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## IS HUMAN HISTORY PREDESTINED IN WANG FUZHI'S COSMOLOGY?\*

### INTRODUCTION

Human history seems to exemplify a cyclical pattern: after prosperous times, chaotic times ensue, and vice versa. In traditional Chinese cosmology, this pattern could very well be explained in terms of the dialectics of *yin* and *yang*, or as the natural order of Heaven. This cosmological explanation appears to fit natural history well. There are natural phenomena such as floods, droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, and so on, that are beyond human control. These events have their own causes. Once those causes are present, a natural disaster, however unfavorably viewed by humans, is bound to take place.

The view that natural history is determined by factors outside the human world can be accepted without much controversy. When applied to human history, however, the role of humans becomes problematic within this kind of cosmology. How much of our success or failure is due to our larger cosmological environment—the working and development of *qi* (cosmic force)? Can a single individual reverse the flow of *yin* and *yang* or the emergence of good times and bad times? On a larger scale, is human history predestined? If there is a necessary rotation of prosperity and chaos, then it can be argued that there must be some value to the existence of chaos.<sup>1</sup> In that case, we humans should just accept the fate that is given to us and do nothing to reverse it. This view of human history renders one a passive fatalist. If one does not wish to be fatalistic, then one needs to provide an analysis for the interplay between Heaven and individuals; between Nature and humans.

In this article, I shall explicate Wang Fuzhi's solution to the above problem. He is not a fatalist, nor does he advocate a form of historical determinism that would deny human autonomy. But he does believe that there is some kind of necessity in the rotation of prosperity and chaos. He specifically argues that there is a Heavenly Principle (*tianli*) governing human affairs. I shall analyze Wang Fuzhi's notion of Heavenly Principle to give a full picture of his cosmology. I shall also examine

whether Wang Fuzhi can coherently accommodate both historical determinism and human autonomy.

This article will be divided into three main parts. In the first section, I shall explicate Wang Fuzhi's cosmology, in particular, his notion of Heavenly Principle. In the second section, I shall explain how his cosmology leads to a plausible interpretation of historical determinism. This interpretation creates a dilemma for him because he apparently does not endorse a strict form of historical determinism. In the third section, I shall present his resolution to the dilemma and offer my analysis of his resolution.

### WANG FUZHI'S COSMOLOGY

Wang Fuzhi's view of the universe can be characterized as consisting of four general theses: rational naturalism, realism, materialism, and holism. These theses are explained separately in this section.

#### *Rational Naturalism*

Naturalism is the view that takes nature as nature itself, devoid of a human value system. Wang separates two conceptions of *Heaven*. He calls them "Heaven-As-It-Is" (*tian zhi tian*) and "Heaven-As-Seen-by-Man" (*ren zhi tian*). The moralized Heaven in most neo-Confucianists' cosmology, a Heaven with virtues such as humanity (*ren*), creativity (*sheng*), impartiality (*gong*), sincerity (*cheng*), and diligence (*jian*), in Wang Fuzhi's mind, is nothing but the Heaven-As-Seen-by-Man. Wang argues that Heaven itself is value-free and judgment-free. It is simply the totality of nature. In this sense, Wang's cosmology is clearly a form of naturalism. Because Heaven is nature itself, it does not have the virtues that neo-Confucians attribute to it. These virtues actually originate in human moral sense. Thus, instead of emulating Heaven in manifesting these virtues, man is responsible for moralizing Heaven. Heaven itself has no self-willed virtues. We assign virtues to Heaven because we are moral beings. In this view, humans' moral sense is given an autonomous status.

On the other hand, Wang Fuzhi also gives this natural Heaven a rationalized interpretation. He thinks that nature itself has a certain order, which he calls the Principle (*li*) of Heaven.<sup>2</sup> He says, "Whatever is manifested in Heaven is Principle itself; man cannot use man's principles to determine Heavenly Principle."<sup>3</sup> This quote implies two theses. First of all, we cannot question whatever happened, because whatever happened must have happened for a reason (Or: it must be governed under

a certain principle). Second, because our understanding is limited, we cannot always comprehend Heavenly Principle. Even if things may appear random or chaotic to our perception, there is an order, an ultimate Principle that governs every object and every event. Wang's naturalistic view of the universe is thus imbued with a rationalistic depiction.

### *Realism*

Realism is the view that what we perceive is reality itself; there is no noumenon or other metaphysical realm beyond our comprehension. Wang Fuzhi is a realist.<sup>4</sup> Even though Wang separates Heaven-As-It-Is from Heaven-As-Seen-by-Man, he does not think that there is an unbridgeable gap between the two. Heaven itself, or the totality of nature, is not something that stands forever beyond human understanding. Wang thinks that Heaven is just one entity; there is no separation between substance and the perceived properties. Wang says, "Heaven has no substance (*ti*); its function (*yong*) is its substance."<sup>5</sup> What we perceive is the function of Heaven, but there is nothing beyond the function of Heaven that serves as its basis. Based on his realism, Wang develops an optimism concerning our epistemic capacity. Because there is no hidden substance of Heaven, there is nothing about reality that humans cannot perceive. Our perception is often too limited to grasp the totality of nature, but our limited perception can be improved through time. The more we learn about nature, the more we can comprehend Heavenly Principle. Eventually, Heavenly Principle is within our grasp.

Wang Fuzhi's focus is on the real world in which we are situated, not on any metaphysical realm other than this world. There is no Creator or Ultimate Designer of the universe. There is also no world beyond the reality that we perceive. The material objects are the "function" of Heaven, and Heaven is nothing but the totality of material objects in nature. This realism can also be seen as a form of materialism, which is what we will turn to next.

### *Materialism Based on the Notion of Qi*

Even though Wang Fuzhi's cosmology can be called naturalism and realism, his basic conception of the nature of matter distinguishes him sharply from the Western conception of materialism and realism. To Wang, the material universe is saturated with the flow of *qi* (the air; the force), and every material object is nothing but the aggregate of the two kinds of *qi*—*yin* and *yang*. The relationship between *yin* and *yang* is complicated. On the one hand, they are not different elements because

they are both a form of *qi*. On the other hand, they cannot be identified as one because they are in constant competition and fluctuation. Furthermore, in theory, *yin* and *yang* are different kinds of *qi* and cannot be confused as one, even though in reality, *yin* and *yang* coexist in all cases. In Wang Fuzhi's cosmology, these two forms of *qi* mingle in every material object and nothing can be said to be pure *yin* or pure *yang*. Wang even argues that what *the Book of Changes (Yijing)* calls the pure *yang* and pure *yin*, the hexagram of *Qian* and the hexagram of *Kun*, are actually the mixture of six prominent *yang* with six hidden *yin*, and the mixture of six prominent *yin* with six hidden *yang*, respectively. If even the purest *yin* and *yang* are mixtures of the two forms of *qi*, then nothing can be said to be solely *yin* or solely *yang*.

According to Wang, the two forms of *qi* are in constant motion: "If one rises, the other falls. They constantly seek each other: *yin* must seek *yang* and *yang* must seek *yin*."<sup>6</sup> The flow of *yin* and *yang* is constantly dynamic, but the totality of *qi* is fixed. As a result, as one form of *qi* expands, the other must be condensed. A balance between *yin* and *yang* in any given object or at any given time can be reached, but because of the dynamic nature of the flow of the two forms of *qi*, it is impossible to maintain this balance forever. The cyclical condensation and expansion of the two forms of *qi* becomes inevitable.

Take the life cycle of a man for example. When he grows from an infant to adulthood, the *qi* that keeps expanding in him is *yang*. But at some point when *yang* reaches its maximum, *yin* must take over, and thus the man starts to grow old and sick and eventually dies. The cycle of four seasons is another good example of the constant rotation between the two forms of *qi*. This constant rotation between *yin* and *yang* is what Wang sees as the Principle of *qi*.

It is with this understanding of the Principle of *qi* that Wang Fuzhi defines the Principle of Heaven explained earlier. Wang says, "Heaven has its principle, but Heaven itself cannot be separated from *qi*. Only when we recognize the Principle as the principle of *qi* can we define the Principle of Heaven. If we don't do that and abandon talk of *qi* to discuss the principle, then we cannot even find the Principle of Heaven."<sup>7</sup> We can summarize his argument as follows:

1. Heaven is the totality of nature.
2. The totality of nature includes natural phenomena and material objects in nature.
3. Whatever is manifested in Heaven is Heavenly Principle itself.
4. Therefore, whatever is manifested in natural phenomena and material objects is Heavenly Principle itself.
5. But every natural phenomenon and every material object is noth-

ing but the aggregate of *yin* and *yang*, and there is an inevitable rotation between *yin* and *yang* that is manifested in each of the material objects.

6. Therefore, Heavenly Principle is the inevitable rotation between *yin* and *yang*.

In Wang's words, "Principle is nothing but the Principle of *qi*. It is simply *how qi should be*"<sup>8</sup> (italics mine). This fusion of the Principle and *qi* is one of Wang's contributions to the cosmological views of neo-Confucianism. Wang advocates this view of a *materialized* Heavenly Principle and flatly rejects the view of a transcendental Principle that was promoted by Cheng Yi and Zhu Xi. Wang does not posit Principle as an abstract Form governing the force; he does not give Principle any a priori status. Principle *cannot* exist outside of *qi*, and *qi does not* exist without having its own internal principle. This is Wang Fuzhi's materialism, which combines Principle and *qi*.

### *Holism*

Holism is the view that every individual object or event is so closely interconnected in the whole system, that nothing can be considered in isolation. Wang Fuzhi's cosmological view is holistic because in his view, all objects relate to one another with their share of *yin* or *yang*. Because everything contains a portion of *yin* and a portion of *yang*, it exists in the whole cosmos of *qi* and has a dynamic connection with other objects. Its internal *yin* or *yang* can grow or decline because of interactions with the *qi* of other objects. Such dynamic interactions are the result of the natural state of *qi* and the constant competition between *yin* and *yang*. Thus, nothing can remain closed and self-sufficient. Everything must interact with other things and stand in relative opposition against each other.

Because Heavenly Principle is nothing but the rotation of the two forms of *qi*, it is manifested in the following forms:

1. relative opposition between *yin* and *yang* among coexisting objects,
2. relative opposition between *yin* and *yang* among temporally contiguous objects, and
3. relative opposition between *yin* and *yang* within each single object.

In this way, every phenomenon and every object is incorporated into a large whole—each is related to another in terms of the competition between *yin* and *yang*, and everything, by virtue of the dominant *qi* within, contributes to the fluctuation between the two forms of *qi*.

This holistic nature of the universe is based on not only synchronic relationships, but also diachronic relationships. One time frame of the

universe, by virtue of its internal expansion of *yin* or *yang*, inevitably affects the next time frame of the universe. Opposition and competition are the constant state of affairs. The tendency is to reach a balance between *yin* and *yang*. But such a balance cannot last long and soon the competition brings about another composition of the two forms of *qi*. From one stage of the universe to the next, we see the dominant *yin* taken over by *yang*, and vice versa. As a result, the history of the universe itself is a continuous manifestation of the constant rotation between the dominance of *yin* and *yang*.

#### THE DILEMMA OF HISTORICAL DETERMINANCY

As discussed in the last section, the totality of nature is governed by the Principle of *qi*. This Principle is best characterized as the inevitable rotation between *yin* and *yang*. The human world is part of nature, and human history is part of the continuing process of the universe. Hence, human history must also be governed by the Principle of *yin* and *yang*. Every human event necessarily affects other human events; every preceding world-state necessarily affects the succeeding world-state. The rotation of the two forms of *qi*, when exemplified in human history, is presented as the pattern of the succession of prosperity (*zhi*) and chaos (*luan*). The peaceful order of one era would eventually give way to chaos in the next era; the maximization of wealth of an epoch would eventually lead to the decline of wealth in the next epoch. But a question emerges: If human history is governed by the Principle of *yin* and *yang* and the rotation is inevitable, is human history itself set in a predetermined pattern?

Before we discuss whether Wang Fuzhi's cosmology commits him to a form of historical determinism, let me first define "historical determinism" as follows:

It is the view that major historical events come about with a certain inevitability; that there is an independent trend of events, some inexorable necessity controlling the progress of human history. History, under this view, has not been the result of voluntary efforts on the part of individuals or groups of individuals, but has been subject to the Law in history.<sup>9</sup>

Wang's interpretation of the Principle in history can be seen as the Law in history, and he does seem to accept some inevitability in the way historical events take shape. Is he, or is he not, a historical determinist?

The question whether human history is predestined in a fixed pattern poses a dilemma for Wang, because he cannot just "bite the bullet" and acknowledge the predeterminacy of human history. Wang's philosophy is deep down a sort of humanism, a view that puts human beings at the

center of things and stresses the individual's powers.<sup>10</sup> Earlier we mentioned that for Wang, a moralized Heaven is a humanized Heaven. Heaven itself is amoral and value-free; it is we who assign moral significance to the role of Heaven. We also discussed his naturalism, according to which the growth and decay of natural objects is nothing but a natural process, not something "willed" by a cognizant Creator. In this view, human history cannot be said to be predestined. There is nothing, or no one, that stands outside of human history to set the pattern of human history in advance. Because of his humanism, Wang must also acknowledge human free will, and his view of human effort must incorporate our ability to change human history.

On the other hand, Wang Fuzhi's materialism, especially his view of Principle governing the two forms of *qi*, also posits an order that is external to the human world. Wang claims that the establishment of the historical world is basically the result of the movement of *yin* and *yang*. When *yang* is manifested in human history, it results in prosperity and order. When *yin* is manifested in human history, it results in decline and chaos. Because the Principle of Heaven is "one *yin* and one *yang* succeeding each other," human history necessarily has the pattern of "one prosperity and one decline, one order and one chaos, succeeding each other."

Once human history is viewed as a *patterned* history, many problems arise:

1. If human history is governed by the Principle of *qi*, do we still have free will to act then?
2. If the prosperity or the decline of the times is nothing but the manifestation of the rotation between *yin* and *yang*, then what is the function of human effort?
3. If the human world is only part of the whole world of nature, and if each subpart of the whole nature necessarily affects the other parts, then the human world is not independent of, or isolated from, the fluctuation of *qi* governing nature. As a result, the human world cannot be an autonomous world determined purely by human actions. How can we still view humans as autonomous agents then?

Judging from these problems, we see that Wang Fuzhi's materialism does seem to lead to a form of historical determinism. There is the possible result that "the personal, the casual, the individual influences in history sink in significance and the great cyclical forces loom up."<sup>11</sup> Also, we can infer that in his materialism, "human actions are at best only the 'instruments' through which certain 'forces,' operating and evolving in conformity with fixed laws, become manifest."<sup>12</sup> Hence, Wang is faced



with this dilemma: How can he maintain a position that reconciles between his materialism and his humanism?

#### RESOLVING THE DILEMMA

What Wang Fuzhi aims to maintain is that human history does exhibit a certain fixed pattern, and yet human agents do have free will and human actions do change human history. One way he could maintain both views and remain theoretically coherent is to restate the difference between “Heaven-As-It-Is” and “Heaven-As-Seen-by-Man.” That is to say, he could argue that even if human history is predestined, since we do not have the whole grasp of Principle in history, we cannot predict what each of our actions will bring about. We should, therefore, not give up our effort to change history because our action may in fact be the element that Principle will bring about in history. In other words, the unpredictability of historical events gives us the indeterminacy of history itself. This is, of course, not a good solution. Our ignorance does not bring us freedom of will and autonomy. If we are, in fact, predetermined, whether we know it or not, we are agents without freedom.

To resolve the dilemma of historical determinacy, Wang introduces an important notion, “tendency” (*shi*). Tendency is the direction of development; it refers both to the direction of the development of *qi*, and to the direction of the development of human affairs. But not all directions of development are called “tendency.” As Wang defines it, “A tendency is what naturally follows with no forced alteration. High ground yields to low land, largeness incorporates smallness; tendency is what one cannot defy.”<sup>13</sup> If Principle is the end result of the development of *qi*, then tendency can be seen as the temporary state of each developmental process. Tendency cannot be identified with Principle because whereas the latter is a fixed order, the former is a dynamic development. Furthermore, the growth of a tendency is one-directional and not cyclical. Principle manifests the pattern of the rotation between *yin* and *yang*, but each tendency itself is an ongoing process and there is no fixed path for tendency to take.

However, Wang also describes tendency as incorporating an inevitability within itself. When tendency in the development of *yin* becomes too strong, things have to change, and a new tendency for the development of *yang* will emerge. Each tendency has its own beginning and end, but other tendencies are developing at the same time and some of them will overcome the present tendency and become dominant. Therefore, what *multiple* tendencies accomplish or manifest in the end is nothing



but Principle itself. If this is the case, then how can this notion of tendency help to resolve the dilemma of historical determinacy?

To further analyze Wang's proposed solution, I wish to introduce the distinction between "global determinacy" and "atomic determinacy" as follows:

- A system is *globally determined* if each definite state of the whole system at a given time provides the necessary and sufficient condition for the occurrence of the next state of the whole system.
- A system is *atomically determined* if at any given state of the whole system, the occurrence of a single unit is necessitated by other units in the same state. (Or: the general state of the whole system provides the necessary and sufficient condition for the occurrence of each single unit in the whole system.)

The difference between global determinacy and atomic determinacy is that the former only determines a general pattern of the development of the whole system, whereas the latter determines each particular occurrence of unit (or event) in the system. Borrowing Mandelbaum's terminology, we may describe the distinction between atomic determinacy and global determinacy as the distinction between "a law of functional relation" and "a law of directional change."<sup>14</sup> According to Mandelbaum, "the distinction between the two types of laws . . . are sometimes referred to as synchronic and diachronic laws."<sup>15</sup> Using this distinction, I will say that atomic determinacy concerns the functional relationship among elements within each time segment of the whole system. Each element is said to be functionally determined by the whole system, such that there is an inevitability for the occurrence of each element. Global determinacy, on the other hand, concerns how the successive states of the whole system are related to each other. A state of the system could be globally determined by the previous state, although the individual elements of the state can still have some flexibility in reaching the final balance of the whole state. Atomic determinacy is certainly stronger than global determinacy. In what follows, I shall argue that it is atomic determinacy, not global determinacy, that is incompatible with human autonomy. It is also atomic determinacy, not global determinacy, that makes every human event an inevitable result of factors external to human history. My argument will be that Wang Fuzhi's historical determinism only advocates a form of global determinacy, not atomic determinacy. It is therefore compatible with his humanistic spirit in preserving human autonomy. Wang's notion of *tendency* is a key to establishing this argument.

To begin with, in many remarks of Wang's we see his commitment to the necessity of the historical pattern. For instance, he says, "One pros-

perity and one chaos (*yi zhi yi luan*), such is Heaven. Just as the sun brings us day and night, so the moon has its wax and wane. Human subjects cannot use their virtues to determine the fate of Heaven.”<sup>16</sup> This remark shows that human beings cannot alter the inevitable rotation between order and chaos, between good times and bad times. If there is such a historical pattern between order (*zhi*) and chaos (*luan*), as suggested by the common saying: “The ultimate development of chaos leads to order (*luan ji er zhi*); the ultimate development of order leads to chaos (*zhi ji er luan*),” then order and chaos have equal value and equal limitations—both are necessary in history, and yet neither can last long. This conclusion rejects the positive value of order and assigns no negative value to chaos. Everything is part of the natural development of human history, whose natural pattern is the rotation between order and chaos. We can call this view “historical naturalism.” Does Wang Fuzhi hold such a view?

The answer is negative. Wang thinks it is easier to understand why the extreme development of chaos eventually leads to order. A totally chaotic society cannot last long, for the extreme chaos would only bring about the society’s self-destruction. Also, because order succeeds absolute chaos, it shows that human efforts can terminate the existing chaos. If chaos comes as the result of the utmost development of order, however, then there is simply no value to human effort. Therefore, Wang rejects the view that chaos arises out of the ultimate development of order and prosperity. To see his point, we need to understand the distinction between his claim of the historical pattern “one prosperity and one chaos,” and the common saying that “the ultimate development of chaos leads to order, the ultimate development of order leads to chaos.” The former asserts an existing pattern, without explaining the causative factors of this pattern; the latter asserts the causal relation between order and chaos as the fact that the utmost development of one *generates* the other. It is the latter assertion that makes the historical pattern between order and chaos the result of the cyclical rotation between *yin* and *yang*. Wang Fuzhi’s assertion describes a *formal principle* of history; it does not make any causal claim on the existence of this formal principle. Thus, even though to him the existence of this formal principle cannot be denied, he does not think that there is nothing humans can do to prevent chaos.

Since Wang Fuzhi only asserts the historical pattern without making any causal claim, he needs to supply us with some explanation of the causative factors of this pattern. According to Wang, the reason why chaos *comes after*, although not *as the result of*, order, is that the roots of the tendency for chaos are already there in prosperity. Wang says, “No ordered society is purely good; it is simply so when superior men (*junzi*)

dominate. There are vile people in the world even when superior men dominate. No chaotic society is purely bad; it is simply so when vile men (*xiaoren*) dominate. There are superior men in the world even when vile people dominate.”<sup>17</sup> Hence, in an ordered society there are already seeds for chaos, just as in a chaotic society there are already seeds for order. One needs to discern these premature *tendencies* to either augment or eliminate them. The second reason Wang gives is that however good a set of laws is, it will always have flaws after it has been passed along for several generations: “Flaws emerge from good laws after they have been implemented for too long. From this we can see what will happen to the mediocre laws. . . . From this point of view, we see that no matter whether rulership is good or bad, none can last forever.”<sup>18</sup> Another natural restriction on good laws and good rulership is that they are only suited for a particular time. When times have changed, rulership must change to meet the needs of a new time. When rulers cannot replace those outmoded laws and policies, even the best-intentioned rulership would result in total chaos. Thus, the natural state of affairs in the directional change of human history manifests the pattern of chaos succeeding order and prosperity.

From the explanations above we see that order and prosperity arise out of the roots of order and prosperity, just as chaos and disaster arise out of the roots of chaos and disaster. The direction of development from the root to its eventual maturation is what Wang calls “tendency.” A tendency is relative to a state of affairs, and each tendency has its own internal order of development. The cyclical pattern of Principle does not apply to the development of each tendency itself. Within each tendency there is only one linear direction: from the tiniest seed to its eventual maturation. The inevitability of development is also not seen in the growth of a tendency. A tendency that was started can always be terminated by an act, just as it can also be augmented by a different act. A tendency for chaos is the accumulation of events that would contribute to chaos; a tendency for prosperity is the accumulation of events that would contribute to prosperity.

In this way, the existence of chaos does not contribute to the future development of prosperity. The two tendencies are constantly being developed at the same time, and it is not because there is prosperity that chaos will emerge next, and vice versa. In other words, the tendency for chaos develops at any given time in history, just as the tendency for order develops at the same time. These two tendencies compete with each other at all times, but one does not necessarily succeed the other. Therefore, the rotation between good times and bad times that we see in human history is not the result of the inevitable rotation between *yang* and *yin*. It is rather the result of humans’ ability to augment the growth

of the tendency for order, and humans' failure to terminate the growth of the tendency for chaos. Furthermore, the rotation does not come at fixed points in history; in particular, it is not the case that after one hundred years of good times, bad times will necessarily ensue. How to prolong peace and order is all up to human efforts. Wang Fuzhi's philosophy of history thus gives human effort its due recognition.

Wang does not, however, give humans' capacity to alter historical developments any major status. There is a point when human efforts become futile, that is, when the tendency has fully developed. Once the development of the tendency for chaos has reached its maximum, there is nothing humans can do to prevent the world from turning into total chaos. In his commentaries on historical dynasties, Wang often describes "the tendency of necessary destruction." When a society has reached the end of this tendency, there is very little individual persons can do to alter it. What one should do is to be prudent and preserve oneself. To make a last attempt to alter the full-fledged tendency would be like throwing straws against the wind. In this sense, Wang's view of history is committed to a form of *global determinacy*: The given state of human history at a time when the tendency for chaos is fully matured, provides the necessary and sufficient condition for the occurrence of total chaos in the next historical stage.

Even though human history is globally determined, individual historical characters and individual historical events are not atomically determined. Wang can take different stands on global and atomic determinacy because of his notion of *tendency*. Globally speaking, there can be a tendency for the whole of human history, but locally, there are also multiple tendencies developing at different paces and in different directions. Every tendency has its own direction of development, and the direction can always be altered by a single event or by the accumulation of singular events. Thus, every single event has its own function relative to the tendency that is developing at the time. Because the development of any tendency (short of full maturation) is not predetermined, the kind of changes each single event can bring about is also not predetermined. That is to say, the function of each individual historical event is relative to the tendency in which it is located; it does not have a predetermined value. An event's function depends on how it could alter the tendency, and also on how other events at the time affect the tendency. The indeterminacy applies not just to the occurrence of events, but also to the decisions of individual historical characters. What an individual can do under a given circumstance varies. If the individual recognizes the development of a tendency and wishes to prolong prosperity and success, then there may be a set of appropriate acts that he or she should adopt under the circumstances; but ultimately, the decision is up to the individual to make.

In Wang Fuzhi's philosophy of history, it is not possible to obtain atomic determinacy. For a local tendency to have its global effect, it depends not just on its own force, but also on the interplay of other competing tendencies. There is thus a very complicated web of functions of events and tendencies. The interplay happens both diachronically and synchronically. Therefore, not only is it impossible for us to predict the function of a single event in terms of the whole system of events, but it is also impossible for us to claim that any singular event is necessitated by its *preceding* events. There is neither atomic determinacy nor predictability governing singular events in human history. For a historical character to have the power to alter a particular tendency, he or she must have the ability to recognize the potential function of the event relative to the tendency, and the potential function of that tendency relative to the global state of historical affairs. For example, if there is a tendency that would lead to corruption, which would bring about chaos, and if the historical person recognizes a particular act that would push the tendency forward, then he should, but also *could*, choose not to take that act. In other words, his decision after making the right discernment of the possible consequences of his act is totally up to him. Therefore, Wang says, "With a tendency, either one eventually brings it to its completion, or one does not eventually bring it to its completion; it is all up to one's judgment."<sup>19</sup> In this remark we see Wang Fuzhi's confirmation of the value of human deliberations and actions in history.

Even if there are strong tendencies pushing for a certain direction at the time when a historical character makes a decision to act, his or her action is not completely determined by the tendency. It depends not only on whether the individual discerns the tendency correctly, but also on whether he or she wishes to comply with the flow of the tendency. In other words, human actions are predetermined by the demands of tendencies *only if* the agent has the desire to meet the demands. If one desires to succeed and to accomplish peace and prosperity, there are certain things one should do in a given circumstance. On the other hand, such a determination does not rule out human freedom, because it only determines what one *ought to* do, not what one *is going to* do. If the agent does not have the desire to succeed, then he or she does not have to, and most likely would not, take that action required by the tendency.

One could argue against my interpretation and point out that even if historical events are not predetermined, human actions are. Once the individual is situated in a given situation and *once his preferences are set*, he is bound to take a certain action. However, I argue that if it is the individual's discernment, judgment, intention, and decision that jointly determine his or her action, then there is no violation of human autonomy. The kind of *internal* determinacy we see here should be sharply

distinguished from *external* determinacy: The former exists when one's action is determined by one's own set of preferences and desires; the latter exists when one's action is determined by external factors out of one's control. If human history displays *external* determinacy, then humans in history can be viewed as pawns of the outside force: We are nothing but what the historical law or the Principle of *qi* compels us to do. If human history displays nothing but *internal* determinacy, on the other hand, then human history is indeed *humans'* history: It is the history of the accumulation of human actions and the fulfillment of human desires.

The joining of historical laws and human desires is indeed what Wang Fuzhi eventually views as Heavenly Principle (*tianli*) in history. Earlier we defined "Heaven" as that which is manifested in natural phenomena and material objects. That notion of *Heaven* applies to the totality of nature. When restricted to the human world, Heaven is defined as that which is manifested in the totality of human history itself. Wang emphasizes especially the universality and the constancy in historical trends. He says, "What can be applied for a thousand years without any change is humanity; it is also Heaven."<sup>20</sup> He also says, "What people's minds share in common is where Principle is; Heaven is also there."<sup>21</sup> In the first statement Wang defines Heaven as the universal law in history. In the second, he defines Heavenly Principle as that which human minds share in common. Wang further defines what people's minds share in common: "the basic desires concerning eat, drink, man and woman."<sup>22</sup> The *naturalized* Heaven takes on a new dimension here: Human preferences and human desires are also *natural*. The Heaven that governs human history turns out to be the common human desires, which are nothing but the satisfaction of basic material needs. When a ruler meets these common human desires, his reign will last a long time. When a ruler fails to meet these desires, his reign will lead to chaos and will soon terminate. If Heavenly Principle is eventually realized in human desires, then there is no external order other than human desires that governs human history. In this way, we see that human history is indeed an autonomous history of human affairs. Wang Fuzhi's philosophy of history is ultimately a *humanistic* philosophy of history.

#### CONCLUSION

In this article I have argued that Wang Fuzhi can coherently claim that there is an inevitable historical pattern in human history, and that there is no inevitability in the occurrences of individual human events. I have presented his view as a form of global determinism but not atomic



determinism, and argued that global determinism is not incompatible with human autonomy. There are, of course, many remaining problems. For one thing, the impossibility of an eternal prosperity is a troubling claim. Even if we can agree with Wang that the natural state of affairs is such that humans will always make blunders and destroy the order their predecessors established, his *cosmologically patterned* view commits him further to the theoretical impossibility of eternal prosperity. It is not just that eternal prosperity is not likely to happen due to human limitations; it is rather that it *cannot* happen, for its very existence would violate the Principle of Heaven.

Another remaining problem is whether Wang's attempt to conjoin the Principle of *qi* with Principle manifested in the universality of human desires can really work. On the surface, the Principle of *qi* and the Principle seen in human desires give two separate notions of Heavenly Principle. If Wang wishes to maintain that these two separate notions are indeed compatible, then he needs to develop a more detailed analysis of the connection between *qi* and human desires. A mere identification of the two Principles does not suffice. But a detailed analysis of how *qi* is manifested in human desires involves a more complicated cosmology than the one Wang gives us.

The cyclical pattern between one *yin* and one *yang*, one cold season and one hot season, one prosperity and one chaos, and so on, has been a widely accepted interpretation of the universe among ancient Chinese philosophers. What is the ontological root of this pattern? What is the competitive and cooperative relationship between *yin* and *yang*? How are the two forms of *qi* exemplified in human actions and human relations? How can human acts contribute to the permutation of the *qi*? There are still many unanalyzed issues in this cosmology.

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#### ENDNOTES

\* This article was first presented at the 11th International Conference on Chinese Philosophy, July 1999, Taipei, Taiwan. The basic idea for this article is derived from my master's thesis, "A Treatise on the Problem of 'Heavenly Principle As Manifested in Human History' in Wang Fuzhi's Philosophy (Taipei, Taiwan: National Taiwan University, 1984). I wish to express my gratitude to my advisor at the time, Professor Zhang Yongjung, for his inspiration and his guidance.

1. Such an argument has also been suggested in Western theology as an explanation for the existence of evil.
2. This term is literally translated as "Reason," and one can engage in a comparative study on Wang Fuzhi's notion of *Li* and Hegel's notion of *Reason*. Here I am following Wing-tsit Chan's translation of the word "Li" in neo-Confucianism as "principle." I believe what Wang Fuzhi aims to capture is the sense of order and principle manifested in nature and in human history.
3. Wang Fuzhi, *Zhangzi Zhengmeng Zhu* (A commentary on Zhang Zi's *Zhengmeng*), p. 26.
4. Sze-Kwang Lao holds the same view; see his *Zhongguo Zhaxue Shi* (History of Chinese Philosophy), p. 684.
5. Wang Fuzhi, *Zhengmeng Zhu*, p. 111.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 37.
7. Wang Fuzhi, *Du Sishu Daquan Shuo* (Discourse on reading the great collection of commentaries on the Four Books), p. 719.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 660.
9. This definition is partially derived from historian Edward P. Cheney's characterization of historical events. See Ernest Nagel, "Determinism in History," in *Philosophy Analysis and History*, edited by William Dray, p. 347.
10. I am using this term in the same sense as Wing-tsit Chan's interpretation of the term. Chan thinks that almost all Chinese philosophers are humanists; see Chan, *A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy*, chapter 1.
11. Ernest Nagel, "Determinism in History," p. 347.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 356.
13. Wang Fuzhi, *Du Sishu Daquan Shuo*, p. 601.
14. Maurice Mandelbaum, "Societal Laws," in *Philosophical Analysis and History*, pp. 330–346.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 333.

16. Wang Fuzhi, *Du Tongjian Lun* (A Treatise on Reading *Tongjian*), 1687–1691, p. 1108.
17. Wang Fuzhi, *Song Lun* (A Treatise on the Song Dynasty), 1691 [Taipei, Taiwan: Hong's Publishing Co.], 1975, p. 129.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 198.
20. Wang Fuzhi, *Du Tongjian Lun*, p. 626.
21. Wang Fuzhi, *Zhengmeng Zhu*, p. 48.
22. Wang Fuzhi, *Shi Guangzhuan* (A general commentary on the *Book of Poems*), vol. 2., p. 11.

## CHINESE GLOSSARY

<i>cheng</i> (sincerity)	誠
<i>qi</i> (material force)	氣
<i>Qian</i>	乾
<i>gong</i> (impartiality)	公
<i>tian zhi tian</i> (Heaven-As-It-Is)	天之天
<i>ren zhi tian</i> (Heaven-As-Seen-by-Man)	人之天
<i>Yijing</i>	易經
<i>ren</i> (humanity)	仁
<i>jian</i> (diligence)	健
<i>junzi</i> (the superior men)	君子
<i>Kun</i>	坤
<i>luan</i> (chaos)	亂
<i>luan ji er zhi</i> (prosperity arises at the extreme of chaos)	亂極而治
<i>sheng</i> (creativity)	生
<i>shi</i> (tendency)	勢
<i>ti</i> (substance)	體
<i>tianli</i> (The Principle of Heaven)	天理
<i>Tongjian</i>	通鑑
<i>Wang Chuanshan</i>	王船山
<i>Wang Fuzhi</i>	王夫之
<i>xiaoren</i> (vile people)	小人
<i>yang</i>	陽
<i>yi zhi yi luan</i> (one period of prosperity and one period of chaos in rotation)	一治一亂
<i>yin</i>	陰
<i>yong</i> (function)	用
<i>Zhengmeng</i>	正蒙
<i>zhi</i> (prosperity)	治
<i>zhi ji er luan</i> (chaos arises at the extreme of prosperity)	治極而亂