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**NANYANG
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**Wang Yangming's Conception of Oneness:
Three Modes of Reasoning In Instructions for Practical Living**

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Abstract

In this paper, I attempt to investigate Wang's conception of oneness. I identify three modes of reasoning for oneness, namely general or web mode, chain mode, and the loop mode, by drawing from passages in *Instructions for Practical Living*. They represent three different structural relationships between the "one" and the "many." This is to say that each structural relationship reflects a certain reasoning patterns with regards to how the "one" and the "many" relate to one another. Then, I delve further into Wang's conception of oneness by contextualising it within the core metaphysical tenet held by Neo-Confucians, namely principle is one but its particularisations many. I make use of the three modes of reasoning to explicate the logic behind Wang's reasoning on this core metaphysical tenet. To aid understanding, I contrast it with the Zhu's account. I argue that the point of divergence between Zhu's reading and Wang's reading is the appeal to condition or context to differentiate the one from the many. Then, I argue that Wang's account is a reading that is just as prevalent in Neo-Confucian text but is eclipsed by the standard traditional reading. Finally, I draw on the findings from Wang's conception of oneness to defend against the claim that Chinese thinkers lack logical thinking. I visit the scholarship that posits Chinese language lacks logic by nature and pick out the assumption motivating this argument: Being poetic is incompatible with being logical. I reject this problematic assumption by appealing to the modern saying of "literature, history, and philosophy do not part ways," drawing from modern scholarships that attempts to reconcile literature, history, and philosophy. Here, I re-visit Wang's three modes of reasoning to argue that it is precisely the literary forms that provide logical meaning to these modes of reasoning and that they are the kinds of reasoning that we employ in our everyday lives.

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CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION

The Problematique

The conception of oneness is an important concept for Wang Yangming, a Neo-Confucian thinker from the Ming dynasty. To affirm its importance, he even goes as far as saying, “In the task of learning, wherever there is singleness (oneness), sincerity will prevail, but wherever there is doubleness, there will be falsehood” (Chan 1963a: 154). However, his conception of oneness, at prima facie, seems problematic. Throughout *Instructions for Practical Living*¹ a text that collects his teachings, Wang seeks to reconcile seemingly disparate concepts as one. He posits that different acts of cultivation found in the *Great Learning*—namely, rectification of the mind, sincerity of the will, extension of knowledge, and investigation of things—are all “one and the same.”² In his doctrine of unity of knowledge and action, he equates knowledge and action to be “one effort.”³ To an analytic mind, such cases of reconciling disparate concepts as one may seem like a case of equivocation, where different concepts illegitimately slide from one meaning to another.

To better understand the issue, we turn to look at the meaning of the “one.” The “one” carries the meaning of singularity. Thus, “oneness” refers to the property of singularity. There are two kinds of philosophically interesting questions we can ask about the property of

¹ All translations for *Instructions for Practical Living* are from Wing-tsit Chan, trans., *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings by Wang Yang-ming*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1963, unless otherwise mentioned.

² Passage 174: “[...] If we talk about the fundamentals it is even sufficient to mention only the cultivation of the personal life. Why speak in addition of the rectification of the mind? It is even sufficient to mention only the rectification of the mind. Why speak in addition of the sincerity of the will? It is even sufficient to mention only the sincerity of the will. Why speak in addition of the extension of knowledge and also the investigation of things? [All these steps are necessary] so the task will be thorough and careful. Essentially speaking, they are all one and the same” (Chan 1963a: 160).

³ Passage 26: “[The Teacher said,] ‘Knowledge is the beginning of action, action is the completion of knowledge. Learning to be sage only involves one effort. Knowledge and action should not be separated’” (Chan 1963a: 30).

singularity. We can first ask: Who is/are the possessor(s) of the property of singularity? The other question we can ask is: How do the entities come together to possess the property of singularity? This paper investigates the second kind of question. To further elaborate, we can frame the second question with the problem of the one and the many. Although the issue is on the “one,” it also involves the “many.” Explicitly, the issue is on how the “many” come together to become the “one”; it is about the becoming of oneness. If we were to look at the examples mentioned above, they seem to describe different ways of coming together. In other words, Wang’s conception of oneness seems to include different ways in which the “many” come together as one. To put things in perspective, we can ask the following questions: What is/are the relation(s) between the “one” and the “many”? Is there more than a way for the “many” to become the “one”? Is/Are the relation(s) logically warranted? By exploring these question—focusing on the first two questions, while briefly touching on the last—this paper seeks to explicate the reasoning behind Wang’s conception of oneness. Hence, the main aim of this paper is to identify Wang’s conception of oneness, and show that it is similar to the way we reason by gesturing towards its logical-ness at parts.

Nature of Project

Scholarship to identify and explicate the way Chinese thinkers think has been an ongoing project. Scholars employ a plethora of terms to describe the way Chinese thinkers think, for example, correlative thinking, yin-yang thinking, cosmological thinking, analogical thinking, metaphorical thinking, binary thinking, trinary thinking, parallel thinking, contextual thinking, pragmatic thinking, aesthetic thinking, etc. The plethora of terms does not suggest that each term is mutually exclusive. In fact, most of the terms capture overlapping content, to the extent that they can be used interchangeably. Essentially, there is no consensus on which term best represents the way Chinese thinkers think. This is because different terms try to focus

on different aspects of their way of thinking. Correlative thinking, analogical thinking, binary thinking, trinary thinking, parallel thinking, etc. generally capture the mechanics or logic motivating it; while yin-yang thinking, cosmological thinking, etc. generally capture the contents embodying it.

Within the scholarship of these terms, other than the debated question of whether the respective terms capture thinking that is unique to the Chinese thinkers, there is one other debated question of whether this way of thinking is logical, rational, or analytic. A.C. Graham, David Halls & Roger Ames, William McCurdy, and Yiu-ming Fung make direct evaluations on mechanics of correlation or analogical associations motivating this way of thinking,⁴ while Henderson can be said to make indirect evaluations by showing how the Chinese thinkers

⁴ Graham argues that correlative thinking is pre-logical, and sets it in contrast with analytic thinking. “In these chains of opposition we find the beginnings of a conceptual scheme, in which the thinking we shall call ‘correlative’ in contrast with ‘analytic’ will tend to fill a vacancy by its place in the pattern. We conceive it as spontaneous and pre-logical, the completion of a Gestalt as in perception, indispensable at the foundations of thought but requiring analytic thinking to test it” (Graham 1992: 62-3).

McCurdy takes correlative thinking to be synonymous to analogical thinking (McCurdy 1992: 334), and argues that correlative thinking is logical, “In order however, to construct conceptual systems such as those of the yin-yang cosmologists or the alchemists, it is not sufficient to have 4-term analogies anymore than it is to have 3-term analogies. Sooner or later certain logical laws about how analogies may be used must be employed, even if only implicitly...The point to recognize in all this is that analogical thinking requires logical thinking, otherwise associations would be without any organization whatsoever. They would be random” (Ibid, 338). He furthers his argument by identifying logical laws that govern analogies: Transitivity (Ibid, 338-9), reflexivity (Ibid, 340), symmetry (Ibid, 3340), etc.

Halls & Ames argues that correlative thinking is arbitrary and nonlogical. “Correlative schemes must seem altogether arbitrary to the mind shaped by causal thinking” (Halls & Ames 1995: 126); “Correlative thinking is effectively a nonlogical procedure in the sense that it is not based upon natural kinds. Part-whole relations, an implicit or explicit theory of types, or upon causal implications or entailments of anything like the sort one finds in Aristotelian or modern Western logics” (Ibid).

Fung argues against Graham and Halls & Ames and strongly asserts that correlative thinking is logical, analytic, and rational. “However, the most important point, I think, is that there is no argument by analogy or correlation which cannot be conceptually expressed and logically articulated. To make a demarcation between analytic and correlative thinking as incommensurable is to commit a mystical view of language” (Fung 2010: 297).

overcame the mismatch between correlative schemas and the natural phenomena.⁵ To sum up, other than the descriptive project to identify the Chinese way of thinking or reasoning, there is also a normative project to evaluate it. The nature of the project of this paper is within the ballpark of the above scholarship. Although it does not ambitiously seek to identify *the* unique way Chinese thinkers think or reason, it seeks to identify a way Chinese thinkers think or reason, and evaluate it. In simple words, the nature of the project of this paper is mainly descriptive, while sparingly normative.

Literature Overview

Scholarship on the conception of oneness in Chinese philosophy usually explores the structural relation between the Way, as the one, and myriad things, as the many. Geliang Shang differentiates the structural relation between them in the *Zhuangzi* from the *Daodejing*. Shang argues that the one, as the cosmological origin, is detached from the many in the *Daodejing*, while in the *Zhuangzi* the one is continuous with the many as the one is the expression of the “sum of total things (many).”⁶ He further describes the one in the *Zhuangzi* “stands neither for any thing nor the nature of things but rather the connectedness, together-ness, and throughness of all different things and human beings in this actual life-world” (Shang 2002: 248). Haiming

⁵ Henderson does not make any direct evaluation on the Chinese way of thinking, instead he describes how the Chinese try to solve the issue of the mismatch between the phenomena and correlative set, ie trying to fit four season (phenomena) into the five phases correlative scheme. Through his discussions, he shows how the Chinese thinkers tried to use mathematical methods to overcome the mismatch between the phenomena and correlative set (Henderson1984: 9-12). This can be seen as an attempt to show the logical-ness behind the mechanics of correlative schemes.

⁶ “One is not some ‘Other’ that determines a particular relation but rather the fact of relationship itself. As far as the relationship is concerned, the distinction of self and other is relativized and dissolved into the Oneness of self and others” (Shang 2002: 243). Shang tries to differentiate them with the former referring to *Daodejing* and latter to the *Zhuangzi*. Specifically, he argues that the idea of the one as the cosmological origin was deconstructed in the *Zhuangzi*.

Wen agrees that the one is continuous with the many but he asserts that, generally, in Chinese cosmology, “[t]he notion One and the notion Many cannot be taken concretely according to common view that One is just particular part of Many and Many are a combination of a lot of particulars,” (Wen 2010: 107) thereby rejecting Shang’s claim. Instead, he argues for a Whiteheadian reading for the continuity of the one and the many, where the one and the many are all part of the process of creation.⁷ The above shows that on the same topic of the relation between the one and the many, there can be different structural relations to describe them. However, these discussions are limited to relationship between the Way and the myriad things and does not provide any clear picture of Wang’s conception of oneness.

Like the scholarship on the conception of oneness, the scholarship on Wang’s conception of oneness is limited to piecemeal topical discussions. To give a few examples, David Tien in “Oneness and self-centeredness in the moral psychology” of *Wang Yangming* examines the conception of oneness in Wang’s understanding of self, where the elimination of “self-centered desires (siyu 私慾)” enables the expansion of one’s sense of self to embrace all reality, forming one body with Heaven, Earth, and the myriad things (Tien 2012: 60-7). This is due to all reality being constituted by universal principle 理. Essentially, Tien describes oneness viz-a-viz the connection between the myriad things and the self sharing a common origin. Shun Kwong-Loi in *Wang Yang-ming on self-cultivation in the Daxue* describes oneness in the doctrine of unity of knowledge and action as “[...] two different ways of describing the same response, one emphasizing the thought that is part of the response and the other emphasizing the actualization of the response” when the heart-mind is in its original state (Shun 2012: 98-100). In short, Shun is describing oneness viz-a-viz the inseparability of two

⁷ “Many realize themselves together with the spatial-temporal cosmos, namely, Many create One and a new One continue to become Many” (Wen 2010: 104); “Many Chinese philosophers agree with that the One changes with many things, while retaining its identity...” (Wen 2010: 105).

mutually entailing concepts. From the examples, we can also see that the discussions of oneness are only instrumental to discussions on wider topics like Wang's moral psychology and self-cultivation. The above examples of oneness, other than their differences in content, differ in their structural relations between the one and the many too. In other words, Shun and Tien, through their respective topical discussions, have captured two different structural relations for oneness. Hence, we can conclude that by limiting ourselves to topical investigations, we are, consequently, limiting our understanding on Wang's conception of oneness. Indeed, I believe that, for Wang, the conception of oneness is not limited to one, but is constituted by many different structural relations of the one and the many. We can have a glimpse of Wang's conception of oneness through the identification of five senses of oneness: 1) numerical identity, 2) "nature as blended whole" hypothesis, 3) parts of a single organic body, 4) parts of an ecosystem, and 5) Sense of solidarity.⁸ Each of these senses explain a different way for the many to come together as one. On the surface, these classifications seem like a good way to differentiate different senses of oneness. However, if we were to look at the structural relation between some of them, we will come to realise that they only differ superficially: they take on different content while retaining the same structural relation. To be more specific, Ivanhoe mentioned the crucial difference between the third and fourth sense of oneness: "Removing important members of a given ecosystem may alter the system but rarely will it lead to its collapse or directly and immediately affect all other parts. Cutting off a person's arm or head will have more immediate and dire results." (Ivanhoe 2015: 233) This sentence may suggest that the difference between the organic body and that of an ecosystem lies in the strength of

⁸ Ivanhoe mentioned that the five senses of oneness are indicative but not exhaustive. "Here, though, I will not attempt an adequate survey of conceptions of oneness in Chinese history; I only aim to present a number of examples in order to help prepare for and frame my discussion of distinctively neo-Confucian concepts of oneness" (Ivanhoe 2015: 233).

structural relation within the respective system. The structural relation of the members within the single organic body are more dependent on each other to the extent that removal of important members will lead to the near to immediate collapse of the system, while the structural relation of the members within the ecosystem are less dependent on each other to the extent that the removal of important members will not lead to near to immediate collapse of the system. Thus, it seems that some of the different senses of oneness identified by Ivanhoe only run skin-deep. While the different senses of oneness can potentially allow us to have a better overview of Wang's concept of oneness, Ivanhoe only mentions them in brief passing. Furthermore, Ivanhoe's claim is a general claims that describes the whole Chinese tradition, which inevitably spans too widely to facilitate a deep understanding of how the different senses of oneness manifest in Wang's system of thoughts. In short, Ivanhoe does not provide sufficient depth and systematic understanding of the five different senses of oneness.

Methodology

Interestingly, Wang tends to express his conception of oneness with parallelism. He arranges the sentence such that the "one" and "many" adopts parallelism, where a litany of successive phrases or sentences mirror the grammatical or syntactical structure of one another, forming a parallel unit. I try to show that this structure or configuration of the "one" and the "many" in the parallel unit indicates Wang's understanding of oneness. Thus, by accentuating the structure or configuration of the parallel unit, we can better understand his conception of oneness. To do so, I will display the sentences of the relevant passages according to their parallel units and subsequently arrange them into a table that accentuates their structure or configuration.

The methodology employed in this paper to investigate Wang's conception of oneness diverges from traditional thematic investigations. Traditionally, thematic investigations require

scholars to make strong adjudicative claims on the meaning of Chinese characters associated with the theme, be it implicitly or explicitly. Such claims adjudicate what counts as the appropriate meaning for these Chinese characters, and as a result, rejecting inappropriate meaning. In other words, the thematic investigations depend on a strong claim on the stipulated meaning of Chinese characters associated with the theme. The thematic investigation of this paper, unlike traditional thematic investigations, does not depend heavily, on a strong claim on the stipulated meaning of Chinese characters. To put it in perspective, the investigation of Wang's oneness does not make a strong claim on the meaning of relevant Chinese characters, but only a weak claim on a thin sense of meaning. The thin sense of meaning includes two aspects: First is an agreement on nature of the Chinese characters—whether it is a subject, object, predicate, or grammatical marker, the subject the predicate is acting on, and the grammatical marker of the equivalent function. Second is an agreement on the meaning of the topical marker that indicates the passage is relevant to the discussion on oneness. With this thin sense of meaning, one will be able to extract the structure or configuration of parallelism to access his conception of oneness. To further elaborate, his conception of oneness can and will be accounted for by replacing the relevant Chinese characters with alphabetical placeholders, as there is no need for a strong reading into their meaning. Hence, this methodology is relatively immune to disputes on the exact content or meaning of the Chinese characters. Put in another way, this project diverges from traditional thematic investigations as it does not draw heavily from the contents of the passages. Instead, it relies more on the structural configuration of the sentences within the passages.

Structure of paper

With the above in mind, this paper takes the following structure. In the second chapter, I identify three modes of reasoning for oneness, namely general or web mode, chain mode, and

the loop mode, by drawing from passages in *Instructions for Practical Living*. They represent three different structural relationships between the “one” and the “many.” This is to say that each structural relationship reflects a certain reasoning patterns with regards to how the “one” and the “many” relate to one another. Here, I highlight the similarities and differences between these modes of reasoning. Specifically, I pick out that all of them consist of three aspects: the “one,” the “many,” and the context or condition that mediates the relationship between the “one” and the “many.” Also, I accentuate their differences by distilling the respective structure or configuration of the constituting parallel sentence taking the form of “One/Many: Condition : Many” for easier identification. Then, I demonstrate how these modes of reasoning serve as building blocks that can be stacked in different ways to form more complex modes of reasoning, which I call hybrid modes of reasoning. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to identify the modes of reasoning and its possible uses.

Subsequently, in chapter three, I delve further into Wang’s conception of oneness by contextualising it within the core metaphysical tenet held by Neo-Confucians, namely principle is one but its particularisations many. I make use of the findings in chapter two to explain that the logic behind Wang’s reasoning on this core metaphysical tenet is to introduce condition or context to describe the “many” as contextualised or conditional parts of the “one.” To aid understanding, I contrast it with the standard traditional account lack of appeal to condition or context to describe the relationship between the “one” and the “many.” Here, I argue that the point of divergence between the standard traditional reading and Wang’s reading is the appeal to condition or context to differentiate the one from the many. Then, I argue that Wang’s account is a reading that is just as prevalent in Neo-Confucian text but is eclipsed by the standard traditional reading. Thus, the aim of the chapter is to bring into focus Wang’s reading on the issue of Principle is One and its Particularisations Many.

Lastly, in chapter four, I respond to the scholarship on Chinese reasoning that argues for the illogical nature of Chinese language. Explicitly, I draw on the findings from Wang's conception of oneness to defend against the above claim and argue that the logic or meaning of the text is interwoven with its literary form, specifically parallelism. To start out, I visit the scholarship that posits Chinese language lacks logic by nature and pick out the assumption motivating this argument: Being poetic is incompatible with being logical. I reject this problematic assumption by appealing to the modern saying of "literature, history, and philosophy do not part ways," drawing from modern scholarships that attempts to reconcile literature, history, and philosophy. Here, I re-visit Wang's three modes of reasoning to argue that it is precisely the literary forms that provide logical meaning to these modes of reasoning and that they are the kinds of reasoning that we employ in our everyday lives. Thus, the aim of this chapter is to argue that the logical-ness of Chinese text is compatible with them taking on literary forms like parallelism.

CHAPTER TWO MODES OF REASONING FOR ONENESS

Wang's conception of oneness is consistently expressed by a specific literary form known as parallelism. This paper argues that by investigating parallelism employed by Wang, one can gain access to his conception of oneness. Explicitly, parallelism employed by Wang not only serves to reinforce, but more importantly, contributes to a nuanced understanding of his conception of oneness.⁹

Before we can see how parallelism reinforces and contributes to a nuanced understanding towards Wang's conception of oneness, we must first have preliminary understanding of parallelism employed by Wang. Development of the scholarship on parallelism is sinuous and complicated. The scholarship generated numerous kinds of parallelism. To name a few, there are semantic parallelism, syntactic parallelism, morphological parallelism, synonymous parallelism, synthetic parallelism, etc. Thus, this paper will not attempt to dabble into the technicalities of these terms, but only seek to propose a commonly accepted, working definition for parallelism that is sufficient to illuminate the issue at hand. The working definition is as follows:

Verbal strings that are reeled out in sequences of equal numbers of characters, forming paired units that are to one extent or another isomorphic in their grammatical or syntactic function (Plaks 2015: 67).

Parallelism in this case is identified as the sharing of identical or near to identical grammar of the sentences or phrases, and the sharing of identical or near to identical number of Chinese characters. In Chinese expository prose, parallelism is usually employed such that the sentences

⁹ Similar claims have been advanced by Gentz and Meyer. Refer to page 50 for detailed discussions.

or phrases express different but complementary aspects of one single point.¹⁰ One such example of parallelism will be, “Tom was out all day, he went to school, then to the supermarket, and finally to his home.” The phrases “he went to school,” “then to the supermarket,” “and finally to his home” are parallel to each other in that they share near to identical grammar and share near to identical number of Chinese characters. Additionally, the parallel phrases come together to provide three different but complementary details that Tom was out all day. This is also the case for Wang. He employs parallel sentences or phrases that come together to provide different but complementary details on his conception of oneness.

Wang’s use of parallelism to express conception of oneness reinforces understanding on his conception of oneness. This is because the mechanism of parallelism he employs emulates the idea of oneness. Each parallel sentence carries a different point but these points are not completely unrelated. They are related in that they are points describing the same topic. They provide complementary descriptions on the same topic that do not contradict each other; each of these complementary descriptions seeks to describe different facets on the same topic. Explicitly, the point of each parallel sentence serves to express different facets of an overarching, singular topic. Reading these parallel sentences together, we get to understand the multifaceted nature of the issue. In short, the point of each parallel sentences comes together to form a parallel unit to describe an overarching point just as the many come together to form oneness. This can be seen as a performative illustration of oneness with use of parallelism.

In addition to reinforce understanding, grammatical structure of the parallel sentences in each parallel unit encodes different ways to account for relationship between the one and the many. Specifically, the one and the many relate to each other in different ways by taking on

¹⁰ Plaks states that a common use of parallel syntax is such that two or more of the “members” of a given parallel sequences express complementary aspects of one single point. However, he uses this point act as a foil to illustrate the deviant use of parallel syntax, in which parallel sentences are not separate-but-equal formulations (Plaks 2015: 72).

subject or object in different configurations mediated by a predicate. These different configurations contribute to Wang's conception of oneness. In other words, the grammatical structure of each parallel unit contains his understanding of oneness. More pointedly, his grammatical structure of parallelism *is* his conception of oneness, where structure contributes to content. Hence, by investigating these different grammatical structure of the parallel sentences, one can derive a nuanced understanding on how Wang understood oneness.

We cannot be certain if Wang has a clear idea of the similarities between parallelism and oneness, and by extension, if he intends for such parallelism to reinforce understanding of his conception of oneness. It is possible that he finds it easier to account for his conception of oneness through parallelism without knowing it can reinforce understanding. Similarly, we cannot be sure if he is conscious of his tendency to employ parallelism to express his conception of oneness. It is possible that, due to some profound psychological reasons, he habitually but subconsciously accounts for oneness through use of parallelism. With the currently available textual evidence, there is insufficient evidence to come to a decisive conclusion on Wang's psychology on this issue. The bottom line is, we can, despite the uncertainty, establish a correlation between his conception of oneness and parallelism to access his conception of oneness with parallelism.

Three Modes of Reasoning for Oneness

Since the grammatical structure of parallelism are different ways to account for conception of oneness, I call them modes of reasoning for oneness. In this section, we explore the general similarities between these reasoning. Then, we investigate the features defining each reasoning. Lastly, we briefly look at the possible variants of the reasoning.

All modes of reasoning generally consist of three aspects: the "one," which is the overarching concept for the "many" to subsume under, the conditions through which the one

can derive the many, and finally the “many.”¹¹ The latter two aspects are presented in a parallel unit taking the form of a subject-predicate sentence. The former aspect is indicated by a marker that either comes before or after the parallel unit. This said, one can track relevant parallelism containing Wang’s conception of oneness by looking for certain markers before or after a parallel unit. The direct and most telling marker will be the use of “— (yi)” to indicate or predicate something as having the property of singularity, ie “性— (xing yi)” (Chan 1963a: 34; Passage 38), “心— (xin yi)” (Chan 1963a: 16; Passage 10). This paper is not trying to reconstruct the range of possible meanings of the word “—.” Rather, this paper is trying to draw from one of the relevant meaning of the word “—” to access the conception of oneness. Alternatively, we can look for indirect markers that express some kind of unity without the using “—”, a simple example can be “cannot be separated 不可離 *bu ke li* (Chan 1963a: 93)” while a more complicated example can be the description of the many being necessary conditions for each other to operate.¹²

General/Web mode of reasoning

The archetype for the first mode of reasoning for oneness can be found in passage 154:¹³

夫良知一也，

以其妙用而言谓之神，

¹¹ While the one and the many will always be present, the condition can sometimes be left out. Refer to page 21 under the paragraph discussing variations to the modes of reasoning.

¹² Passage 153: Principle is the order according to which material force operates, whereas material force is the functioning of principle. Without order it cannot function, and without functioning there will be nothing to reveal what is called order (Chan 1963a: 132).

¹³ More examples of this mode of reasoning for oneness can be found in passage 3, 38, 57, 133, 154, 165, etc. of *Instructions for Practical Living*.

以其流行而言谓之气，

以其凝聚而言谓之精。

Now, innate knowledge is one.

In terms of its wonderful functioning, it is spirit;

In terms of its universal operation, it is force; and

in terms of its condensation and concentration, it is essence.

The passage states that innate knowledge is the “one.” The parallelism right after the first sentence provides two information. It, first, identifies the respective many, which are referred to as spirit, force, and essence. It, then, provides the condition required for the one to become the respective many, namely “wonderful functioning”, “universal operation”, and “condensation and concentration.” By accentuating the grammatical structure of the subject-predicate sentence, we can represent the relationship between the one and the many as follows:

The one (subject)	Conditions (predicate)	The many (object)
innate knowledge	wonderful functioning	spirit
innate knowledge	universal operation	force
innate knowledge	condensation and concentration	essence

The first set of correlations represents the grammatical structure of the parallelism: “One : Condition : Many.” The one is the subject of the sentence, the respective condition is the predicate acting on the subject, and the respective many is the object of the sentence. By repeating this grammatical structure throughout a parallel unit, the passage provides an explanation on how the one diversifies into the many, with each parallel sentence describing an aspect of how the one can transit into the many. This explanation describes how the one directly diversifies into the many through respective conditional. Under the condition of wonderful functioning, the innate knowledge refers to the spirit; under the condition of

universal operation, the innate knowledge refers to the force; under the condition of condensation and concentration, the innate knowledge refers to the essence. From another perspective, the passage is describing how the different but complementary facets—spirit, force, and essence—come together as one—innate knowledge. In this regard, oneness is not just a concept or entity that takes form as innate knowledge, but also a function that serves to unite the spirit, force, and essence as one.

Chain mode of reasoning

The general mode of reasoning provides the general information that the many come together as one but lack further information on how exactly the many come together as one. This is in contrast with the chain mode of reasoning. The chain mode, on the other hand, does provide information on how the many come together as one through a chain relation. However, it lacks information on the direct relationship between the one and the many. The archetype for the second mode of reasoning for oneness can be found in passage 78:¹⁴

问:

“身之主为心。

心之灵明是知。

知之发动是意。

意之所看为物。

是如此否? ”

¹⁴ More examples of this mode of reasoning for oneness can be found in passage 127, 174, 265, 201, etc. of *Instructions for Practical Living*.

先生曰：“亦是”

I asked,

“The mind is the master of the body.

Knowledge is the intelligence of the mind.

The will is knowledge in operation.

And a thing is that to which the will is directed.

Is this correct?”

The Teacher said, “Generally correct.”¹⁵

Although Wang did not directly express the mode of reasoning above, he did agree with the mode of reasoning, which can be understood as an endorsement for it. The above passage is the explanation for how the body, heart-mind, will, knowledge, and things are one. The idea is not mentioned in this passage, but it is expressed in passage 201: “The important thing to know is that the body, the mind, the will, knowledge, and things are one.” The one here does not take its form as a specific concept but only serves as a function to describe the unity of the many, namely the body, mind, will, knowledge, and things. The many relates to one another under different conditions, they are “master of”, “intelligence of”, “operation of”, and “direction of” respectively. By accentuating the grammatical structure of the subject-predicate sentence, we can represent the relationship between the one and the many as follows:

Many _x (Subject)	Conditions (Predicate)	Many _{x+1} (Object)
Body	master of	heart-mind
heart-mind	intelligence of	knowledge

¹⁵ I made a minor correction to Chan’s translation. I take the Chinese character 身 *shen* to refer to ‘body’ instead of ‘personal life’ in this passage. This is because, in the same passage, 身 is the inclusive term used to describe the ears, eyes, mouth, nose, and the four limbs 耳目口鼻四肢, 身也, hence it would seem inappropriate for 身 to refer to take the translation suggested by Chan, which is to take it to refer to personal life.

knowledge	operation of	will
will	direction of	things

The first set of correlations represents the grammatical structure of the parallelism: “Many_x : Condition : Many_{x+1}.” The respective many is both the subject and object of the sentence. The sub-scripts “x” and “x+1” are meant to denote a succession of the many, where the object of the previous sentence—“x”—follows through to become the subject of the next sentence—“x+1”, except for the first and last sentence. The respective condition is the predicate acting on the subject. By repeating this grammatical structure throughout a parallel unit, the passage provides an explanation on how the one consists of a chain of conditionals, with each parallel sentence describing a snippet of the chain. Unlike the general mode, this explanation does not describe the direct relationship between the one and the many. Instead, it describes the chain relationship between the many; the previous many refers to the next many by fulfilling the corresponding condition, with the exception of the first and the last particular many. The body’s master is the heart-mind, the heart-mind’s intelligence is the knowledge, the knowledge’s operation is the will, and the will’s direction is the things. Essentially, the chain reasoning describes how the one diversifies through an interlocking chain of conditions. From another perspective, the chain reasoning describes how the different but complementary parts—the body, heart-mind, knowledge, will, and things—are unified through a chain of conditions.

Loop mode of reasoning

The loop mode of reasoning, like the chain mode, provides information on how the many come together as one and thus lacks information on the direct relationship between the one and the many. Unlike the chain mode, it describes the many coming together as one through

a loop relation, we can also understand this as a chain mode that comes full circle. The archetype for the third mode of reasoning for oneness can be found in passage 9:¹⁶

理之发见 可见者谓之文。

文之隐微不可见者谓之理。

只是一物。

When principles become manifested and can be seen, we call them patterns and when patterns are hidden and abstruse and cannot be seen, we call them principles. They are the same thing.

The “one” in this loop reasoning, like the above chain reasoning, does not take its form as a specific concept but only serves as a function to describe the unity of the many, namely principles and patterns. The many relate to one another through the conditions of “manifested and can be seen” and “hidden and abstruse and cannot be seen.” By accentuating the grammatical structure of the subject-predicate sentence, we can represent the relationship between the one and the many as follows:

Many _x (Subject)	Conditions (Predicate)	Many _y (Object)
Principles	Manifested and can be seen	Patterns
Patterns	Hidden and abstruse and cannot be seen	Principles

The first set of correlations represents the grammatical structure of the parallelism: “Many_x: Condition : Many_y.” The respective many is both the subject and object of the sentence. Like the chain mode, there is a succession of the many, where the object of the previous sentence—

¹⁶ More examples of this mode of reasoning for oneness can be found in passage 5, 25, 33, 117, 133, etc. of *Instructions for Practical Living*.

“x”—follows through to become the subject of the next sentence—“x+1,” except for the first and last sentence. However, unlike the chain mode, the succession of the many will ultimately loop back to the first many to form a close loop. Hence, in order not to confuse them, the subscript “x” and “y” is used, where “x” still represents the object of the previous sentence, but “y” represents the succession “x+1” that connects back to the first many to form a close loop. The respective condition is the predicate acting on the subject. By repeating this grammatical structure throughout a parallel unit, the passage provides an explanation on how the one consists of a loop relation, with each parallel sentence describing a part of the loop. Like the chain mode, this explanation does not describe the direct relationship between the one and the many. Instead, it describes the loop relationship between the many; in this case where there are only two of the many, the loop relation is a pair of conditions that allows the many to mutually transform into each other. Principles, under the condition that it is manifested and observable, are called patterns; while patterns, under the condition that it is hidden and unobservable, are called principles. Essentially, the loop reasoning describes how the one diversifies through a close chain of conditions that comes full circle. From another perspective, the loop reasoning describes how the different but complementary parts—principles and patterns—are unified through a close chain of conditions that comes full circle.

It may be tempting to think that these modes of reasoning belong to the same level of explanation due to the strikingly similar form they take. However, this is not the case. The general mode of reasoning is named as such is due to it being a more general mode of reasoning. In other words, the general mode belongs to a different level of explanation as compared to the chain and the web mode. We can better see this by looking at the details provided in each of the modes. While all modes describe the relationship between the “one” and the “many,” the kind of details or description are provided are different. More accurately, the general mode provide details of the relationship between of only the “one” and the “many,” while the chain

and loop mode focus on the description of the relationship between the “many.” In short, the general mode does not provide exact information as to how the “many” relate to one another.

There can be variations to archetypes of the three modes of reasoning. To name a few: The number of many does not have to be restricted to the numbers mentioned above, as long as it is more than two—this is the smallest possible number for many. The subject can, sometimes, be implicit and must be inferred from the context of the passage.¹⁷ Specific to the chain reasoning, the series of conditions do not always follow from the previous object.¹⁸ Another variation to the chain reasoning is that, in addition to being a function to unite the many, the one is part of the chain of relations.¹⁹ As there can be innumerable variations, we shall not enumerate all of them or investigate them in depth due to the constraint of the scope of this paper.

Faced with the variations, there is, however, a rule of thumb to identify these modes of reasoning. They exist in subject-predicate sentences taking on parallelism, where the grammatical structures of these sentences take on the structure of the first set of correlations mentioned earlier. Explicitly, parallel sentences in the general reasoning take on the correlation of One : Conditions : Many, parallel sentences in the chain reasoning take on the correlation of Many_x : Conditions : Many_{x+1} , and parallel sentences in the loop reasoning take on the

¹⁷ One example can be found in passage 38: “Nature is one. As physical form or body it is called nature. As master of the creative process it is called the Lord. In its universal operation it is called destiny. As endowment in man it is called man's nature. As master of man's body it is called the mind.” This passage describes the oneness of Nature. However, the subject is implicit and is not expressed in the passage.

¹⁸ One example can be found in passage 201: “Therefore, if there is no mind, there will be no body, and if there is no body, there will be no mind. As something occupying space, it is called the body. As the master, it is called the mind. As the operation of the mind, it is called the will. As the intelligence and clear consciousness of the will, it is called knowledge. And as the object to which the will is attached, it is called a thing. They are all one piece.” The third and second last sentence’s subject, namely the will, is being repeated two times, thus disrupting the flow from the subject to object.

¹⁹ One example can be found in passage 174. This passage is quoted and analysed in depth in page 28-30 , for more details, refer to page 28-30.

correlation of $\text{Many}_x : \text{Conditions} : \text{Many}_y$. This does not mean that Wang can only present his understanding of oneness through parallelism, and this paper certainly does not argue so. It is just that through these forms of parallelisms, the modes of reasoning for oneness that reflect Wang's various conceptions of oneness become succinctly expressed in a way that is readily identifiable and thus easily accessible. Certainly, it is possible that Wang chooses not to express oneness through parallelism, but through qualitative descriptions or clues scattered throughout *Instructions for Practical Living*.

To sum up, the three modes of reasoning for oneness above describes three different relationship between the one and the many. The general reasoning describes the relationship between the one and the many, while the chain and loop reasoning describes the relationship between the many. The general reasoning is more detailed than the chain and loop reasoning as it provides information on the relationship between the one and the many. However, the general reasoning is less detailed than the chain and loop reasoning as it only provides general information that the many are subsumed under the one, while the chain and loop reasoning further describe the many to be subsumed under the one in a chain and loop manner respectively. These reasoning are merely indicative but not exhaustive. Wang *may* hold more than three of them. However, this does not make the three reasoning any less important or any less telling. In fact, these three reasoning are more prominent modes of reasoning for oneness, which can be easily found throughout *Instructions for Practical Living*.

Hybrid Mode of Reasoning for Oneness

Each mode identified above has a specific reasoning on the relationship between the one and many. These different reasoning can serve as basic building blocks that can be combined to form a hybrid and more complex mode of reasoning, specifically on reasoning for oneness. There are two ways of combination: the first provides an reasoning for oneness on

one topic captured by different modes, while the second provides an reasoning for oneness on different topic where one or more subordinate modes is part of a dominant mode of reasoning.

Let us look at an example for the first kind of combination:

G + L 心一也。

G 未杂于人谓之道心。

G 杂以人伪谓之人心。

L 人心之得其正者即道心。

L 道心之失其正者即人心。

G + L There is only one mind.

G Before it is mixed with selfish human desires, it is called the moral mind, and

G After it is mixed with human desires contrary to its natural state, it is called the human mind.

L When the human mind is rectified it is called the moral mind and

L When the moral mind loses its correctness, it is called the human mind.

The direct marker “There is only one mind” marks a topic that is described by two modes of reasoning, namely general and loop mode; these modes come together to describe the topic on the oneness of heart-mind, denoted by “G + L.” We can demarcate the respective parallel units through the grammar of the subject-predicate sentences, allowing us to identify the respective modes of reasoning. The second and third sentence adopts the grammatical sentence of “One : Conditions : Many” making them the general mode of reasoning, denoted by the letter “G”. The fourth and the fifth sentence adopts the grammatical sentence of “Many_x : Conditions : Many_y” making them the loop mode of reasoning, denoted by the letter “L”. Both modes of reasoning share the same “one”—heart-mind in general, and “many”—moral mind and human

mind. However, the way the one and the many are configured differs, thus leading to two different reasoning of how the heart-mind possesses the property of oneness.

These two explanation contribute to one topic of oneness where both are equally important in providing information to account for the oneness of heart-mind; neither of them takes precedence or importance over the other. The general mode describes the relationship between the one and the many, accounting for the individual properties characterizing the many, namely the moral heart-mind is characterized by being free from human desires, while the human heart-mind is characterized by being mixed with human desires. The loop mode describes the relationship between the many, accounting for how the many relate to each other, namely the rectified human mind is the moral mind, while the unrectified moral mind is the human heart-mind. Combined together, this hybrid mode of reasoning for oneness describes the oneness of heart-mind by accounting for how the many are individuated from this oneness and how the many relates to each another in a loop relation.

Let us now look at an example for the second kind of combination:

故

C_L 无心则无身，

C_L 无身则无心。

但

C_L 指其充塞处言之谓之身，

C_L 指其主宰处言之谓之心，

C 指 心之发动处谓之意，

C 指 意之灵明处谓之知，

C 指 意之涉著处谓之物，

C 只是一件。

Therefore

C_L If there is no mind, there will be no body, and

C_L if there is no body, there will be no mind.

C_L As something occupying space, it is called the body.

C_L As the master, it is called the mind.

C As the operation of the mind, it is called the will.

C As the intelligence and clear consciousness of the will, it is called knowledge. And

C as the object to which the will is attached, it is called a thing.

C They are all one piece.

The direct marker “They are all one piece” marks a topic that is described by one mode of reasoning, namely the chain mode. The indirect marker “If there is no mind, there will be no body, and if there is no body, there will be no mind” marks a topic that is described by another mode of reasoning, namely the loop mode. Unlike the previous hybrid mode, this hybrid mode is accounting for two different topics on oneness. The chain mode is describing oneness of body, heart-mind, will, knowledge, and things while the loop mode is describing the oneness of body and heart-mind. Thus, they do not share the same “one” nor “many.” We can, again, demarcate the respective parallel units through the grammar of the subject-predicate sentences, allowing us to identify the respective modes of reasoning. The third and fourth sentence forms the loop mode by adopting the grammatical sentence of “Many_x : Conditions : Many_y,” where the first indexical 其 *qi* refers to the heart-mind and the second refers to body, denoted by the

letter with sub-script “CL.”²⁰ The third to seventh sentence forms the chain mode by adopting the grammatical sentence of “Many_x : Conditions : Many_{x+1},” with the exception of third sentence, denoted by the letter “C” Although the third sentence does not fit the grammatical structure of the chain mode, the chain of conditions is still connected from body to things.

These two reasoning respectively contribute to two different topics on oneness where the main point of the passage is on the oneness of body, heart-mind, will, knowledge, and things, while the oneness of body and heart-mind is merely a part of the former reasoning. In other words, the loop mode is a subordinate mode to be subsumed under the dominant chain mode. The chain mode describes how the body is related to heart-mind, heart-mind to will, will to knowledge, and finally knowledge to things in a series of conditions leading from one to another. The loop mode modifies part of this chain reasoning by strengthening the bilateral relation between the heart-mind and the body; not only does the body leads up to the heart-mind, the heart-mind also leads up to the body. From another perspective, the subordination of loop mode or the dominance of the chain mode can, perhaps, be understood through the parallelism between the third to seventh sentences. Although the grammatical structure in the parallel unit of the loop mode differs from the chain mode of reasoning, both their grammatical structures differ only slightly; they are very similar. In other words, we can say that they are still generally parallel.²¹ Thus, by retaining a general similarity to their grammatical structure, we can, ultimately, say that the loop reasoning is weaved into the dominant chain mode of reasoning. We can, then, infer that this break in parallelism between the fourth sentence and fifth sentence may suggest a change into a different mode of reasoning, with the fourth sentence being shared by and connecting both modes of reasoning. Putting the two reasoning together,

²⁰ The sub-script L is to denote the loop mode that is subsumed under the chain mode of reasoning.

²¹ The similarity in grammatical structure and parallelism can be better identified in Chinese text than in the English translations.

this hybrid mode of reasoning for oneness describes the oneness of the compound concept body, heart-mind, will, knowledge, and things, while strengthening the relation between the body and heart-mind.

To summarise the above, Wang's conception of oneness consists of at least three ways the many coming together as one. The three modes of reasoning identified above are generally expressed through parallelism where the grammatical structure succinctly expresses the relationship between the one and the many. These reasoning are akin to building blocks that can come together to form hybrid modes of reasoning for oneness.

CHAPTER THREE PRINCIPLE IS ONE AND ITS PARTICULARISATIONS MANY 理一分殊

The very core of Neo-Confucians' metaphysical pursuits can often be traced back to the tenet of Principle is One and its Particularisations Many (理一分殊 *liyi fenshu*). Thus, this metaphysical tenet can be said to be the most important tenet of the Neo-Confucians. The aim of this chapter is to argue that there are two possible lines of reasoning and logic for this metaphysical tenet. Generally, I seek to illustrate Wang's reasoning and logic behind Principle is One and its Particularisations Many, and proceed to argue that Wang's reasoning and logic is an alternative reading to this important tenet that is often eclipsed by Zhuxi's reading. Specifically, I draw from the previous chapter, explaining how Wang's conception of oneness affects his reasoning on this important tenet by unpacking crucial passages that lend credence to it. Here, I highlight the importance of Wang's move to introduce context or condition to describe the relationship between the one and the many, which motivates and characterises the reasoning of this tenet. I briefly show that such reasoning on oneness is not confined to Wang alone, it can be found in other Neo-Confucians and can even be traced back to Daoist roots. To further clarify Wang's reading, I contrast his reasoning with Zhu's to show how his reasoning deviates from Zhu's reading. Additionally, I illustrate their differences by appealing to modern scholarship to make salient and contrast the logic behind their reasoning. Ultimately, I attempt to demonstrate that there are two possible lines of reasoning and logic for Principle is One and its Particularisations Many by bringing to the fore the eclipsed reading that is prevalent in Wang's conception of oneness.

Contextual in Wang's Conception of oneness

Wang's conception of oneness described in chapter two can be used to understand the metaphysical tenet of Principle is One and its Particularisations Many. With the introduction of contexts or conditions, we can see that Wang does not simply equate the one and the many together. Not only do they serve to differentiate the many between themselves, the contexts and conditions also serve to differentiate the one from the many by showing that the many are contextualised or conditionals parts of the one. Let us look at a relevant example in passage 174:

C₁ Principle is one and no more.

C₂ In terms of its condensation and concentration in the individual it is called the nature.

C₃ In terms of the master of this accumulation it is called mind.

C₃ In terms of its emanation and operation under the master, it is called the will.

C₄ In terms of the clear consciousness of the emanation and operation, it is called knowledge. And

C₅ in terms of the stimuli and responses of this clear consciousness, it is called things.

The passage is describing how nature, mind, will, knowledge, and things are all contextualised or conditional parts of the one principle during the process of perception by employing the chain mode of reasoning.²² Hence, the C refers to the chain mode of reasoning while the

²² Although Wang did not explicitly mention about the process of perception, the terms and descriptions above nudges us towards this direction. According to Wang, the reasoning behind Principle is One and its Particularisations Many is as follows: perception occurs when the emanation and operation of mind is invoked, followed by the clear consciousness of will through the response of knowledge to the stimulus of things. Although there may be some differences in the use of terminologies, this part of description of perception does not deviate much from the layperson's understanding of perception: The mind is activated thus giving rise to thoughts—the will—and the cognitive aspect of thoughts—the knowledge—contains perceived information of things, which is to be processed. Wang's process of perception that deviates from the common understanding is the claim that nature is the condensation of the principle—also known as universal principle. Nature is the condensation of universal principle, which provides the capacity for a human to not just perceive, but more importantly to comprehend the manifested principles of things. The manifested principle within things stimulates (感 *gan*) the universal principle within our nature, and this is met with the response (應 *ying*) of the comprehension of the

subscript refers to the corresponding sentence within the reasoning. The form of parallelism here requires some synthesis to distinctly see that it adopts the chain mode. The subject from sentence C₃ to C₅ is being referred to by its function/property: ‘This accumulation’ in the third sentence refers to the nature, ‘the master’ in the fourth sentence refers the heart-mind, ‘the emanation and operation’ refers to the will, and ‘this clear consciousness’ in the fifth sentence refers to knowledge. Hence, if we were to recognise this, we can see that the form of parallelism here takes the form of the chain mode: Many_x : Conditions : Many_{x+1}. It is important to note that this chain reasoning process motivating the above passage appeals to different contexts or conditions, thereby allowing the one to transit into the respective many through them; parts of the one is differentiated from the many through a chain of context. For example, the one under the condition or context of “condensation and concentration” yields the nature, under the condition or context of “condensation and concentration” and “master of” it yields the mind, etc. Each of the context or condition is a partial description about the process of perception. Thus, the contexts or conditions play an important role to allow us to differentiate and identify the respective many particularisations as specific parts of the one principle during perception. Without it, we lose the means to differentiate them.²³ The move to differentiate the one and many is emphasised in passage 137.²⁴ Although the context or condition is not mentioned

manifested principle of things. In simple words, the reason as to why we can understand and grasp the manifested principles in things is due to the fact that we have the universal principle replete within us. Thus, principle and nature, too, are pertinent parts of the process of perception that enable us to both perceive and comprehend the manifested principle of things.

²³ The differentiation and identification of the respective many as parts of the one during perception is reinforced in the second part of the argument. “Therefore when it pertains to things it is called investigation, when it pertains to knowledge it is called extension, when it pertains to the will it is called sincerity, when it pertains to mind it is called rectification.” By appealing to the first part, the passage accentuates the contextual or conditional differentiation of the many by bringing up respective acts of cultivation that correlates with the aforementioned many.

²⁴ “By investigating the principles to the utmost is meant that the task includes the investigation of things, the extension of knowledge, the sincerity of the will, and the rectification of the mind. Therefore whenever we talk

explicitly in passage 137, we can infer them from the second part of the argument mentioned in passage 174 earlier: different acts of cultivation are required under different condition or context. All these different acts are required so that investigating the principle to the utmost can be thorough and complete; all the different parts are required to constitute the one.

The use of context and condition to differentiate between the one and its particularisations can also be found in passage 3:

When this mind, which has become completely identical with the Principle of Nature, is applied and arises to serve parents, there is filial piety;
when it arises to serve the ruler, there is loyalty;
when it arises to deal with friends or to govern the people, there are faithfulness and humanity.

Although the “many” in the metaphysical tenet of Principle is One but its Particularisation Many is often referred to as the myriad things or principle of myriad things, it can also be used to refer to affairs or principle of affairs, like in the passage above. Indeed, it is a common trope in Neo-Confucians to treat things and affairs as synonymous as they argue that affairs are constituted by myriad things and myriad things always exist in events that are in relation to one another. The previous passage captures the particular many as manifested principles of the myriad things, while this passage captures the particular many as manifested principles of affairs. The various virtues in the passage can be understood as affairs because, according to the Neo-Confucians, virtues mentioned above are not simply abstract concepts, but are tangible actions that make them up. The passage takes on the general mode of reasoning to describe the

about the investigation of the principles of things to the utmost, we include in it the task of the investigation of things, the extension of knowledge, the sincerity of the will, and the rectification of the mind; and whenever we talk about the investigation of things, we have to mention the extension of knowledge, the sincerity of the will, and the rectification of the mind at the same time. Only when it includes these can its task be complete and thorough.”

one principle manifesting itself as different virtues under different conditions or contexts. Each of the condition or context refers to its corresponding right course of action. The right course of action one undertakes to serve one's parents, ruler, friends, and people is called filial piety, loyalty, faithfulness, and humanity respectively. The virtue, thus, is the result of fulfilling the condition or context; explicitly, the virtue is result of the performance of each stipulated right course of action. All of the virtues are required to constitute the one principle. Hence, in order to be said to possess the one principle, it is not sufficient to only take the right course of action in certain context or condition; one must be able to take the right course of action in every context or condition that yields a virtue. We should not take this passage too literally to only refer to four virtues; it does not provide an exhaustive list of all the virtues required to make up the one principle. The mentioned virtues should be interpreted figuratively to refer to all possible virtues. Therefore, a heart-mind that is identical to the Principle of Nature—one principle—should possess all virtues and thus be able to perform the right course of actions in all possible situations.

From the above, we can identify three specific functions pertaining to the employment of context or condition in Wang's reasoning on oneness. First, it serves to differentiate the respective many amongst themselves. Second, it serves to equate the respective many to corresponding parts of the one. Third and more importantly, it also serves to differentiate the one from the respective many.

The above approach to interpreting the relationship between the one and many through context or condition is not held by Wang alone and can be found in other Neo-Confucians. One of the more salient example can be found in Zhangzai's philosophy, alluding to this kind of reading. In his metaphysical worldview, he describes a world that is made up *qi*:

As the Great Vacuity, material force is extensive and vague. Yet it ascends and descends and moves in all ways without ever ceasing... Here lies the subtle, incipient activation of reality and unreality, of motion and rest, and the beginning of yin and yang, as well as the elements of strength and weakness. Yang that is clear ascends upward, whereas yin that is turbid sinks downward. As a result of their contact and influence and of their integration and disintegration, winds and rains, snow and frost come into being. Whether it be the countless variety of things in their changing configurations or the mountains and rivers in their fixed forms, the dregs of wine or the ashes of fire, there is nothing (in which the principle) is not revealed (Chan 1963b: 503).

Principle can be understood as a natural law that motivates the workings of *qi*, for the purpose of this chapter, we can understand them as synonymous. “The one”—principle or *qi*—manifests itself as the many— natural phenomenon like wind, rain, snow, frost or natural landscapes like rivers and mountains. These manifestations are made possible through the causal interactions, for example integration, disintegration, ascension, descension, etc., between yin and yang *qi*. In another passage, Zhang mentioned that, in addition to yin and yang, the five phases of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth are also responsible for the manifestations of the natural world.²⁵ From the above, we can see that Zhang’s account of the one principle and its particular manifestations are mediated by the interactions between yin and yang or five phases, which serves as conditions or contexts. However, unlike Wang, Zhang is unclear on the second function of the context or condition; he does not go into detail what exactly is the specific context or condition for the one to give rise to the particular many. Nonetheless,

²⁵ “Therefore, when discussing the ultimate problems of the nature of things and the way of heaven, the sage limits himself to marvellous changes and transformations of yin and yang and the Five Agents (of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth)” (Chan 1963b: 503).

Zhang's account, albeit less clear, still attempts to differentiate the one from the many with the use of conditions or contexts.

The move to differentiate the one and many through context or conditions on the issue of principle is one but its particularisations many can be found in Chinese text dated to earlier periods of China. They are particularly prevalent in Daoist philosophy. One can even make the claim that the employment of context or condition on this issue can be traced back to Daoist roots. This thesis, however, does not seek to argue for the Daoist roots on the core metaphysical tenet by the Neo-Confucians. Instead, I merely wish to bring attention to the existence of such reasoning extending beyond the Neo-Confucians, to earlier periods of China. One such salient example is the extensive and systematic discussion in chapter three of the *Huainanzi*. There are many other examples scattered throughout chapter three, but the following is particularly representative and illustrative:

The unbalanced qi of Heaven and Earth, becoming perturbed, causes wind;
the harmonious qi of Heaven and Earth, becoming calm, causes rain.
When yin and yang rub against each other, their interaction produces thunder.
Aroused, they produce thunderclaps;
disordered, they produce mist.
When the yang qi prevails, it scatters to make rain and dew;
when the yin qi prevails, it freezes to make frost and snow. (Major 2010: 278-9)

In this case, “the one” can be taken to mean *qi*, while the many is described as natural phenomenon like wind, thunder, thunderclaps, mist, rain, dew, frost, and snow. Again, I think that this passage should not be taken literally to mean that “the one” only gives rise to the aforementioned set of natural phenomena. It should be taken figuratively to refer to all possible

natural phenomena. The contexts or conditions, in this passage, for “the one” to give rise to the many are perturbed unbalanced *qi* of Heaven and Earth, calm harmonious *qi* of Heaven and Earth, yin and yang rubbing against each other, yin and yang together being aroused and disordered, yang *qi* prevailing, and yin *qi* prevailing.

To conclude, the employment of condition or context on the issue of Principle is One and its Particularisations Many is a reasoning that is employed by Neo-Confucians. Such reasoning extends beyond the Neo-Confucians and can be found during the earlier periods of China. This reading is another possible alternative in contrast to the standard reading of principle is one but its particularisations many held by Zhu, which is going to be the topic of discussion in the next section.

Zhu’s reading of Principle is One but its Particularisations Many

Wang’s reading of principle is one but its particularisations many is a response to Zhu’s reading. Hence, in order to better understand Wang’s reading, I now contrast his reading with Zhu’s reading. This reading of principle is one but its particularisations many is best represented by a famous passage by Zhu:

Fundamentally there is only one Great Ultimate, yet each of the myriad things has been endowed with it and each in itself possess the Great Ultimate in its entirety. This is similar to the fact that there is only one moon in the sky but when its light is scattered upon rivers and lakes, it can be seen everywhere. It cannot be said that the moon has been split (Chan 1963b: 683).

Since the passage does not directly mention the principle, some clarification is needed in order for us to see the link to the issue at hand. It can be said that, despite the many differences of Neo-Confucians, they all agree on some kind of concept describing the ultimate ontological unity that gives rise to myriad things in the natural world. Specifically, they may disagree with

the name or identity used to refer to this kind of concept, for example Zhou Dunyi argues that it is called *wuji* 无极, Zhangzai argues that it is called *taixu* 太虚 or *qi* 气, and etc, or that they may differ on the workings of this concept, but ultimately they will agree on the existence of such ultimate unified concept. We can understand such a concept to either be a metaphysical entity or a configuration describing a complex system. For the issue at hand, it will suffice to understand the Great Ultimate or *taiji* 太极 to serve the same function as the Principle as both are trying to refer to the ultimate ontological unity that gives rise to myriad things in the natural world. Hence, I do not make clear distinctions between them in this case. In other words, I take the above passage to be trying to use the concept of Great Ultimate to explicate the idea of principle is one but its particularisations many.

The passage draws an analogy between the Great Ultimate and the moon. The one moon in the sky shines its light and cast its reflections on the many rivers and lakes. This is not restricted to any area, but is a widespread phenomenon that can be found and seen everywhere. Furthermore, Zhu cautions us that reflections of the moon do not mean that the moon has lost its integrity as a whole or that it has been divided into parts. On the other hand, the reflections of the moon do not mean that they are parts of the moon; instead, they are no less, whole representations of the moon in the sky. These properties apply to the Great Ultimate too. The Great Ultimate is one but it can manifest itself through many different particularisations. This is such that it accounts for the existence for all myriad things everywhere. The many particularisations being manifestations of the Great Ultimate does not mean that the Great Ultimate is compromised as a whole or that it is being split up. The manifestations, on the other hand, are whole representations of the Great Ultimate. This is supported by the keyword “entirety (全 *quan*), which is used to describe the undivided wholeness of Great Ultimate within the myriad things. We can better understand the analogy through deductive reasoning. Since

there is only one Great Ultimate, and that each of the myriad things possess a Great Ultimate in its entirety, this leads to the conclusion that the Great Ultimate within the myriad things are identical to *the* Great Ultimate.

To have a better grasp of the reasoning motivating the analogy, we can look at modern scholarship on Buddhist logic. Before that, some qualifications to link Buddhism to the issue at hand is required. We can trace the use of the moon analogy to Buddhist thoughts, for example Huayan and Chan Buddhism.²⁶ Zhu himself acknowledges the use of the above analogy as being able to have glimpse the Pattern of the Way.²⁷ Indeed, many contemporary scholars tried to show that the Neo-Confucian were deeply influenced by Buddhist thoughts, especially on the topic of principle. Ziporyn mentioned that the Neo-Confucians adopted and developed the concept of *li* (理) from the Buddhist thoughts, “It (Li) came into prominence as the central metaphysical category rather gradually, seemingly only through the intervention of Buddhist uses, taking on its decisive role only in the thought of Cheng brothers and further developed by Zhu Xi, read back into the pre-Buddhist tradition although its actual appearance in the early texts is sparse and problematic” (Ziporyn 2013: 21). Angle & Tiwald argue for the influence of Buddhist thoughts on the issue at hand, “By the time the Neo-Confucians rose to prominence in the Song dynasty, Buddhist frameworks thoroughly pervaded metaphysical discourse, and the distinction between li and more tangible phenomena was chief among them” (Angle and Tiward 2017: 30). We can understand the passage as saying that the Buddhist idea of using principle to account for the various phenomena of the natural world to be the most important

²⁶ We can see the use of similar logic by Huang Bo, a Chinese Zen Master during Tang dynasty: “The essential Buddha-Substance is a perfect whole, without superfluidity or lack. It permeates the six states of existence and yet is everywhere perfectly whole. Thus, every single one of the myriad phenomena is the Buddha” (Blofeld 1958: 84). Although the subject is different—Buddhahood instead of principle, the logic is the same.

²⁷ “The Buddhists say, ‘The one moon is commonly reflected in all pools of water; in all pools the moon is the same moon.’ Herein the Buddhists have glimpsed the Pattern of the Way” (Angle and Tiwald 2017: 31).

tenet that pervaded that the metaphysical discourse, which is picked by Neo-Confucians. However, we have to be careful and not overplay the Buddhist influence on Neo-Confucians' system of thoughts. Take the moon analogy for example. Wang Fuzhi, another Neo-Confucian, criticized Zhu's inappropriate use of the moon analogy as it seems to posit that the manifestations are illusory, which sharply deviates from the Confucian lineage.²⁸ While I understand Wang Fuzhi's criticism, he seems to be reading too much into the analogy. From the first and the last sentence of the above passage, the emphasis seems to be on the wholeness of both the one and the many. Throughout the passage, there was no reference to treating the reflections of the moon as illusory. This problematic reading can only be affirmed if one were to assume that Zhu absorbed the analogy from Buddhism with its possible connotations—in this case, the fact that the manifestations are illusory—without any further synthesis. Hence, to read the above analogy thinking that Zhu accepted the premise that manifestations of the principles are illusory is to overestimate the extent of influence Buddhist thoughts has on Zhu's idea of Principle is One and its Particularisations Many, thus resulting in an inappropriate reading.²⁹

From the first and the last sentences of the above passage, the emphasis seems to be on the logical relationship between both the one and the many rather than the illusory or non-illusory nature of the one and the many. Although Zhu was against the idea that the

²⁸ “然则先儒以月落（印）万川为拟者，误矣！川月非真，离月之影，而川固无月也。However, past Confucian uses the analogy of the moon casting its reflections on thousand rivers as example, this is mistaken. The moon on the river is not real, the reflection that is detached from the moon in the river will be moonless” (translation is mine). By “past Confucian,” Wang Fuzhi is referring to Zhu, who adopted the moon analogy from Buddhist thoughts.

²⁹ Contemporary scholars like Angle and Tiwald recognise and argue that one of the crucial divergence in Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism is that Buddhism posits that the principle of a thing is “empty (空 kong)” while Neo-Confucians think that the principle is “substantial (实 shi)” (Angle and Tiwald 2017: 33). Hence to view the manifestations as illusory is an inappropriate reading.

manifestations are illusory, he is on board with the logic behind the analogy. In other words, it is more accurate to say that the influence of Buddhist thoughts on Zhu is perhaps more towards the logic of how the one and many relate to one another.

Recall that in logical terms, the relationship between the one and the many is that they are identical to one another. The philosophical position of the moon analogy is adopting an unintuitive and unusual claim. To see its unusual-ness, we can take the one and the many to be the negation of each other; they are mutually exclusive concepts. If so, how can the one be identical to the respective many—is this not a contradictory claim? Contemporary scholars like Graham Priest is an ardent defender of such a position. His main strategy is to coin a new term called “gluon,” a compressed term synthesized from the phrase “glue on.” Gluon is a concept that has contradictory properties, it is both an object and not an object; he calls it a special kind of object called relationship object that glues different object together by its very nature (Priest 2014: 9 & 12). The “one” functions like a gluon seeking to bind each of the many together by being identical with each of them and itself. In addition, he proposes that the solution to the above problem is to adopt paraconsistent logic, where contradictions are accepted and do not explode (Priest 2014: 18-9). Although the one being identical to the many runs into contradiction, it will not be problematic if we were to adopt paraconsistent logic. He further elaborates on this position by positing that identity loses its property of transitivity in this system of paraconsistent logic (Priest 2014: 17). In simpler words, it means the fact that the one is identical to each of the many does not make the disparate many identical to each other. Priest’s attempt to defend this position is extensive, and reasonably so, as it goes against to the one of the most intuitive and traditional axiom of classical logic: law of non-contradiction. He raises the issue of Bradley regress and illustrates how his position solves it, delineates the revised logical properties of identity in paraconsistent logic in using both formal and informal semantics, and provide applications of paraconsistent logic to motivate his position (Priest

2014: 16-37). In sum, his philosophical position posits that one is identical to the many and for this logical relation to stand Priest does away with the law of non-contradiction.

Comparing Zhu's and Wang's logic on oneness

To better understand Zhu's and Wang's logic, we can compare them to shed light on each other. The main point of divergence lies in the introduction of context or conditions that leads to a difference in understanding the one and the many. For Zhu, he does not employ context or condition to differentiate between the one and the many. Thus, this leads to his claim that the one is identical to the many. Wang's claim, on the other hand, differs slightly from Zhu's. It is not that the many is identical to the one, more accurately, the many is identical to only *a part* of the one. This move differentiates the one from the many by positing that the many is identical to only part of the one and not *the* one. All this is made possible through the use of context or condition to describe the relationship between the one and many.

We can cast the above in logical terms based on modern scholarship. Given the one and the many to be the negation of each other, the difference between Zhu and Wang lies in whether one should retain the law of non-contradiction while understanding the relationship between the one and the many. One way to make sense of Zhu's reading is that he does away with the law of non-contradiction by reasoning with paraconsistent logic, where the one and many is identical. Wang, conversely, employs classical logic, retaining the law of non-contradiction, where the many is a part of the one. Another point of divergence lies in their explanatory purposes. For Zhu, the reasoning focuses on the concept of "wholeness" or "totality." Thus, it can be said that he accounts for the one more than the many. He seeks to explain how the many share the same contents as the "one" such that by accessing one of the many, we can have full access to the "one." For Wang, the reasoning places equal emphasis on both the one and the many. On the one hand, the context or condition shows how the one diversifies into the many.

On the other hand, the context or condition shows how the many are unified as parts of the one through them. Furthermore, Wang does not posit that we can have full access to the one through one of the many; we only have partial access to the one under a specific context or condition. Instead, full access to the one can be only granted through all the many characterised by their respective context or condition.

The lines of reasoning on this metaphysical tenet exemplified by Zhu and Wang are the only two possible ways to interpret Principle is One and its Particularisations Many; there are only two possible logical relations between the one and the many. Either the one is identical to the many or that the one is not identical to the many. Since the one is an ontological unified concept as established earlier, it must be greater than the many, which means that the many must be part of the one. Thus, the only two possible logics to understand Principle is One and its Particularisations Many is that either the one is identical to the many, which is exemplified by Zhu's reading, or that the many is part of the one, which is exemplified by Wang's reading. It is important to note that the reasoning on this metaphysical tenet can take on various contents, but the *line* of reasoning, ultimately fall under the two possible logical classifications mentioned above. This is analogous to the case on logic: "A $\rightarrow$ B" is a line of reasoning that can take on different reasoning with "A" and "B" being empty placeholders. The one and the many behave like empty placeholders that can take on different reasoning but ultimately, the logic or line of reasoning behind it remains unchanged. Thus, my aim of this chapter is not an adjudicative claim on the right way to understand Zhu's and Wang's understanding of the metaphysical tenet, which would require more extensive and close analysis of their text. Instead, I am only trying to pick out the two possible lines of reasoning or logic for this issue at hand.

There is a complication with regards to the two readings presented above. Although they are two different ways to understand the relationship between the one and the many, it seems that Zhu adopts both ways of understanding in his system of thoughts. For example, Zhu

agrees that “Man and things are all endowed with the principle of the universe as their nature, and receive the material force of the universe as their physical form. The difference in personality is of course due to the various degrees of purity and strength of the material force” (Chan 1963b: 620). The various degrees of purity and strength can be understood as the condition or context that leads to the differentiation between the “one” and the “many”; they describe the causal processes that can serve as condition or context. There can be two ways to understand the above. The first way is to understand this as a bad attempt to absorb and synthesize the Confucian tenets into a system of thoughts as there is inconsistent attitude towards the law of non-contradiction. The second way is to find a way to reconcile the different understandings, accounting for the inconsistent attitude. One possible way is to account for the inconsistent attitude by positing that there is a process of development with regards to Zhu’s system of thoughts. This way of understanding Zhu’s system of thought is a viable way to defend him and is adopted by Chen Lai.³⁰ For the purpose of this paper, I do not need to defend Zhu as that is not my main point. To reiterate, my main argument for this chapter so far is to show that there exists two different ways of reading or lines of reasoning on the relationship between the one and the many.

To serve as conclusion, I list a point that my argument does have claims over and three points that it does not have claims over. I am claiming that there are only two ways to understand the core metaphysical tenet, one of which is exemplified by Zhu and the other by Wang. However, I am not arguing that the lines of reasoning exemplified by the respective philosophers are their only lines of reasoning—we can see that this is at least not true for Zhu. Furthermore, I am not trying to evaluate and compare the traditional account of reasoning with

³⁰ Chen, Lai. 2008. *The Investigation of Master Zhu’s Philosophy*. China: East China Teachers’ University Press.
陈来. 2008. 朱子哲学研究. 中国：华东师范大学出版社

the alternative account in terms of their logical-ness. Given that Priest's interpretation of the traditional account is appropriate, the traditional account is just as logically robust as the alternative account I am proposing, in fact this is the whole point of Priest's defense of traditional account. In this sense, I am not accusing the traditional account of being an illegitimate way of reasoning and the alternative reading to be the logical alternative. The second point, which is related to the first point, is that I am not trying to adjudicate between the two ways to read and interpret the idea of Principle is One and Particularisations Many. In short, my point is to bring into focus an alternative reading to show the heterogeneous nature of this idea.

CHAPTER FOUR CHINESE REASONING

There is a possibility that scholars may be led to think that Wang is equivocating with regards to the issue of oneness. Specifically, he seems to, ambiguously, lump disparate many as one without any proper account. Moreover, the use of parallelism make salient the poetic nature of his account, which seems to further reinforce its lack of logical-ness. Taken together, this creates an impression—at least *prima facie*—that Wang’s conception of oneness is problematic and that his reasoning lack logical rigor. This chapter identifies one of the important arguments driving this impression. I elucidate how relevant contemporary scholarship implicitly base this type of argument on the assumption that being poetic is incompatible with being logical and trace the origin to the sharp dichotomy cast down by Plato on poetry and philosophy. Then, I reject the above assumption by arguing for a contemporary saying describing the Chinese culture, loosely translated as “Literature, history, and philosophy do not part ways (文史哲不分 *wen shi zhe bufen*) and show contemporary attempts that argue for it. Here, I turn to Wang to show that form, more specifically literary form, can contribute to the meaning of oneness. Ultimately, I delineate modern applications of Wang’s modes of reasoning and draw on the similarities between modern scholarship on the problem of one and many and Wang’s conception of oneness to show Wang’s take on oneness is logically rigorous.

Before identifying the argument driving this impression, I set the grounds by providing some relevant scholarship on this issue. There is a scholarship that endeavours to investigate the Chinese way of thinking, seeking not only to describe it, but also to evaluate it. For example, Graham argues that correlative thinking is pre-logical, and sets it in contrast with analytic thinking. “In these chains of opposition we find the beginnings of a conceptual scheme, in which the thinking we shall call ‘correlative’ in contrast with ‘analytic’ will tend to fill a vacancy by its place in the pattern. We conceive it as spontaneous and pre-logical, the

completion of a Gestalt as in perception, indispensable at the foundations of thought but requiring analytic thinking to test it” (Graham 1992: 62-3). McCurdy takes correlative thinking to be synonymous to analogical thinking (McCurdy 1992: 334), and argues that correlative thinking is logical, “In order however, to construct conceptual systems such as those of the yin-yang cosmologists or the alchemists, it is not sufficient to have 4-term analogies anymore than it is to have 3-term analogies. Sooner or later certain logical laws about how analogies may be used must be employed, even if only implicitly...The point to recognize in all this is that analogical thinking requires logical thinking, otherwise associations would be without any organization whatsoever. They would be random” (Ibid, 338). He furthers his argument by identifying logical laws that govern analogies: Transitivity (Ibid, 338-9), reflexivity (Ibid, 340), symmetry (Ibid, 340), etc. Halls & Ames argues that correlative thinking if viewed from a Western idea of causality seems to be arbitrary, ambiguous, vague, and incoherent. “Correlative schemes must seem altogether arbitrary to the mind shaped by causal thinking” (Halls & Ames 1995: 126); “The relative indifference of correlative thinking to logical analysis means that the ambiguity, vagueness and incoherence associable with images and metaphors are carried over into the more formal elements of thought” (Ibid, 124). Fung argues against Graham and Halls & Ames and strongly asserts that correlative thinking is logical, analytic, and rational. “However, the most important point, I think, is that there is no argument by analogy or correlation which cannot be conceptually expressed and logically articulated. To make a demarcation between analytic and correlative thinking as incommensurable is to commit a mystical view of language” (Fung 2010: 297). Scholars employ a variety of qualities to describe Chinese thinking and judge it based on them, for example “rational,” “logical,” “analytic,” and etc. Although terms that are of Western origins is used, the point of this chapter is not to impose a Western thinking ad hoc on Chinese thinking. It is not trying to use an alien framework to understand Chinese thinking. Even though the qualities mentioned may have

Western origins, it is not alien to Chinese thinking at all. Hence, attempts to show the logicalness of Chinese thinkers in this chapters are not attempts to impose contemporary standards on them, but rather attempts to uncover the inherent logical qualities nestled within the text.

One challenge with this scholarship is that the standards or definitions represented by each descriptions are often taken for granted by scholars and is generally unclear. However, regardless of how we construe the definitions, we get the lingering impression that—despite the heated debate—Western thinking as compared to Chinese thinking is more reasoned and systematic. Although the charge to Chinese thinking is usually directed at the Classical periods of Ancient China, this impression looms across different periods of Chinese history.

Being Poetic is Incompatible with Being Logical

One of the arguments driving the sweeping generalisation that Chinese thinking lacks reasoning is an argument based on an assumption that being poetic is incompatible with being logical. We can understand “being logical” loosely. By “logical”, I am not talking about translating the texts into semantic logic. Instead, I understand the term “logical” in its greatest broadest and to interchangeable with mentioned qualities above. Generally, this assumption motivates the impression that if something is poetic, it will be something that is not rational, logical, analytical, etc. From another perspective, we can understand it as saying if something is poetic, it lacks logical rigor or reasoning.

Let us first look at the type of argument based on this assumption. One of the earliest appearance of such argument can be traced to Wilhelm von Humboldt, who argues that Chinese is a picturesque and inarticulate language lacking grammatical form (Harbsmeier 1956: 22). A more elaborate and sustained argument is made by Marcel Granet, who is influenced by Humboldt’s view, argues that the ideographic Chinese writing system leads to the articulatory poverty of the Chinese language; it is composed of images rather than concepts and is an

ineffective tool for analysis (Harbsmeier 1956: 23). This is because analysis involves abstraction that can only be precisely expressed through concepts. Since the nature of Chinese language is based on musical and picturesque symbolisation, it can only poetically and figuratively suggest precise thought, instead of articulating them directly (Harbsmeier 1956: 23). By contrast, the Indo-European languages are precise and explicit, which make them effective tools for analysis involving abstraction. This results in a blanket claim that Chinese culture, which employs Chinese language, is incapable of thinking or reasoning effectively. Although Granet's argument is meant to describe how Chinese language is inappropriate for scientific analysis and precise scientific discourse while Indo-European language is appropriate, we can see how his argument, in turn, can be used to argue for lack of the qualities mentioned above. Abstract thinking or reasoning is constitutive of the qualities mentioned above. Thus, the lack of abstract thinking or reasoning will result in a lack of the qualities mentioned above. Explicitly, the nature of Chinese language does not allow Chinese culture to engage in thinking or reasoning that are logical, rational, analytical, etc. effectively.

The above argument tries to contrast two set of qualities, which describes the Western and Chinese way of thinking respectively. This argument hinges on the assumption that these set of qualities are, supposedly, strictly exclusive and diametrically opposed. We can, perhaps, trace this assumption back to the sharp divide Plato cast on philosophy and poetry. Plato, throughout his corpus, endorses the running theme that poetry's influence is often pervasive and harmful in contrast to philosophy, leaving behind a famous tagline of "there is an old quarrel between philosophy and poetry" in the *Republic*.³¹ He argues that poets do not strive to discover the truth of the discourse they engage in and often make up ideas as he defines poetry

³¹ "Plato on Poetry and Rhetoric" *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy*
<https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-rhetoric/> last seen: 1740, 15 Nov. 17

to be “everything that is responsible for creating something out of nothing.”³² Consequently, these ideas are based on imaginations that wilfully mislead people from the philosophers’ idea who commit themselves to the truth of the discourse based on reason. Hence, poetry is sometimes associated with mere rhetoric, in which its sole purpose is to persuade others without any regards for the truth, while philosophy is associated with reasoned process with knowledge of the truth. This dichotomy between work of philosopher, who strives to discover truth and know the truth through reason, and work of poets, who does not strive to discover truth and make up the truth through imagination drives the intuition for the conditional above. This resonates with several numbers of dichotomies in Plato’s corpus, for example, imagination versus reason, emotion versus principle, etc., where we can understand them to take on loose formulations of the conditional mentioned.³³

Plato’s dichotomy between poetry and philosophy may have significantly influence scholarship on the fundamental difference in thinking between Chinese and Western culture. One of the ways to account for the difference is to align them according to the sharp divide between philosophy and poetry. Explicitly, Chinese language is made for poetry, which cannot engage in abstract thinking or reasoning effectively, while Indo-European language is made for philosophy—or anything involving abstract analysis, which can engage in abstract thinking or reasoning effectively. Essentially, scholars account for their difference in thinking by appealing to their difference in language.

The aforementioned argument and its assumption can have a detrimental impact on the Chinese way of reasoning. By applying this sharp divide to Western and Chinese thinking or reasoning, scholars are committed to the claim that there is a fundamental difference between

³² “Notes to Plato on Poetry and Rhetoric” *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-rhetoric/notes.html#21> last seen: 1740, 15 Nov. 17

³³ “Plato on Poetry and Rhetoric” *The Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/plato-rhetoric/> last seen: 1740, 15 Nov. 17

the cultures. As a result, some efforts to describe the differences between Chinese and Indo-European language seem to serve as evidence that reveals Chinese language's "inadequacies" in expressing abstract thinking or reasoning even though it may not be intended by the scholar. For example, Chad Hansen's arguments that compare Chinese language with Indo-European language to conclude that Chinese has no concept of truth and that they do not differentiate between mass noun and count noun (Hansen 1985) seem to offer evidence to the argument that Chinese are inapt at reasoning even though this may not be the case.³⁴ Similarly, efforts to capture the poetic nature of Chinese language seem to indirectly yield the same effect.

Literature, History, and Philosophy do not part ways

One of the problems with the argument and implication arguing that Chinese thinking is illogical is that it is based on a problematic assumption that does not square well with the Chinese culture. Thus, by re-examining this assumption, one can see how the argument founded by this assumption falls apart. Let us first look at scholars who reject the assumption that being poetic is incompatible with being logical. They argue that it is in the nature of Chinese language to be logical. Janusz Chmielewski turns the tables by arguing that Chinese language, as compared to Indo-European language, is more logically transparent. He argued that features like monosyllabism of lexical units, lack of inflections and lack of clearly delimited grammatical word-classes make Chinese language more similar to the symbolic language of modern logic than Indo-European languages (Harbsmeier 1956: 8). On the same note, he also tried to show the application of formal logic within arguments in Classical Chinese text by formalising them in "Notes on Early Chinese Logic" to back up his arguments. Harbsmeier further elaborates on this viewpoint by identifying correspondence of Chinese

³⁴ Hansen's argument is that the classical Chinese language adopts a pragmatic rather than a semantic interest in language.

characters with logical operators to show that no language is at a “logical disadvantage” and Chinese language, like Indo-European language, is an efficient instrument for the articulation of structured thoughts (Harbsmeier 1956: 5).

A further claim to defend against the problematic assumption can be encapsulated with the modern saying of “Literature, history, and philosophy do not part ways (文史哲不分 *wen shi zhe bufen*).” This saying can be taken to mean that the works of Chinese literati has all these areas interwoven together, it, however, does not necessarily mean that all works by Chinese literati are so. More accurately, it means that the works by Chinese literati do not differentiate distinctly between them. Although this is a modern saying, we can trace this phenomenon back to the Pre-Qin period. Take for example the tendency to appeal to tradition or history to argue for a philosophical point in the *Xunzi* or Sima Qian’s intention to imbue accurate historical records with moral significance. Take another example, the tendency to express philosophical point with literary forms: yin-yang thinking or correlative thinking expressed through strict parallelism in the *Huainanzi*. Works of Chinese philosophers actively draw from history and literature to elucidate philosophical points they are trying to make.

In such a culture, if we were to adopt the assumption of sharp divisions amongst them, we may either end up blinding ourselves to the possible philosophical significance resulting from the interaction between these areas or accusing these interactions as problematic or superfluous from the philosophical perspective. To be more explicit, Western scholars like Jeremy Bentham criticised the tendency to appeal to tradition or history to argue for a philosophical point to be a fallacious argument, which he came to call “Chinese argument”. The criticism is that the dogmatic appeal to historical precedence is not a good justification for an action. As a result, scholars like Bentham failed to see the philosophical significance resulting from the interaction between history and philosophy, which is highlighted by scholars

like Antonio Cua. He defended against the above, arguing for the interaction between history and philosophy in *Xunzi*'s arguments by trying to show possible pedagogical, rhetorical, elucidative, and evaluative functions of appeals to history (Goldin 2008: 79). To this end, there are other scholars like Paul Goldin who also argued for the interaction between history and philosophy, in which he investigates the moral significance of accurate historical recounts (Goldin 2008: 91).

A more relevant example, which will be dealt more in depth in the next section, is the interaction between philosophy and literature. Any scholar, who assumes the dichotomy between philosophy and literature and is only interested in the philosophy of any Chinese text, will tend to disregard the literary aspects of the philosophical argument. They treat such literary aspects as extra-logical, superfluous tools to direct the reader's attention to the true aspects of philosophical argument; in other words, they are extraneous aspects of the philosophical argument (Gentz and Meyer 2015: 4-5).³⁵ This is to say that the parallelism that is replete in many Chinese text, to name a few *Daodejing*, *Huainanzi*, etc, and the colourful imageries invoked by the analogies by Mencius, or parables in the *Zhuangzi*, may all seem superfluous as they seem to be extra-logical means that only draw attention to and not convey a philosophical point. Scholars that defend against the above are Gentz and Meyer. They argue extensively that the tradition of blending the philosophical content and its literary form is common to many early Chinese texts (Gentz and Meyer 2015: 6). They further contend that "[many] arguments in early Chinese texts cannot be understood fully if the crucial function of their literary form is not taken into consideration and analysed accordingly," so these literary forms are indispensable parts of the argument (Gentz and Meyer 2015: 7).

³⁵ Although Gentz and Meyer are describing the poetical philosophy of Plato, but they did try to draw the link between Plato and Chinese text. "The discussion of Plato's poetical philosophy therefore provides an excellent example for the discussion of Chinese thinking (Gentz and Meyer 2015: 4)."

Interplay between Literature and Philosophy in Chinese Texts

Literary forms are indispensable parts of the argument in that they can provide renewed understanding to our traditional understanding of reading Chinese text. To this end, Plaks brings to our attention a less common interpretation of parallelism, which can change the way we interpret the—philosophical—meaning of Chinese text. Parallelism usually abides by the “principle of equivalence” in which parallel textual units are deemed as semantically separate but similar. However, Plaks points out that there is a type of parallelism that does not abide by the “principle of equivalence”; some of the textual units are subordinated under a primary textual unit, to support or modify it (Plaks 2015: 71). He highlighted three such parallelism characterised by subordination. The first type of subordinating parallelism has the subordinating parallel textual units corroborate with the point made by the primary textual unit. The second type describes subordinating parallel textual units that set up a provocative rhetorical stage for the point made by the primary textual unit by countervailing it. The third type describes subordinating parallel textual units that neither corroborates nor countervails the primary textual unit, but acts as an “adverbial” modifier to it (Plaks 2015: 72). Plaks shows how each subordinating parallelism can yield an interpretation that diverges from traditional interpretation, but I shall only illustrate what I believe best proves my point.

He suggests that the opening lines of both *Daxue* and *Zhongyong* employs the second type of subordinating parallelism.³⁶ The traditional reading is to understand the parallel

³⁶ Opening sentence of *Daxue*: “大学之道，在明明德，在亲民，在止于至善。The Way of self-cultivation lies in causing the light of one’s inner moral force to shine forth; in bringing the people to a state of renewal; and in coming to rest in the fullest attainment of the good.”

Opening sentence of *Zhongyong*: “天命之谓性，率性之谓道，修道之谓教。By the term ‘nature’ we speak of that which is imparted by the ordinance of Heaven; by the ‘Way’ we mean that path which is in conformance

sentences each as equally important foundational principles. Scholars typically agree that the opening lines of *Zhongyong* and *Daxue* serve as the thesis statement for the whole text. Thus, they understand their themes to be represented by all parts of the opening sentence. However, as Plaks suggests, a scrutinised reading of both texts seem to yield a different understanding. The arguments constructed throughout both texts revolve around the last parallel textual unit, specifically on “rest in the fullest attainment of the good” and “by ‘moral instruction’ we refer to the process of cultivating man’s proper way in the world,” as the rest of the sentences remain relatively peripheral to the central propositions developed in the texts (Plaks 2015: 82). He continues to argue that this type of subordinating parallelism is repeatedly employed through both text and goes on to provide an example that he understands exemplifies his point.³⁷ If Plaks is right in his reading, this would mean that there should be a shift in understanding the opening sentence of *Zhongyong* and *Daxue*. Instead of being foundational principles of equal emphasis contributing equally to the meanings of the opening sentences, the last mentioned principles in each parallel unit of the opening sentence should be the emphasis.

While Plaks alerts us to the possible shift in the emphasis of meaning of Chinese texts by appealing to parallelism, Gentz goes further to argue that parallelism can subvert our traditional understanding of the meaning of Chinese texts. He pointed out that the nature of Chinese characters is ambiguous and underdetermined with regards to their meaning and that literary forms are better indicators, as compared to lexical semantics, to help us understand their meaning. Literary forms embody and encode arguments formed by these Chinese

with the intrinsic nature of man and things; and by ‘moral instruction’ we refer to the process of cultivating man’s proper way in the world” (trans. Plaks 2015: 82).

³⁷子曰：“天下国家可均也，爵禄可辞也，白刃可蹈也，中庸不可能也。The Master said: “It is possible for one to impose uniform rule on a family, on a kingdom, or even on the entire world; it is possible for one to renounce official titles and emoluments; it is even conceivable for one to tread upon the naked blade of a sword. But to put the mean into practice may be beyond the capacity of any individual” (trans. Plaks 2015: 82).

characters, disambiguating their meaning. On this same note, he further highlights the importance of literary form by showing that “the function of a term within a literary form can have its common lexical meaning overruled by its literary placement” (Gentz 2015: 112-5). He lists three literary forms and show how they breathe meaning into the Chinese texts: Double-directed parallelism, enumerative catalogue, and referential signifiers. Double-directed parallelism is, according to Gentz, a kind of parallelism of which the first textual unit develops the first part of the text and the second introduces the second part (Gentz 2015: 116). Double-directed parallelism carries the same function of performative illustration of oneness mentioned above, where different textual units—in this case two—describe different aspects coming together to describe the same topic (Gentz 2015: 128). Enumerative catalogue defines a group of “key analytical terms that create the particular conceptual field the arguments deal with,” which make up an exhaustive list of members in that particular field (Gentz 2015: 128). As enumerative catalogue is also a form of parallelism, it can be understood as an argument expressing the different members within one particular set. Referential signifier is a careful way of argumentation that “secures the position from which the argument moves on further and great effort is spent in double and triple affirming the belonging of concepts and terms to one of the two contrasting sides by means of literary repetitions of terms” (Gentz 2015: 137).

Gentz uses the literary form of double-directed parallelism to challenge the traditional reading of *Laozi* 41, specifically this part of the passage:

上士闻道，勤而行之；

中士闻道，若存若亡；

下士闻道，大笑。不笑，不足以为道。

If superior men hear about the Way, they diligently put it into practice.

If middling men hear about the Way, they sometimes retain it, and sometimes lose it.

If inferior men hear about the Way, they laugh out loud. If they didn't laugh, it would not be worth being considered as the Way (Gentz 2015: 122).

The traditional reading is very much literal: the superior men refer to superior people who practices the Way, the middle men refer to middle people who may or may not retain the Way, and the inferior men refer to inferior men who laughs at the Way. However, by appealing to double-directed parallelism coupled with the rhyme scheme present in *Laozi* 41, Gentz presents us with another reading, which subverts our traditional reading. He claims that *Laozi* 41 can be divided into two parts, one of which employs double-directed parallelism—the rest of the passage not mentioned above. The part that does not employ double-directed parallelism corresponds to the part that does. Coupling this correspondence with the rhyme scheme of the passage mentioned above, Gentz argues that the mentioned passage should not be read literally.³⁸ If his reading is correct, the right way of understanding this passage is a complete reversal of the traditional reading. This passage will mean that the superior men are not in the literal sense superior to the inferior men, they represent the seemingly superior people who diligently try to put the Way into practice—possibly in vain. Gentz reads this as a criticism directed towards Confucians, who diligently cultivates themselves in hope to achieve the Way.

³⁸ Gentz argument for this is long and complicated, for a detailed account, refer to his work on “Defining Boundaries and Relations of Textual Units: Examples from the Literary Tool-Kit of Early Chinese Argumentation” page 122-7.

According to this logic, the inferior men are not in their literal sense inferior to the superior men, they represent the seemingly inferior people who are characterised by laughing out loud. Here, the inferior men's action can be understood as representative of the Daoist's ideal, which goes against any kind of conscious, deliberate act of cultivation.

From the above, we find examples on how furthering our understanding on literary forms, specifically parallelism, can lead to profoundly different readings, ranging from a shift in emphasis of meaning to its complete subversion. Scholars like Graham provides justification as to why parallelism can be crucial to understanding the meaning of Chinese texts. He argues that parallelism provides information as to how the Chinese conceive of the world. This is because he believes that beyond the parallelism in Chinese texts lies correlative schemas that represents the correlative level of thinking. This level of thinking, which is characteristic of Chinese thinking, reflects the yin-yang correlative schematising that lays out clearly "the full range of comparisons and contrasts which other kinds of thinking leave implicit" (Graham 1986: 2).³⁹ In simple words, parallelism in Chinese texts allows us direct access to the Chinese way of thinking.

In conclusion, literary form like parallelism can shape the way we understand Chinese texts and, in turn, our philosophical perspectives on these texts. This is not to say that literary forms itself can make adjudicative claims in interpreting the meaning of Chinese texts. Instead,

³⁹ The explicit list of comparisons and contrasts lay bare the correlates, which draws from their understanding from the world, granting us to access their worldview. This worldview does not merely include the correlates postulated by the Chinese culture, more importantly, it shows how the Chinese thinkers organise the world through correspondence of the correlates. Similar points are advanced by Harbsmeier. He mentions that the profound aspect to parallelism is that it represents how the Chinese thinkers view the world as a harmoniously patterned whole in which different levels of reality, for example social, political, personal, and etc., correspond with. In short, he claims that "linguistic parallelism is a linguistic reflection of the intellectual habit of parallel pattern, 'correlative thinking'" (Harbsmeier 1956: 104).

it is a call to acknowledge the interplay between literary form and the—philosophical—meaning of Chinese texts. Specifically, literary form can serve as a useful guide to the construction of the meaning of Chinese texts. Thus, the above examples, admittedly controversial, should not be understood as a subversion of our traditional way of understanding the meaning of Chinese texts, but a justified reason to rethink and reinvestigate any traditional interpretations, should there be a conflict with its literary form.

Logical-ness of Wang's Conception of Oneness

Although the wealth of examples above is restricted to ancient periods of China, I believe that similar examples can also be found in later periods of China. The intimate relation between literature and philosophy can at least be generalised to make it relevant to the case at hand. Since Wang's conception of oneness is encased and expressed in parallelism, understanding this literary form is crucial to understand his conception of oneness. In this section, I shall explore the flow of reasoning and evaluate the logical-ness in Wang's conception of oneness. Specifically, I show that the syntactic repetitions that condense different configurations of the one, many, and conditions to form different modes of reasoning to account for oneness is not alien to our modern sensibilities. Furthermore, I show that the logical move to use context or conditions to describe the relationship between the one and the many is a logical move called precisification.

Here, I explore the flow of reasoning for Wang's conception of oneness, by highlighting how each mode of reasoning takes on a specific configuration of parallelism. The general feature of Wang's modes of reasoning is that it is constituted by conditional sentences, which are stacked into a parallel unit to produce modern equivalences of certain logical reasoning. Recall that the general mode is made up of subject-predicate sentences taking the grammatical form of "One : Condition : Many." The effect of repeating this conditional sentence is a modern equivalence of the description how the many are subsets of the one. In simple words, it

describes on how the many can be understood as different parts of the one under respective conditions. We can synthesize this general reasoning presented in parallelism, to get the following reasoning represented in the diagram below:

Reasoning with the idea of subset is not alien to our modern sensibilities. One modern application of such reasoning can be employed in describing the relationship between H₂O and its three different states. Under the condition of 100 degree Celsius, H₂O manifests itself as water vapour, under the condition of room temperature, H₂O manifests itself as water, and under the condition of 0 degree Celsius, H₂O manifests itself as ice.⁴⁰ Hence, ice, liquid, and water vapour are subsets of the chemical compound H₂O in that they are manifestations of it. We can see how the example of H₂O and ice, water, and water vapour is analogous to the example of innate knowledge and spirit, force, and essence employed by Wang mentioned above. Even though identities of the one, many, and conditions or context differ, the logic behind their explanations remains the same. Both the ones—H₂O and innate knowledge—directly give rise to each of the respective many mediated by a specific condition or context. For H₂O, the condition or context describes the temperature of the H₂O molecules, while for innate knowledge, the condition or context describe the physical state of innate knowledge. In

⁴⁰ This example may be an oversimplification of the different states of H₂O. For example, the H₂O does not necessarily have to be at 100 degree Celsius to manifest as water vapour, there is a fourth state of matter known as plasma form, etc. However, this example remains illustrative for our purposes.

both cases, the condition or context captures the specific state or characteristic of the one that is required to yield a corresponding many in a direct relationship—this is opposed to the chain mode, where the many are mostly to the one indirectly. Even though one may not recognise the identity of the one, the many, and the conditions mentioned in Wang’s general reasoning above, one can, nevertheless, understand the line of reasoning that is employed as it corresponds to how we reason with the idea of subset.

Recall that the chain mode is made up of subject-predicate sentences taking the grammatical form of “Many_x : Condition : Many_{x+1}.” The effect of repeating these conditional sentence is a modern equivalence of chain conditional reasoning. In simple words, it describes how the many can be understood as different parts of the one under a chain of conditions. We can synthesize the chain reasoning presented in parallelism, to get the following reasoning represented in the diagram below:

Chain conditional reasoning, too, is not alien to our modern sensibilities. In fact, we can understand the chain reasoning by Wang above without much appeal to its cultural context. This is because the line of reasoning and identities of the one, the many, and the conditions used loosely corresponds to our modern understandings: the body is controlled by the mind, this mind is in the state of knowing, this state of knowing operates by having an intention, this intention must be directed at something. Although the passage does not provide details on the one in the text, we can infer that it seems to be providing some kind of account on perception. The many are related to each other and unified through this account of perception characterised by this chain of conditionals. Here, we are familiar with most of the identities of one, many,

and condition or context, thus it is not difficult to realise that the chain mode of reasoning corresponds to how we reason with a chain of conditionals.

Recall that the general mode is made up of subject-predicate sentences taking the grammatical form of “Many_x: Condition : Many_y.” The effect of repeating these conditional sentences with only two “many” is a modern equivalence of biconditional reasoning. In simple words, when one of the concept in the biconditional relation is referred to, the other concept in the biconditional relation is necessarily referred to as well. We can synthesize the loop reasoning presented in parallelism, to get the following reasoning represented in the diagram below:

Biconditional reasoning is a common type of reasoning we use. One modern application of such reasoning can be used to describe the relationship between the coin with two sides, top and bottom. The top and bottom side of the coin are both references to the one coin. However, the top side of the coin is not just the top side of the coin, specifically, it is the top side of the bottom of the coin. Similarly, the bottom side of the coin is not just the bottom side of the coin, it is the bottom side of the top of the coin. According to this logic, by referring to the top side of the coin, one will inevitably be referring to the other side of the coin. One cannot simply refer to one side of the coin without reference to the other side of the coin. Therefore, both sides of the coins are inseparable and mutually entailing. To conclude, the loop mode of reasoning accounts for oneness in virtue of the loop relation binding the many as one. We can see how the example of two sides of a coin is analogous to the example of principle and pattern described by Wang as mentioned above. Even though identities of the one, many, and

conditions or context differ, the logic behind their explanations, again, remains the same. Both the ones—the coin and the compound concept of principle and pattern—directly give rise to each of the respective many mediated by a specific condition or context. For the coin, the condition or context describes the two physical aspects of the coin, while for the compound concept of principle and pattern, the condition or context describes two possible states of the compound concept. In both cases, the condition or context captures the specific state or characteristic of the one that is required to yield a corresponding many, where the many are inseparable aspects of the one. Even though one may not recognise the identity of the one, the many, and the conditions mentioned in Wang’s loop reasoning above, one can, nevertheless, understand the line of reasoning that is employed as it corresponds to biconditional reasoning.

In logical terms, the addition of context or condition as a further description on the relationship between the one and the many is known as precisification. Precisification, generally, means providing more information to an indeterminate sentence so that a truth value can be yield. Indeterminate sentences for our purposes refer to ambiguous or vague sentences that do not have a clear referent and therefore lacks truth value. For example, the sentence “The man is tall” is an indeterminate sentence that cannot yield any truth value as it is unclear as to what is meant by tall, as there is not objective standard measure of what qualifies someone to be tall. In order to make sense of this sentence, we can precisify it by saying “The man is tall; the average height of a man is 176 cm and he is 180cm.”

We can see how this is useful to understand Wang’s move to clarify the relationship between the one and the many. He attempts to differentiate the one and many by adding information in the form of context or condition to indicate the “one” the many is part of. These contexts or conditions are predicates that describe the state the “one” can manifest in. The differentiation is at work when the context or condition specifies a part of the “one” the many

is identical to. Thus, the “many” are only identical to a certain manifested part of the one.⁴¹ In other words, the “many” shares the same amount of properties to a manifested part of the “one.” Thus, the identity relation between the one and many can only be obtained when the context or condition is specified.

From the perspective of reasoning, the context or condition is crucial for us to reason with the one and the many. By positing that the many are parts that constitute the one, I am simply stating a matter of fact; there is no reasoning involved. However, with the addition of the condition or context, it allows us to reason with regards to this issue. Explicitly, by having knowledge of the how exactly the one manifests or diversifies itself into many through specific condition or context, we are able to reason and derive the corresponding many when we were only provided information about the condition or context. Similarly, if we were provided only information about the many, we will be able to reason and derive the context or condition that yields the many.

To sum up this chapter, I attempt to reject the problematic assumption that being poetic is not compatible to being logical. I show that this assumption does not square well with the Chinese culture. Thus, I propose that the modern saying of “literature, history, and philosophy do not part ways” is a better way to understand the Chinese text. As such, I show how Wang’s modes of reasoning as well as current efforts in modern scholarship supports this modern saying. Ultimately, my aim is to show that reasoning within the Chinese texts do employ extensive literary forms like parallelism, but they are, at the same time, logical.

⁴¹ The definition of “identity” I employ is that “no two objects have exactly the same properties” (this is adopted from <https://plato.stanford.edu/entries/identity-indiscernible/>). Another useful working definition is “two objects are the same if one object has a property just if the other does” (Priest 2014: 19). This definition of identity will be employed throughout this paper.

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