因此也是动态的、生长的，这与朱子学和阳明学以本性为一的看法皆不同。阳明后学强调良知现成，强调“赤子之心”“童心”，这都是一种“本来面目”的思维方式。船山对孟子“赤子之心”的解读则引申了：大人固然不失赤子之心，但仅仅有赤子之心是不够的。他由此批评了两种错误的解释倾向：一是认为赤子之心就是圣人的全部，一是将赤子自然而然、不假安排的啼哭喜笑看作是心。前者类似于老子说的“婴儿”，后者则是以情识和知觉运动来说心。这两者共同结合起来，走向了异端：“若认大人、赤子了无不同，则已早侵入异端界也”，“孟子说个‘赤子之心’，是从天道上见得，不容向一啼、一笑讨消息”。^⑥船山这里只是批评《大全》中朱子学者的解释，以及佛老，但他写作此段时脑海中肯定想着罗汝芳、李贽等人。

① 张学智：《明代哲学史》，北京：中国人民大学出版社，2012年，第545页。

② 段玉裁：《答程易田丈书》，《经韵楼集》，上海：上海古籍出版社，2008年，第184页。

③ 焦循：《申戴》，《焦循诗文集》，第125页。

④ 王夫之：《尚书引义》，《船山全书》（二），第299-300页。

⑤ 王夫之：《读四书大全说》，《船山全书》（六），第753页。

⑥ 王夫之：《读四书大全说》，《船山全书》（六），第1018-1019页。

要言之，阳明学反对朱子学理气二分言性，但因为继承了程朱天地之性本一，故认为气也是一，取消了朱子学通过气质建立的现实中的等差。船山则认为气不断地灌注，性理也随着气而不断生长，从而成全了程朱理学所建立的等差。

需要注意的是，船山讲人性因气的灌注而呈现动态的发展，并不是说会有“恶气”存在，使得人性成为有善有恶者。生而为人事实，已经决定每人所秉的气就是善的。只是这种善的气有生长的强弱、盛衰而已。他常说“气善则理善”，因此他即气言性，同时也即性言气，高扬气的善，把气的道德价值向上提升；与此相对的，戴震即气言性，则从气与情欲相关联的结构中言性，是把性的道德要求向下降。在船山哲学中，人的气时时刻刻与太虚之气发生关联，他要时时刻刻为自己整全的人生负责，为整体的宇宙负责，努力增加太虚中的清气。这种“乾乾夕惕”的工夫，对于人们的道德要求其实是更高了。人不是仅仅知道某些道理就可以了，他还要在气上下工夫：一方面反复锻炼使之中正纯粹，一方面培育滋润使之盛大充沛。这使得船山的哲学与戴震等有根本的不同，是故船山称得上明末至清代思想的异调。

四、教化与秩序^[96]

船山在清代的特异之处，不仅表现在基本的哲学义理上，还表现在他的问题意识和现实关怀上。因为对于人性差等还是平等的看法，与政治上的“教化”还是“絜矩”相关。

戴震坚持理是条理、分理，反对理学家“如有物焉”的说法。但理学家所言之理并非如此浅薄。戴震强调“分”，理学家又何尝不知分理。程颐有“理一分殊”的说法，后来李延平教朱子时说：“吾儒之学，所以异于异端者，理一而分殊也。理不患其不一，所难者分殊耳。”^①可见程朱一脉对于分殊有着极为清醒的认识，只是这个分殊之理，要统一于太极之理。程子说：

《西铭》明理一而分殊，墨氏则二本而无分。（自注：老幼及人，理一也。爱无差等，本二也。）分殊之蔽，私胜而失仁；无分之罪，兼爱而无义。分立而推理一，以止私胜之流，仁之方也。无别而迷兼爱，至于无父之极，义之贼也。^②

笔者曾经指出，理一分殊表达了理学家的政治设计：“理一”的意义在于强调士人不断学习明彻先王之道，并且有整个天下乃至宇宙的政治担当和责任感；“分殊”的意义则在于警戒士人要安于自己的伦理角色和政治分位，不要躐等或僭越。对于一个处于较低官位或者没有官职的士人来说，他一方面在具体政治实践中不可做出僭越之事；另一方面则要有家国天下的责任感和不断学习圣人之道努力。^③这是一个等差结构，而更直观地加以表达的，则是司马光的《体图》。他的这个图式，自王、公至士、庶人共十等，形成一个金字塔模式。司马光说：“一以治万，少以制众，其惟纲纪乎！”^④保持这个金字塔统一的，是纲纪，亦即程子的“天理”。以此角度来审视，周敦颐的《太极图》及《太极图说》，也具有一种自上而下的政治义涵。从空间上来看，“无极而太极”居于最高位，其他的存在者都是太极的展开，居于下位。太极是统一之理，而人极之确立取决于圣人。不论周敦颐还是朱子，都会认为太极

① 赵师夏《跋延平答问》引朱子语，转引自王懋竑：《朱熹年谱》，北京：中华书局，1998年，第15页。

② 程颢、程颐：《二程集》，北京：中华书局，2004年，第209页。

③ 谷继明：《从执一统众到理一分殊——试论魏晋到北宋政治哲学的一个变化》，载《集美大学学报》2014年第4期。

④ 司马光：《潜虚》，四部丛刊影宋本，第3页。

之理是真实而无妄的;而余英时先生将朱子的“无极而太极”比拟为政治中的虚君,^①是缘于将民主政治的前见投射到宋代士大夫上,并不符合朱子本人的意思。也正是在这个角度上,戴震“发狂打破宋儒家太极图”的意义才能被理解:对太极图的打破,其实是对于这样一个理一分殊之等差世界和共同体秩序的打破。

船山正是与宋代理学家站在一个立场上。在讨论《尚书》中“天”和“民”的关系时,他说:“盖天显于民,而民必依天以立命。合天人于一理。天者,理而已矣。有目而能视,有耳而能听,孰使之能然?天之理也。”^②他根据“天视自我民视”的话,指出既要重视民情、民意,又不能谄媚民意而违反天理。换句话说,民众的诉求有时并不正确,或者说是违背天理的,这时候圣王应该做的是“无违道以干百姓之誉”,即以天理化民。这与戴震把天理消解于民情之中,是根本不同的。在船山看来,民意有时候是很危险的:“忘大德,思小怨,一夫倡之,万人和之,不崇朝而喧阗流沔,溢于四海,旦喜夕怒,莫能诘其所终。若此者,非奉天以观民,孰与定其权衡,而可惟流风之披靡以诡随哉?”^③在信息传播和人际交往日益便捷的社会里,各种话题和热点极容易被制造出来,引诱民意的沸腾和欲望的肆虐,而且一部分士子还热衷于从事这项事业。明末各种邸报的盛行、宫廷实录的公开和传抄、出版的繁盛、香艳书籍的风行等,与当时各种形式的群体性事件呈现出很大的关联性。陈宝良指出:“(明末的新社会风尚)是一种秩序变动,而其根本点理应着力于商业繁荣以后的诸多商业化倾向,但也不能不注意到,自王阳明崛起以后在意识形态领域产生的巨大震动,以及由此而对人们生活观念变化的影响,乃至对整个社会生活领域所产生的冲击。”^④

同样地,在对待理欲问题上,船山与清代思想也十分不同,《思问录》说:

所欲与聚、所恶勿施,然匹夫匹妇,欲速见小,习气之所流,类于公好公恶而非其实,正于君子而裁成之。非王者起,必世而仁,习气所扇,天下贸贸然胥欲而胥恶之,如暴潦之横集,不待其归壑而与俱泛滥;迷复之凶,其可长乎!是故有公理,无公欲,公欲者,习气之妄也。不择于此,则胡广、譙周、冯道,亦顺一时之人情,将有谓其因时顺民如李贽者矣,酷矣哉!^⑤

所谓“公欲”,即“众人所欲求者”。但因为人性是动态发展的,亦即有差等的。许多人在成长的过程中并不能贞定自己的性,反而为习气所煽动。这样一类人所欲求的,未必就符合天理。公理上同天理,而公欲则下流为放肆狂乱。船山又说:

有公理,无公欲。私欲净尽,天理流行,则公矣。天下之理得,则可以给天下之欲矣。以其欲而公诸人,未有能公者也。即或能之,所谓违道以干百姓之誉也,无所往而不称愿人也。^⑥

船山此处讲得更清楚,而且他反对公欲,恰恰与我们上面所引的他对于《尚书》“违道干百姓之欲”的批评相互发明。以每个个体的平等为基础,通过选票、“公投”建立的社会,往往会产生很多“违道干百姓之欲”的政客,这种人为了赢得民意和选票,不惜以空言欺骗民众,放弃对于善和正义的追求,故船山称之为“愿人”,亦即乡愿之人。需要辨析的是,在其他的语境中,船山也有过肯定“公欲”的说法,比如他说:“天下之公欲,即理也;人人之独得,即公也。道本可达,大人体道,故无所不

① 余英时:《宋明理学与政治文化》,长春:吉林出版集团,2008年,第155页。

② 王夫之:《尚书引义》,《船山全书》(二),第328页。

③ 王夫之:《尚书引义》,《船山全书》(二),第330页。

④ 陈宝良:《明代社会生活史》,北京:中国社会科学出版社,2004年,第662页。

⑤ 王夫之:《思问录》,《船山全书》(十二),第428页。

⑥ 王夫之:《思问录》,《船山全书》(十二),第328页。

可达之于天下。”^①但我们需要注意，这里的语境是君主“好货”“好色”之欲，船山之意在于，这个“欲”若要合于天理，必然是能“达”之于天下的欲。这就不仅是以欲规定理，而且以理来规定欲。易言之，当船山肯定公欲的时候，他指的是所有人之人性中固有之合理倾向的欲；他所反对的“公欲”，则是现实状态中、具体某一情境下，每个个体或一部分个体共同表达出的欲求和意见。

当李贽、黄宗羲、顾炎武、戴震等纷纷适应“近世化”而渐渐向大众和个体一边靠拢的时候，船山却站在精英士大夫一边思考，不免显得“反动”。就这个问题来说，嵇文甫、蔡尚思等先生的眼光十分犀利，没有强把船山等同于梨洲、戴震等人。嵇文甫曾注意到船山与黄梨洲同为“启蒙思想家”，但“在对于群众性政治运动的看法上颇有些歧异。梨洲热烈赞扬某些群众性和党派性的政治斗争，而船山则持否定的或批判的态度”。^②蔡尚思则指出“船山浓厚的以三纲为中心的礼教思想”。^③老前辈实事求是的态度十分可贵，尽管他们基本是从否定的方面来看待这个问题。更具体一点考察船山、梨洲等人的不同，我们可以更清楚地了解船山此种观点的问题意识所在。比如同样将明亡之祸归于阳明后学，梨洲、亭林主要指责他们不学无术、空疏无实，导致国家衰微；船山所反对的，是阳明后学陷入猖狂妄行之后，带来的纲纪陵迟、上下之别泯灭，要言之即共同体的败坏。明朝之亡，先亡于李自成、张献忠之乱，后亡于清军入关。在船山看来，李自成、张献忠是“犯上作乱”。这种乱局，一方面是由于统治者不注重保障民生、满足人民的基本欲求；另一方面，则是阳明后学风行之后，对于等级之分所带来的破坏力，使得犯上作乱成为一种极易被鼓动起来的事。只有从这个角度，我们才能真正理解船山为什么一方面重视民之所欲，谴责忽视人民欲求的苛政；一方面却仍不赞同人民自作主张，斥责躐等。

船山所理解的儒学是一种这样的政治学：君主的权力虽然要受到限制，但却不能无限制的向下开放，以至于人人都可以议政；政治、教化的主体，应当在贤良士大夫手中。船山憎恶的主要有这几类群体：党争、农民起义（“大盗”）、异族。显然，在他的眼里，儒学要维护共同体的秩序，以走向善治，而非鼓励“犯上”和“作乱”。他解释“民可使由之，不可使知之”曰：

天之生人也同，而人之习以成性者异。夫既为民矣，其父兄之所率，乡党之所狎，知有饱暖逸居而已。进之孝友姻睦，尊君亲上，免于淫僻而止耳。为之禁其作，定其分，行乎不得不然之途，所可以以贵治贱，以贤治不肖，而使之由者也。若其所以然者，君之何以尊，父之何以亲，……而欲使知之，必不可也……先知先觉者显其用于德行，则亦足以导天下于中正和平之中，而风俗美矣。^④

他的思考是符合古代儒家思想的，包括被认为最能弘扬人之主体性的孟子。“先觉觉后觉”的思路决定了此种政治理论的基本结构。也正是基于古代儒学义理和现实问题的考虑，船山批评躐等之学：

“后世有异端者，欲以性命之理遍喻愚贱，非贬道以殉俗，则立意以惊众。言之淳下，及于猥琐，适足以生君子之厌恶而惑小人之狂迷。”^⑤这里的“异端”不仅仅指佛道，更指向了阳明后学。正如前面提到的，船山的这个批评不仅仅是从抽象、形上层面出发，而且更是为了探究明代后期社会秩序崩溃的原因，以期重建皇极（皇极者，大中至正之道也）。

（责任编辑：张发贤 责任校对：陈真）

① 王夫之：《张子正蒙注》，《船山全书》（十二），第191页。

② 嵇文甫：《论王船山与黄梨洲政治思想中的一个歧异点》，《王船山学术讨论集》，北京：中华书局，1965年，第457页。

③ 蔡尚思：《王船山思想体系》，长沙：湖南人民出版社，1985年，第27页。

④ 王夫之：《四书训义》，《船山全书》（七），第541页。

⑤ 王夫之：《四书训义》，《船山全书》（七），第542页。

A Different Voice in Qing Thought: Revisiting the Political Philosophy of Wang Fuzhi

Gu Jiming[✉]

Abstract: Understandings of Wang Fuzhi in modern China have been prone to the influence of two preexisting notions. One highlights his ethnic theory and uses it to promote the anti-Manchu revolution, and the other regards him as an Enlightenment thinker. However, an examination of his *Complete Works of Wang Fuzhi* shows that it contains little Enlightenment thought and instead shows Wang as something of a reactionary in the context of the enlightening trends of his day. Both the philosophical legacy of Wang Yangming and Qing text-critical research, though different or even opposite in form, functioned to deconstruct the traditional rank hierarchy, whereas Wang Fuzhi was a defender of hierarchy and took it as the basis for his theory of human nature and ethics.

Keywords: Wang Fuzhi, political philosophy, growing and attaining completion daily, skipping over necessary steps

Major Evaluations of Wang Fuzhi in Modern China

[Refer to page 82 for Chinese. Similarly hereinafter]

Tan Sitong's 谭嗣同 (1865–1898) evaluation of Wang Fuzhi 王夫之 (also known as Wang Chuanshan 王船山, 1619–1692), and particularly of his political thinking, had a large influence in the late Qing dynasty. Tan juxtaposed Wang's thought with that of Huang Zongxi 黄宗羲 (1610–1695), though he denigrated Gu Yanwu 顾炎武 (1613–1682). The criterion by which Tan made his judgment of each man was his thinking regarding civil rights:

After Yao 尧 and Shun 舜, two of the legendary sage kings in ancient China, came no governance worth observing and after the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties came no books worth reading. In their thoughts on civil rights, of the three major Confucians in early Qing Dynasty, only Wang Fuzhi was purely pursuant of revealing their deepest meaning. Next came Huang Zongxi, who wrote *Waiting for the Dawn* [明夷待访录] with the same purpose. Gu Yanwu's study, however, was not worth taking notice of.¹

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¹ Tan Sitong, "A Letter to Master Ouyang Banqiang" [上欧阳瓣菴师书], in *Complete Works of Tan Sitong* [谭嗣同全集] (Beijing: SDX Joint Publishing Company, 1954), 323.

However, Tan did not specify just which of Wang's statements he saw as criticizing autocracy and upholding civil rights, nor did he quote them.

Fuzhi was often critical of the "ignorant Qin and ill-informed Song" (孤秦陋宋), thinking that the rulers of the two dynasties were too preoccupied with selfish motives. He was opposed to any political form, "in any land whatsoever, where people's welfare is governed by the whim and the word of one man."² Such anti-autocratic opinions found favor with anti-Manchu revolutionaries and were highly praised by later revolutionaries who advocated equality and democracy.

Closely related with Wang's political thought is his view of *li* 理 (principle) and *yu* 欲 (desire). He once said,

The *li* 礼 (rites), though purely the ritual pattern of the principle of Heaven, have to dwell in the desire of human beings so as to embody itself and, though they remain quiescent, have to vary according to the situations to manifest their function. It is just so and therefore, in the final analysis, there is no Heaven separate from humanity and there is no [Heavenly] principle that is separated from desire.³

Objecting to the denigration of human desire, he held that the political arrangement should be able to satisfy people's legitimate desires and guarantee their livelihood. With this as their basis, quite a few Wang Fuzhi researchers have related his view of principle and desire to the sexual emancipation movement occurring after mid-Ming Dynasty (1368–1644) and, in the writing of the history of philosophy, Fuzhi has also often been put on a par with Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724–1777). But does this really paint a true picture?

Principle and Desire in Qing Thought ^[83]

By the closing years of Ming Dynasty, people were already bored with Neo-Confucian debates over Heavenly principle and human desire. The movement for sexual emancipation was prevalent at the time and more and more thinking people legitimated or even celebrated human desire, under the slogan "principle dwells in desire." It can be said that Qing thinkers mainly affirmed desire, of whom Dai Zhen was a representative.

Here we are not intending to explore Dai Zhen's entire philosophy but merely to focus on his criticisms of Neo-Confucianism and its relevance to politics. According to Dai, the true principle was not, as Neo-Confucians claimed, "like a thing received from Heaven and completely embodied in the mind"⁴ but rather dwelled in *qi* 气 (vital force), that is, in *qing* 情 (feelings). He wrote, "Principle consists of feelings that do not err. Principle can never prevail when [correct] feelings go unsatisfied. ... The principle of Heaven means natural discrimination."⁵

Ontologically, Dai was opposed to regarding principle as independent and monolithic. He proposed that "principle dwells in vital force," in accord with his theory that "principle dwells in feelings" on the ethical level. Here "feelings" refers to the feelings of all people, ranging from the elite all the way down to peddlers and menial servants. In his opinion, if people could not

2 Wang Fuzhi, *Extended Comments on the Book of History* [尚书引义], in vol. 2 of *Complete Works of Wang Fuzhi* [船山全书] (Changsha: Yuelu Publishing House, 2011), 401.

3 Wang, vol. 8 of *Discussions After Reading the Great Collection of Commentaries on the Four Books* [读四书大全说], in vol. 6 of *Complete Works of Wang Fuzhi*, 911.

4 English translations of Dai Zhen's works are from Wing-tsit Chan, trans. and comp., *A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), with slight modification.

5 Dai Zhen, *Commentary and Textual Research of the Mencius* [孟子字义疏证], in vol. 6 of *Complete Works of Dai Zhen* [戴震全集] (Hefei: Huangshan Publishing House, 2010), 150.

reach “unanimity”⁶ with regard to principle but rather let a certain elite or class seize hold of some “principle” by which to decide affairs, there would be serious consequences:

The Way of the sages consists in ensuring that there is no feeling under heaven left unconveyed and in pursuing the universal peace and order by satisfying people’s desires. The Neo-Confucians in later times were not aware that the true principle is the feeling which is able to be supremely subtle and free from any regret. What they referred to as “principle” was tantamount to what those cruel officials referred to as “law.” As the cruel officials killed a person by their “law,” so the Neo-Confucians killed a person by their “principle.” Leaving the “law” aside, they were lost in dwelling on their “principle.” Like a dying man, there was no saving them after that.⁷

Dai’s critique of the Song–Ming Neo-Confucians for “killing people by ‘principle’” is unusually severe. It can be summarized in the following points: First, there exists no independent, supreme, and singular principle. Second, since principles dwell in affairs, they are “principles subject to discrimination” and should not be matters of domination and oppression. Third, no one can claim to have attained some universally applicable principle and use that to subdue others. The principle they claim to have attained is merely an opinion, which actually represents an overweening attempt at discursive hegemony. According to Dai, since such a “principle of Heaven” does not exist and when the Neo-Confucians and their asserted such a “principle of Heaven,” what they aimed at was nothing but oppressing and dominating others by mean of its so-called universality and inevitability.

But in abolishing the unity of principle, how could Dai preserve the unity of the community, whose collective life is one of the main aims of Confucianism? He had no choice but to resort to the Way of *xieju* 絮矩 (regulating one’s conduct as if by a measuring square):

When one does something to others, one should examine oneself and think quietly to see whether he could accept if others did the same thing to him. When one gives some responsibility to others, one should examine oneself and think quietly to see whether he could fulfill it if others gave the same responsibility to him. When the measure of the self is applied to others, principle will be clear. The principle of Heaven means natural discrimination. With natural discrimination, one measures the feelings of others in terms of one’s own, and there will be no injustice or imbalance.⁸

The Way of *xieju* as interpreted by Dai as denoting a relationship of communication and dialogue established on the basis of equality. We can justifiably say that the emphasis on the Way of *xieju* is characteristic of Qing thought. Qian Daxin 钱大昕 (1728–1804), though he did not think much of Dai’s *Commentary on the Meanings of Terms in Mencius*, agreed with him with regard to his emphasis on the Way of *xieju*:

The Way of *xieju* is nothing but the Way of cultivating one’s person. This is then extended to the family, and thence to the state, and finally to the whole world. It is similar to Confucius’ saying that “my doctrine is that of an all-pervading unity” (*Analects*, 4:15) and his doctrine of *zhongshu* 忠恕 (being true to the principles of our nature and benevolent to others).⁹

Jiao Xun 焦循 (1763–1820), a disciple of Dai, went further from his teacher’s position and thought that *xieju* was an indirect exhibition of feelings, which was the Way of *zhongshu* itself.¹⁰ That is to say, it is a criterion for making judgments which is established

6 Dai, *Commentary and Textual Research of the Mencius*, in vol. 6 of *Complete Works of Dai Zhen*, 151. According to Dai, “When one believes something right, all others say ‘it cannot be otherwise,’ that is what is meant by ‘unanimity.’”

7 Dai, “A Letter to Someone” [与某书], in vol. 6 of *Complete Works of Dai Zhen*, 479.

8 Ibid., 150.

9 Qian Daxin, *Collected Works of Qianyan Hall* [潜研堂文集], vol. 9 of *Complete Works of Qian Daxin of Jiading* [嘉定钱大昕全集] (Nanjing: Phoenix Publishing House, 2016), 45.

10 Jiao Xun, *Collected Poems and Essays of Jiao Xun* [焦循诗文集] (Yangzhou: Guangling Publishing House, 2009), 162, 170.

through dialogue between people. Apart from this, when interpreting *Zhouyi* 周易 [Book of Changes], Jiao also used such relationships among the sixty-four hexagrams as indirect exhibition and proper timing of action actions as the basis for *xieju* and *tongqing* 通情 (empathy) among different social groups and strata.¹¹

Some Ming scholars also emphasized feeling and opposed principle, among whom the towering figure was Li Zhi 李贽 (1527–1602). Qing Confucians, however, were critical of Li on various grounds. Where Li's doctrine highlights that everyone can be a sage and that there exists ready-made intuitive knowledge (良知) and sageliness, Qing Confucians emphasized human imperfection and the impossibility of skipping over necessary steps (躐等). Actually, these two seemingly contradictory opinions share an attitude diametrically opposed to that held by the Confucians in the Han (206 BC–AD 220) and Tang (618–907) and even from that of the Cheng–Zhu School of Neo-Confucianism, namely the pursuit of equality. Latter-day followers of Wang Yangming 王阳明 (1472–1528) stressed that “the streets are full of sages,” meaning that they elevated people in general to the level of the sages, while Dai Zhen, opposing a hegemonic principle, lowered sages and worthies to the level of the common people.

Han and Tang Confucianism attached importance to hierarchical difference and order among sages (圣), worthies (贤), scholars (士), and commoners (庶), while Song (960–1279) Neo-Confucianism was emphatic that, while retaining such a hierarchy, people on different levels could move between the levels. As Zhou Dunyi 周敦颐 (1017–1073) said, “The sages aspire to model themselves on Heaven, the worthies aspire to model themselves on the sages, and the scholars aspire to model themselves on the worthies.”¹² However, according to the followers of Wang Yangming, particularly the Taizhou School, as that hierarchy had been broken up, the common people were now sages themselves and so didn't need to attain sageliness step by step. What the philosophy of Dai Zhen implies is that everyone in reality is fallible and imperfect and therefore no one is capable of claiming ownership of the entire truth and using it to subdue other people. According to him, judgments are formed amid their interactions, which in turn are based on *xieju*, that is, equal dialogue. Clearly, Yangming scholars' doctrines and Dai Zhen's philosophy reached a bizarre agreement regarding deconstructing the ancient hierarchy with its different ranks.

Wang Fuzhi's Philosophical Argumentation [85]

When we take the thinking of Dai Zhen and other Qing Confucians as the keynote to Qing thought, we will find Wang Fuzhi clearly incompatible with them. Compared with Dai, Wang came somewhat closer to lining up with the Neo-Confucians.

Wang attached considerable importance to the diagram of the Supreme Ultimate (太极), though his understanding was not necessarily the same as Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130–1200). For example, the first several sections opening his “Outer Chapters” in the *Record of Thoughts and Questionings* [思问录外篇] are discussions concerning that diagram. Understanding the Supreme Ultimate and the Supreme Void (太虚) proposed by Zhang Zai 张载 (1020–1077) in a coherent way, he stated that “though void, the Supreme Ultimate is full of principle and vital force,”¹³ taking the Supreme Ultimate as a unity of principle and vital force. In his *Outer Commentary on the Book of Changes* [周易外传], Fuzhi also

11 Chen Juyuan, *A Study of Jiao Xun's Idea of Confucianism and the Book of Changes* [焦循儒学与易学思想研究] (Ji'nan: Shandong Qilu Press, 2000), 192.

12 Zhou Dunyi, *Collected Works of Zhou Dunyi* [周敦颐集] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1990), 21.

13 Wang, *Record of Thoughts and Questionings* [思问录], in vol. 12 of *Complete Works of Wang Fuzhi*, 430.

put forward the proposition that “the Supreme Ultimate dwells in changes to give rise to changes.”¹⁴ Zhang Xuezhi notes that this emerges out of Zhu Xi’s theory of *liyi fenshu* 理一分殊 (i.e. that principle is one but its manifestations are many).¹⁵ In substance, his paying close attention to the Supreme Ultimate is his attaching importance to ontological oneness. Here Wang forms a sharp contrast to Dai Zhen, who “crazily breaks up the Song Confucians’ diagram of the Supreme Ultimate”¹⁶ and states that “the connotation one understands by himself is surely not that of Zhang Zai’s *Western Inscription* [西铭] or Zhou Dunyi’s *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate* [太极图].”¹⁷

Despite the apparent similarity between Dai’s thought and Wang’s position that “principle dwells in vital force,” his ideas on human nature and feelings, and his views on principle and desire, this similarity is only superficial, calling for careful discrimination. The most essential of Wang’s statements on human nature reads as follows:

By nature is meant the principle of growth (生). As one daily grows, one daily achieves completion. Thus by the Mandate of Heaven is not meant that Heaven gives decree (命) only at the moment of one’s birth. ... In the production of things by Heaven, the process of transformation never ceases. It is not that at the moment of birth there is no decree. How do we know that there is a decree? Without it, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom would be without any foundation. Similarly, when one grows from infancy to youth, from youth to maturity, and from maturity to old age, it is not that there are no [continual] decrees. ... The physical form gets its support every day, every day the vital force enjoys its flourish, and principle attains completion every day. These things are received as one is born, but as one continues to live for a day, one keeps receiving them for a day. What one receives has a source. Is this not Heaven? Thus Heaven gives decrees to human every day and human receives decrees from Heaven every day. Therefore, we say that by nature is meant the principle of growth. As one daily grows, one daily achieves completion.¹⁸

Wang discusses human nature as inseparable from vital force and thinks that people are endowed with vital force every day and that as one daily grows, one daily achieves completion in his nature. In other words, human nature presents itself in a dynamic structure. To those who are familiar with the history of Chinese philosophy, these opinions are unremarkable, yet we need to consider further where their significance lies.

With regard to human nature, Cheng Yi 程颐 (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi probed it from two perspectives: One is principle and the other vital force. The purely good nature is the innate nature, attributable to principle, while acquired evil is ascribed to *qizhi* 气质 (acquired characteristics). With respect to their purely good nature, there is no distinction between the common people and a Yao or Shun, but due to differences in *qizhi*, people are in reality still subject to differences of degrees. A scholar should approach the realm of sageliness step by step by making efforts to change his *qizhi* and understand principle thoroughly. The latter-day Yangming thinkers differed from such a position, for they linked principle, vital force, mind, and nature, and also explained nature in terms of vital force. On the one hand, they shared with Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi the opinion that innate nature was the same in everyone; on the other hand, they turned to vital force for their discussion of nature and deduced that vital force was also the same in every one. This was how they reached their conclusion about

14 Gu Jiming, *Notes and Commentary on Wang Fuzhi’s Outer Commentary on the Book of Changes* [王船山周易外传笺疏] (Shanghai: Shanghai People’s Publishing House, 2016), 225.

15 Zhang Xuezhi, *A History of the Philosophy of the Ming Dynasty* [明代哲学史] (Beijing: China Renmin University Press, 2012), 545.

16 Duan Yucai, “Reply to Cheng Yitian” [答程易田文书], in *Collected Works from the Jingyun Building* [经韵楼集] (Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Publishing House, 2008), 184.

17 Jiao, *Explaining Dai* [申戴], in *Collected Poems and Essays of Jiao Xun*, 125.

18 Wang, *Extended Comments on the Book of History*, in vol. 2 of *Complete Works of Wang Fuzhi*, 299–300. The English translation is based on Wing-tsit Chan’s version, with slight modification.

“living sages,” that the people on the street are all sages. Wang also discussed nature in terms of vital force, but as he regarded vital force as instilled into a person at every moment, he understood human nature also as being dynamic and keeping growing. Thus, he distanced himself from both Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming, who viewed nature as static.

The followers of Wang Yangming were emphatic about ready intuitive knowledge and of *chizi zhi xin* 赤子之心 (namely that a great person “retains a newborn baby’s mind”) and *tongxin* 童心 (child’s mind), all of which display a preoccupation with people’s original nature. By contrast, Wang extended Mencius’s idea of the newborn baby’s mind, saying that it is true that a great person does not lose the mind of a newborn baby, but the newborn baby’s mind alone is not enough. With this, he went further and criticized two wrong tendencies in interpreting newborn baby’s mind: One was to take the newborn baby’s mind for the whole of sageliness, and the other was to mistake a baby’s crying, weeping, smiling, and laughing naturally and unaffectedly for its mind. For the former, the “baby” was like Laozi’s concept of the infant (婴儿), while for the latter, the baby’s mind was explained as emotional responses and perceptual movements.

The differences between the Yangming school and Wang Fuzhi boil down to their relation with Cheng–Zhu Neo-Confucianism. The Yangming school is opposed to Zhu Xi’s discussion of nature in terms of the binary distinction between principle and vital force, but it inherits the proposition that “the nature of Heaven and of Earth are of one origin” put forth by Cheng–Zhu Neo-Confucianism, so it regards vital force also as unitary, denying the differences of degree due to *qizhi* that Zhu Xi proposed. Wang Fuzhi, however, was of the opinion that as vital force keeps imbuing each person, so one’s nature and principle keep growing ceaselessly, thus building on the Cheng–Zhu doctrine of “differences of degrees.”

What is worth noting is that, when Wang Fuzhi spoke of nature growing dynamically with vital force, he did not mean that the existence of evil vital force (恶气) causes the distinction between good nature and evil nature to come into being. The simple fact of having been born a human being determines that everyone is born with good vital force, the only difference being that in disparate persons the good vital force is different in strength or vitality. Wang often talked about good vital force causing good principle and therefore when he explained nature in terms of vital force, he was discussing vital force in terms of human nature and, by thus upholding the goodness of vital force, he was thereby exalting its moral value. In contrast, when Dai Zhen discussed human nature in terms of vital force, he situated it in a structure where material and sexual desire are related and lowers the moral demands of human nature.

In Wang’s philosophy, humans’ vital force of keeps relating itself with the vital force of the Supreme Void and people’s responsibility for their own lives and for the whole universe and make efforts to add pure vital force into the Supreme Void actually. This amounts to *raising* the moral bar. It is not enough for people to know some truths only. They should continue to exert themselves in their vital force by continuing to refine it so as to make it increasingly upright and pure and nourishing it to make it increasingly abundant and vigorous. This point represents the fundamental difference between Wang Fuzhi’s philosophy from those of Dai Zhen and others. Therefore Wang stands out as a variation from the mainstream of the thoughts in the late Ming and the Qing.

Wang’s Political Philosophy ^[87]

Wang’s uniqueness in the Qing dynasty comes across not only in his basic philosophic thought but also in his *problematic* and his realism. The question of whether human

nature is different in different people or the same in everyone actually is correlated with that of whether moralizing or *xiejue* should be practiced in politics.

Earlier we stated that the Neo-Confucian doctrine of “one principle with many manifestations” conveyed the Neo-Confucians’ political design, for the significance of the “one principle” lies in its emphasis on the intellectuals’ continually studying and thoroughly understanding the Way of the ancient sage-kings and taking up their political duties with a sense of responsibility for the whole country and even the whole world, while that of “many manifestations” lies in warning them that they should be content with their ethical role and political position, refraining from skipping over necessary steps or self-arrogation.¹⁹ This hierarchical structure was presented visually in the *Diagram of Substance* [体图] by Sima Guang 司马光 (1019–1086) as a pyramid of ten ranks ranging from the topmost king and duke to the scholar and the lowest of the common people, with the pyramid’s unity is maintained by the “structure and discipline,”²⁰ that is, the principle of Heaven as proclaimed by Cheng Yi. Seen from this point of view, Zhou Dunyi’s *Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate* and *Explanation of the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate* [太极图说] also implied a top-down hierarchy. In space, at the uppermost is the Ultimate of non-being, identical with the Supreme Ultimate of being (无极而太极), with all other beings spread out below the Supreme Ultimate as expressions of it. The Supreme Ultimate is the unified principle and the establishment of the human ultimate depends on the sage. It is from this point of view that Dai Zhen “crazily broke up the Song Confucians’ diagram of the Supreme Ultimate.” Breaking up the diagram of the Supreme Ultimate amounted to breaking up the world of different ranks and the common order dominated by one principle with many manifestations.

Wang, however, stood on the side of the Song Neo-Confucians. When discussing the relationship between “Heaven” and the “populace” expounded in the *Book of History*, he wrote:

Heaven manifests itself in the people, and the people must rely on Heaven to establish their destiny. Heaven and humanity are unified as one in principle. Heaven is nothing but principle. One who has eyes to see with ears to hear with: who endows him with these? It is the principle of Heaven.²¹

Here he stated that much attention should be paid to the popular sentiment and will, but there must be no contravening the principle of Heaven in order to flatter the popular will. In other words, popular feeling is not always right and indeed can even turn its back on the principle of Heaven. In such cases, what a sage-king should do is to bring moral edification to the people by the principle of Heaven. Here Wang differed fundamentally from Dai Zhen, who dispensed with the idea of Heavenly principle in favor of popular sentiment. In Wang’s opinion, the popular will is sometimes very dangerous.²² In a society where the spread of information and interpersonal association are becoming easier and easier, popular opinion is easily manipulated and popular will and desires can run amuck, and a number of scholars were keen to get involved in dealings of that sort. As Chen Baoliang states:

[The new social fashions in the late Ming Dynasty] represented a change of order. When we attempt to understand its fundamental point, we should pay more attention to the many commercializing trends attendant on the business prosperity in that period. However, at the same time, we should not ignore the seismic ideological impact of the rise

19 Gu Jiming, “A Change of Political Philosophy from the Wei and Jin Dynasties to the Song Dynasty” [从执一统众到理一分殊——试论魏晋到赵宋政治哲学的一个变化], *Journal of Jimei University* [集美大学学报], no. 4 (2014): 7–12.

20 “One governs the myriad and the few control the many, and are these not by means of guideline and discipline?” See Sima Guang, *Submerging in Void* [潜虚], in *Series of Four Categories* [四部丛刊] (based on the Song edition), 3.

21 Wang, *Extended Comments on the Book of History*, in vol. 2 of *Complete Works of Wang Fuzhi*, 328.

22 Ibid., 330.

of Wang Yangming and the consequent conceptual changes in people's lives, and indeed the storm they unleashed in social life as a whole.²³

By the same token, with regard to principle and desire, Wang was also strikingly different from other Qing thinkers. In his mind, what he called public desire (公欲) meant the wants and hopes of the multitude of people. Since human nature keeps growing dynamically and is different in degree, many people, in their growing process, cannot hold their nature firm and steadfast, but rather find the temptation of bad practices irresistible. What this type of people desires is not necessarily in accord with the principle of Heaven. Though public principle (公理), which is selfless, can rise to become equivalent to the principle of Heaven, public desire may cause indulgence and disorder. In this regard he added:

When there is public principle, there is no popular desire. With selfish desire completely eliminated, the principle of Heaven prevails, and this is the selfless state. With the universal principle attained, the universal desire can be satisfied. However, when one imposes one's own desire on all others, there will be no sharing it among all others. Even if there is such sharing, what he or she does will be what is called "going against the Way" to get the praise of the people and in all quarters he will be cheered as a "good and careful" person (愿人).²⁴

The society established on the basis of individual equality with voting and referenda produces politicians who "go against the Way to get the praise of the people." To win popular support and votes, they do not scruple to cheat people by making empty promises to them and give up the pursuit of the good and the just. Such a politician is none other than Wang's "good and careful" person, that is, a hypocrite.

What needs analyzing is that, in other contexts, Wang also mentioned public desire in an affirmative manner. For example, he wrote, "The popular desire of the whole world is principle. When everyone attains it, it is universal (公). The Way is originally reachable and the great person embodies the Way. Therefore there is nothing that cannot be reachable in the world."²⁵ However, it should be noted that the context here was a discussion of the monarch's desire for goods and sex. What Wang meant by public desire in this context is that, if desire is to accord with the principle of Heaven, it must be obtainable by all the people in the world. Thus, it is not only that desire defines principle but also that principle defines desire. In other words, when Wang affirmed public desire, he was referring to the reasonable desires inherent in the human nature of everyone, and when he spoke negatively about public desire, he was referring, in specific real situations, to the desires and opinions expressed commonly by all or some individuals.

While Li Zhi, Huang Zongxi, Gu Yanwu, and Dai Zhen all adapted themselves to their era's trend toward increasing worldliness and gradually sided with the masses and the individual, Wang stood on the side of elites and scholar-officials, thus inevitably appearing "reactionary." In this respect, Ji Wenfu 嵇文甫 (1895–1963), Cai Shangsi 蔡尚思 (1905–2008), and some other scholars were insightful when they did not group Wang with Huang, Dai, and others. Ji noticed that, though both Wang and Huang were thinkers of enlightenment, "their views were quite different with regard to mass political movements, for Huang was vehement in praising some political struggles of a mass or partisan character, while Wang adopted a negative or critical attitude to them."²⁶ Cai pointed out that "Wang's

23 Chen Baoliang, *A History of Social Life in the Ming Dynasty* [明代社会生活史] (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2004), 662.

24 Wang, *Extended Comments on the Book of History*, in vol. 12 of *Complete Works of Wang Fuzhi*, 328.

25 Wang, *Annotations to Master Zhang's Rectifying Ignorance* [张子正蒙注], in vol. 12 of *Complete Works of Wang Fuzhi*, 191.

26 Ji Wenfu, "A Different Point between Wang Fuzhi and Huang Lizhou in Their Political Thoughts" [论王船山与黄梨洲政治思想中的一个歧异点], in *Collected Scholarly Discussions on Wang Fuzhi* [王船山学术讨论集] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1965), 457.

thought was concerned with the Confucian code of ethics, which is heavily centered on the Three Cardinal Guides (三纲).²⁷ These older scholars displayed a laudably matter-of-fact attitude in their studies, but basically they took a negative posture toward Wang.

A further probe into the differences between Wang Fuzhi and such scholars as Huang Zongxi and Gu Yanwu enables us to have a better understanding of Wang's *problematique*. For example, when both sides similarly attributed the downfall of the Ming dynasty to the followers of Wang Yangming, Huang and Gu charged them with lacking learning and practical ability and a penchant for empty talk, bringing about the decline of the dynasty, while Wang Fuzhi accused them of a decadence that caused indiscipline and social leveling, thereby bringing about the ruin of the social community. In Wang's eyes, the fall of Ming could be blamed, on the one hand, on rulers who failed to pay adequate attention to people's livelihoods and satisfying their basic wants and hopes, and on the other hand, on the fashion brought about by followers of Wang Yangming to the detriment of the social hierarchy, which made it easy to arouse the masses to defy their superiors. Only from this point of view can we understand truly why Fuzhi shows a dual attitude: he attached importance to people's desires and denounced harsh government that neglected them, while at the same time he objected to self-assertiveness on the part of the people and rebuked the practice of "skipping over necessary steps."

As Wang saw it, in Confucian politics, although the power of the monarch should be limited, political power should not be opened entirely to the lower orders of society, for that would allow everyone to discuss the affairs of government; and furthermore the dominant role in politics and moral edification should be played by the talented and virtuous scholar-officials. Among the several groups of people he detested were those engaged in cliquish partisan politics, those engaged in peasant uprisings (whom he called "bandits"), and non-Han peoples. Obviously, in his eyes, Confucianism should maintain the order of the community so as to effect good governance rather than encouraging rebellion. Agreeing that "the people may be made to follow a path of action, but they may not be made to understand it,"²⁸ he wrote that "those who first apprehend principles display their exemplary function in morality and conduct, and it is sufficient to guide the country into the harmonious and peaceful realm, never swerving from the Mean, where its mores and customs will be refined."²⁹ This opinion of his agrees with ancient Confucian thought, including that of Mencius, the great advocate for human subjectivity. Wang that "they who first apprehend principles should instruct those who are slower to do so,"³⁰ which determined the basic structure of his political theory.

Based on his reflections on ancient Confucian doctrine and practical considerations, Wang criticized the "skipping over of necessary steps." He wrote:

The later heretics, when scheming to make the principle of nature and being intelligible to all the stupid and base, either degrade the Way to cater to the vulgar or make up their minds to startle the public. Words which originally were sincere become insignificant or even obscene in their mouths, which is enough to prompt aversion from superior men and madness on the part of lesser men.³¹

The "heretics" here referred not only to Buddhists and Daoists but even more to the followers of Wang Yangming. As we mentioned above, Wang not only made this criticism on an abstract and metaphysical level but also in order to understand the collapse of the

27 Cai Shangsi, *The Ideological System of Wang Fuzhi* [王船山思想体系] (Changsha: Hunan People's Publishing House, 1985), 27.

28 *Analects*, 8:9. English translations of the *Analects* are based on James Legge's version.

29 Wang, *Explanation of the Four Books* [四书训义], in vol. 7 of *Complete Works of Wang Fuzhi*, 541.

30 *Mencius*, 5A:7. English translations of the *Mencius* are based on James Legge's version.

31 Wang, *Explanation of the Four Books*, in vol. 7 of *Complete Works of Wang Fuzhi*, 542.

social order in the late Ming dynasty in hopes of re-establishing the Way of great centrality and supreme uprightness.

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