

Article

Confucian Response to the Challenge Posed by Catholicism: Wang Fuzhi's Views of Catholicism

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Abstract: Despite his significant influence, Wang Fuzhi's perspective on Catholicism and its actual impact on his philosophical outlook have yet to be thoroughly examined. This essay aims to delve into this topic and elucidate Wang's attitude toward Catholicism, highlighting its evolution over time. In his earlier ideological developments, Wang Fuzhi adopted a staunchly critical approach to Catholicism, primarily from an ethical standpoint and through the lens of the Hua-Yi differentiation (*hua yi zhi bian* 华夷之辨). He perceived Catholicism as a doctrine of Yi 夷, lacking an understanding of the proper human place within relationships. Moreover, he pointed out that Catholicism was characterized by dogmatic adherence, in contrast to the Confucian emphasis on embodying the "mean" (*Zhong* 中) in practical terms. However, in his old age, Wang Fuzhi's perspective underwent a subtle shift, spurred by the astronomical observations conducted by missionaries like Matteo Ricci. This shift prompted him to re-evaluate the Confucian concept of heaven and led him to assert that certain Catholic practices were essentially endeavors of "investigating things" (*gewu* 格物). This reinterpretation encouraged individuals to explore the significance of engaging with the external world—a facet often overlooked in the context of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. Wang Fuzhi embarked on an endeavor to integrate Catholicism into the Confucian framework. He identified select Catholic ideas that aligned with his own viewpoint and incorporated them into the doctrine of *qi*. Despite his lifelong dedication to Confucianism, the challenges posed by Catholicism and the activities of missionaries compelled him to reassess and, in some instances, embrace new ideas that deviated from his predecessors' stance.



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Since the beginning of the last century, Wang Fuzhi (1619 CE–1692 CE) has gradually gained recognition as one of the most influential thinkers who embodied Confucianism, and even Chinese philosophy, during the late Ming dynasty. While there have been numerous studies on Wang Fuzhi's philosophy, very few scholars have given sufficient attention to his views on Catholicism, despite its significance. Jacques Gernet quotes Wang Fuzhi to demonstrate the different ideas of human history between the East and West, presenting him as a defender of Confucianism. Gu Jiming 谷继明 also highlights the differences between Wang's thoughts and contemporary Catholic theories. However, Xu Sumin 许苏民 focuses on the influence of Catholicism on Wang Fuzhi's ideas, although he needs to further strengthen his evidence (Gernet 1993, pp. 98–101; Gu 2021, pp. 9–11; Xu 2012, pp. 28–38).

This essay aims to examine Wang Fuzhi's views, particularly, his criticisms of Catholicism, with a more precise analysis of the significance of his thoughts in his old age. Notably, there was a change in his perspectives in his late life. In contrast to the fierce criticism he expressed earlier, Wang Fuzhi partially accepted the Catholic idea of "heaven" (*tian* 天). In his old age, Wang acknowledged the correctness of the Catholics' assertions regarding the celestial movement. By recognizing the correctness of their doctrine, he also accepted their methods and, by extension, the results obtained with those methods. Wang's understanding of "heaven" extended beyond the transformation of *qi* 气 and incorporated the

study of cosmology. He emphasized the manifold connotations of the notion of “heaven” and underscored the importance of studying it from an astronomical perspective. This kind of study had been neglected by many Confucian scholars before him. Inspired by the activities of the Catholics, Wang Fuzhi recognized the limitations of Confucianism in “investigating things” (*gewu* 格物), including the study of “heaven”.

1. Ethics, the Differentiation between Hua 华 and Yi 夷 (*hua yi zhi bian* 华夷之辨), and His Early Criticism

In his earlier life, Wang Fuzhi mainly criticized Catholicism from an ethical and political perspective.¹ There are three books in which Wang expressed his criticisms, namely, *Outer Commentary on the Book of Changes* (*Zhouyi Waizhuan* 周易外传), *Reading the Great Collection of Commentaries on the Four Books* (*Du Sishudaquan Shuo* 读四书大全说), and *Record of the Yongli Court* (*Yongli Shilu* 永历实录). *Record of the Yongli Court* is Wang Fuzhi’s personal historical account of the Yongli 永历 reign (1646 CE–1662 CE)². In Wang Fuzhi’s narratives, he expressed his discontent with the significant influence of Catholicism on political affairs during that time. One prominent issue was the introduction of a new calendar. In the *Chronicle of Deceased Emperor* (*Daxing Huangdi ji* 大行皇帝纪), which is the biography of the Yongli emperor, Wang Fuzhi wrote:

西洋人瞿纱微进新历，诏颁行之。(Wang 2011, book 9, p. 361)

The Westerner, Andreas Xavier Koffler, submitted the new calendar. (The emperor) promulgates the imperial edict to put it into practice.

给事中尹三聘奏瞿纱微擅用夷历，燹乱祖宪，乞仍用大统旧历。从之。

The supervising secretary (*jishi zhong* 给事中), Yin Sanpin 尹三聘 (b. 1606 CE–?) submitted a memorial to the throne that Andreas Xavier Koffler had adopted the Yi’s 夷 calendar without proper authorization and flagrantly disturbed the decrees made by ancestors. (He) pleaded for continually adopting the old calendar of *Datong* 大统. (The emperor) agrees on (his request).³

The new calendar implemented during the Chongzhen 崇禎 regime (1611 CE–1644 CE) was known as the Chongzhen calendar (*Chongzhen Li* 崇禎历). It acquired the name “Yi 夷 calendar” because it was compiled by Chinese Catholic converts who incorporated measures and technologies primarily introduced by Western missionaries. The adoption of this new calendar sparked a fierce debate during the Chongzhen reign (Li 2020, pp. 82–87; Xiao 2021, pp. 77–89). For some Confucian scholars, the successful implementation of the new calendar posed a challenge from Catholicism to Confucianism because the calendar held significant political implications in Confucianism. In the Confucian classic of political theories, *The Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚书), when the ideal sage-king, Yao, issues a proclamation, he first commands “the Xis and Hes, in reverent accordance with (their observation of) the wide heavens, to calculate and delineate (the movements and appearances of) the sun, the moon, the stars, and the zodiacal spaces, and so to deliver respectfully the seasons to be observed by the people” (乃命羲和，钦若昊天，历象日月星辰，敬授人时).⁴ This exemplifies the alignment of human activity with the cosmic clockwork (Kern 2017, p. 36), emphasizing the intimate connection between ideal Confucian politics and heaven. During the Han dynasty, when Confucianism became the imperial ideology, this relationship between politics and cosmology was further reinforced, with the emperor’s cosmological position determining his political function (Wang 2000, p. 190).

Therefore, the compilation of the calendar was not merely an astronomical academic endeavor but a political affair. Implementing the new calendar was not simply a reform of astronomical institutions but rather a disruption of the relationship between heaven and politics, which is emphasized by Confucianism. This challenge directly questioned the guiding principles of Confucianism as the ideology of the ruling regime.

Furthermore, it is worth considering that the Chongzhen emperor, who had adopted the new calendar and had almost embraced Catholicism (Chan 1982, p. 123), ultimately committed suicide and lost his sovereign power. From a Confucian perspective, the cal-

endar reform could be seen as a contributing factor to the collapse of the dynasty and the disruption of social order and imperial strength. Thus, it is reasonable to assume that Yin Sanpin 尹三聘 intended to remind the Yongli emperor of the failure of the Chongzhen reign. Yin heavily criticized the new calendar, condemning it for flagrantly disregarding the decrees established by ancestors, specifically referencing the calendar adopted by the Ming dynasty's founder, the Hongwu 洪武 emperor. This calendar, known as the *Calendar of Great Unity* (*Datong Li* 大统历), was compiled by Confucian scholars with the Hongwu emperor's support (Li 2019, pp. 19–26). Yin implied that if the Yongli emperor wished to avoid the fate of the Chongzhen reign, he should follow in the footsteps of the Hongwu emperor and reintroduce the ancient calendar. Wang Fuzhi aligned with Yin Sanpin's perspective and disagreed with the calendar reform. He recorded Yin's criticism in the *Biography of Eunuchs* (*Huanzhe Liezhuan* 宦者列传) again. Both Wang and Yin considered Catholicism and its converts as threats to the sovereignty of the state.

In Wang Fuzhi's recording we quoted above, the missionary, Andreas Xavier Koffler, also deserves our attention. According to the research of modern scholar Huang Yinong 黄一农, Andreas Xavier Koffler baptized the Queen Mother, the Queen, and the son of the Yongli emperor, namely, Zhu Cixuan 朱慈炫 (also known as Constantine). Huang Yinong suggests that Koffler may have hoped that Zhu Cixuan, in the future when he became emperor, would emulate Emperor Constantine and declare religious freedom, allowing Catholicism to spread without restrictions (Huang 2006, pp. 352–53). These historical facts indicate that due to Andreas Xavier Koffler's influence, the impact of Catholicism significantly increased within the Yongli regime's court. Wang Fuzhi, being aware of these events, mentioned them in *Biography of Eunuchs*. Wang Fuzhi wrote:

天寿事天主教，拜西洋人瞿纱微为师，勇卫军旗帜皆用西番书为符识，类儿戏。又荐纱微掌钦天监事，改用西历。给事中尹三聘劾罢之。

Pang Tianshou 庞天寿 embraced Catholicism and regraded the Westerner, Andreas Xavier Koffler, as his teacher. The emperor's guard (*yongwei jun* 勇卫军) used Western words as symbols on their flags, like children's play. Moreover, (Pang Tianshou) recommended Andreas Xavier Koffler to be appointed to maintain the directorate of astronomy (*qintian jian* 钦天监), switching to using the Western calendar. The supervising secretary, Yin Sanpin 尹三聘 criticized (this policy), leading to its subsequent annulment.⁵

This record supplements the information we mentioned earlier. The reason why Andreas Xavier Koffler was able to submit the new calendar was that he was recommended by Pang Tianshou (庞天寿, 1588 CE–1657 CE) and then he was in charge of the directorate of astronomy at the time. Pang, also known by his Christian name Achilleus Pang, served as the captain of the Yongli emperor's guard (Dong 2020, pp. 42–43). These facts indicate that Christians gradually gained more political influence and became involved in state affairs during the Yongli reign.

In addition to agreeing with Yin Sanpin's criticism, Wang Fuzhi commented that using the cross as a flag symbol was mere children's play. Evidently, Wang Fuzhi was discontented with the involvement of Catholic power in political matters. However, the question arises: Why was Wang Fuzhi hostile toward Catholicism and its political engagements? His depiction of the new calendar as the calendar of Yi 夷 cued the reason. The notion, Yi 夷, shows that the fundamental reason behind his discontent can be traced to his view concerning the differentiation between Hua 华 and Yi 夷 (*hua yi zhi bian* 华夷之辨).

Originally, Hua denoted the "middle state" (*zhongguo* 中国) and had various meanings, primarily referring to the dominion of the king of Zhou and his vassals. From the period of Spring and Autumn onward, it also came to represent civilization (Chang 2009, p. 190). During the Han dynasty and beyond, it took on an ethnic connotation, specifically Chinese, and became closely associated with Confucianism (Chang 2017, p. 60). Simultaneously, the connotation of Yi developed. Initially, it referred to outsiders⁶ who lived in the east of the middle states. Subsequently, it encompassed all outsiders residing on the borders of the middle state and was often referred to as *Yidi* (夷狄)⁷. When Confucianists consciously perceived Hua, its meaning of civilization was emphasized. Consequently, Yi

came to signify barbarity. Thus, the differentiation between Hua and Yi evolved into the differentiation between civilization and barbarity. Of course, the civilization is Chinese civilization predominantly shaped by Confucianism (Tang 2019, pp. 115–36).

When encountering foreign religions or civilizations brought by outsiders, Confucian scholars often used a discourse strategy that emphasized the differentiation between Hua and Yi. This can be clearly seen in the historical debate between Confucianism and Buddhism during the early transmission of Buddhism in China (Zürcher 2007, pp. 254–86). During Wang Fuzhi's time, a similar situation arose with the introduction and promotion of Catholicism in China. Like Wang Fuzhi, some Confucian scholars opposed the spread of Catholicism, arguing that it was a doctrine of Yi. In the *Shengchao Poxie Ji* (圣朝破邪集), a collection edited by anti-Christian scholars, Huang Zhen 黄贞, a contemporary Confucian thinker alongside Wang Fuzhi, believed that foreign missionaries used deceitful tactics. They would flatter the Chinese people and quietly propagate their doctrines. Once they gained enough power, they would dismantle Confucianism and its influence. Furthermore, Huang referred to Chinese individuals who had converted to Catholicism as the "Yi of the Hua" (*hua zhi yi* 华之夷).

西之夷，天主耶穌之徒；華之夷，從天主耶穌之徒者是已。然夷固不即滅儒也，而其計先且媚與竊，……爪牙備，血力強，一旦相與躡素王之堂，咆哮滅之，予小子誠為此懼。

The Western Yi are the disciples of the Lord of Heaven and Jesus. The Yi of Hua are those who follow the disciples of the Lord of Heaven and Jesus. However, Yi admittedly cannot put Confucianism in ruins immediately. They have a stratagem to flatter and propagate in silence first. (After) With enough talons and fangs (button man) and strong bloody force, they will squat in the hall of the uncrowned king (*suwang* 素王), roaring and exterminating Confucianism. I, a child (*yu xiaozi* 予小子), sincerely fear of it.⁸

The concept of the "uncrowned king" initially appeared in the Zhuangzi, specifically in the chapter titled *The Way of Heaven* (*Tian Dao* 天道). It refers to a king who understands that "vacancy, stillness, placidity, tastelessness, quietude, silence, and doing-nothing are the root of all things" (夫虛靜恬淡，寂寞無為者，萬物之本) and acts "in a low position" (以此處下). However, during the Han dynasty, the term took on a specific meaning associated with Confucius. It implied that Confucius possessed the virtues of a king but was unable to attain the position, and he formulated laws and principles for future generations (Van Ess 1999, p. 34; Zeng 2019, pp. 79–85). When Huang mentioned that Catholicism would squat in the hall of Confucius, he expressed concerns that Catholicism possessed such strong power that it would challenge Confucianism's position within the government and potentially replace it as the guiding ideology in the future. Huang shared similar worries to Yin Sanpin and Wang Fuzhi. However, Huang took a more radical stance. He regarded Chinese Catholics as "the Yi of the Hua". In Huang's eyes, the transformation occurring in these Chinese Catholics, especially among those who used to be Confucian scholars, meant that they were distancing themselves from the Confucian identity they naturally possessed and embracing Catholicism. Huang thought this change should be rejected and individuals should remain consistent with Confucianism. Behind his radical condemnation, it becomes evident once again that the differentiation between Hua and Yi is not merely an ethnic matter but should be examined from the perspective of civilization. Converting to Catholicism is not merely a personal religious conversion but a deliberate attempt to transform Confucian civilization from what Huang perceives as barbarity. In Huang's perspective, even if a person is ethnically Chinese, they would be considered Yi if they abandon their Confucian identity. Wang Fuzhi, on the other hand, was less radical than Huang Zhen. While he also discussed this differentiation from the Confucian perspective, he placed more emphasis on morality and ethics.

Before continuing to analyze Wang's criticisms, it is necessary to understand how he interpreted the differentiation between Hua and Yi from an ethical or moral perspective. Wang expressed the following viewpoint:

所恶于夷者，无君臣父子之伦也。以大伦故而别夷夏，不以夷故而废大伦。

(Wang 2011, book 5, p. 334)

What (I) hate about Yi is the lack of a relation between prince and minister, father and son. Because of this great relation Hua and Yi are differentiated. Do not use Yi as the reason to abolish the great relation.

天下之大防二：中国、夷狄也，君子小人也。非本末有别而先王强为之防也。中国之于夷狄，所生异地。其地异，其气异矣；气异而习异，习异而所知所行蔑不异焉。乃于其中亦自有其贵贱焉。特地界分，天气殊，而不可乱；乱则人极毁，华夏之生民亦受其吞噬憔悴。防之于早，所以定人极而保人之生，因乎天也。

(Wang 2011, book 5, p. 334)

Under the heavens, there exist two significant barriers: one between the middle state and the outsiders (*yi di* 夷狄), and the other between the superior man (*junzi* 君子) and the small-minded person (*xiaoren* 小人). These barriers are not a differentiation between roots and branches (*benmo* 本末) and were made by the ancient kings firmly. When it comes to the middle state and its relationship with the outsiders, they originate from different lands. The land itself differs, and so does its *qi*. The variation in *qi* leads to distinct customs, and these customs, in turn, shape the total difference in the knowledge and actions of people residing in those regions. Furthermore, nobility and humbleness arise within their respective areas. This differentiation is based on the boundaries and territories, the disparity in heavenly *qi* and it must not be disrupted. Any disturbance to these barriers would bring about the destruction of the peak of humans (*renji* 人极) and cause the people of Huaxia to bear its engulfment and become haggard. Therefore, the barriers were established early on to safeguard the establishment of the peak of humans, ensuring the generation of human beings, complying with heaven!⁹

In analyzing Wang Fuzhi's quotations, it is evident that he does not deny the existence of kinship or political relationships within Yi societies. However, he emphasizes that Hua differentiates itself from Yi based on the concept of the "great relation" (*dalun* 大伦), which is derived from Confucian ethics. The great relation can be found in various Confucian texts, such as the *Analects* and the works of Mencius. For example, in the *Analects*, Zilu 子路 says: "how is it that he sets aside the duties that should be observed between sovereign and minister? Wishing to maintain his personal purity, he allows that great relation to come to confusion" (君臣之义，如之何其废之？欲洁其身，而乱大伦). In *Mencius*, Mencius says: "how, between father and son, there should be affection; between sovereign and minister, righteousness" (父子有亲，君臣有义).¹⁰ These principles are considered fundamental in Confucianism, and they highlight the significance of maintaining proper relationships and fulfilling one's duties. Wang Fuzhi's statements align with these Confucian teachings as he emphasizes "affection" (*qin* 亲)¹¹ and "righteousness" (*yi* 义) within the great relation. By doing so, he underscores the ethical values embedded in these relationships as defined by Confucian ethics.

Furthermore, in the second quotation, Wang Fuzhi challenged the notion that the difference between Hua and Yi is merely a subjective distinction created by individuals, similar to the difference between roots and branches within the same tree. Instead, he traces the differentiation back to the earth and its manifestation in the form of *qi*. Wang argued that Hua and Yi inhabit different lands, leading to the development of distinct customs. These differences arise from the unique *qi* that each land possesses. Wang asserted that these distinctions, along with the boundaries shaped by heavenly *qi*, should not be disrupted. Disruption would disturb the *qi* and have detrimental effects, including the potential destruction of the peak of humans and endangering the living men of Hua. It is important to note that Wang Fuzhi's emphasis on *qi* suggests that the difference between Hua and Yi is not solely a human creation but is rooted in their shared yet distinct origins.

Additionally, his mention of the peak of humans aligns with the ideals of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, which focuses on the behavior of the sage to fix on the position of humans (Adler 2014, p. 169). It is clear that Wang took the Confucian ethical principle

as the ethic of human beings itself. Only by practicing Confucian ethical principles, the living men of Hua could comply with heaven and make themselves live well. As for Yi, he would prefer Yi to reside in areas where their customs flourish. From a Confucian perspective, where the sage establishes the peak of humans, Hua occupies the central place where the great relation is upheld. Yi, on the other hand, would be better suited to live in the broader areas of Hua, where they can maintain their customs without disrupting the established order.

Although Wang Fuzhi did not specifically address the concept of “Yi of Hua”, as asserted by Huang Zhen, we can speculate on his perspective based on his general ideas. Following Wang’s line of thinking, it is plausible to suggest that he would advocate for those who have adopted the identity of Yi to relocate to areas where Yi customs are thriving. In the context of his criticism of Catholicism, if we apply his views on the differentiation of Hua and Yi, it becomes apparent that he would be more inclined to encourage Chinese Catholics to go to regions where Catholicism is flourishing.

In line with his views on Hua and Yi, which are central to Confucian ethical principles, Wang Fuzhi’s emphasis on the “great relation” can also be observed in his critique of Catholicism in *Outer Commentary on the Book of Changes* (*Zhouyi Waizhuan* 周易外传). Wang Fuzhi argued that:

且夫人之生也，莫不资始于天。逮其方生而予以生，有恩勤之者而生气固焉，有君主之者而生理宁焉。则各有所本，而不敢忘其所递及，而骤亲于天。然而有味始者忘天，则亦有二本者主天矣。忘天者禽，主天者狄。……狄之自署曰“天所置单于”，黷天不疑，既已妄矣。而又有进焉者，如近世洋夷利玛窦之称“天主”，敢于褻鬼倍亲而不恤也，虽以技巧文之，归于狄而已矣。呜呼！郊祀之典礼至矣哉！不敢昧之以远于禽，不敢主之以远于狄。合之以理，差之以量。圣人之学《易》，于斯验矣。德业以为地，不敢亢人以混于杳冥；知礼以为茅，不敢绝天以安于卑陋。（Wang 2011, book 1, p. 346）

Furthermore, regarding human birth, there is nothing that does not benefit itself and originate from heaven. As people come into existence and the birth is given, there is grace (*en* 恩), which diligently nurtures it so that the generating *qi* (*shengqi* 生气) could be concentered here, and there is also a sovereign (*jun* 君) who governs this process, ensuring the maintenance of the principles of life (*shengli* 生理). Hence, everything has its own foundation¹² on which it relies and dares not forget the order or directly love heaven. However, there are those who conceal this initial connection and forget heaven. Some individuals even establish two foundations (*erben* 二本), attempting to exert dominance over heaven.¹³ Those who forget heaven are birds, while those who seek to dominate heaven resemble the *di* 狄. The (chef of) *di* signs itself as *chanyu* 单于¹⁴ titled by heaven. This act unquestionably defies heaven and is deemed incorrect. Moreover, there are people who go to great lengths, like the recent foreigner Yi, Matteo Ricci, who advocates for (the concept of) the “Lord of Heaven” (*Tianzhu* 天主). He dares to show irreverence toward ghosts (*gui* 鬼) and abandons their parents without any concern. Despite attempting to mask these actions through his skills and techniques, he should still be classified as one who is similar to *di*. Oh, how paramount and significant are the rituals of sacrificing at the border altar (*jiaosi zhi dianli* 郊祀之典礼)! It, (the ritual), does not dare to hide heaven and thereby distance itself from (being like) birds. Nor does it dare to dominate heaven and distance itself from (being like) *di*. These rituals combine principles while distinguishing each element through appropriate measures. Sage’s study of the *Book of Changes* can be affirmed here. Taking virtue and work as the earth, (the sage) dares not equate himself to be mingled into darkness. Regarding knowledge and rituals as the sacrificed thatches, (the sage) dare not to isolate himself from heaven to dwell in the mundane and inferior.

One notable aspect that catches our attention is Wang’s association of Catholicism with *di* and *Chanyu* 单于. As we have previously mentioned, *di* refers to the northern outsiders, while *Chanyu* denotes the leadership title of the Xiongnu 匈奴, a group of Mongolian nomads from the north. However, why would Wang Fuzhi connect Catholicism with them? Is it related to the transmission of Catholicism? Apparently not. The spread

of Catholicism during the Ming Dynasty began in the southeastern regions (Sebes 1988, pp. 25–40). To answer this question, we need to examine the implications of *di*. As Professor Hans van Ess points out, among the various outsider groups, the northern *di* hold more power and pose a greater challenge for the Hua people (Van Ess 2004, p. 244). Wang's association of Catholicism with *Di* implies that he initially regarded Catholicism as a doctrine of the Yi or *Di* and then recognized the influential nature of Catholicism, which he believed would bring disaster to the middle state. Wang kept an insistence on this standpoint. There are two noteworthy points to consider in his sayings.

Firstly, Wang criticized Catholicism, claiming that Catholics audaciously love heaven directly. In Wang's perspective, there are two significant factors in the birth of individuals: "grace" (*qin* 亲), which also directly refers to parents, and the role of heaven. Wang believes that the process of birth follows a specific sequence that cannot be disrupted. However, to Wang's astonishment, Catholics, particularly Matteo Ricci, attempt to establish a direct connection with heaven and assert that heaven governs them directly. They dare to engage in direct communication with heaven and hold a position of authority in heaven, referred to as "Lord of Heaven" (*Tianzhu* 天主). This leads Wang Fuzhi to argue that Catholics are even more misguided than *di* and "the Lord of Heaven" is, in reality, a form of a ghost. The reverence shown by Catholic believers toward the Lord of Heaven is viewed by Wang as disrespectful and blasphemous, rather than the proper way to honor heaven. This behavior simply demonstrates their immersion in darkness. However, what is the correct approach? Wang asserts that the ideal way to show respect to heaven is with the practice of the superintendent rites of sacrificing at the border altar (*jiaosi zhi daili* 郊祀之典礼). Additionally, apart from the rituals carried out at the individual level, Wang Fuzhi emphasizes the significance of virtue as the appropriate path. This implies that individuals should focus on their own virtue and diligent work instead of attempting direct communication with heaven. People should seek knowledge and adhere to rituals rather than consider themselves inferior. Furthermore, it is important to note that during this period, Wang still viewed the scientific methods used by Matteo Ricci merely as skills and techniques, without recognizing their inherent importance.

Secondly, Wang Fuzhi believed that Catholicism neglects the importance of the great relationship and abandons parents without concern. After analyzing the existence of two foundations and their sequence in the process of birth, some questions arise: What is the difference between these two foundations? Do they conflict in their roles and functions? In Wang's answers to these questions, he further showed his criticism of Catholicism. He argued that there is no conflict between the foundations as they both adhere to the same principles. The disparity lies in how human beings approach and treat them.

To provide a clearer interpretation, it is necessary to examine Matteo Ricci's relevant statements, as he is specifically mentioned by Wang Fuzhi. In Matteo Ricci's monograph, "The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven" (*Tianzhu Shiyi* 天主实义), Ricci states that "a man has three kinds of fathers: the first is the Lord of Heaven, the second is the sovereign of his state, and the third is the father of his family" (Ricci 2016, p. 353). Here, Ricci places the Lord of Heaven (*Tianzhu* 天主) in the highest position, above the status of parents. If a man "obeys his father of lowest rank and thereby disobeys his senior fathers, he will naturally be reckoned the most unfilial of sons." (Ricci 2016, pp. 353–54). This idea differs significantly from the thoughts expressed in Confucian texts. For instance, in the *Analects*, Confucius discusses how to avoid offending a superior with one's actions. His response emphasizes engaging in the foundation (*wuben* 务本), and practicing filial piety is considered the best way to fulfill this foundation.¹⁵ Clearly, Confucianism places parents in the primary position. Wang Fuzhi similarly asserts that parents are a source of grace who diligently facilitate the birth of individuals. Through parents, the generation of *qi* is embodied within us. In this sense, even if there are two foundations in the process of human birth, the significance of parents should not be ignored, as they are intimately connected to us. This idea can be found in other statements by Wang Fuzhi. For example, Wang Fuzhi said:

从其大者而言之，则乾坤为父母，人物之胥生，生于天地之德也固然矣；从其切者而言之，则别无所谓乾，父即生我之乾，别无所谓坤，母即成我之坤；惟生我者其德统天以流形，故称之曰父，惟成我者其德顺天而厚载，故称之曰母。……尽敬以事父，则可以事天者在是；尽爱以事母，则可以事地者在是。(Wang 2011, book 12, p. 353)

To speak of what is great, *qian* 乾 and *kun* 坤 are the parents. It is undeniable that both the entire process of human birth and the generation of all things are bestowed by heavenly virtue. To speak of what is close, there is nothing else that can be referred to as *qian* or *kun*. The father is identical with the *qian*, giving me birth, while the mother is identical with the *kun*, completing my existence. Only because the one who gives birth to us possesses the virtue that encompasses the essence of heaven, enabling the manifestation of form, is he referred to as the father. Only because the one who completes us possesses the virtue that aligns with heaven and is in its largeness to support, is she referred to as the mother... It is through exhausting the reverence to serve (our) father that (we) can serve heaven. It is through exhausting the love to serve (our) mother that (we) can serve earth.

In this paragraph, Wang Fuzhi provided his interpretation of the relationship between heaven and earth, as well as the roles of father and mother. Unlike Matteo Ricci, Wang placed significant emphasis on the vital role of parents and did not solely focus on the fundamental role of heaven. He believed that the father possesses the virtue inherent in heaven, allowing forms to prevail. The father is represented by *qian*, embodying the one who gives birth. Similarly, the mother possesses the virtue that aligns with heaven, completing the process of birth. She represents the *kun*, embodying the one who achieves the whole process of birth. Parents are the *qian* and the *kun* and play a crucial role in the process of giving birth. In this sense, venerating parents is a way to serve heaven. Here, serving heaven with personal virtue and rituals is crystallized as the behavior of venerating parents, namely, practicing filial piety. Simultaneously, it also means there is no need to serve heaven directly.

Wang found it incomprehensible to deliberately emphasize the importance of heaven and believe in a dominating Lord of Heaven. As he negated the catholic doctrine to serve heaven, he by nature denied the methods they adopt, especially the external objects used as the symbolization. This denial is manifested in his criticism of the cross. For example, he criticized the symbolized implication of the cross in *Reading the Great Collection of Commentaries on the Four Books*. However, before analyzing Wang Fuzhi's criticism, we, in the first step, should check the implication of the cross that was popular in his era.

The use of the cross was prevalent during Wang Fuzhi's era, and its significance was also widely accepted. One document that sheds light on this is the *Daily Copy of a Mouth Bell* (*Kouduo Richao* 口铎日抄), compiled by Giulio Aleni (1582 CE–1649 CE). Although there is no direct evidence indicating that Wang Fuzhi had read this book, considering that the cross was often used in Catholic preaching, it is highly likely that its implications were elaborated upon and that Wang Fuzhi had read it. Therefore, this book can be seen as a compilation that summarizes the spread and implications of the cross in Late-Ming society. It provides a valuable background for understanding Wang Fuzhi's criticisms.

In the *Daily Copy of a Mouth Bell*, Giulio Aleni states:

矧吾主钉于架上，吾侪抚膺流涕，顾瞻斯架，有上下左右之义焉。上者，以至高无上之主，为我等悬于斯架。宁无动我超然向上之思，曰：“惟是仿吾主以自淑乎？”下者，以至善无瑕之躬，为我订于斯架。宁无动我兢兢谦下之念，曰：“惟是卑以自牧乎？”左右者，凡人左手恒弱、右手恒刚。法左之善忍，法右之刚强。且默思不可与此架之恩相左，又安可不如右之强有力者，以勉承此恩乎？(Aleni 2002, pp. 426–27)

Furthermore, our Lord is crucified on the cross. We touch our chests, weep, and turn our heads to gaze at the cross. The significance of the cross can be found in every direction: up and down, left and right. At the top, we see the highest and most supreme Lord hanging on the cross for us. Does this not inspire in us a sense of awe and lead us to have supernatural thoughts, “Only what I should do is emulating my Lord and showing kindness

to myself"? At the bottom, we see a body of utmost goodness, faultless and crucified for us. Does this not move us to embrace prudence and humility, and say, "Only what I do is humbling myself and nourishing my virtue in lowliness¹⁶"? Regarding the left and right, the left hand of common people is often weaker, while the right hand is stronger. Therefore, we should emulate the goodness and endurance of the left hand, and the strength and determination of the right hand. Moreover, it is understood that opposing the grace of the cross is not permissible. Should we not, then, diligently undertake this grace, unlike a person who wields great power in their right hand?

According to Aleni's explanation, the cross carries a metaphorical meaning that reveals the greatness of the Lord. Its purpose is to move us and help us comprehend this greatness, encouraging us to emulate our Lord in our personal lives. Each part of the cross has its own symbolic implication, motivating us to be good and humble. The top symbolizes loftiness and paramountcy, while the bottom represents the body that embodies supreme goodness. The left signifies endurance, and the right signifies unyielding strength. Through the cross, we are reminded of the immense suffering that our Lord endured for our sake. In the context of preaching, the cross serves as a reminder for us to show reverence to the Lord of Heaven, adhere to Catholic teachings, and cultivate our virtues.

However, Wang disagreed on the implication of the cross and held it is heretical. Let us go back to Wang's criticism. Wang said:

斯道之体与学者致道之功，总不可捉煞一定盘星，但就差忒处说，有过、不及两种之病，不可说是伸着不及，缩着太过。两头一般长，四围一般齐，一个枢纽。如此理会，所谬非小。且如《河图》中宫之十、五，《洛书》中宫之五，却是全图全书之数，与乐律家说天数五、地数六，合之十一，遂将六作中声不同。天垂象，圣人立教，固无不然。所以无过、不及处，只叫做“至”，不叫做“中”。近日天主教夷人画一十字，其邪正堕于此。(Wang 2011, book 6, p. 757)

The Body of the Dao and the effectiveness of scholars dedicated to its pursuit cannot be tightly grasped, much like counting the marks on the arm of a steelyard. Speaking of errors, two faults arise: too much (*guo* 过) and too little (*buji* 不及).¹⁷ (However), it cannot be asserted that "too little" could be expanded and "too much" could be drawn back. Both ends have the same length, with four regular sides at the same height and a central pivot. If we interpret it in this manner, the mistakes are not insignificant. Furthermore, both the numbers ten and five, which are in the central place of the *He-Map* (*Hetu* 河图), and the number five, which is in the central place of the *Luo-Writing* (*Luoshu* 洛书),¹⁸ refer to the whole *He-Map* and *Luo-Writing*, respectively. This differs from the assertion made by some melodists that heaven's number is five and earth's number is six. When added together, they sum up to eleven, making six the central number of sounds. In this way, heaven hangs out its imagery, and the sage establishes teachings, which are indeed nothing else. Therefore, when there is no "too much" or "too little", it is called "extremity" (*zhi* 至) rather than "mean" (center, *zhong* 中). Recently, the Catholic Yi person (*yiren* 夷人) drew a cross, by which their deviant practices align with this erroneous understanding.

The last sentence tells that Wang was dissatisfied with the adoption of the cross in Catholicism, and he criticized the Catholic teaching for being dogmatic. To shed light on this, we need to examine Wang's statements regarding the numbers in the *He-Map* and *Luo-Writing*. Wang compared them with the numbers counted by melodists and argued that the melodists' approach was erroneous. They simply added the heavenly number (five) to the number of the earth (six), resulting in eleven, and then took six as the central number of sounds. Wang deemed this method as a simplistic and dogmatic way of calculation. In contrast, the numbers in the *He-Map* and *Luo-Writing* cannot be approached in the same manner. Wang pointed out that the numbers ten and five in the *He-Map*, as well as the number five in the *Luo-Writing*, represent the entirety, respectively. They should not be dogmatically added together using a simple calculation. Similarly, Wang believed that Catholicism suffered from the same problem. In the quotation provided, the significance of the cross's application in preaching is emphasized, with each part carrying its own implication. However, when viewed against the backdrop of Wang's criticism of melodists,

it becomes clear that Wang Fuzhi considered this approach to be dogmatic. He believed that too much attention was placed solely on the implications of each part, neglecting the perspective of the whole. Wang's criticism continued when he mentioned that "both ends have the same length, four regular sides are in the same high, and there is one pivot." This means he was drawing attention to the visual form of the cross itself, including its vertical and horizontal elements. When the ends or sides of the cross are not in order, it can be trimmed. However, in Wang's view, it would be problematic if one only understood it as being inspired by the shape of the cross during moral practice. This would lead to dogmatism because it suggests that we should simply pull back if we act "too much" and only extend if we act "too little". Wang disagreed with this approach, likening it to "counting the first mark on the arm of a steelyard". The place where there is no "too much" and "too little" is called "extremity" (*zhi* 至), which is not reached in a dogmatic way, rather than "mean" (center, *zhong* 中). In this sense, Wang Fuzhi held that even the Catholic theories about the cross cannot make people reach "extremity", not to speak of "mean".

Wang Fuzhi's criticism stems from his understanding of the implication of the cross and his philosophical perspective rooted in Confucianism. The cross, as interpreted, serves as a reminder of the Lord's immense suffering and serves to inspire individuals to cultivate virtue. It evokes a moral motive by highlighting the Lord's selfless act of taking on humanity's sins, prompting reflection and self-improvement. The cross symbolizes the grace of the Lord and provides a visible representation of the moral motive. In contrast, Wang Fuzhi, from a Confucian perspective, believed that humans could directly observe heavenly imagery. He traced the origin of Confucian moral practice back to the heavenly way. In his view, the human body is the congregation of *qi*, and humanity is the principle of *qi* (*qizhili* 气之理) endowed in the congregation's process and represents the heavenly way. Humanity, similar to the heavenly imagery, arises from the transformation of *qi*, and moral behavior shares a fundamental principle with the imagery of heaven (Liu 2018, pp. 112–20). Wang denied the existence of a supernatural power conferring humans' moral motive, emphasizing the continuity between heaven and humans. Furthermore, Wang recognized that heavenly imagery is constantly changing, and he argued that there is no fixed humanity within individuals and "humanity is daily renewal" (*xing risheng richeng* 性生日成). It is similar to how the weather can change and heavenly imagery transforms through the flow of *qi*. Wang believed that human actions could guide humanity to become better or worse; therefore, in order to manifest humanity and pursue goodness, individuals should focus on nurturing their inner virtue daily. Wang's perspective empowers individuals to take initiative in their self-cultivation and align themselves with the heavenly way, without relying on external reminders. That is the implication of his statements that "the body of this Dao" can also not be perceived in a dogmatic way.

This criticism can be further clarified if we know the meaning of "extremity" and "mean" and their differentiation. This differentiation draws Wang so much attention that he also discussed it in *Reading the Great Collection of Commentaries on the Four Books*. Although he did not mention the cross in his sayings here, articulating his sayings can help us to understand his criticism of the cross. He said:

今以道体言之，则程子固曰：“中是里面底”，里只与外相对。不至者外，至者里也。非里面过去，更有一太过底地位在。若以学言，则不得已，且将射作喻。不及鹄者谓之不及，从鹄上盖过去谓之过。若正向鹄去，则虽射穿鹄，透过百步，亦不可谓之过。初不以地界为分别。只在箭筈离弦时，前手高便飘过去，前手低便就近落耳。则或过或不及，只缘一错。而岂鹄立于百步，便以百步为中，九十步内为不及，百十一步外为过之谓哉？ (Wang 2011, book 6, p. 757)

Now, in terms of the body of Dao, Master Cheng admittedly states: the "mean" is inward". "Inward" denotes the opposite of "outward" and "non-extremity" is associated with "outward", while "extremity" refers to the "inward". It does not mean that surpassing the "inward" "too much" can still result in a state or place that is called even more "too much". When discussing "learning", a metaphor of archery has to be taken. "Failing to reach" the bull's eye is called "too little"¹⁹. Exceeding the bull's eye from above is called

“too much”. However, if one precisely hits the bull’s eye, even if the arrow passes through it, in a hundred steps away, it is still not considered “too much”. Initially, the distinction is not made by the boundaries. Only when the arrow leaves the bowstring, if the hand is held high, it will ultimately go over the bull’s eye, but if the hand is low, the arrow will fall short. Therefore, whether it is “too much” or “too little”, it is simply due to an error (in our hands). Would it be right that due to the bull’s eye being set a hundred steps away, “mean” is considered with one hundred steps, anything within nine steps is considered “too little”, and anything beyond one hundred and ten steps is deemed “too much”?

The first thing I want to figure out is that at the beginning of this paragraph, Wang stated with saying on the concept of the “body of Dao” and “learning”, it echoes the beginning of the aforementioned criticism of the cross.

Wang showed his understanding of “extremity” with a metaphor of archery. According to Wang Fuzhi, an archer’s technique plays a crucial role in determining whether they hit the bull’s eye or not. “Extremity” occurs when the archer aims precisely at the bull’s eye with enough strength for the arrow to reach its maximum distance, regardless of whether it actually passes through the bull’s eye or not. In this case, successfully hitting the bull’s eye, “reaching the mean”, is natural. Wang Fuzhi coined this as “the mean is inward” and “extremity refers to the inward”. This implies that once an archer has aimed accurately at the right target, they only need to give their best effort. Achieving the goal will naturally follow their endeavor. On the contrary, “non-extremity” or “outward of extremity” is twofold. If the archer’s hand is raised too high when releasing the arrow, it is considered “too much”, and if the hand is too low, it is labeled “too little”. These instances occur when the archer does not aim directly at the bull’s eye, leading to the impossibility of hitting the target. This state is known as one interpretation. Another scenario is when the archer aims at the bull’s eye, and there is only one outcome—the arrow fails to hit the target. This too is referred to as “too little” and falls under the category of “non-extremity”. That is different from the conventional understanding of archery. Generally speaking, in archery, the bull’s eye is typically set one hundred paces away from the archer. “Mean” refers to the case in which the flying arrow hits the bull’s eye. When the arrow flies over the bull’s eye, it is referred to as “exceeding” or simply “too much”. Conversely, if the arrow falls short of hitting the bull’s eye, it is known as “failing to reach”, or “too little”. This difference lies in Wang’s value of the moment when the arrow leaves the bowstring, while the general understanding takes the fixed distance between the bull’s eye and the archer as the standard. What is worse, it can be calculated using human steps. Wang thought this standard is dogmatic.

Relating this idea to Wang Fuzhi’s criticism of the cross, similar to calculating the distance by counting steps, using a cross, especially its visual form of up and down, left and right, we can see that it easily misleads us into thinking we have done “too much” or “too little” and focusing on emulating the Lord of Heaven as the moral motive outside of us. Instead, similar to focusing on the position of our hand at the beginning of archery, Wang suggested that we should direct our moral practice from the very beginning, acting based on our inner virtue as the original and fundamental motive. When we exclusively focus on our inner virtue, we can confidently give our best effort, and the only thing to be concerned about is whether we have the ability or sufficient power, we act “too little”, to achieve our objective. That is coincident with what Wang said in his commentary of *The Doctrine of Mean (zhongyong 中庸)*.²⁰ He said:

中庸之为德，一全“用”字在内。……一直到人伦之至，治民如尧，事君如舜，方是得中，则岂有过之哉？ (Wang 2011, book 6, p. 757)

The “mean” (*zhongyong 中庸*) as a virtue consists of the full actualization (*yong 用*) of it. This extends even to the “extremity” of human relations (*renlun 人伦*), such as exemplified by Yao 尧, who governs the masses, and Shun 舜, who serves the king. This is what is referred to as achieving the mean. But is there such a thing as “too much” of it?

Yao 尧 and Shun 舜 have always been regarded as the ideal sages in Confucianism, representing the “extremity” of moral behavior. Even if people behave similarly to Yao

and Shun, they would still be achieving the “mean”. This implies that there is no such thing as “too much” adherence to virtuous conduct. Moreover, Wang Fuzhi emphasized that the essence of moral behavior lies in human relations (*renlun* 人伦), specifically, the significant relationships involving parents, princes, and ministers. These relationships are also called the great relation (*dalun* 大伦), which we mentioned in the earlier quotations. Therefore, in Wang’s eyes, because of neglecting human relations, Catholicism even did not gain “extremity”. By contrast, Confucianism enables people to gain the “mean” in their moral behavior.

In our analysis, it becomes evident that the symbol of the cross plays a crucial role in his understanding of Confucian ethics. Although it remains unknown where and how Wang Fuzhi knew the cross, it acted as a reminder that enabled him to consciously make comparisons. This, in turn, facilitated a deeper interpretation of Confucian ethics. Wang Fuzhi distinguished Confucian ethics from Catholic theories, particularly those represented by the cross, while placing significant value on the great relations, particularly those involving filial piety, prince, and minister.

To summarize, in Wang Fuzhi’s earlier life, he criticized Catholicism primarily from political and ethical perspectives. He expressed concern about the political influences of Catholicism in the courts and its potential to undermine Confucian ethics, such as the relationship between heaven and human beings. This awareness of the crisis caused by Catholicism continued throughout his life. However, as he delved deeper into his understanding of Catholicism, he underwent a slight change in perspective. He sought to reconcile the Catholic ideas he accepted with Confucianism, aiming to equip Confucianism to face the theoretical challenges posed by Catholicism.

2. Heresy, Calendar, Astronomy, Geography, and Scientific Technology in His Later Views

In his later life, Wang Fuzhi primarily directed his criticism toward Catholicism, focusing on the calendar and astronomy rather than the ethical aspects. However, it is important to note that this does not imply any radical shift in Wang Fuzhi’s own beliefs, nor did he adopt the ethical ideas of Catholicism. Upon a careful examination of the related texts, it becomes apparent that Wang Fuzhi just acknowledged the validity of the scientific technologies used by the missionaries. As a result, he recognized the significant challenge Catholicism posed to Confucianism, which compelled him to make adjustments to his own expressions.

The first of his sayings that draws our attention is in *Commentary on Zhuangzi* (*Zhuangzi Jie* 庄子解)²¹. Wang said:

无才不可以为墨，今世为天主教者近之。(Wang 2011, book 13, p. 468)

Without capability, one cannot act like a Moist. In the contemporary age, people acting as Catholics are close to it.

Moism holds that “loving all equally” (*jianai* 兼爱). This sentence reveals Wang Fuzhi’s criticism of Catholicism drew inspiration from the historical conflict between Confucianism and Moism. In the Pre-Qin period. Moism developed so rapidly that Confucianists, including Mencius, viewed Moism’s doctrine of “loving all equally” as a heretical school that undermined the importance of great relations, potentially leading people to behave similarly to beasts.²² Yi Zhi夷之 said: “To me it sounds that we are to love all without difference of degree; but the manifestation of love must begin with our parents” (爱无差等，施由亲始) (Legge 1985, <https://ctext.org/mengzi/teng-wen-gong-i#n1658>, accessed on 8 August 2023), emphasizing the significance of parents in the manifestation of love. Mencius disagreed, identifying two foundations in Yi Zhi’s argument. Wang Fuzhi followed Mencius’ perspective, emphasizing the importance of parents and their roles in human relationships. Linking it to his early criticism of Catholicism, we will find Wang Fuzhi’s discourse seemed to be influenced by Confucian views on heresy, specifically drawing from Mencius’ teachings. However, in later writings, he unequivocally likened Catholicism to Moism. This analogy served to position Catholicism as a hereti-

cal doctrine rather than a doctrine of Yi 夷. With this analogy, Wang Fuzhi attempted to deconstruct Catholic theories and integrate them into Confucianism. He sought to apply Confucian principles to address the challenge posed by Catholicism in his contemporary context, just as Mencius had addressed the spread of Moism during his time. By doing so, Wang aimed to defend Confucianism against the perceived threat of Catholicism's transmission in his era.

Another notion, "capability" (*cai* 才) also needs to be checked. Wang Fuzhi said people without capability cannot become Moist. In other words, he thought that all Moists have "capability". In order to figure its meaning out clearly, we have to check Moists' capability first.

As a matter of fact, the founder of Moism, Mo Di 墨翟, who lived in the middle of the fifth century B.C.E., and his followers are artisans. In that era, they were also famous for their craftsmanship (Fraser 2016, pp. 4–24). So, it would be clear that when Wang Fuzhi said Catholicism is close to Moism, he noticed that missionaries have the "capability" of craftsmanship and master lots of techniques.²³ That is one of the central issues of Wang's criticism in his later thoughts and can be found in other texts. For example, in *Record of Thoughts and Questionings* (*Siven Lu* 思问录)²⁴, he criticized the methods adopted by Catholics to observe celestial movements. Compared with his early criticism of the aspect of the political influence of the calendar, Wang aimed to criticize the procedure of Catholics' observation, which results in changing the calendar. Wang said:

古之为历者，皆以月平分二十九日五十三刻有奇为一朔，恒一大一小相间，而月行有迟疾，未之审焉。……至祖冲之谗知其疏，乃以平分大略之朔为经朔，而随月之迟疾出入于经朔之内为定朔，非徒为密以示察也，以非此不足以审日月交食之贞也。西洋夷乃欲以此法求日，而制二十四气之长短，则徒为繁密而无益矣。其说大略以日行距地远近不等，迟疾亦异，自春分至秋分其行盈，自秋分至春分其行缩，而节以漏准，……乃以之测日月之食，则疏于郭守敬而恒差。……若一昼一夜之内，或长一刻，或短一刻，铢累而较之，将以何为乎！日之有昼夜，犹人之有生死，世之有鼎革也。纪世者以一君为一世，一姓为一代，足矣。倘令割周之长，补秦之短，欲使均齐而无盈缩之差，岂不徒为紊乱乎！西夷以巧密夸长，大率类此，盖亦三年而为棘端之猴也。(Wang 2011, book 12, p. 439)

All the ancient scholars who studied the calendar believed that the Moon completes its cycle between the Sun and the Earth in a little over 29 days and 53 quarters per month. (During this time, moonlight becomes invisible on the Earth). This marks the first day of the lunar month, known as "shuo" 朔. The synodic month is always consistently one big and one small. However, the speed of the moon's movement, both fast and slow, was not thoroughly explored by them. It was not until Zu Chongzhi (祖冲之, 429 CE–500 CE) knew their careless omission and classified the first day of the lunar month, namely, *shuo* 朔, into two types. "*Jingshuo*" 经朔 represents the average duration of a month, which remains constant, and "*dingshuo*" 定朔 fluctuates around the general duration due to the Moon's varying speed. This method does not only demonstrate the accuracy of their exploration. Without this approach, the precise timing of solar and lunar eclipses cannot be accurately examined. However, the Western Yi attempts to apply this method to study the Sun's movement and determine the length of the twenty-four solar terms (*jieqi* 节气). Their efforts appear tedious and meticulous but lack utility. Their doctrine mainly suggests that during the sun's motion, it has varying distances from the Earth and its speed also varies. It moves faster from the Spring Equinox to the Autumn Equinox and slower from the Autumn Equinox to the Spring Equinox. Nonetheless, the criterion for determining solar terms (*jieqi* 节气) is based on the use of the clepsydra..... leading to roughness and universal faulty examinations of solar and lunar eclipses, compared with (the methods of) Guo Shoujing (1231 CE–1316 CE)..... There can be differences of up to a quarter of an hour within one day and night. What is the purpose of such an examination if it scrutinizes even the tiniest details? Every day has its day and night, similar to how humans experience life and death and society's continuous cycle of evolution and reform. Those who document society and history use one monarch or name to represent one generation, and that is suf-

ficient. If the spare time of the Zhou dynasty is omitted, it is used to cover the gap in the Qin dynasty, ensuring that every dynasty has a similar duration without any disparities. Otherwise, it could lead to chaos. The Western Yi's pride in their skill and precision may inadvertently contribute to a chaotic situation, similar to the story of engraving a female monkey on the tip of a thorn.

In this paragraph, Wang Fuzhi acknowledged the Western scholars' skills in making accurate explorations and did not dismiss their work arrogantly. Instead, he recognized their ability to contribute to this field. However, in his view, the problem with Western scholars lies in their misapplication of the method used to study the moon's emotions to the study of the Sun's movement. Specifically, they incorrectly determine the twenty-four solar terms (*jieqi* 节气) based on the use of a clepsydra, leading to chaos instead of order. Wang Fuzhi criticized this approach by referring to a story from *Hangfei Zi* 韩非子. In this story, the king of Yan 燕 is deceived by a man who boasts his ability to engrave a female monkey at the tip of a thorn.²⁵ Wang Fuzhi likened Western scholars to this engraver, cautioning people not to be deceived by their skillfulness.

Furthermore, Wang Fuzhi examined the Westerners' studies by comparing them with those of ancient scholars, such as Zu Chongzhi. This approach demonstrates Wang Fuzhi's attempt to comprehend the new knowledge brought forth by Western scholars and to evaluate it based on the foundation of his existing knowledge system. His aim was not merely to ascertain the correctness of the new knowledge but to position the Westerners' learning appropriately within the context of his existing knowledge. This comparative method is also used by Wang Fuzhi when discussing the shape of the earth. He said:

浑天家言天地如鸡卵，地处天中犹卵黄。（黄）虽重浊，白虽轻清，而白能涵黄使不坠于一隅尔，非谓地之果肖卵黄而圆如弹丸也。利玛窦至中国而闻其说，执滞而不得其语外之意，遂谓地形之果如弹丸，因以其小慧附会之，而爲地球之象。人不能立乎地外以全见地，则言出而无与为辨。乃就玛窦之言质之，其云地周围尽于九万里，则非有穷大而不可测者矣。……则地之欹斜不齐，高下广衍，无一定之形，审矣。而玛窦如目击而掌玩之，规两仪爲一丸，何其陋也！（Wang 2011, book 12, p. 458)

The scholars who advocated the doctrine of chaotic heaven (*huntian* 浑天) used the analogy of an egg to describe heaven and earth. They likened (heaven to the egg white and) earth to the egg yolk, with the earth positioned at the central place of heaven. While the egg yolk is heavy and cloudy, and the egg white is light and clear, the egg white can still hold the egg yolk, preventing it from falling into a corner. However, this analogy did not mean to imply that the earth is exactly like egg yolk and is round like a projectile. When Matteo Ricci arrived in China and encountered this doctrine, he stubbornly adhered to it without fully grasping its symbolic meaning beyond the language. Consequently, he asserted that the earth's shape is indeed like a projectile and even depicted in this manner, displaying his small cleverness. Since humans cannot observe the entire globe from an external vantage point, nobody challenged his interpretation. Specifically speaking, Matteo Ricci claimed that the circumference of the earth is only 90,000 *li* 里 away. (Given the enormity of the measurement), it is difficult to ascertain it precisely without something of extremely big size for reference... It is evident that the earth is uneven, high or low, long or short, and lacks a specific shape. Matteo Ricci seemed as if he had seen it with his own eyes and could play with it in his palm. How swallow it is!

Matteo Ricci discovered the Chinese people's deep respect and admiration for science and technology, influenced by those who came before him. In his mission to spread Christianity, he used a strategy where knowledge of science and technology served as a means to attract the Chinese population (Sebes 1988, pp. 30–40). This approach proved successful. Inspired by him, numerous Chinese individuals, including Confucian scholars, actively participated in scientific pursuits, and some even chose to convert (Gernet 1993, pp. 93–102). Under the influence of Matteo Ricci and his followers, many embraced scientific engagement, making Wang's critique of Matteo Ricci's earth-related theories not

merely an academic discourse but a defense of Confucianism. This is evident in Wang's comparison of Matteo Ricci's assertions to the doctrine of chaotic heaven (*huntian* 浑天).

The doctrine of chaotic heaven originated during the Han dynasty as an astronomical concept. With the development of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, it underwent further refinement and was adopted as a framework to illustrate the transformation of the Heavenly Way. Wang Fuzhi was also deeply involved in this endeavor, revising the doctrine to align it with Confucian principles. In his revisions, he elucidated the structure of heaven and the interconnectedness of heaven and earth (Li 2022, pp. 76–82). Consequently, when Wang analogized Matteo Ricci's viewpoint to this doctrine and suggested that Matteo Ricci's ideas were influenced by it, he demonstrated an awareness that Matteo Ricci's theories posed a challenge to fundamental Confucian tenets. This analogy also implied Wang's indirect acknowledgment that Matteo Ricci's assertions might hold validity. In this paragraph, he did not outright reject Matteo Ricci's ideas. On the contrary, he acknowledged Matteo Ricci's intellectual capacity, attributing his issues to a stubborn and dogmatic interpretation of the doctrine of chaotic heaven, including his notion of the earth as a sphere. Wang recognized the limitations of his doctrine, as one cannot observe the entirety of the globe from an external viewpoint. The earth is manifestly uneven, with varying heights, lengths, and shapes, rendering Matteo Ricci's claims questionable. Interestingly, Wang critiqued Matteo Ricci for relying on visual observation. Wang's argument was also rooted in his empirical experiences derived from observing the earth, whereas Matteo Ricci attempted to adopt an external vantage point.

Wang's criticism can also be found in another place. He said:

利玛窦地形周围九万里之说，以人北行二百五十里则见极高一度为准。其所据者，人之目力耳。目力不可以为一定之征，远近异则高下异等。当其不见，则毫厘迥绝；及其既见，则倏尔寻丈；未可以分数量也。……盖所望之规有大小而所见以殊，何得以所见之一度为一度，地下之二百五十里为天上之一度邪？……玛窦身处大地之中，目力亦与人同，乃倚一远镜之技，死算大地为九万里。(Wang 2011, book 12, pp. 458–60)

Matteo Ricci's assertion that the earth's circumference is 90,000 *li* is based on the premise that by traveling north for 250 *li*, one can observe a deviation of one degree in the sky. What he relies on hinges on personal visual observation. However, human eyesight cannot serve as an absolute benchmark. When an object is far away, its height is seen as low. When it is near, its height is seen as tall. When it is not seen, minor disparities can never appear; conversely, when it is seen, it is suddenly found with a height of eight or ten feet. Due to the different compasses by which people observe, what they can see is different. How can we take the one-degree disparity our eyes perceive as real and equate it with 250 *li* long on the earth? ... Ricci, residing on the earth, possesses the same visual faculties as the average individual. His reliance solely on the telescope leads him to doggedly maintain the earth's circumference at 90,000 *li*.

In this paragraph, Wang Fuzhi directly attributed the issues with Matteo Ricci's theories to the foundation upon which Ricci built his ideas: human eyesight. Drawing upon empirical experiences, Wang took his contemplation a step further, asserting that what we perceive is often distinct from the true nature of things. Our observations are notably impacted by the spatial distance between objects and ourselves. Moreover, if we aim to replicate Matteo Ricci's observation of the earth's shape, such an endeavor must occur from a vantage point outside our planet. Yet, the reality remains that both we and Matteo Ricci are earth-bound inhabitants. Hence, in Wang's perspective, comprehending the earth's shape is an unattainable feat, not to mention arriving at a concrete representation akin to Ricci's description. This skepticism regarding the reliability of human eyesight is likewise evident in other texts. Adding to this, Wang Fuzhi intertwined this predicament with the discourse concerning "presentness" (*you* 有) and "unpresentness" (*wu* 无)—both pivotal concepts within Chinese philosophy. These two concepts are fundamental in Chinese philosophy, particularly in Daoism, where they play a crucial role in ontological and

cosmological contemplation. This indicates that Wang approached this problem on a profound level, surpassing mere reliance on empirical experiences. Wang said:

聚而明得施，人遂谓之有。散而明不可施，遂谓之无。不知聚者暂聚，客也，非必常存之主。散者，返于虚也，非无固有之实，人以见不见而言之，是以滞尔。……明则谓之有，幽则谓之无，众人之陋尔；圣人则不然。……言有无者，徇目而已。不斥言目而言离者，目其静之形，离其动之用也。(Wang 2011, book 12, p. 29)

During the phase when things come together, and vision is used, this state is referred to as “presentness” (*you* 有). Conversely, during the phase of dissolution, when vision ceases to be applicable, it is termed “unpresentness” (*wu* 无). Lacking an understanding that what momentarily assembles is akin to a visitor and not an unchanging, constant host, (and failing to recognize that) what is in the process of perishing returns to a state of purity (*xu* 虚) devoid of inherent uncertainty, people label these states as instances of seeing or not seeing, consequently leading to stagnation……Brightness is called “presentness” and dimness is called unpresentness, which is a viewpoint limited to the perceptions of the ordinary individual, not shared by the wise……Speaking in terms of “presentness” and “unpresentness” simply relies on visual input. However, the reason why people criticize not eyesight itself but rather the associated brightness (*li* 离) is due to perceiving the static form of things, disregarding the actualization of their movement.

浅则据离明所得施为有，不得施为无，徇目而心不通。(Wang 2011, book 12, p. 30)

Due to a superficial understanding, numerous scholarly figures (*zhuzi* 诸子) build their arguments upon the assumption that the accompanying brightness (*li* 离) and visual perception are utilized, categorizing it as “presentness” (*you* 有). Conversely, if not utilized, it is termed as “unpresentness” (*wu* 无). This approach relies solely on their eyesight, causing their heart-mind (*xin* 心) to become unobstructed.

Wang Fuzhi maintained that the concepts of “presentness” and “unpresentness”, which are central to Chinese philosophy, are introduced due to humanity’s misguided perception. Humans erroneously rely on their eyesight, considering unseen things as “unpresentness” and visible things as “presentness”. However, what people perceive with their eyes is not the true essence of the object. Moreover, what they perceive is only a temporary and static form of things. This “presentness” is confined to what is apparent within our vision. The enduring and constant existence of objects eludes human comprehension, leading to a neglect of an object’s movement if only its form is observed. Wang Fuzhi criticized those who excessively depend on their sense of sight, which ultimately obstructs their intellectual insight. In this larger context, Wang Fuzhi’s critique of Matteo Ricci implies that Ricci overly fixates on the earth’s physical shape and presumes that this shape can be readily grasped visually. Ricci neglects to adequately consider the earth’s dynamic nature and fails to apply deep contemplation to explore the unchanging aspect of the earth’s existence.

Interestingly, Matteo Ricci draws upon his experiences and observations during his voyages to demonstrate the earth’s spherical nature (Chen’en 1939, p. 341). Furthermore, according to Hui-Hung Chen’s research, comprehending Matteo Ricci’s scientific pursuits requires an understanding of their missionary context. These pursuits align with the Renaissance tradition of cartography, which portrays the universe graphically. Within this tradition, geography is intertwined with cosmology, shaped by Christian theology. The visual capacity of humans is believed to be a gift from God’s omnipotence. Therefore, Matteo Ricci encourages involvement in scientific endeavors as a means to help the Chinese grasp the celestial and terrestrial realms holistically. These pursuits through observation enable people to decipher geographical configurations, opening pathways to understand the Creator’s significance (Chen 2007, pp. 517–20). In essence, these visual activities are pivotal for Matteo Ricci in conveying Christian teachings. Conversely, Wang Fuzhi’s criticism reflects his refusal to adopt a method akin to Matteo Ricci’s approach. Wang Fuzhi advocates for comprehending heaven and earth by engaging the heart-mind, diverging from the Christian cosmological theories introduced by Matteo Ricci. That indicates his

unwillingness to embrace Christianity. Instead, his focus lies in making the heart–mind unobstructed. This alternative approach serves as a means to safeguard Confucian cosmological theories when confronted with the ideas put forth by Matteo Ricci.

Wang Fuzhi's criticism of Matteo Ricci's approach centered on the requirement for humans to position themselves outside the earth in order to use Ricci's method. This naturally leads to the question of whether Ricci's method remains valid when applied while standing solely on earth, without transcending it. Wang's implied response to this query can be discerned at the end of the first quotation. Wang Fuzhi specifically critiqued Ricci's utilization of the telescope to conduct observations instead of stepping outside the earth's confines. Importantly, it is worth noting that Wang's critique did not pertain to the use of the telescope itself. He did not reject the significance of eyesight. In Wang Fuzhi's perspective, both ordinary eyesight and the telescope should contribute to fostering an unobstructed heart–mind. In essence, he recognized the value of certain ideas and methods presented by Matteo Ricci, provided they harmonized with relevant Confucian theories. This can be evidenced by the following quotation.

“远镜质测之法，月居最下，金、水次之，日次之，火次之，木次之，土居最上。盖凡行者必有所凭，凭实则速，凭虚则迟。气渐高则渐益清微，而凭之以行者亦渐无力。故近下者行速，高则渐缓。……。西洋历家既能测知七曜远近之实，而又窃张子左旋之说以相杂立论。盖西夷之可取者，唯远近测法一术，其他则皆剽袭中国之绪余，而无通理之可守也。” (Wang 2011, book 12, p. 39)

Using the method of measuring things (*zhice* 质测) with a telescope, (it becomes evident that) the Moon occupies the lowest (and closest position to Earth). Proceeding upward, the sequence extends to Venus, Mercury, the Sun, Mars, and Jupiter, culminating with Saturn at the highest point. In a broader context, all objects in motion exhibit a basis for their movement. Objects relying on substantial elements tend to move more swiftly, while those dependent on the purity of elements manifest slower motion. The higher the *qi* presence, the clearer and more lucid it is, thereby rendering it more challenging for celestial bodies reliant on *qi* to access power externally. Consequently, celestial bodies positioned lower exhibit swifter movement, while ascending heights induce gradual deceleration..... Western astronomers managed to discern the factual positions and distances of the seven luminaries (*qiyao* 七曜) from Earth, yet they also incorporated Zhang Zai's 张载 (1020 CE–1077 CE) assertion of the seven luminaries' counterclockwise rotation into their doctrines. Generally speaking, what the Western Yi's (statements) can be accepted is just the method of measuring things (*zhice* 质测) (to measure things) in far and near, others are just stolen heavily from the residues passed down in the middle state, without establishing a coherent set of unobstructed principles (*li* 理) to be applied.

This quotation suggests Wang Fuzhi's acknowledgment of the validity of Ricci's methodology, particularly emphasizing the significance of the telescope (Henrique 2008, pp. 120–21). He concurred with their observations regarding the “seven luminaries” (*qiyao* 七曜)²⁶. This agreement marked Wang Fuzhi's acceptance that the domain where these seven luminaries traverse is also referred to as “heaven”. This understanding of heaven as multifaceted underscores the necessity for in-depth investigation, mirroring Matteo Ricci's approach, rather than mere contemplation. Notably, this form of exploration had largely been disregarded by Confucian scholars preceding Wang Fuzhi (Li 2022, pp. 78–82).

To safeguard Confucianism, Wang Fuzhi interlinked Matteo's ideas with analogous concepts within Confucian thought. This explains his reference to Zhang Zai 张载 (1020 CE–1077 CE), a pivotal figure in Song–Ming Neo–Confucianism who greatly influenced Wang Fuzhi's philosophical development. Wang Fuzhi's thoughts were constructed upon his interpretation of Zhang Zai's works, aligning with Zhang Zai's doctrine of *qi* (Liu 2018, pp. 150–56). In his pursuit, Wang Fuzhi followed in Zhang Zai's footsteps, refining Zhang's notion of “chaotic heaven” (*huntian* 浑天) to render it compatible with Confucianism (Liu 2018, pp. 104–7). Consequently, this analogy implies that the theories introduced by Matteo Ricci have been positioned in a manner that aligns Ricci's ideas primarily

with Zhang Zai's, even if they are more accurate in Wang Fuzhi's eyes. However, akin to Zhang Zai's viewpoint, further refinement is necessary for full accuracy. Hence, when confronting challenges posed by Christian converts, Wang Fuzhi responded by striving to reconcile the Christian methods and theories he could embrace with Confucian principles.

Wang Fuzhi also highlighted a crucial issue in their approach. Within the previously mentioned quotes, Wang underlined that their flaw lay in excessive reliance on visual perception without making the heart-mind unobstructed. This issue, as elaborated here, signifies a deficiency in possessing unobstructed and applicable principles (*li* 理). Wang Fuzhi elucidated this principle comprehensively. He directed his focus more toward the dynamics of phenomena, specifically celestial bodies, rather than their outward forms. His perspective posited that the movement of these bodies is significantly influenced by *qi*. When the *qi* within their realm is clear, their movement is swift; conversely, a cloudy *qi* results in slower motion. Evidently, this understanding is rooted in philosophical contemplation rather than empirical observation. That means Wang Fuzhi's critique of Matteo Ricci did not take the form of a direct confrontation using Ricci's framework. Instead, Wang sought to reconcile Ricci's accurate methodology with the Confucian concept of *qi*. Notably, while there is no direct evidence suggesting Wang was aware of Ricci's attempt to introduce Christian ideas with such methods, Wang's response does indicate his awareness of the potential threat posed by Christianity to Confucianism.

This response delves into the realm of methodologies. Based on our analysis, Wang Fuzhi's perspective on Matteo Ricci's methods emphasizes their excessive reliance on visual observation, particularly regarding the utilization of the telescope. Wang believed that these methods could be embraced if they facilitated the unobstructed heart-mind with Confucian principles. This insight directs our attention to the initial sentence in the quoted passage, where Wang characterized Ricci's approach as "measuring things" (*zhice* 质测) with a telescope. Wang specifically perceived the telescope as a particular means of measurement, echoing his assessment of Fang Yizhi (1611 CE–1671 CE) as well. This connection serves as a useful point of reference to further elucidate Wang Fuzhi's viewpoint. In *Saoshou Wen* 搔首问²⁷, Wang asserted:

密翁与其公子为质测之学，诚学思兼致之实功。盖格物者，即物以穷理，惟质测为得之。若邵康节、蔡西山则立一理以穷物，非格物也。(Wang 2011, book 12, p. 637)

Fang Yizhi and his son were deeply engaged in the study of "measuring things" (*zhice* 质测), which is a certain work that embodies a dual process of both learning and contemplation. Generally speaking, investigating things (*gewu* 格物) entails a comprehensive engagement with objects to discern their underlying principles (*li* 理). It is only aligned by "measuring things". Merely assigning a single principle to comprehend things in their entirety, akin to the approaches of Shao Kangjie 邵康节 and Cai Xishan 蔡西山, does not resonate to "investigate things".

"Investigating things" (*gewu* 格物) stands as one of the most crucial concepts within the framework of the *Great Learning* (*Da Xue* 大学). In Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, particularly within the teachings of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130 CE–1200 CE) and his adherents, the act of investigating things furnishes them with a philosophical Confucian foundation for probing the external world (Kim 2019, p.164). When juxtaposed with the methodologies embraced by Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011 CE–1077 CE), namely, Shao Kangjie 邵康节 in quotation and Cai Yuanding 蔡元定 (1135 CE–1198 CE), namely, Cai Xishan 蔡西山, Wang Fuzhi posited that "measuring things" resonates with the very essence of "investigating things", enabling a deeper comprehension of the world and rectifying the common predicament faced by scholars of Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. This predicament entails the confinement of celestial understanding due to an obstinate adherence to principle (*zhiyi li xiantian* 执理以限天) (Li 2022, pp. 81–82). As discerned, Wang Fuzhi positioned the use of the telescope within the framework of "measuring things", a classification that seamlessly aligns with the realm of "investigating things". This incorporation serves the purpose of delving into the underlying principles (*li* 理) of objects. In essence, the methodologies and associated theories championed by Matteo Ricci can be viewed as harmonizing with the practices

of Confucian scholars aimed at understanding both phenomena and principles. Furthermore, these methods stand to be considered more effective when juxtaposed against their existing counterparts within Confucianism.

In sum, in his later years, Wang Fuzhi persisted in his critique of Catholicism and certain doctrines it propagated. However, his stance exhibited a subtle evolution. While attributing some ideas held by the Western missionaries to the middle state, he found himself compelled to acknowledge the potential validity of these notions, some of which were hitherto disregarded by his Confucian predecessors. An example of this shift can be seen in his recognition of the significance of visual observation. Upon embracing Matteo Ricci's methodologies, Wang Fuzhi was led to endorse their outcomes, subsequently yielding insights into the celestial realm that did not entirely conform to traditional Confucian viewpoints. In order to assimilate these insights into the Confucian context, he anchored them upon the foundation of *qi* and interpreted these methodologies as efficacious means of “investigating things” within Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. Concurrently, these methodologies and ideas prompted Wang Fuzhi to differentiate his interpretations of select Confucian texts from those of his predecessors.

3. In Conclusion

Wang's perspective on Catholics underwent a notable transformation over the course of his life. During his earlier years, he vehemently criticized Catholicism. His efforts to bolster the prominence of Confucianism led him to engage in comparative studies from both political and ethical standpoints. In this context, he positioned Confucianism as a doctrine of “great relations”, while Catholicism was portrayed as aligned with the doctrine of Yi 夷, which ignores it. However, this stance underwent a shift in his later years. In his old age, he came to view Catholicism as heretical yet open to incorporation within the framework of Confucianism. Wang became acutely aware of the potential threat posed by Catholic teachings. Consequently, he directed more attention toward the scientific observations advocated by figures like Matteo Ricci and others. Gradually, he began to accept ideas that resonated with his own convictions. He anchored these evolving perspectives on the foundation of the Confucian doctrine of *qi*.

This transformation in Wang's outlook illustrates a progression from mere comparison to a deliberate contemplation of how to assimilate certain Catholic concepts. As his understanding of the challenges posed by Catholicism deepened, Wang's focus shifted from drawing contrasts to exploring ways in which select Catholic ideas could be harmonized with Confucian thought. However, he did not change his views totally. Throughout his life, Wang Fuzhi centered on Confucianism.

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Notes

- ¹ Gu Jiming fully details Wang Fuzhi's views of Catholicism, but he neglects this difference of Wang's thoughts in his earlier life and in the later (Gu 2021, pp. 9–11).
- ² The Yongli reign is the third regime of the so-called Southern Ming. Wang once worked as a messenger (*xingren* 行人) at the messenger office (*xingren si* 行人司) of the Yongli regime in 1650 (Liu 2016, p. 167; Struve 1984, pp. 139–95).
- ³ The Supervising Secretary (*jishi zhong* 给事中) is responsible for criticizing and proposing imperial policies (Wang 2011, book 9, p. 361).
- ⁴ James Legge (1899), <https://ctext.org/shang-shu/canon-of-yao#n21034> (accessed on 8 August 2023).
- ⁵ Directorate of Astronomy (*qintian jian* 钦天监) is responsible for conducting astronomical observations, forecasting weather, interpreting natural phenomena, and preparing the annual state calendar (Wang 2011, book 9, p. 551).

- 6 I disagreed with Geoff Wade's translation. He directly translated Hua 华 into Chinese, Yi 夷 into foreigners. The ethnic connotation of these two terms originated not from the spring and autumn. What is more, subsequently, it not only had the ethnic meaning (Geoff 2018, p. 78).
- 7 Di 狄 originally denoted northern outsiders (Van Ess 2004, p. 244).
- 8 "Uncrowned king" is a translation from Hans van Ess. "I, a child (*yu xiaozi* 予小子)" is Legge's translation (Huang 2013, p. 1766; Van Ess 1999, p. 34; Legge 1861, <https://ctext.org/analects/yao-yue#n1599>, accessed on 8 August 2023).
- 9 Another translation is made by Chang Chi-shen. But I would say Chang's translation misses some important notions. This miss seems to make the original texts be in accordance with his expositions from the ethnic and geographical perspective. Taking the notion, the peak of humans (*renji* 人极) as a example. When he translates it, he deliberately underlies its implication with regards to the boundary between Chinese and barbarians. However, this notion is a common and important notion in Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism. It is firstly used in Zhou Dunyi's 周敦颐 *Discussion of the Supreme Polarity Diagram* (*Taiji Tu Shuo* 太极图说). And Zhuxi 朱熹 makes a further commentary (Chang 2017, p. 71; Adler 2014, p. 169).
- 10 A similar saying could be easily found in other texts (Legge 1985, <https://ctext.org/mengzi/teng-wen-gong-i#n1657>, accessed on 8 August 2023).
- 11 Qin 亲 is not easily translated. It signifies not only parents or relatives but also love or affections. What is more, it can be used as a verb and means loving or being close to somebody. In the following writing, we will translate it according to the specific contexts without any further expositions.
- 12 In this sentence, Ben 本 is verb and means depending on. In the next, it is a noun and means the foundation that is depended. There is little change in its connotation. Hence, in my translation, I will translate it according to the contextual background.
- 13 In Chinese, it can also be expressed "taking Heaven as the lord". In Wang's saying, this sentence connects itself it to the notion,= Lord of Heaven (*tianzhu* 天主).
- 14 It is the title of Chief of the Xiongnu in ancient China.
- 15 The chapter Xue'er 学而 records: "The senior man bends his attention to what is the foundation.....Filial piety and fraternal submission!—are they not the root of all benevolent actions?" (Legge 1861, <https://ctext.org/analects/xue-er#n1103>, accessed on 8 August 2023).
- 16 "Humbling oneself and nourishing one's virtue in lowliness" (*bei yi zi mu* 卑以自牧) is firstly used in *Book of Changes* (*Yijing* 易经) (Legge 1879, <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/qian1#n25268>, accessed on 8 August 2023).
- 17 We can trace it back to the saying in *Analects*. It seems that "too much" means going beyond and excessiveness. "Too little" means failing to reach and insufficient. In Wang's metaphorical expression, it appears as if he refers to an object that can stretch out and draw back (Legge 1861, <https://ctext.org/analects?searchu={\simsun\otimes}\#n1371>, accessed on 8 August 2023).
- 18 These texts are mentioned in *The Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚书) and *The Great Treatise of Book of Change* (*Yizhuan Xici* 易传系辞), and are regarded as the results of the sage's calculation of heaven's number. For example, *The Great Treatise of Book of Change* conveys that "the He gave forth the map, and the Lo the writing, of (both of) which the sages took advantage" (河出图, 洛出书, 圣人则之) (Legge 1879, <https://ctext.org/book-of-changes/xi-ci-shang#n46932>, accessed on 8 August 2023).
- 19 As we explained above, in terms of the Chinese word "*buji* 不及". Its original connotation is "failing to reach". And it was often understood by its extended meaning, "too little". We need to focus on the relevance of these meanings, especially in the English translation and writing. Similarly, the word "*guo* 过" can mean "exceeding, excess, passing and too much".
- 20 Wang Fuzhi's criticism of Catholicism we quote above is also found in his comments of *The Doctrine of Mean* (*zhongyong* 中庸).
- 21 According to a modern scholar, Wang Xiaoyu 王孝鱼 study, the writing of this book was approximately completed in 1679. Although we do not know when the writing was finished, it is also undoubtedly regarded as the text conveying the later thoughts of Wang Fuzhi (Wang 2011, book 13, p. 480).
- 22 Mencius says: "Mo's principle is "to love all equally," which does not acknowledge the peculiar affection due to a father. But to acknowledge neither king nor father is to be in the state of a beast" (墨氏兼爱, 是无父也。无父无君, 是禽兽也。.....吾为此惧, 闲先圣之道, 距杨墨, 放淫辞, 邪说者不得作) (Legge 1985, <https://ctext.org/mengzi/teng-wen-gong-ii#n1668>, accessed on 8 August 2023).
- 23 Gu Jiming also points out that this sentence indicates that Wang Fuzhi recognized the capability of some missionaries (Gu 2021, p. 9).
- 24 This book was finally completed in 1690 (Liu 2016, p. 198).
- 25 This original Chinese text can be check at (Hanfeizi 2006).
- 26 This is a traditional Chinese astronomical term. It refers to seven planets: Venus, Mercury, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, and the Moon.
- 27 This book was completed in 1689 or 1690 (Deng 2008, p. 16).

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