THREE

Heavenly Principle/Universal Principle and History

1. TIME AND PROPENSITY OF TIME

In *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought*, questions about the relationships between empire and nation-state and between systems of enfeoffment *(fengjian)* and centralized administration *(junxian)* emerge from a more fundamental line of thought in intellectual history: the establishment of "Heavenly Principle" *(tianli)* and the changes in intellectual thought that unfolded through transformations in the relationships between "principle" *(li)* and "things" *(wu)*.[1] The first half of *The Rise of Modern Chinese Thought* discusses the significance of this issue in the context of Confucian thought, and the second half continues with observations of the formation of the scientific worldview and its internal contradictions. The problem of the relationship between "principle" and "things" addresses the themes of change and stasis and continuity and discontinuity—that is, the problem of "the order of things" and its natural unfolding. Within this framework, all of the political and social problematics previously discussed can be seen as the historical form of this order and its unfolding. The discussion of the worldviews of Heavenly Principle and the axiomatic Universal Principle is actually an inquiry into unique characteristics of, historical changes in, and claims to legitimacy made for Chinese identity in different eras. Simply put, the Heavenly Principle, as a universal set of values for a moral-political community, is the key concept for moral-ethical

praxis, cultural identity, and political legitimacy in China "before the West." The disintegration of a worldview based on Heavenly Principle meant that this moral-political community and its sense of identity that took shape over a long stretch of history fell into crisis. As the result of this disintegration, the emergence of the Universal Principle/scientific worldview indicates that previously extant forms of identity had already become difficult to maintain. Alongside the expansion of the capitalist-colonialist system, the nation-state model then becomes a dominant political form. In the midst of China's own transformation, the traditional historical-political identity of the hybrid state cannot but give way to a kind of newly emergent form of identity found in a national identity that takes shape within the framework of the worldview of Universal Principle. In cases ranging from early nationalist ideology's dependence on the worldview of Universal Principle to the implicit connections between Universal Principle and the Chinese Communist movement and its ideology, it becomes clear that the Heavenly Principle worldview and the model of identity that it embodied could no longer provide a legitimate basis for Chinese identity.

Just as the worldview of Heavenly Principle resisted and even defeated the dominant influences of Buddhism, Taoism, and local religions with its ability to structure common sense in daily life, cosmology, epistemology, and ritual practice, the modern scientific worldview (or worldview of Universal Principle) challenged the dominant position of the worldview of Heavenly Principle through the structuring of its cosmology, historiography, and methodology, as well as its appeal to common sense. In a large number of documents from the late Qing to the "May Fourth" era, we can sense the sharp opposition between the worldviews of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle. First, Universal Principle reversed the view of history presented by Heavenly Principle, locating the realization of an ideal politics and morality not in the past but in the future. This reversal collapsed the sense of historical truncation or discontinuity embedded within the Confucian worldview, along with the will to produce connections and continuity with tradition that were produced by this sensibility, substituting this consciousness with another historical consciousness that emphasized the continuity of history and end-

less evolution—and the will to break from the past that is produced by this consciousness. Under the dominance of this historical consciousness, the primary emphasis is not a construction of traditional orthodoxy through individual moral-political practices, but the commitment to the project of the future; this commitment expresses a historical will to produce a new ethics. Second, the worldview of Universal Principle substituted concepts of the "propensity of the times" *(shishi)* and the "propensity of principle" *(li shi)* found in the worldview of Heavenly Principle with a linear concept of time that extends into the future.[2] Concepts of the "propensity of the times" and the "propensity of principle" are internal to the transformation of material things and do not weave the transformation of material things into a teleological timeline. Linear time, however, provides a teleological framework that brings the entirety of changes, transformations, and developments of the *Lebenswelt* into a teleological sequence. Third, the worldview of Universal Principle structured the category of "fact" in a teleological way to attack the metaphysical assumptions of the worldview of Heavenly Principle, attempting to use the logic of the fact or natural principles as a basis for structuring ethics and politics. With the establishment of this atomistic notion of facts, any resistance to the logic of facts or natural principles was forced to recognize the binary between facts and values. This ethical orientation stood directly in opposition to previous efforts to overcome the binaries of Cheng-Zhu neo-Confucian orthodoxy that had been undertaken by such thinkers as Lu Xiangshan (1139–1193), Gu Yanwu (1613–1682), and Zhang Xuecheng (1738–1801) in the fields of "learning of the heard-mind" *(xinxue)*, studies of the classics, and studies of history.

However, in its critique of neo-Confucianism, the modern "worldview of scientific Universal Principle" also adopted the vision of the natural order found in neo-Confucianism. When comparing the moralism of Thomas Huxley (1825–1895) and the naturalism of Herbert Spencer (1820–1903), Yan Fu (1854–1921) explained the differences between the two by making direct reference to the "Theory of Heaven" *(tian lun)* as discussed by Liu Zongyuan (773–819) and Liu Yuxi (772–842), undertaking a "naturalist" critique of evolutionary ideas such as "natural selection" and "survival of the fittest" through an application of the model of

the "Theory of Heaven."[3] Starting with modern theories of evolution, Yan Fu worked his way back to the theories of Heaven put forward by Liu Zongyuan and Liu Yuxi, linking his version of the concept of natural selection *(wujing tianze)* with Liu Yuxi's argument that "the myriad things are regarded as limitless . . . because each has the advantage in its own sphere and each functions by turn in its own sphere."[4] Yan Fu believed that these links revealed a basic historical fact: even from within the historical outlook found in evolutionary thought, the grounds on which the "Theory of Heaven" served as a basis of legitimacy for the existing order of reality had not changed.[5] At the same time, Yan Fu followed Zhu Xi's logic of "investigating things and extending knowledge" *(gewu zhi zhi)* to understand the significance of scientific methods and to attempt to unify scientific knowledge with moral and ethical practice. For these reasons, the decline of the Heavenly Principle worldview and the rise of the scientific worldview are not a simple relation of succession and supplanting; deep entanglements bind the two. For example, the category of "the transformations of heaven" *(tianyan),* the term that Yan Fu used to translate "evolution," understands modern states, societies, markets, and many categories of rights and powers to be the result of natural processes of evolution, providing reformist social agendas with a set of theories drawn from the social sciences. How different can this use of "transformations of heaven" *(tianyan)* really be from the way that neo-Confucians used the categories of Heavenly Principle to provide support for their social thought?

Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle were used not only for critiques of society by gentry elites, for social protest by lower classes, as evidence for the legitimacy of an old order's replacement by a new order, or even as the ultimate moral goal of modern revolutions, but also as evidence for the legitimacy of ruling orders in different societies. A wide variety of critical movements and resistance movements understood Heavenly Principle or Universal Principle to be ultimate, universal values; by slicing through the artificial linkages between either Heavenly Principle or Universal Principle and the existing order, they exposed how essential aspects of that order were in conflict with Heavenly Principle or Universal Principle. Yet if this absolute and universal value were to be-

come removed from the actual activities of resistance, it would, in turn, become a basis of legitimacy for a new set of hierarchical relations. In this sense, ideas such as Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle were similar to ancient ideas of the Mandate of Heaven *(tian ming):* they used the name of heaven/nature *(tian)* or the universal *(gong)* to bring legitimacy to existing orders, and also used the name of heaven or the universal to provide a rational basis for revolution and rebellion. Modern society, therefore, did not extract itself from a dependence on a self-legitimating universal set of values, which is also to say that modern society never completely unified society's modes of existence with its modes of evaluating moral questions in the way that was achieved in the ancient society of rites/music.[6] The worldviews of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle both appeal to daily life to discuss morality and questions of political legitimacy, but both also retain certain metaphysical characteristics and certain degrees of tension and distinction between the actual and the ideal. In this sense, the worldview of Universal Principle follows the logic of the worldview of Heavenly Principle to establish its own rationality and legitimacy.

Any understanding of Heavenly Principle or Universal Principle cannot and should not begin with a highly precise conceptual definition of the terms, but rather from a discussion of the processes of their historical emergence. The historical processes in which these principles emerged are found in the conditions where they are manifested in everyday practices, such as politics, ethics, and economy. Heavenly Principle or Universal Principle are not abstract concepts, definitions, or forms of discipline, but are something that humans faced every moment of every day and that they needed to make choices and decisions. Therefore, even though various schools of Confucianism and modern historians of intellectual history and philosophy have offered a great number of definitions of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle, these definitions cannot provide or advance an essential understanding of them. In this sense, an understanding of the relationship between Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle cannot concern itself merely with conceptual continuity and discontinuity, but should analyze the fundamental social transformations that occurred during this process of substitution and succession. If

we say that the dominant position of the worldview of Heavenly Principle was produced in the process of the historical formation and perfection of the Tang and Song dynasties, and that the worldview of Universal Principle is a precondition for the modern, programmatic legitimacy of the nation-state, then there will be no possibility whatsoever that our examination of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle and their mutual relations will bypass a discussion of systemic social changes. The concepts of Heavenly Principle or Universal Principle, however, are always linked to the choices and judgments that people make in specific situations and in the practice of daily life, and thus we can only grasp the fundamental significance of these two concepts by understanding social relations as a process of ethical and moral choices. In a certain sense, at the core of the social imaginary is the imagination of the moral order: all social relations must be interpreted as a moral relationship. For example, the scientific worldview tends to understand ethical relations as a material relation (relations of interest and necessity), and thus uses a knowledge about nature and society (natural sciences, social sciences, and human sciences) to eliminate the mysterious aspects of these relations. On the other hand, the worldview of Heavenly Principle is the exact opposite: it tends to see all material relations or relationships of interest as a moral relation, the heart-mind/nature relation, or a metaphysical relation, and thus uses a moral knowledge (neo-Confucianism, studies of the classics, or history) to understand all varieties of actual relations. Therefore, science, social sciences, and human sciences should all be understood as moral knowledge, whereas forms of Confucian learning such as neo-Confucianism, studies of the classics, and traditional history should also be understood as knowledge of nature, material things, systems, and behaviors. The former sees "principle" as a "material" relation, whereas the latter sees "material" as a relation of "principle"; therefore any inquiry into "principle" must take an inquiry into "material" as its starting point, and any inquiry into the "material" must take an inquiry into "principle" as its starting point. The distinction between *li* (principle) and *wu* (things/the material) must be understood through a discussion of the emergence, transformation, and conditions of these two concepts. It is for just this reason that I place *li* and *wu*, these two ancient yet very young categories, at the center

of the historical narrative; by tracing their genealogies, I show how the continuously changing historical relationships between knowledge, institutions, and moral judgment unfold.

How, then, are we to understand the relationship between the worldviews of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle? Let us begin with the common understanding of the worldview of Heavenly Principle. Its establishment was of decisive significance for the formation of neo-Confucianism *(lixue)* and provided a central category around which major questions of Confucian learning were reorganized and developed. From the Yuan dynasty onward, Cheng-Zhu neo-Confucianism was established by rulers as the standard version of official Confucian learning. This political development led the neo-Confucian worldview to become a dominant ideology, to the extent that any practice of thought directed against the dynasty and its institutions would always to some degree constitute an implied critique of neo-Confucianism. Ming-dynasty "learning of the heart-mind" *(xinxue)* and "unadorned learning" *(puxue)* both implied a certain degree of rejection and resistance to official neo-Confucian learning. Such critiques of official neo-Confucianism, however, did not necessarily enable those versions of critical thought to escape the basic assumptions of neo-Confucianism. On this matter, two points merit special attention. First, a suitable distinction must be made between official neo-Confucianism and the neo-Confucianism of the gentry elites, thereby placing into a more complex set of historical relationships the processes by which a certain kind of neo-Confucianism gained official status and by which other critiques of dynastic institutions were presented by neo-Confucian thinkers. Second, forms of Confucian learning such as "learning of the heart-mind," "unadorned learning," and studies of history were all produced through rejection and critique of neo-Confucianism, especially official neo-Confucianism. However, these schools of thought retained to varying degrees some of the basic concerns of neo-Confucianism and continued to respond to some of the problems to which neo-Confucian thinkers also attempted to respond. Important themes in Qing-dynasty thought epitomized by Gu Yanwu's statement that "the study of principle *(lixue)* was the study of the classics *(jingxue)*" emphasized that the model of the study of the classics was the only appropriate path for answering

those basic questions put forward by neo-Confucian learning, and thus forms of Confucian learning such as "learning of the heart-mind," studies of classics, and studies of history can all be seen as the transformation, development, and extension of the neo-Confucian worldview. Fundamental challenges to the neo-Confucian worldview did arrive in the late-Qing era: in the process of reforming state institutions, Universal Principle, a concept with a type of new, positivist-oriented view of science, rose to become the highest category that could provide the basis of rationality and legitimacy for politics, morality, and processes of recognition. With their position supported by this Universal Principle, reformist gentry and intellectuals used a new kind of scientific view of the universe and theories of society to undertake a thoroughgoing critique of the worldview of Heavenly Principle, ultimately supplanting it in terms of ideology and institutions of knowledge.[7]

The process by which the scientific worldview of Universal Principle established its hegemony can be divided into two distinct phases. In the late-Qing period, scientific thought, scientific practice, and scientific knowledge were an organic part of the larger body of social thought, social practice, and new knowledge. However, Yan Fu, Liang Qichao, Du Yaquan (1873–1933), and many other editors of and writers for scientific periodicals did not coalesce into a fully specialized scientific community. These figures' interpretations of the meaning of science, whether they were put forward by advocates for reform or propagandists for revolution, were always limited by the boundaries of rhetorical models such as science/civilization, science/historical era, science/state, or science/society. With the establishment of the Republic of China, specialized communities of science did form out of the division and growth of other social groups and knowledge communities, establishing their legitimacy through a position of specialization that was unrelated to politics, society, culture, and other such fields. This faith in science for science's sake was the product of a new division of labor and new institutions of knowledge. Why, then, did these professions of science and their practices in education and technical fields, which supposedly were unrelated to society and politics, form into such an authoritative force in the social-political field? Why was it that the strict division between science and humanistic knowledge

led to the scientific view of the universe and the dominance of scientific discourse over fields of humanistic learning? If our discussion departs from the hegemonic position of worldview of Universal Principle and its methodology, we have no way to explain this phenomenon.

The concept of Universal Principle is closely related to the rise of modern European epistemology, became the foundation of modern European science and the methodologies of the human sciences. According to Gadamer,

> Modernity is defined—notwithstanding all disputed datings and derivations—quite univocally by the emergence of a new notion of science and method. This notion was worked out initially in a partial field of study by Galileo and philosophically grounded for the first time by Descartes. Since the seventeenth century, therefore, what we today call philosophy is found to be in a changed situation. It has come to need legitimation in the face of science in a way that had never been true before; and for all of two centuries right down to the death of Hegel and Schelling, it was actually constructed in such a self-defense against the sciences. The systematic edifices of the last two centuries are a dense succession of such efforts to reconcile the heritage of metaphysics with the spirit of modern science. Thereafter, with the entry into the positive age, as it has been called since Comte, one seeks to save oneself upon solid land from the storms of mutually conflicting world views with a merely academic seriousness about the scientific character of philosophy. And so philosophy entered into the bog of historicism, or got stranded in the shallows of epistemology, or goes back and forth in the backwater of logic.[8]

Working from a variety of perspectives and directions, thinkers such as Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, and Hume developed concepts of atomism and individualism into a systematic method for observing the world, replacing the central position of God with the central position of the human being. In this focus on the human as individual, the first question faced by modern European thought was the relationship between the person and his or her environment—material objects and other intelligences: How

did humans understand people and things that were external to them? How did consciousness and knowledge of the world develop? What kinds of mechanisms controlled the ways that humans obtain knowledge? We understand these principles of epistemology to be the worldview of Universal Principle because, since the Enlightenment in eighteenth-century Europe, people have attempted to use these epistemological principles to discover the principles of the natural universe and a set of moral principles that are both rational and just. They have argued that these principles

> are equally valid and place equal restrictive power on all rational and reflective beings, regardless of the particularities of their cultural traditions, religious backgrounds, political orders, or moral and ethical structures. In politics, this ambition was expressed in the major declarations that emerged from the American Revolution and French Revolution. Among philosophers, Hume, Diderot, Bentham, and Kant all endeavored to provide theoretical explanations of these principles.[9]

The transformation from Heavenly Principle to Universal Principle is a process of extreme conflict. Just as the dominance of the Heavenly Principle worldview was produced through institutional relationships, the dominance of the Universal Principle worldview was produced through the establishment of the model of sovereignty of the modern state and its institutions of knowledge. If the worldview of Heavenly Principle used the order and institutions of rites as a natural and rational order, then the worldview of Universal Principle used atomism and individualism to deconstruct and critique the worldview of Heavenly Principle and its social significance.

Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle both address questions of the relationship between heart-mind *(xin)* and things *(wu)* and the order of things: "Heaven" *(tian)* and "Universal" *(gong)* both represent an appeal or claim to universality, whereas "Principle" *(li)* indicates a rule or law that both exceeds "things" yet is also internal to "things." It is worth noting that, during the process in which the worldview of Universal Principle put forward a sharp critique of the worldview of Heavenly Principle,

"principle" *(li)*, a concept that represents the universal order beyond time and space, was in fact retained, even in this revolutionary transformation. An obvious piece of evidence for this comes from the Chinese language itself: in Chinese, the concept of Heavenly Principle *(tianli)* and Universal Principle *(gongli)* both rely on and appeal to the concept of "principle" *(li)* and ideas behind it. Late-Qing intellectuals used categories such as "the study of principle" *(lixue)*, "fathoming patterns" *(qionglixue)*, "investigation of things" *(gewu)*, and "extension of knowledge" *(gezhi)* to translate the term "science" and its processes of understanding, thereby forming unintentional, unconscious linkages between Universal Principle—a concept from the natural sciences—and Heavenly Principle—a category from neo-Confucianism.[10] With these facts in mind, we cannot avoid the following questions: Why did both the ancient order and modern order need to appeal to the category of "principle" *(li)*? Why could category of "principle" *(li)* be used in modern epistemology? Just what kind of relationship exists between the worldview of Heavenly Principle and the Universal Principle (scientific) worldview? Is it a relationship of continuity or one of revolutionary supplantation? As with the development of neo-Confucianism, a process of institutionalization accompanied the development, spread, and transmission of the scientific worldview and its genealogy of knowledge. Therefore, in order to answer the questions just posed, we must analyze the process of the establishment of Heavenly Principle and its subsequent evolution. To understand the significance of Heavenly Principle, we must consider the following questions:

First, the concept of Heavenly Principle was produced in an environment of Confucian learning deeply influenced by the ideology of reviving antiquity *(fugu zhuyi)*. Beginning in the latter period of the Tang dynasty, Han Yu (768–824) and others declared that continuity with the Confucian orthodoxy *(daotong)* that stretched back to the time of Mencius (c. 371–c. 289 B.C.?) had been lost. This opinion was generally accepted by Confucian scholars of the Northern Song dynasty, who also took the restoration of orthodoxy as their duty. According to the worldview that advocated reviving antiquity, the Three Dynasties of Antiquity (Xia, Shang, and Zhou) *(sandai zhi zhi)* constituted the ideal society. In historical documents and political-moral discourses from this period, we

can repeatedly see a model of discourse that draws sharp contrasts between a variety of institutions from the Three Dynasties of Antiquity and the Qin and Han dynasties—the distribution and division of land, the organization of the military, the educational system, the state bureaucracy, and so forth. This model of discourse was produced by a consciousness of historical discontinuity. If we say that imaginings of the Three Dynasties of Antiquity are an important factor or theme in Confucian learning from Confucius onward, then it is also true that Song-dynasty Confucian learning structured this imagination of the Three Dynasties into a full consciousness of history and a critical resource. It is especially worth noting that Heavenly Principle was produced not by a sense of historical continuity, but rather was produced by a sense of historical *discontinuity,* and that the pursuit of Heavenly Principle itself must appeal to the power of the subject, a kind of will that, through the subject's practice, re-creates historical continuity that has been broken. In this respect, the sense of historical discontinuity has internal connections with the production of agency *(zhutixing).* This sense of discontinuity bore a deep and lasting influence on a wide variety of forms and developments of Confucian learning—such as neo-Confucianism, studies of the classics, and studies of history.

Let us begin our discussion with the relationship between a universal Heavenly Principle and the consciousness of a historical break or rupture. What must first be taken into consideration is the way in which this sense of historical rupture was expressed: historical rupture expresses not only the ending of a linear, unidirectional genealogy of orthodoxy *(daotong),* but also the historical fragmentation between rites/music and institutions, i.e., the institution of rites and music of the Three Dynasties of Antiquity underwent a dissimulation in the process of historical change, as in the case of the shift from a system of enfeoffment to a system of centralized administration, the shift from nonofficial schools and academies to the civil examination system, the decline of the well-field *(jingtian)* system and the rise of the equal-field *(juntian)* system, the sinicization of foreigners, China's conversion to foreign customs, etc.: these changes were not a continuation of orthodoxy, but rather phenomena produced *after* the break from orthodoxy. It was through the emergence

of this kind of historical consciousness that Song-dynasty Confucian scholars, through the development of interpretations of Heavenly Principle, were able to develop grounds for criticism and intervention in politics and everyday life. The concept of time put forward by the ideology of restoring antiquity—that is, historical "discontinuity," not "continuity"—provided an internal logic to the establishment of Heavenly Principle: Confucian scholars, then, had to establish connections with the Sage-Kings of antiquity through their discussion of Heavenly Principle and the Way of Heaven. Heavenly Principle was established in a discourse in which orthodoxy or the ideal order had already been cut off. Song-dynasty Confucians attempted to use this concept to establish a new understanding of the relationships between historical change and the ideal order or the natural order. Because the consciousness of rupture was expressed through the dissimulation between rites and music and institutions, heated debates surrounding Heavenly Principle and how to understand it were always closely tied to problems of political systems and daily life. It is exactly in this sense, then, that Heavenly Principle became the core of political-ethical consciousness for Confucian scholar-gentry from the Song dynasty onward.[11]

Second, by starting from the paradoxical relationship between Heavenly Principle and history, we can analyze the relationship between Heavenly Principle and "propensity of the times" *(shishi).* Under conditions in which the rites and music of the Three Dynasties of Antiquity had dissolved or, put another way, under conditions in which actual institutions were unable to provide moral rationality, Heavenly Principle was structured into the ultimate criterion and basis for moral evaluation. Therefore, the only way to reconstruct historical continuity was to cleave to Heavenly Principle, and thus the investigation of it and the investigation of history were, in fact, the same process. However, in the conclusions reached by Song-dynasty Confucians, cleaving to Heavenly Principle was not equivalent to a return to the ideal political system of antiquity, and thus Heavenly Principle was not locked in the ideal past. Heavenly Principle was produced not only from within a sense of historical fragmentation, but also from within a state that faced toward the present and the future. Heavenly Principle existed within a "natural propensity of principle" *(ziran zhi lishi)*

or "propensity of the times" *(shishi)*—and "propensity of the times" or "natural propensity of principle" became important internal aspects of Heavenly Principle.

"Propensity of the times" *(shishi)* is a concept used to transform historical rupture into continuity, as in the following line from Han Yu's "Rhyme-Prose of Taking Pity on Myself" *(Min ji fu):* "I regret that I cannot measure up to the men of ancient days; this is but the result of the propensity of the times."[12] In the *Emperor's Four Treasuries (Siku quanshu),* "propensity of the times" appears about 1,458 times, with 154 occurrences in texts related to the *Book of Changes (Yijing)* under the "classics" category *(jing bu),* with the majority of the remainder using the term to explicate the *Analects* and the *Mencius.* In the collections of texts by individual writers *(zi bu),* the term occurs 216 times, with many other instances in historical writings *(shi bu).* The *Analects* makes no reference to "propensity of the times," but Mencius praised Confucius as a "sage of timeliness" *(yi sheng zhi shi zhe),* which followed the commentary on the *gen* trigram in the *Book of Changes* that argues "rest when it is time to rest and move forward when it is time to move forward. When action and rest are not out of accord with the times, the Way is bright and clear."[13] Many subsequent commentators used the idea of "propensity of the times" or "propensity of principle" to explicate the *Analects* and *Mencius.* Cheng Yi (1033–1107) wrote: "To recognize the time and understand its [propensity], this is the great advice imparted by the study of the *Book of Changes.*"[14] Lu Zuqian (1137–1181) wrote: "To act in accordance with the purport of the times is great indeed. Men of the previous generation said that the 380 trigrams of the *Book of Changes* could be understood simply in terms of 'timeliness' *(shi).* Mencius grasped the indescribable greatness of Confucius by calling him 'a sage of timeliness.' "[15] To describe the principles of the *Book of Changes* in terms of "propensity of the times" was to make historical changes and their principles—as well as considerations on how to respond to these historical changes and their principles—into central problems of Confucian thought. Beginning with this view of the universe, Confucian thinking established an inherent link between the propensity of the times and moral action, emphasizing that "moral action *(dexing)* is quickened by the propensity of the times."[16] Confucian think-

ing also put forward the idea of the necessity for people to exercise power within an established framework, arguing the following:

> In the conduct of his affairs, the sage weighs *(quan)* what the situation requires and endeavors to begin at the proper time. Weighing what the situation requires is the guiding principle in all things, and action at the proper time is the leading principle in all affairs. Therefore there are few who, without relying on what the situation requires and in opposition to the propensity of the times, are able to carry a task to completion.[17]

In their use of principle *(li)* to explain Heaven *(tian),* Song-dynasty Confucian scholars gradually came to replace the concept of "propensity of the times" with the concept of "propensity of principle" *(li shi),* and thus the rhetoric of "adjustment to historical conditions" *(shishi)* came to provide a basis for interiority. In the works of Cheng Yi, we find only one mention of "propensity of the times" *(shi shi);* in Zhang Dai's works, three mentions of "propensity of principle" *(li shi);* in Zhu Xi's works, sixty-three uses of "propensity of the times" or "propensity of principle"; in the works of Lu Xiangshan, four uses of "propensity of the times" appear. Originally, the concept of "propensity of the times" was closely related to the *Yijing,* but Zhang Dai's work, *Hengqu's Discussions on the Book of Changes (Hengqu Yijing shuo),* substituted "propensity of principle" with "propensity of the times," as in this statement: "As for when the propensity of principle changes, and one cannot fully match with the current times, then this is not the most advantageous route."[18] Zhu Xi used both "propensity of the times" and "propensity of principle," but the frequency of the use of "propensity of principle" was much higher. For example,

> All principle *(li)* under heaven is based in what is correct and without deviance. It begins in what flows and is without blockage. Therefore, in regard to all propensity under heaven, that which is correct and fluid is always heavy and need not rely on anything external; that which is deviant and runs in opposition is always light and must rely on assistance from others. This is the inevitable result of the propensity of principle *(lishi).*[19]

"Propensity of the times" or "propensity of principle" relate to the significance of historical change: the function of these concepts is to explain why the institutions of the Sage-Kings of antiquity underwent transformations. It is very obvious that the concept of "propensity of the times" or "propensity of principle" were produced under conditions of historical rupture or disconnection from orthodoxy, and thus consciousness of historical rupture and consciousness of historical continuity exist side by side. Under conditions of historical rupture, "continuity" cannot be clearly delineated as specific historical instances of continuity, and thus continuity becomes a kind of internal, essential process and state; that is, continuity must make these delineations using abstract methods. Categories such as "time," "propensity," "propensity of the times," "propensity of principle," or "nature" *(ziran)* are all used in the midst of historical change to delineate and demonstrate the universal existence of the concept of Heavenly Principle. As historical change defines itself in terms of the dissimulation of the institutions of rites and music and strict divisions between the periods before and after the Three Dynasties period, then rupture becomes a part of the historical process, and people must ask: Just what force is dominating this historical process? How is it possible to grasp Heavenly Principle amidst continuous change or fragmentation? The concepts of "propensity of the times" or "propensity of principle" were produced in just this process of questioning. In the viewpoints produced by these two concepts, any effort to restore or return to the ideal conditions of the Three Dynasties must be based on a natural propensity of principle or propensity of the times, otherwise there is no way to understand why it is precisely the *discontinuity* that lies between the rites/music of the institutions of the Three Dynasties on the one hand and subsequent eras on the other that becomes the necessary form for constructing historical continuity. Mencius said that Confucius was "a sage of timeliness"; the *Book of Rites (Li ji)* says, "In (judging of) rites, the time should be the great consideration."[20] Here "time" and "timely" *(shi)* refers not only to an era and the changes it underwent but also to changes that take place through the propensity of the times. In the context of mainstream Confucianism, what is emphasized by "propensity" is a natural trend or natural force that dominates material changes: this natural trend

or natural force certainly always takes effect through individuals, institutions, and events that push for its self-realization, but it cannot be equated with material processes in themselves. The transition from "propensity of the times" to "propensity of principle" implies a weakening of the significance of time: what is emphasized by the concept of "propensity of principle" is the interiority of propensity. The importance of the concepts of "propensity of the times" or "natural propensity of principle" lies in the fact that even as Confucian scholars provided a kind of political ideal based in the ideology of reviving antiquity, the political ideals of this revivalism could not be equated with a "fundamentalism" mired in the old doctrine of earlier Confucian thought.

During the Tang-Song period, the idea of propensity of the times was closely related to views on the natural development of history or natural occurrence of historical events; "propensity of the times" was opposed to the Han-dynasty view of the universe expressed in the "Mandate of Heaven." For example, Liu Zongyuan argued that the transformation of political institutions was a product of the propensity of the times or a product of "adjustment to historical conditions" *(shishi)* and rejected the idea that any one political system could claim to be absolutely rational. These arguments created a philosophy of history centered on political forms. Just as Hegel saw the family, civil society, and the state as forms of historical evolution, Liu Zongyuan saw the system of enfeoffment and system of centralized administration as results internal to historical change: the transitions from "the rise of the power of rulers and the administering of punishments" in the earliest societies to the "establishment of the various nobles," from the regional earls *(fangbo)* and aggregation leaders *(lianshuai)* in feudal states to the system of centralized administration with concentrated central power,[21] were the products of long processes of historical evolution. Liu Zongyuan's view of the propensity of the times was, on the one hand, a rejection of the Han-dynasty framework of "mutual correspondence between Heaven and Man" that justified permanent rule of the system of enfeoffment and, on the other hand, an argument for a system of centralized power. Unlike Hegel, however, Liu's argument did not rely on an appeal to a teleological view of history, but rather was established on the views of history and nature

expressed by concepts such as "production and reproduction" *(shengsheng)* and "natural occurrence" *(zisheng),* expressed first in the *Book of Changes* and the *Zhuangzi* and elaborated by Guo Xiang (?–312). Springing from views of history and nature represented by "production and reproduction" and "natural occurrence," the system of centralized power defended by Liu Zongyuan also did not possess an eternal rationality, but rather was the product of the constantly changing propensity of the times.[22] The idealist attitude toward the Three Dynasties held by neo-Confucian scholars such as Zhu Xi was in some ways different from Liu Zongyuan's view, but was identical to Liu's view in the way it explained the rationality of the institutions of subsequent dynasties in terms of propensity of the times or "propensity of principle in nature."

In the development of Confucian thought, especially neo-Confucian thought, propensity of the times or a consciousness of propensity of the times is a neglected yet extremely important topic; this concept has served a key function in at least two areas. First, the concept of propensity of the times places history and its changes into the category of nature, deconstructing the decisive role that the Mandate of Heaven played in the human realm, and providing a space for historical acts by the subject. From the view of historical evolution, the Three Dynasties, serving as a moral-political ideal, are in a position that is hidden and not visible to the outside; the ideal of the Three Dynasties exists amid the process of change, and exists in the decisions weighed and made at every minute and every hour, but is not found in preexisting doctrine or in the mechanical reproduction of these doctrines. Neo-Confucians use the concept of nature to distinguish between events *(shi)* and things *(wu),* dividing all things between "natural" and "unnatural," judging what was natural and what was unnatural in terms of changes generated by the propensity of the times. Song-dynasty Confucian scholars frequently linked "investigating things and extending knowledge" with the concept of "knowing where to rest" *(zhi zhi).*[23] In this instance, "to rest" is a criterion that lies between what is natural and what is unnatural and requires a subject *(zhuti)* in order to be grasped. Song-dynasty Confucians venerated the Three Dynasties but did not use specific policies from the Three Dynasties as a plan for practice, opting instead to uphold Heavenly Principle as

a way both to seek out a rational solution in the midst of historical change and as a way to appeal to the goal of reaching sagehood through practice of individual self-cultivation in daily life. From recurring debates about "investigation of things" to sincere attempts to think through the relationship between accepted standards *(jing)* and expedients *(quan),* Song-dynasty Confucians and those who followed them all attempted to grasp the criteria of moral-political practice and the limits of propriety from within the framework of the movements of historical change, propensity of the times, or the natural propensity of principle. In his *Evidential Studies of the Meanings of Characters in the Mencius (Mengzi zi yi shu zheng),* Dai Zhen (1724–1777) provided a distinction between the natural *(ziran)* and the necessary *(biran),* placing great importance on the concept of the "expedient" *(quan):* the "expedient" implies that the subject must balance decisions between Confucian principles and specific situations and environments, reaching a harmonious balance between nature, propensity of the times, and human relationships.[24] In the process of naturalizing history, the concept of "propensity of the times" played an important role; if Heavenly Principle exists within the propensity of the times, then the individual must make decisions according to his or her ability to cultivate the self and to evaluate the propensity of the times. In this sense, the synthesis between Heavenly Principle and propensity of the times is precisely what provides space for the practice of the subject.

Second, the concept of propensity of the times reorganizes fragmented histories into relationships of natural transformation, thereby also creating a historical subject of natural historical transformation. Otherwise, once history has become fragmented and discontinuous, how are people to be able to reorganize it into a genealogy of institutional change that takes the Three Dynasties as its starting point? Changes in relations among different ethnic groups, the changing of dynastic genealogies, shifts in social structures, radical change in language and customs—all of these can be seen within the changes of propensity of the times and can be placed within an endlessly rich set of transformations experienced by the historical subject. Therefore, this concept provided an essential framework of identification for a consciousness of community or for a Chinese identity. In neo-Confucianism or learning of the

heart-mind *(xinxue)*, concepts such as the "natural propensity of principle" or "that which is made necessary by the propensity of principle" sought out the possibility of communication between Heavenly Principle and history. In the study of the classics and history, the concept of propensity of the times provided an important grounding for historical methodology: if Heavenly Principle existed within the propensity of the times, then it is a methodological error to pursue Heavenly Principle according to the methods of metaphysics—Heavenly Principle is a means of self-emergence for historical events, and any inquiry into Heavenly Principle that departs from historical change (like changes in customs and changes in political forms) will be unable to reach a true understanding of Heavenly Principle. Song neo-Confucianism *(lixue)* and classical studies *(jingxue)* together provided an important basis for Confucian views of history and methodology: neo-Confucianism placed moral practice within the order of the practice of self-cultivation, whereas classical studies argued that this process must be grounded in music and rites. Song- and Ming-dynasty neo-Confucianism and classical studies of the Qing dynasty all took the following questions as their basic points of departure: If deep discontinuity and transformation already separates the Three Dynasties from what followed, what must be done before we can reach a world that is truly in accord with rites and music? If we say that Song and Ming dynasty Confucian scholars thought through this question from within a framework of "investigating things and extending knowledge," then scholars of "unadorned learning" *(puxue)* attempted to use a unique methodology that would span all historical change, restoring every detail of a world governed by rites and music. Beginning with this question, Gu Yanwu developed an extremely precise set of methods of evidential learning, combining the methods of close textual investigation and phonology with an interest in historical developments, pursuing at each level the true sounds (of music) and significance (of rites) of the Three Dynasties according to their changes with the propensity of the times. According to Gu Yanwu's practices of phonology and philology and his discussions of customs and institutions, the internal threads of historical change formed the core of the methodology of evidential learning.[25] Zhang Xuecheng's famous dictum that "the Six Classics are all history"

not only provided an understanding of the contents of the classics, but also made the historical conditions of the formation of the classics as well as the changes they underwent an essential part of any understanding of the classics. In his argument that the *Dao* and actual things and affairs were unitary *(dao qi yi ti)*, Zhang made the knowledge of the sages subordinate to the processes of "nature" themselves.[26] The knowledge of the sages, in his view, was a knowledge of "what could not but be the case," knowledge that was produced through insightful observations of nature. Beginning with this historical ontology, Zhang developed a way of explaining the *Dao* through the relationships between historical changes to the system of rites/music and, from the relationships found in the propensity of the times, developed a critique of classifications of knowledge such as the "Six Arts" *(liu yi)*, "Seven Summaries" *(qi lue)*, and "Four Categories of Literature" *(si bu)* and their significance. When seen in terms of the transformation of the propensity of the times, the relationship between classic *(jing)*/master *(zi)* and classic *(jing)*/biography *(zhuan)* has been thoroughly upended: the master and biography are no longer produced through an understanding of "classics" *(jing)*, but the classics are produced in the way that they are restructured by masters and biographies; in other words, the father does not produce a son, but the son produces the father. This process of structuring the classics is in itself a product of institutional transformation (such as the establishment of the system of erudites [*boshi*] by Qin and Han scholars). In this respect the idea of propensity of the times provided a foundation for the birth of an archaeology and genealogy of the classics. For an archaeology or genealogy of the classics, the center of inquiry now includes not only exegesis of and evidential scholarship on the texts of the classics, but also an inquiry into the relationship between the process by which the classics obtain meaning and significance and their relationship to the propensity of the times—in other words, the politics and historicity of classical learning. From the standpoint of this particular kind of classical learning, both Gu Yanwu and Zhang Xuecheng understood the Three Dynasties of Antiquity and their institutions of rites/music to be the source of an ideal morality and politics, and both men strove to develop a complete set of methods similar to that of the rule of the Three Dynasties of Antiquity. It was precisely

because of this understanding of the propensity of the times that they structured their political-moral ideal in a way that avoided fundamentalism. Both Gu Yanwu's call to "suffuse the spirit of the system of enfeoffment within the system of centralized administration" *(yu fengjian yu junxian)* and Zhang Xuecheng's discussion of establishing a method of historiography from within historical changes were based on the Confucian view of the propensity of the times.[27]

By bringing together three major themes of neo-Confucianism such as the rule of the Three Dynasties of Antiquity, the propensity of the times (history) and Heavenly Principle, we can then understand why "investigation of things and extension of knowledge" *(gewu zhi zhi)* from the Song dynasty onward became such an important point of debate among Confucian scholars. The reference to and inspiration provided by the Three Dynasties of Antiquity was produced by a sense of historical rupture; and, when seen in terms of changes in the propensity of the times, this rupture served in various ways as an expression of the dissimulation between rites/music and institutions. In formulations of neo-Confucianism and historiography, the problem of the separation between rites/music and institutions was produced by an understanding of the distinction between the rites/music of antiquity and actual institutions. In other words, the rites/music of antiquity, which once could express the will of Heaven and standards of morality, had already transformed through course of history into a functionalist institution that was unable to commune with the will of Heaven. Separation between rites/music and institutions, however, was the result of transformations in propensity of the times, and the propensity of the times in itself was a means of expression for Heaven. Therefore, even if the institutions, customs, scholarship, and other practices of later dynasties were already completely detached from the rites and music of antiquity, as phenomena produced by transformations of propensity of the times, they still serve as "traces" that express and communicate ideal knowledge or the will of the sages. Seen in this light, in one sense, neither existing systems, laws, standards, nor orders that appeal to the words of the sages, nor knowledge passed down by our forebears, nor the authority of lords and kings can be equated with the rites and music of the Sage-Kings or with a universal Heavenly Principle;

this concept of Heavenly Principle (as well as the binary between rites/music and institutions) constitutes a type of questioning or suspicion of institutional authority. In another sense, any investigation of Heavenly Principle is inevitably an investigation of actually existing institutions, customs, habits, and scholarship. The pursuit of Heavenly Principle is a process that emerges from the interplay of general Confucian principles and specific historical situations, and thus many people became concerned with the question of what kind of method, path, and process can be used to discover, experience, or show Heavenly Principle within the transformation of propensity of the times. If we say that a sense of rupture or separation from orthodoxy fueled the desire to restructure a sense of continuity with that orthodoxy through individual self-cultivation and political practice, then the concept the propensity of the times also drove the need for a strong and robust methodology: What method could connect "things" and their changes, which are always tied to specific circumstances, while also obtaining an understanding of the general order? What method can overcome the externality and temporariness of "things" *(wu)* and reach a unity with "principle" *(li)*?

These questions are the internal force that led "investigating things and extending knowledge" *(gewu zhi zhi)* to become a major point of contention in debates among Confucian scholars from the Song dynasty onward. The paradox of "investigating things and extending knowledge" can be described as follows. On the one hand, if one lacks an understanding of Heavenly Principle, then the appropriateness or validity of any form of daily life is open to question, and it is impossible to establish any understanding of the significance of forms of daily life. On the other hand, Heavenly Principle is internal to the process of the emergence of daily life itself, and thus any approach that treats "investigating things and extending knowledge" as a cognitive activity that is external to the practice of daily life will fail to grasp Heavenly Principle. Heavenly Principle is neither a product of "investigating things and extending knowledge" nor the creation of the sages, but rather an existence waiting to be discovered that is internal to daily life yet not the same as daily reality. From the perspective of Confucian learning, forms of daily life that accord with Heavenly Principle exist only under conditions set out by rites and

music; if rites and music should devolve into hollow forms or merely functional institutions, then the relationship between Heavenly Principle and the everyday *Lebenswelt* is no longer transparent or direct, and thus it is only through the practice of "investigating things and extending knowledge" that one is able to reestablish internal connections between daily life and Heavenly Principle. In this sense, the demands placed by Confucian learning on methodology are deeply rooted in Confucian views of history. According to the historical perspective that is based on the separation of rites/music and institutions, the category of "things" *(wu)* has undergone deep transformation. In the category of pre-Qin rites and music, "things" are both a manifestation of the moral order and moral behavior in itself (the identical relation between "things" [*wu*] and "events" [*shi*] is established in the significance of the practices of rites and music), and thus the concept of "things" is identical to the concept of standards or norms; because the will of Heaven is directly manifested as the order of rites and music, the "things" as expressed in the "hundred things" *(bai wu)* within this order are also closely related to the idea of a natural order. However, with the separation between rites/music and institutions, the relationship between the will of Heaven and institutions becomes uncomfortable and unclear, and the normative meaning of "things" as understood in the discourse of rites and music gradually dissolves, and thus a concept of "things" appears that is unrelated to moral standards and focuses largely on the objectivity of representations (similar to the modern sense of the "fact"). Under conditions of dissimulation of rites/music and institutions, even if what is expressed by "things" are still the "events" found in the practice of ritual, because the practice of ritual in itself is formalistic and hollowed out, these practices, behaviors, and processes do not carry the significance of morality or standards of propriety. However, the shift in "things" took place in its relationship with the propensity of things, and thus possesses a dual nature: on the one hand, the shift in "things" is the result of fragmentation between rites/music and institutions, and thus "things" can no longer be equated with the standards of propriety within rites and music. On the other hand, if this process of fragmentation is a product of the propensity of the times, then the shift in "things" in itself is also a part of a natural process, and thus must

hold the "traces" of Heavenly Principle. For these reasons, then, the methodology of "fathoming the principles of things and affairs" *(ji wu qiong li)* becomes a pathway to return to the world of rites/music or the world of Heavenly Principle under conditions created by changes that occur in the propensity of the times. In the senses described previously, the concept of "things" (facts), which stands in contrast to values or standards of propriety, is the product of the continued fragmentation of rites/music and the institutional order.[28] Debates in Song-Ming neo-Confucianism about whether "nature is principle" *(xing ji li)* and whether "the heart-mind is principle" *(xin ji li)* and Qing-dynasty scholars' critiques of neo-Confucianism are always related to this transformation of the category of "things": If "things" transformed into a category of "facts," then how could an inquiry into "things" or "the nature of things" *(wuxing)* yield a basis for moral practice? Are "things" the "ten thousand things" *(wanwu)*, or "the heart-mind" *(ci wu)*, or the standards that arise from the institutions of rites and music?

In Chinese thought, "principle" *(li)* is a freighted expression for ideas of order. At its core, the question of "principle" and "things" is a question of the relationship between stasis and change, continuity and discontinuity; it can also be said to be a question of how to understand a variety of historical relationships and their transformations as a rational and natural process. It is an extremely important thread in research on intellectual history. In the field of Chinese thought, the concept of "principle" *(li)* is linked with categories such as "the Way" *(dao)*, "matter-energy" *(qi)*, "nature" *(xing)*, the "heart-mind" *(xin)*, "things" *(wu)*, "names" *(ming)*, and "words" (*yan*, also translated as "speech"). But "principle" obviously holds a central position in the logic of these categories: it combines and unites the common order and the transcendental order, the logic of cycles and the logic of linear change, thus becoming an omnipresent and natural category. What is meant by "omnipresent" is that "principle" is internal to the uniqueness of things and events; what is meant by "natural" is that "principle" is not a kind of rigid rule, but is an internal order that is expressed in the process of the transformation of "things" *(wu)*. Any understanding of "principle" is always linked with the sense of uniqueness implied by the concept of "things." "Things" can refer to events and

objects, and can also be ethical laws, objectively defined objects, subjective spirit, nature in its purity, and the practices of people.[29] From the perspective of "principle," the process of recognizing "things" always includes universalist assumptions about "principle"; yet from the perspective of "things," these assumptions about the universality of "principle" are always effected through specific situations and environments. Regardless of how the pursuit of practices of knowledge concerning "things" may become distant from our common understanding of moral behavior, it always has moral and ethical applications—at the same time, this judgment also implies that moral judgments and moral practices have always been moral judgments or moral practices that arise from specific situations and environments or relationships.

2. HEAVENLY PRINCIPLE AND UNIVERSAL PRINCIPLE

Since the late Qing, Chinese thought, institutions, and genealogies of knowledge have undergone extremely important transformations. Beginning with that period, scholars of various schools began to seek out the historical sources of this "modern" transformation. Just as many people are accustomed to seeing humanism (liberation from theocracy, gaining equality from feudal aristocracy, and establishing the central role of humans through the control of nature) as a central value of modernity, many people also understand the intellectual transformations that occurred in the Ming-Qing transition to be important historical clues for the appearance of modernity in China. Sharp differences can be found between the views on history presented by Liang Qichao, Hu Shi, and Hou Wailu, but their research on intellectual history shares two key judgments. The first key judgment is found in the argument that the turn in Song-Ming neo-Confucianism toward the modern can be found in the central place allotted to the "heart-mind" *(xin)* in the works of followers of Wang Yangming such as Wang Ji (1498–1583) and members of the Taizhou school such as Wang Gen (1483–1541). The most complete expression of this new view of order was put forward in the work of Li Zhi (1527–1602), who affirmed desire and self-interest. Modern scholars' arguments about the impor-

tance of the notions of the heart-mind in the Song and Ming dynasties clearly emerge from two frames of reference: first, the rise of ideas of the individual and the self in modern European thought; and second, modern thinkers' sharp critiques of neo-Confucianism and its social foundations. The second key judgment is found in arguments made by Liang, Hu, and Hou that the rise of evidential learning during the Qing dynasty contained positivist scientific methods and a teleological view of knowledge for the sake of knowledge. This revolution in methodology and views about the nature of knowledge were not only an attempt to resist "learning of the heart-mind and nature" *(xin xing lun),* but also contained elements of modern scientific methods. This argument emerges from the dual background of modern European scientific thought and Chinese critiques of neo-Confucianism. These two fundamental viewpoints shared by Liang, Hu, and Hou established the basic context for understanding changes in Song-Ming neo-Confucianism and Qing-dynasty thought: the idea of the self (and new ideas about privacy) and positivist methods continuously broke through the limitations of the metaphysical idea of Heavenly Principle, providing an internal force for movement toward the modern in Chinese thought. According to this line of argument, the rise of modern thought can be described as follows: (1) the liberation of the human, the discovery of the self, and the establishment of equal rights among private individuals; and (2) the use of the power of science to drive out evil spirits, or a process of rationalization. According to this logic, we can also make the following argument: modern ideas of equality and modern ideas of science (which are, in a certain sense, completely identical) disavowed the existence of any innate hierarchies and attempted to remake society according to a scientific Universal Principle, and thus argued that a completely antithetical relationship existed between modern Universal Principle and Heavenly Principle, which attempted to naturalize traditional hierarchical relations. These two fundamental ideas together implied a substitution of natural philosophies: modern society no longer needed naturalistic categories such as Heaven or Heavenly Principle to serve as the basis of its legitimacy. In this sense, Heavenly Principle was incompatible with modern society, and the rise of the modern worldview coincided with its decline.

We must reexamine these two views of the rise of modern thought. First, the arguments described previously are all based on judgments that disavow neo-Confucianism; that is, all work in a direction opposed to neo-Confucianism to delineate modern elements within Chinese thought—as when, starting from the perspective of modern individualism, neo-Confucianism is seen as the ideology of the feudal hierarchies, or, when, starting from the perspective of positivist views of science, neo-Confucianism is defined as a metaphysics lacking any grounding in reality. The forms of Confucian thought clearly had undergone many changes: from arguments made by Zhu Xi that "nature is principle" *(xing ji li)* to Wang Yangming's statement that "the heart-mind is principle" *(xin ji li);* from the claims of the later adherents of the Wang Yangming (1472–1529) school that "there is no distinction of good and evil in the original substance of the mind"[30] to the argument made by Li Zhi (1527–1602) that there was "no other and no self" *(wu ren wu ji);* and from arguments made by Gu Yanwu and Huang Zongxi (1610–1695) for the virtue of self-interest to Sun Yat-sen's motto that "all under heaven is shared by all" *(tianxia wei gong).* All such changes, however, still took place from within the categories of Confucianism or contained internal elements of Confucian thought, and shared a view of order established by neo-Confucianism. These critical modes of thought exposed hierarchies/control relationships hidden beneath the robes of Heavenly Principle, but the basis on which they depended to critique and expose these relationships still lay within Heavenly Principle itself—a new understanding and interpretation of Heavenly Principle. For example, investigations into heart-mind, nature, and self undertaken by Wang Yangming and his disciples developed out of the basic assumptions of neo-Confucianism. Its critique of Cheng-Zhu neo-Confucianism can in itself be seen as a result of the internal fragmentation of neo-Confucianism. Both in terms of their intellectual direction and methodologies, studies of the classics and history from the early Qing inherited the tradition of "investigating things and extending knowledge" advocated by neo-Confucianism. At the same time, these fields attempted to use the classics and history to answer the basic questions put forward by neo-Confucianism. Huang Zongxi's thought on political institutions, Gu Yanwu's analysis of customs and habits, and Dai

Zhen's exposure of the way some could "kill people in the name of principle *(li)*"—all of these developments took place within categories internal to Confucian learning, and all were motivated by the desire to restore and establish the original meanings of Heavenly Principle and the Way of Heaven. Therefore, if one wishes to show definitively that late-Ming and early-Qing thought contained elements of modernity, then one must also ask whether neo-Confucianism itself also contained these elements; this question cannot be fully grasped within the framework of neo-Confucianism and anti-neo-Confucianism. The Northern and Southern Song dynasties substituted views of Heaven that had been dominant since the Han dynasty with the concept of Heavenly Principle, and saw it as a realm that every person could reach through self-cultivation and cognition. This transformation could only be accepted under the conditions of social change that took place during the Tang and Song dynasties, which were epitomized by the decline of the system of hereditary aristocracy. Internal linkages, then, were established between Heavenly Principle and the moral practices of individual subjects. From this historical perspective, if we only take the decline of the concepts of Heaven or Principle as indications of modernity, then we have no way to understand the complex historical relationships between "modern thought" or "elements of modern thought" and the worldview of Heavenly Principle.

Second, scholars' discoveries of elements of modernity in Ming-Qing thought or in "early enlightenment" thought *(zaoqi qimeng zhuyi)* are rooted in practices of social history that link an emphasis on the individual or the self and ideas of equality with the history of the development of capitalism. This view is a result of attempts to link the teleology of modernity to the development of capitalist relations. The disavowal of hierarchies or a focus on interiority are not, however, exclusively modern phenomena; we need to understand *which* hierarchy is being disavowed. For example, in the Wei-Jin period the concept of "principle" underwent an important transformation: following the expansion of the system of centralized administration during the Qin and Han dynasties, forms of thought emerged that reaffirmed the aristocratic system of hierarchies and limitations on the emperor's power. Ideas about "principle" held by important figures in the Wei-Jin period and their emphasis on reverence

for the individual, self, and nature showed internal linkages to a desire to revive the spirit of the ancient system of enfeoffment that had emerged during a time of shared power between the imperial regime and powerful families *(menfa)*. Contrary to these developments, following the rebellion led by Wang Anshi during the Tang dynasty, people were deeply affected by the splitting up and loss of territory and crises created by war, and began to rethink questions of the necessity of maintaining a system that concentrated power in the hands of the emperor. Liu Zongyuan's essay "On Enfeoffment" *(Fengjian lun)* discussed the decline of the system of enfeoffment and the rise of social fluidity, mustering the "Way of Great Centrality" *(da zhong zhi dao)* against the system of official ranks *(pinji)*. The essay's argument for a grand unification of governance was closely related to the conflicts that arose between the Tang dynasty's expanding system of centralized administration and the older aristocratic hierarchies. The growth to maturity during the Northern and Southern Song dynasties of the civil examination system, the two-tax system *(liang shui fa)*,[31] and official bureaucratic system provided the basis for centralized political power and the development of urban economies, which, in turn, led to the total breakup of the aristocratic system characterized by enfeoffment. Set against this background, Song-dynasty Confucian scholars transformed "principle" and Heavenly Principle into foundational concepts of morality, setting them as a balance against the various institutions of the centralized administrative state and its standards; these scholars' concept of Heavenly Principle cloaked demands for shared power in the rhetoric of reviving antiquity. Based on their overall direction, we can see that the concept of Heavenly Principle was completely different from Liu Zongyuan's idea of the Way of Heaven (or the "Way of Great Centrality"), a politically freighted idea that he had used to attack the system of official rank and to establish a system of imperial power centered on the emperor. In fact, the problems emphasized by Heavenly Principle were how to place limitations on and balance out imperial power and the system of centralized administration. Therefore, on the one hand the emergence of the concept of Heavenly Principle shows an internal historical relation to the bankruptcy of hierarchies handed down from antiquity. On the other hand, this form of egalitarianism cannot be

equated with a complete endorsement of new social relations that arose under conditions created by the system of centralized administration. For example, Song-dynasty Confucians used the well-field system *(jingtian zhi)* to resist the equal-field system *(juntian zhi)* and two-tax system, used the patriarchal clan system to resist institutions of bureaucratic administration, and used the idea of academies *(xuexiao)* to resist the imperial examination system. Song Confucians, then, would find the way modern people link social change with a teleological view of time to be quite foreign: their criterion for evaluating change was not time, but rather an internal criterion—"the propensity of principle" *(lishi)*.

Third, because the patriarchal clan system of the Ming-Qing era used the worldview of Heavenly Principle as the basis for justifying its legitimacy, the critique of the patriarchal clan system and its ideology presented by the New Culture and May Fourth movements placed the values of the individual and the self in opposition to the worldview of Heavenly Principle, working within a framework of egalitarianism to define the worldview of Heavenly Principle as the ideology of hierarchy. This rhetorical strategy concealed the historical relationship between modern egalitarianism and new forms of social hierarchy. The atomistic view of the individual is a legal abstraction set against the backdrop of the modern state system; this abstraction extracts people from relations of family and locality and other social relations to structure them as individual entities bound by duties and obligations. This legal abstraction does not vacate actual relations among people, but demands the use of a new model for actual relations to regulate individual behavior, thereby reorganizing society according to these new standards. When legal relations are unable to regulate people's behavior completely, the idea of the individual produces a kind of interior concept of the self, one that understands the individual as an entity with internal depth. This depth of the individual, in turn, becomes the basis of morality and sentiment. These are the background conditions for the production of self-discipline through morality and sentiment. An internal tension exists between the atomized individual and the category of the self, as the concept of the self produces resistance to individualist social institutions. The rise of modern society, then, is a systemic transformation, one that involves not only

certain kinds of modes of recognition or individual rights and powers, but also a transformation of the entire social system and the basis of its legitimacy.

Fourth, it is on this point that we can find certain similar structures shared by the socially constructed oppositions that lie between the worldviews of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle. First, both ideas appeal to the value of equality. As they do so, however, they also serve to justify the legitimacy of projects to remake various social hierarchies. Second, certain connections exist between the modern concept of the self and ideas of the self found in neo-Confucianism and the "theory of the heart-mind and nature" *(xin xing lun)* found in "learning of the heart-mind" *(xinxue).* In their varying discourses, they all give rise to certain kinds of resistance and to critiques of new forms of social relations. In other words, the worldviews of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle accept new forms of social change (such as the decline of the system of hereditary aristocracy and the rise of the new state system, etc.) as a historical premise, and thus lend themselves to an affirmation of new social changes ("the propensity of the times"); both ideas, however, also contain internal tensions with these social changes and their legitimacy. For this reason, then, both principles also formed into critical intellectual resources for their respective eras. Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle are both internal to their respective eras but are also Others *(tazhe)* of their respective eras. It is this final point that distinguishes my narrative of Song-Ming neo-Confucianism from those views held by Naitō Konan and Miyazaki Ichisada: the Kyoto School's positive view of the Song dynasty is conditioned by assumptions about the nation-state. Their view of neo-Confucianism and its relation to elements of "Song-dynasty capitalism"—such as well-developed transportation, prosperous urban centers, a relatively free market, new systems of currency and taxation, constantly evolving divisions of labor, bureaucratic institutions and efforts to expand education based on the civil examination system, and a growing separation between government and the military—was fully in concert with the ideology of "nationalism,"[32] and thus failed to discover the tensions and critical oppositions that lie between the worldview of neo-Confucianism and the social processes that are subsumed beneath

the category of "Song-dynasty capitalism." It is essential, therefore, to distinguish between what Song-dynasty Confucians recognized as "the propensity of principle" *(lishi)* and those historical elements that today are included within such categories as modernity and capitalism; only then can we liberate these "key factors" from the logic of historical determinism (with modernization theory as the most complete and influential expression of this determinism in historical narrative). It is precisely this distinction that will be of great use to us in reaching a new understanding of the question of "the rise of modern Chinese thought": Why is it that we can see a type of paradoxical mode of thought, one that, to varying degrees, in the process of the pursuit of modernity, nonetheless retains critical stances toward capitalism and its political forms? This mode of thought can be found in the works of people such as Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao, Yan Fu, Zhang Taiyan, and Lu Xun (and in the leaders of two modern Chinese revolutions, Sun Yat-sen and Mao Zedong). How should we understand the complex relationships between modern thought and intellectual traditions from the Song dynasty onwards? Without a sense of the criteria and experiences that were part of these historical transitions, we have no way to understand the means by which they could both embrace and resist historical change, and we have no way to understand how they both pursued Universal Principle and firmly rejected declarations of universality that were made by borrowing the authority of Universal Principle.

Fifth, the worldviews of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle all appeal to categories of the "natural" *(ziran)* and the "necessary" *(biran)* to justify the rationality of moral-political practice. Because they make distinctions between the natural and necessary, the natural and the unnatural, the necessary and the accidental, these two worldviews both give a central place to considerations of methodology. The former sees "investigating things and extending knowledge" as the sole path to reaching Heavenly Principle, whereas the latter sees the methods of science as the one and only way to understand Universal Principle. The worldviews of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle both revolve around an absolute essence *(juedui cunzai)* that is both universal and internal (i.e., Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle), demolishing worldviews that combine moral judgment with specific backgrounds or

conditions, such as the worldview of rites/music. The internal contradictions within the idea of "principle" *(li)* and the forces that lead to shifts within it are mainly expressed in two ways. First among these is the opposition between principle *(li)* and the methodology of the pursuit of principle *(li).* Regardless of whether it is within the worldview of Heavenly Principle or in the worldview of Universal Principle, "principle" is a concept that extends through cosmology, metaphysics, and the "theory of the heart-mind and nature" *(xin xing lun).* Incommensurable parts, however, always exist in the relationships between these different fields. As a metaphysical assumption (or faith), "principle" is something that is not concrete; as a cosmological assumption, it is something that can be thought; and as a kind of ethical order, it must be something that can be grasped through everyday practice. On the one hand, a general "principle" *(li)* assumed it had a route by which it would return into itself through specific practices of cognition and self-cultivation, thereby structuring a connection between the concept of Heavenly Principle and a positivist mode of "investigating things and extending knowledge" or scientific methodology. However, if the self-cultivation practices of "investigation of things and extending knowledge" gradually came to be understood as a methodology with empiricist aspects, then the moral implications of "investigation of things and extending knowledge" would transform into a practice of cognition of the world, thus demoting "principle" to a the role of objective rule or fact. On the other hand, "principle" *(li)* assumes an inherent interrelatedness between Heaven (Nature) and humans, and thus moral practice provides the precondition for the theory of the heart-mind and nature. According to the logic of the theory of the heart-mind and nature, "principle" is not an external object, and thus "investigating things and extending knowledge" should be understood as an activity or function that is inherent in the spirit *(xinling)* itself, and should not be confused with objective cognition of the world. Those ways of understanding that see "fathoming the principles of things and affairs" *(ji wu qiong li)* or scientific methods as the process of separating things and events into categories would simply be a distortion of "principle."

Moreover, a paradoxical relationship exists between Heavenly Principle and institutions. As a transcendent concept, "principle" contains the

connections between individuals and Heavenly Principle, which is to say that every person can reach Heavenly Principle through everyday moral practice, and thus "principle" expresses a force and appeal that transcends specific power relations and institutions. Yet the concept of "principle" always draws on an idea of order (such as the institutions of rites/music or legal systems) for its inherent power, attempting to establish at another level a unified relationship between morality and existing institutions. An indivisible relationship exists, then, between "principle" and political or social order. The paradoxical relationship between "principle" and institutions can be described as follows: first, "principle" establishes itself on the dual foundation of the Way of Heaven or operations of nature and the cognition of the subject, attempting to use moral-political judgment as a basis to free itself from the control of dominant institutions and their systems of judgment, thus structuring a self-negation into the very idea of order assumed by "principle" that attempts to unify the ideal and the actual. Second, to overcome arbitrary and overly individual interpretations of "principle," people emphasize the objectivity of methodology, thereby creating a gulf between "knowledge" and practice that is difficult to bridge. The two problems just described are inherent in the concept of "principle" and the internal processes of its application. For this reason, then, methodology is something that is inherently needed by the worldviews of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle but is also the force that causes crises to occur within the worldviews of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle and leads them to break down under their own weight.

The difficulties inherent in the worldviews of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle paved the way for three different intellectual orientations. The first was expressed as the self-negating tendencies within neo-Confucianism *(lixue)* and the orientations toward antihumanism inherent within modern thought: doubts about the relationship between Heavenly Principle and the methodology of "investigating things and extending knowledge to the utmost" within neo-Confucianism led to efforts to further internalize "principle," that is, linking principle *(li)* and the original mind-heart *(benxin)*, the heart-mind *(xin)*, the substance of quiescence *(jiti)*, and nothingness, rejecting the idea that any project of

knowledge or its institutionalization could provide a basis for moral practice. In essence, the transition from the substance of the moral mind *(xinti)* and the substance of the moral nature *(xingti)* to the substance of quiescence *(jiti)* and nothingness was also a process of moving from the person and his or her interiority to the self-negation of the person and his or her interiority. This logic, which develops interiority to its furthest extreme, is also a complete rejection of discourses on "investigation of things and extending knowledge" that contain any substantive epistemological project. A very similar logic appears in modern thought: for example, Zhang Taiyan brought together the ideas of Zhuangzi's "On Equalizing Things" *(Qiwu lun)*, "consciousness-only" Yōgacāra Buddhism, and the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche to launch a fierce critique of notions of Universal Principle, evolution, and scientism, ultimately formulating a view of nature based in the equalization of all things to reject anthropocentric cosmologies and worldviews. The second orientation is found in new discourses on institutions that are internal to neo-Confucianism and also found in modern thought. The worldviews of Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle both assumed that a kind of ideal society (the Three Dynasties of Antiquity or the world of rites/music, the society of the future, or the world of *Da tong*, or Great Unity) could serve as a basis for moral-political practice, and thus also assumed a tense relationship between the ideal society and the actual world. The unity between humans and Heavenly Principle contained a systemic teleology, in which Heavenly Principle manifested itself in a kind of perfect combination or union between moral-political practice and an ideal order. From within this moral-political practice that was oriented toward Heavenly Principle, a kind of institutional argument was produced: any practice that did not rely on institutions or ritual had no way of reaching the moral goals set out by Heavenly Principle. A wide variety of thinkers placed institutional considerations at the center of their thinking, leading to the disintegration of views on the interiority of Heavenly Principle. These efforts ranged from work by neo-Confucian scholars to revive the practices of the patriarchal clan system and the well-field system to efforts by later adherents of the Wang Yangming school to dress and carry out rites in the style of Confucius; and from attempts to use the decrees and regula-

tions of antiquity to imagine political-economic institutions (such as Huang Zongxi) to attempts to use the categories of "investigating things" to revive the practices of the classical Six Arts *(liu yi)* (such as Yan Yuan [1635–1704] and Li Gong [1659–1733]). This mode of thinking that tied Heavenly Principle closely with institutions also provided a basis for modern utopianism: both Kang Youwei's imaginations of future societies in *The Book of Great Unity (Da tong shu)* and the future world that was rooted in the socialists' rejection of the real world as it existed attempted to transform Heavenly Principle or Universal Principle from a state within the interior of the self into real-world institutions and to provide a basis for moral-political practice. Within this new institutional framework, the adversarial relationship between Heavenly Principle/Universal Principle and actual institutions was transformed into an adversarial relationship between different types of institutions. The third orientation can be found in new discourses on rites/music or debates on customs internal to Confucian learning and in neoclassicism *(xin gudian zhuyi)* in modern thought. As with the discourse on new institutions, the discourse on new rites/music and neoclassicism rejected abstract speculation and excessive internalization of Heavenly Principle, and saw the worldviews of Heavenly Principle/Universal Principle in themselves as a sign of the crisis of modernity. They resolutely maintained that moral-political practice must be established on real relationships of rites/music or institutional relationships. However, unlike discourses on new institutions, new discourses on rites/music or neoclassicism emphasized that institutions of rites/music are the products of tradition and its evolution, and that any discussions and moral-political practices that depart from customs, habits, language, and tradition will never be able to achieve a unity with Heavenly Principle. New rites/music discourses and neoclassicism contained two types of attitudes. The first was radical, using classical ideals to attack existing institutions, working to reconstruct forms of rites/music and classical institutions within their historical context, and basing the practices of reform on these efforts. The second, however, was conservative, emphasizing the evolution of rites/music and classical regulations, insisting that no moral-political practice could divert from rites/music, customs, habits, and the process of their evolution, and rejecting any mode of

thought that attempted to imagine the future by diverging from these processes of change in themselves.

The three orientations just described present different aspects of contradictions that lie within the worldviews of Heavenly Principle/Universal Principle. At the same time, however, they are also predicated on three different views of Heavenly Principle/Nature. The first of these defines Nature/Heavenly Principle through the antithetical relationship between human action and Nature (Heavenly Principle). The second defines Nature/Heavenly Principle through the relationship between nature and necessity. Finally, the third defines Nature/Heavenly Principle through the relationship between Nature and the propensity of the times. These three views of Nature/Heavenly Principle are all established on the denaturalization of Nature or on the emptying out of Heavenly Principle from Heavenly Principle, i.e., the refusal to acknowledge that actual existence in itself is Heavenly Principle and Nature; these three views of Nature/Heavenly Principle all attempt to establish by various means a state of Nature that is differentiated from this type of actual existence. It is worth noting that one of the main characteristics of the worldview of Universal Principle is to use science and its empiricist methodology to expose the fictional essence of such naturalist categories as Heaven, the Way of Heaven, the Mandate of Heaven, and Heavenly Principle and to place Nature into objective reality, thus changing the ontological (and originary) significance of the word "Nature" *(ziran).* The modern worldview of Universal Principle views Nature as an object that can be known and controlled, and argues that the process of the control of Nature in itself is a demonstration of the freedom of the subject. The extraction of the subject from Nature is predicated on the treatment of Nature as an objective entity that can be controlled, but the process of the control of Nature can never avoid the question of the control of society—i.e., the subject who also controls Nature. In this sense, if one wishes to think through and critique this process of modernization itself, then one must undertake a deuniversalization and denaturalization of the worldview of Universal Principle and its concept of Nature. For example, in modern history, "evolution" was seen as a kind of Universal Principle: it was seen not only as an objective narrative of history but also as a moral impera-

tive. From the ethics of the state to social ethics, from race to gender, from the family to marriage, all varieties of changes that took place in modern society were drawn into this model of evolution. Market-oriented society was understood as a product of evolution and therefore as a kind of "natural" system, or one that accorded with Universal Principle. In this view, the modern world naturalizes another, new set of categories in order to demonstrate the legitimacy of modern society.

Across the centuries, debates about "principle" have repeatedly broken out, with each debate always leading to a denaturalization of "principle." Is "principle" the reality of the universe or the origin of the universe, or an order that is internal to our spirits? Is "principle" the relationship of rites/music formed across history, or moral rules of conduct, or a product of natural processes? Interpretations of "principle" always direct people anew toward their understanding of the actual world: Is this a world of things *(wu)*, or a world of the heart-mind *(xin)*? Is this a world of institutions, or a world of Nature? Can people only understand "principle" through an understanding of the material world, or can they experience the immanence of "principle" only through the practice of daily life? Should people act according to the standards of institutions and rituals in order to fulfill "principle," or must they free themselves from all external standards and reestablish "principle" by returning anew to their own essence? Investigations of "principle" are closely linked to how people understand "things," whereas an understanding of "things" is also the only route to grasping "principle." Seeking the sources of "principle" *(li)* and "things" *(wu)* is a pursuit of the sources of critique and liberation, and an analysis of the underpinnings of order and control. By narrating the historical changes of "principle" through the ever-changing relations of "things," this method in itself already contains the historicization or deconstruction of universalist concepts of "principle" (Heavenly Principle and Universal Principle). My primary goal and method is to focus on the relationships between "principle" and "things," to investigate various aspects of "the order of things": first, changes in methods of moral judgment and historical circumstances of these changes; second, changes in methods of moral judgment and their relationship to ways that institutions of knowledge and methods of inquiry were restructured; third, the relationship

between the restructuring of genealogies of knowledge and changes to social institutions. All of these questions are closely related to the question of China's modern identity: questions of identity cannot avoid leading to questions of worldviews, knowledge, and their institutions. Nationalism, modernity, and other questions are phenomena that are produced amid massive changes in institutions and knowledge, and thus a historical understanding of these questions cannot avoid taking into account the epic changes that occurred in the nineteenth century in worldviews, institutions of knowledge, institutional conditions, and material culture. If one of the main duties of modern Chinese revolutions was to transform traditional China into a nation-state, then the dissolution of the worldview of Heavenly Principle and the formation of the dominant position of the worldview of Universal Principle also conformed to this process of transformation.