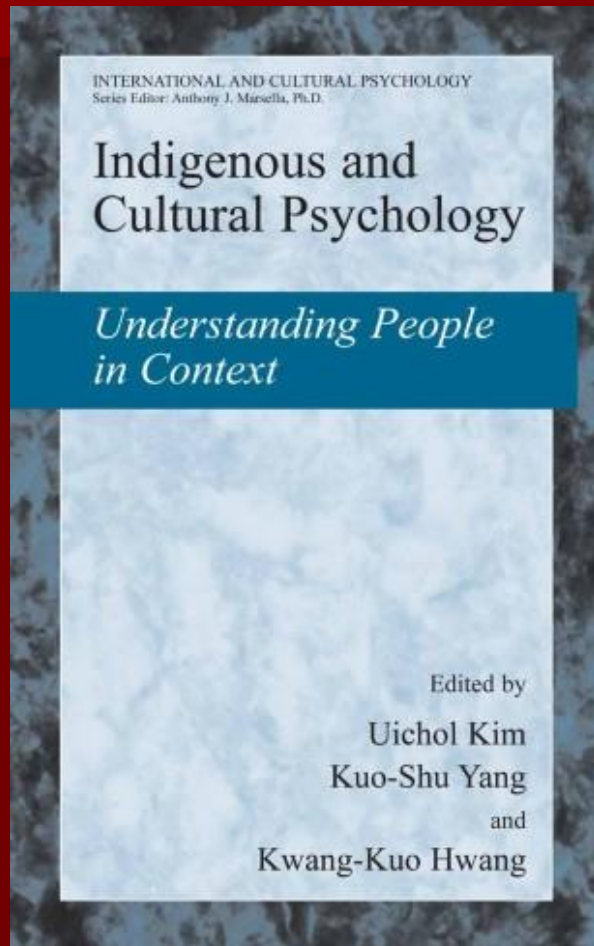


Chinese Conceptions of the Self

Lecture 7: Man as microcosm: The individual in the Huainanzi

Indigenous and Cultural Psychology



- “Constructive Realism and Confucian Relationalism”
- “Naïve Dialecticism and the Tao of Chinese Thought”
- “Indigenous Personality Research”
- “The Chinese Conception of the Self: Towards a Person-Making (做人) Perspective”

Indigenous approach to psychology

- Entails understanding people within their cultural/social/historical context → person in culture position
- Yang Chung-fang, “Chinese Conception of the Self,” p. 328:

“The indigenous approach advocates that non-local investigators put aside their past training and experience and their habitual way of thinking and understanding things in order to examine local people from the native’s point of view. Local investigators need to put aside any western frameworks they adopted while receiving their social-science training in western countries, and examine their own cultures from within.”

THE YIN/YANG MODE OF THINKING

- ❑ Western approaches: focus on concepts, substances, logical opposites, categories, dialectics and compromises → essentialist and dualist
- ❑ Yin/yang mode: little emphasis on concept formation; yin/yang are not two objects (substances); non-definable in terms of qualities
- ❑ Yin/yang are labels describing possible states of events or situations
- ❑ Refer to relationships – “one can be transformed to become the other” – NOT “one interacts with or influences the other”
- ❑ → yin/yang naturalizes relationship between humans and the natural world

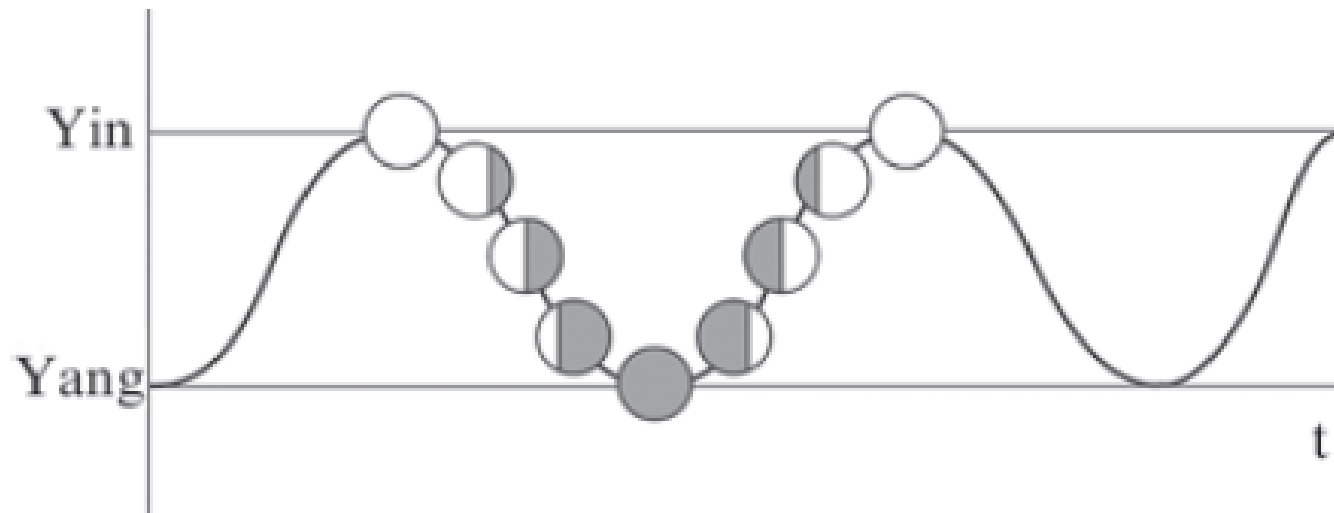


Figure 1. Yin/Yang Mode of Thinking

Energetic wave set in motion by an actor.

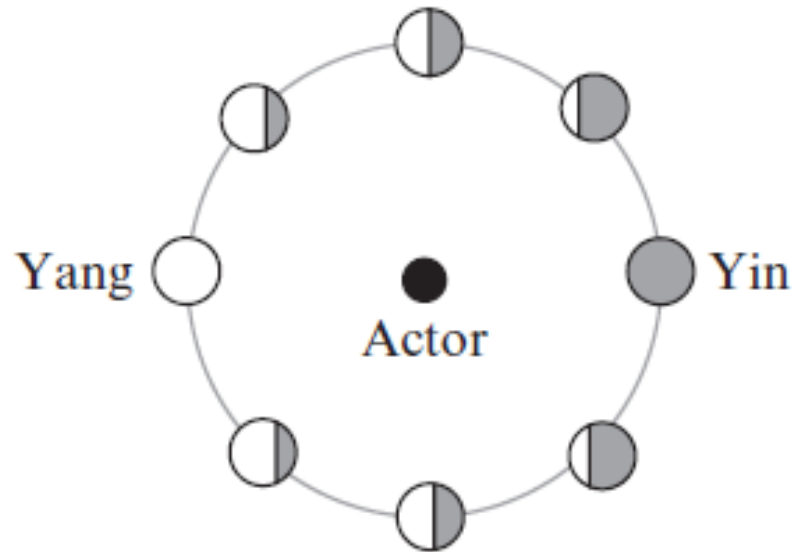
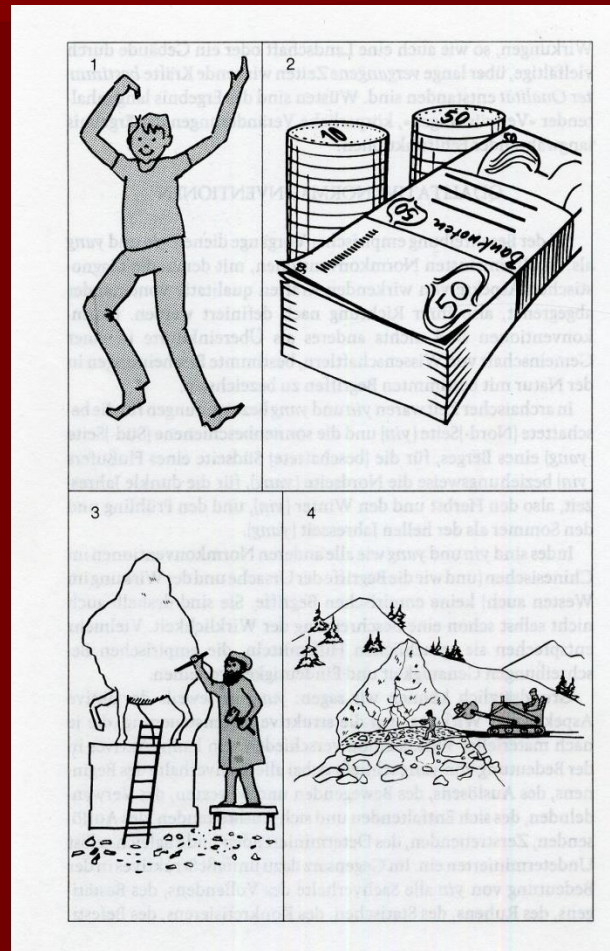


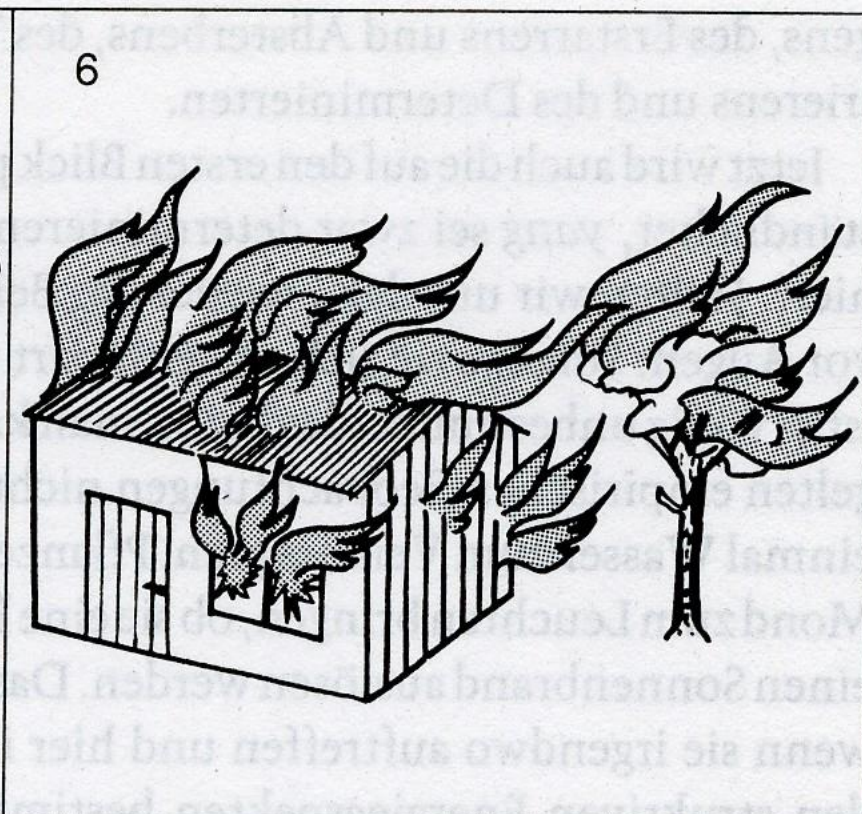
Figure 2. Actor-Centered Yin Yang Thinking Mode

Focus of attention on:

- (1) detecting the possible actions taken by an actor that dominate
- (2) the underlying relationship or movement, and
- (3) finding the best action that achieves the most desirable result between the two end states. (Chang, p. 331)

The forces of Yin and Yang





Hunting a deer interpreted through Yin and Yang: I

Yang phase	Yin phase
Hunter shoots arrow or bullet	Animal is hit and sinks to the ground
4 stages	4 stages
1. tracking down the deer 2. take aim 3. pull the trigger 4. the bullet is fired	1. the bullet reaches deer 2. penetrates its skin 3. reaches the heart 4. deer drops dead
→ Intensification of action	

Hunting a deer interpreted through Yin and Yang: II

Yang phase	Activity
1. tracking down the deer 2. take aim	Phase of potential activity → Wood
3. pull the trigger 4. the bullet is fired	Phase of actual activity (the arrow is in the air) → Fire

Hunting a deer interpreted through Yin and Yang: III

Yin phase	Activity
1. the bullet reaches deer 2. penetrates its skin	Phase of potential structuring → Metal
3. reaches the heart 4. deer drops dead	Phase of actual structured effect → Water

Phase during which activity shifts towards receptivity → **Earth**

Correlative thinking

- **What is correlative thinking?**
- “In general, correlative thinking draws systematic correspondences among various orders of reality or realms of the cosmos, such as the human body, the body politic, and the heavenly bodies.” (Henderson)
- → “the officials are the eyes and ears of the emperor” = correspondence between the human body and the organisation of the state
- Correlative thinking assumes that these related orders are homologous, that they correspond with one another in number, in kind, in structure, or in some other basic respect, and that they form a continuum.

-
- ❑ Zou Yan 鄒衍 (305-240? BC): theory of correlation of the five phases with the cyclical patterns of history
 - ❑ concept of mutual conquest
“water/fire/metal/wood/earth”
 - ❑ The relation among earth/wood/metal/fire/water was probably based on simple natural observation such as the observation that vegetation overcomes earth by drawing its sustenance from it: that metal overcomes wood as when a sharp axe can be used to fell trees; fire melts metal; water extinguishes fire; and earth can somehow conquer water (by drainage or absorption).
 - ❑ includes colours, seasons, cardinal directions etc.

Is correlative thinking science?

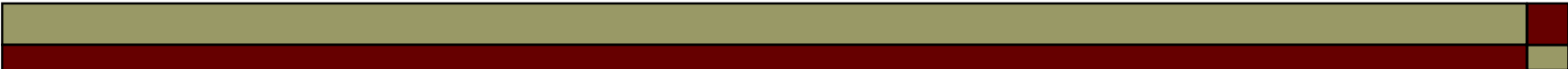
- ❑ “Correlative thinking seems scientific but is actually close to the intuitive aesthetics of music and dance; it tended to crowd out any possibility of a vigorous development of genuine science in ancient China (as, also, in the West).” (Nivison, CHAC, p. 810)
- ❑ Claude Levi-Strauss has described it as a primitive “science of the concrete” (correlative cosmology relates concrete phenomena actually perceived in our ordinary experience to each other “horizontally”).
- ❑ “It is a kind of anthropocosmology in which entities, processes, and classes of phenomena found in nature correspond to or ‘to together with’ various entities, processes, and classes of phenomena in the human world.” (Quote from Schwartz, p. 351).

Resonance

tian ren ganying 天人感應 “resonance between heaven and humans”

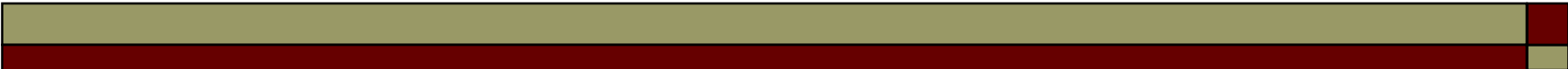
Idea that any dislocation on earth (or in the heavens) will accompany a corresponding and similar dislocation in the heavens (or on earth)

→ Omina or unusual natural events (e.g. snow in August) are interpreted as signs (sometimes warnings) of heaven to the emperor



Parts and whole

- ❑ Humans are part of a **monistic** system in which everything is part of a unity or larger whole
- ❑ How do Chinese thinkers construe the relationship between the parts and the whole?
- ❑ Does the desire for unity leave room for the individual person?
- ❑ What role does *resonance* play in the interaction between the parts and the whole?
- ❑ *Huainanzi* offers a view of unity from the perspective of the periphery



THE INDIVIDUAL IN THE HUAINANZI – UNITY FROM THE PERIPHERY

Two competing ideologies

- Unity from the centre (ruling from the centre)
 - Focus on the imperial institution and its rituals
 - Canonisation of texts
 - Court appointed scholar-officials
- Unity from the periphery
 - Theoretical foundation in a text titled *Huainanzi* (Master of Huainan)
 - Compiled at the court of King Liu An of Huainan
 - Syncretistic work incorporating ideas that cannot be attributed to one single school of thought but representative of multi-polarity
 - *Huainanzi* provides concrete examples for the fundamental patterns and processes of the world



Daode jing, chapter 11

Thirty spokes unite in one hub;
It is precisely where there is nothing, that
we find the usefulness of the wheel.

三十輻，共一轂，
當其無，有車之用。

We fire clay and make vessels;
It is precisely where there's no substance,
that we find the usefulness of clay pots.

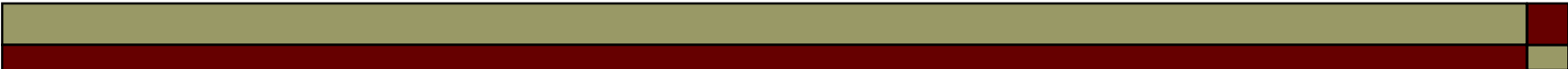
埴埴以為器，
當其無，有器之用。

We chisel out doors and windows;
It is precisely in these empty spaces, that
we find the usefulness of the room.

鑿戶牖以為室，
當其無，有室之用。

Therefore, we regard having something
as beneficial;
But having nothing as useful.

故有之以為利，
無之以為用。



Wang Bi's (226-249) Commentary

“That by which a [= one] hub is capable of holding together thirty [different] spokes is its negativity [vis-à-vis their specific features]. Because of this negativity, [the hub] is capable of taking in the points of origin of [many different] entities. That is why [the hub] is capable, being itself the minimum, to control the many [spokes]!” (Trans. by Rudolf G. Wagner, *A Chinese Reading of the Daodejing*, 154)

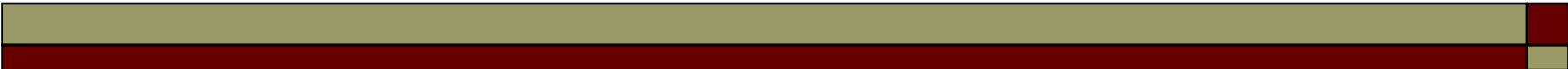


Resonance 感應

- not a “historical” process of linear causation or generation; not a diachronic development, but rather a process in which all elements combine into a synchronic order
- Charles LeBlanc: “the power of things to affect and to be affected in such a way as to bring about harmony. This power is based on the persistent affinity and attraction of things that were originally one, but that became scattered when the world began. Through the True Man *kan-ying* recreates the original unity.”
- Original unity → diversified multiplicity → return to original unity

Total resonance vs relative resonance

- ❑ Relative resonance: takes place among the members of a given category (*Yin* or *Yang*).
- ❑ Total resonance: not limited to one category, but total and universal; crosses the boundaries of the categories (e.g. *Yin* and *Yang*) and brings about all at once things that are essentially different, such as fire and water.
- ❑ Total resonance is metaphysical and can only reside in the hub of the wheel in *nothingness* (*wu* 無)



Examples

An example for the difference between relative resonance and total resonance is given in *Huainanzi*, Chapter 6, section 6.

Please read the dedicated page on Moodle, Section “Man as Microcosm: The Individual in the Huainanzi”

True knowledge (*zhen zhi* 真知)

“In this sense true knowledge (*chen-chih*) is not a mirror-image - neither a representation of 'what's out there' nor a focal or peripheral vision of the intellect - but rather a direct and immediate *affectus* of things themselves, an affinitive correspondence and union that precedes any reflected awareness of it. It is this ontological relation of an affinitive rather than causal type that actualizes in the discrete world of space, time, species and individuals the primal unity of the cosmos.” (transl. Le Blanc, *Huai nan tzu*, 208)

Individuation of a person

- At birth a human being is in a state of total resonance, completely attuned to the Heavenly principle (*tian li* 天理); no distinction between inside and outside or other differentiations
- Relative resonance: a person exists in their own relative natural (*ziran* 自然) state of being in accordance with their allocated fate, the environment, their ambitions, talents and so forth → person as a self-regulating entity
- Culture in *Huainanzi* is not bad as long as it does not impede the realisation of a person's true nature (*xing* 性)

Resonance $\neq$ Synchronising

- Resonance between things is not like synchronising metronomes

