

# Being Cosmos: The Human Relationship to Cosmos in Thomas Berry and Confucius

Sheri Ritchlin

In 1948, Thomas Berry traveled to China to teach and to study Chinese language and culture. His trip was cut short in 1949 by the Maoist revolution and he returned to study Chinese language at Seton Hall University. This opened up deeper layers of meaning in the classic Confucian texts and he went on to teach the *I Ching* and Confucianism, among other Asian traditions, at Seton Hall, St. John and Fordham Universities.

Berry found in Confucian thought an integral view of the Cosmos, Earth, and the human that touched on his own deepening concerns about contemporary trends that violated this relationship. In a 1973 article, Berry offered this description of the “profound intercommunion of Heaven, Earth and Human” that he found there: “The Cosmos is encompassed in the human and the human in the Cosmos.... The highest ontological attraction of things to each other in the Confucian tradition can be indicated quite simply by the word ‘communion’” (Berry 1973, 2). This statement foreshadows his primary cosmological concept that the universe is a communion of subjects, not a collection of objects.

## Cosmology and Cosmos

In order to grasp the view of cosmology and Cosmos that we find in both Confucius and Thomas Berry, we need a clear definition of the terms as they appear in this paper. Here they are defined by the *American Heritage Dictionary*:

### Cosmos

1. The universe regarded as an orderly, harmonious whole.
2. An ordered, harmonious whole.
3. Harmony and order as distinct from chaos.

### Cosmology

1. The study of the physical universe considered as a totality of phenomena in time and space.
  - a. The astrophysical study of the history, structure, and constituent dynamics of the universe.
  - b. A specific theory or model of this structure and these dynamics.

While these two definitions appear to be irreconcilable, we can find in them some correlation with popular descriptions of the two hemispheres of the brain.<sup>1</sup> In this description, the left hemisphere is identified as the primary locus of rational, linear and analytical thinking and the right, as the primary locus of spatial, imagistic and holistic thinking. The left brain is also seen as the dominant center for language. The English language is made up of sentences with a subject, an object, and a verb, so it could be argued that the separation of subject and object is structured into the language itself. The Chinese language is composed of images, enabling a perspective more closely related to the right brain functions in our description. This is an oversimplification but it provides a useful analogy as a starting point. These differences can loosely be seen in our definitions of cosmology and Cosmos.

In his classic *History of Chinese Philosophy*, Fung Yu-lan, writing in the 1930s, makes this distinction between Western and Chinese philosophy.

Chinese philosophers for the most part have not regarded knowledge as something valuable in itself, and so have not sought knowledge for the sake of knowledge... Even in the case of knowledge of a practical sort that might have a direct bearing upon human happiness, Chinese philosophers have preferred to apply this knowledge to actual conduct that would lead directly to this happiness, rather than to hold what they

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1. I say "popular" because our scientific understanding of brain functions grows more subtle and complex every year and this model would no longer be seen as neurologically accurate. Nevertheless it continues to have impact on psychology, education and other fields.

considered to be empty discussions about it. (Fung and Bodde 1952, 2)

Fung traces this basic difference to the emergence in the West of the consciousness by the ego of itself. “Once it has consciousness of itself, the world immediately becomes separated into two: the ego and the non-ego, or what is subjective and what is objective. From this division arises the problem of how the subjective ego can have knowledge of the objective non-ego...” (Fung and Bodde 1952, 1). In Chinese thought, he adds, the lack of such a consciousness resulted in little attention paid to the division between the ego and the non-ego, subjective and objective.

Richard Tarnas, a historian of Western thought, acknowledges the forging of the autonomous self in the West during the modern period. He notes that this made possible “a new freedom from externally imposed meanings and orders that had previously been seen as embedded in the cosmos, and upheld and enforced by traditional structures of cultural authority” (Tarnas 2006, 21). But he adds that this freedom was attained at a great cost: the disenchantment of the cosmos.

Disenchantment, the denial of intrinsic meaning and purpose, essentially *objectifies* the world—and thereby denies *subjectivity* to the world. Objectification denies to the world any capacity to intend, to signify intelligently, to express its meaning, to embody and communicate humanly relevant purposes and values. To objectify the world is to remove from it all subjective categories, such as meaning and purpose, by perceiving these as projections of what are now regarded as the only true subjects, human beings. (Tarnas 2006, 21)

Berry echoes this thought: “We gave away our subjectivity, our very souls to the objective, reasoning mind. You might say we conspired in our own diminishment in agreeing to live a divided life when interiority, or subjectivity, got lost in the process of ‘progress’” (Toben 2012, 80).

Without question, the development of objective, analytical

thought in the West is the source of the remarkable scientific advances that have improved the lives of millions of people throughout the world and brought us the wonders of the technological age.<sup>2</sup> But by the late 20th century, the exclusively objective scientific worldview described by Tarnas and Berry was showing its destructive shadow.

In an article on 21st century cosmology that appeared in the journal *Science*, astrophysicist Joel Primack and Nancy Abrams posed serious questions regarding this split.

- How many people recognize the possibility of a sacred relationship between the way the expanding universe operates and the way human beings ought to behave?
- How can we develop a planetary wisdom, now that we are a planetary power?
- What is the role of the human in the planetary evolution? (Abrams and Primack, 2001, 1770)

These are crucial questions asked by “cosmologists” who are seeking to cross that divide between our definitions of cosmology and Cosmos. As we shall see, Berry addresses these questions, often calling upon the framework of Confucian thought.

### **The *I Ching* and Its Confucist Commentaries**

We find the earliest delineation of the Cosmos in China in one of the five great Chinese classics, the *I Ching* or *Book of Changes*. In Chinese tradition, this work arises with Fu Hsi, legendary founder of Chinese civilization and the first of the “*I Ching* sages.” According to this legend, the arrangement of the trigrams, three line figures

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2. It should be noted that China, at the beginning of the 20th century, was a mere shadow of its former glory, weakened in nearly all areas and ripe for the Communist revolution that overtook it in 1949; a revolution that in the next decades virtually erased centuries of Chinese culture. By the end of the 20th century, East and West were leaning toward one another. The West was exploring Eastern thought and practices, while the East embraced scientific advances and the scientific method that had been so successful in the West. In China, Confucianism began to enjoy a revival, along with the study of Western philosophers like Alfred North Whitehead and John Dewey.

that would be used in divination, was revealed to him in the markings on the back of a tortoise that emerged from the Luo River in the 29th century BCE. Evidence of oracle bone and tortoise shell divination (yarrow stalks were later used) have been found dating from the last centuries of the Shang dynasty, between the 14th and 11th centuries BCE. In oracle bone inscriptions from that period, the act of the ancestors in meeting the gods was called *pin*.<sup>3</sup> “Dead ancestors were often seen, in the records of the kings, to *pin* Shang Ti, in the course of which the king’s requests from the profane world were turned over to the Supreme Being” (Chang 1976, 161). This single word embraces ideas of prayer, divination, reception, and petition. In every case, it must be seen as an act of *opening up* between Heaven and Earth by the person of the sage or king. Through the instrument of the oracle—usually within the sacred precinct of the temple—the sage or king penetrates the world of Heaven. This extended also to the actual task of taking astronomical measurements of the heavens necessary to making adjustments to the calendar; putting the people, in their daily lives, in accord with Heaven.

The *I Ching* or *Book of Changes* that has come down to us includes the first textual statements appended by King Wen, founder of the Chou dynasty (c. 1046–256 BCE), in statements appended by his son, the Duke of Chou—identified as the second and third of the *I Ching* sages—and Ten Wings or Commentaries attributed to the fourth *I Ching* sage, Confucius (551–479 BCE). While recent scholarship suggests that Confucius was not directly the author of these texts, they nevertheless constitute one of the main pillars of Confucianism. The Ten Wings, particularly the *Ta Chuan* or Great Treatise, are deeply embedded in Chinese culture.

### The One, Two, Three of the *I Ching* and Chinese Philosophy

The character for “one” (*i*) in Chinese is —, a single line. Its philosophical meaning is “the essence, the practice and the function of

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3. Throughout this paper I have used an earlier Romanization system—Wade-Giles—for the transliteration of characters, rather than the present widely-used Pinyin system to avoid confusion over terms like Tao and Tai Chi. A brief glossary at the end will give the Pinyin equivalents.

the Way (*Tao*)” (Wu 1986, 1). In its function, I think of it as a process of “one-ing,” although as Lao Tzu tells us, “the Tao does nothing, yet nothing is left undone” (Ch.37). Nevertheless, he describes a process that we will meet again in the Confucist commentary on the *I Ching*. “The Way (Tao) brings forth *i* (one). One brings forth two. Three brings forth all things” (Ch.42, quoted in Wu 1986, 2). Throughout the *I Ching*, the “self-cultivated person” exercises this capacity for bringing order out of chaos through his or her own integrity—a one-ness that is shared with the Cosmos as Heaven-and-Earth. The sage is the highest expression of this, as beautifully described in the *Ta Chuan*.

In ancient times the holy sages  
made the Book of Changes thus:

They invented the yarrow-stalk oracle in order to lend aid  
in a mysterious way to the light of the gods.  
They put themselves in accord with tao and its power [*te*: virtue],  
and in conformity with this laid down the order of what is right.  
By thinking through the order of the outer world to the end,  
and by exploring the law of their nature to the deepest core,  
they arrived at an understanding of fate.  
(Wilhelm/Baynes 1977, 262)

In our scientific mode, we too “think through the order of the outer world to the end.” Through our introspective modes—philosophy, psychology, art, meditative practices—we “explore the law of our nature to its deepest core.” Through our spiritual traditions, “we seek to lend aid in a mysterious way to the light of the gods,” however that is envisioned. But the relevant idea here is this: “They put themselves in accord with *tao* and its [*te* - virtue], and in conformity with this laid down the order of what is right.” Tao as the unfolding, evolving universe is regarded as the model for “what is right.”

This sentence introduces the two principle ideas of Lao Tzu’s classic, the *Tao Te Ching*. (*Ching* means “classic book.”) In this seminal Taoist text, Lao Tzu offers a description of the beginning of creation, not as a fixed moment in time but as an ongoing origin; a description

of the way all things come into being.

There was something formed in chaos;  
 It existed before heaven and earth.  
 Still and solitary,  
 It alone stands without change.  
 It is all-pervasive without being exhausted.  
 I do not know its name but name it  
 Tao, the Way  
 Lao Tzu, *Tao Te Ching*, Ch.25 (Wu 1989, 88)

Tao expresses evolution in its broadest and literal sense—“to roll out, unfold” as the way of the universe, constantly emerging into new forms yet always as a single process. In the Confucian classic, *The Doctrine of the Mean* (26:7), we find—“The way (tao) of Heaven and Earth may be declared in one sentence: They are without doubleness, and so they produce things in a manner that is unfathomable” (Legge 1971, 420). The universe is singular yet it is always producing a multiplicity of new forms, each one unique.

*Tè* is usually translated as “virtue” or “power.” Both of those translations are inadequate to convey the full meaning of the word so it is useful to look for clues in the character itself.

德 *te*: virtue

In the lower right of the character is the element for heart-mind (inseparable in Chinese) and above it we find that single line meaning “one,” “straight.” Above that are “ten eyes,” meaning “ten eyes have seen it and called it straight, true, right” (Wilder and Ingram 1974, 38). It was said that before the days of square and plumb-line, ten eyes were called on to test the straightness of the frame of a house. To the left is the abbreviated character for “walking.” A literal translation for this would be “single (straight/true)-heart-and-mindedness in action before the world.”

As the human increasingly senses his or her natural course (tao) within the larger course (Tao) as the Way of Heaven-and-Earth—whether experienced in the inmost being or the external world—*te*

arises as this force of virtue, which is both the singular flowering of the individual nature and the quality of the universe coming into being. This is the meaning of a phrase that appears in the *I Ching* and the *Great Learning*—*ming ming te*: to manifest bright virtue. *Ming*, the “light, clarity” of natural inner virtue (the essence of human nature with its source in One) is brought outward to shine forth as the second *ming* through comportment and action in the world. The numinous seed that is the nature, bestowed by Heaven, is consciously and deliberately cultivated and lived out as the whole or integral person. In this way, the human could be said to lend an individual inner light to “the light of the gods” through expressing that light in the world as human thought and action.

Most Chinese philosophic schools have taught the way of what is called the “Inner Sage and Outer King.” The Inner Sage is a person who has established virtue in himself; the Outer King is one who has accomplished great deeds in the world. The highest ideal for a man is at once to possess the virtue of a Sage and the accomplishment of a ruler.... (Fung and Bodde 1952, 2)

The Chinese character for two is 二. It doubles the character for one and can express the two realms of Heaven and Earth, each with its own process of one-ing. The *Ta Chuan* says, “In Heaven the images are completing. On Earth the forms are completing.” Completing is one-ing.

*Ch'ien* (the Creative) and *Kun* (the Receptive) are the hexagrams of Heaven and Earth and are made up respectively of all yang and all yin lines. Yang is represented as a solid line and yin, as a broken line. The yang “mode” is associated with heat, light, firmness and movement. The yin mode is associated with cold, dark, yielding and stillness.

Here is a description of the two hexagrams from the *I Ching* Ten Wings:

The way of the Creative works through change and transformation, so that each thing receives its true nature and destiny



and comes into permanent accord with the Great Harmony: this is what furthers and what perseveres. (Wilhelm/Baynes 1977, 371)

Notice here the expression of Cosmos as “the Great Harmony.” Through the way of the Creative as Heaven, “each thing” receives its true nature and destiny and is brought into accord with that Great Harmony. Thus everything in the universe is caught up in the activity of “Cosmos-making.”

The Receptive, in its riches, carries all things.  
Its nature is in harmony with the boundless.  
It embraces everything in its breadth  
and illumines everything in its greatness.  
Through it, all individual beings attain success.

The Receptive as Earth is the partner, complementary mode, in Cosmos-making; embracing everything in harmony with the boundless to bring each individual thing to completion.

It is important to emphasize that yin and yang do not exist independently of one another but are two modes of a single process. “That which lets now the dark, now the light shine through is called Tao” (*Ta Chuan* I.5). Yi Wu explains this further: “The universe is just one chi (energy). *Yang* chi (the Creative) is straight. When it meets Earth (the Receptive), it turns in darkness and becomes *yin*. *Yang* as the Creative gives the energy to create but it doesn’t produce until it meets Earth.”<sup>4</sup>

This process, as imaged in the *I Ching*, is described in the *Ta Chuan* (I.11) in this way:

Therefore there is in the Changes the Great Primal Beginning  
*Tai Chi* - the Supreme Ultimate  
This brings forth the two primary forces.  
(Wilhelm/Baynes 1977, 318)<sup>5</sup>

4. Class notes 1992, California Institute of Integral Studies.

5. Note that *chi* here is a different word from the previous one (energy) with the meaning of “ultimate.”

These are the two modes, *Ch'ien* and *Kun*, imaged in the hexagrams for the Creative and the Receptive as Heaven and Earth.

The two realms, Heaven and Earth, must themselves be integrated for the higher one-ing to complete itself. And so there are three. The character for the numeral is three lines: ☳. This is also the figure of the trigram. The *Ta Chuan* passage continues:

Thereupon the eight trigrams were realized. The eight trigrams interacted, and afterwards the ten thousand things were born therein.

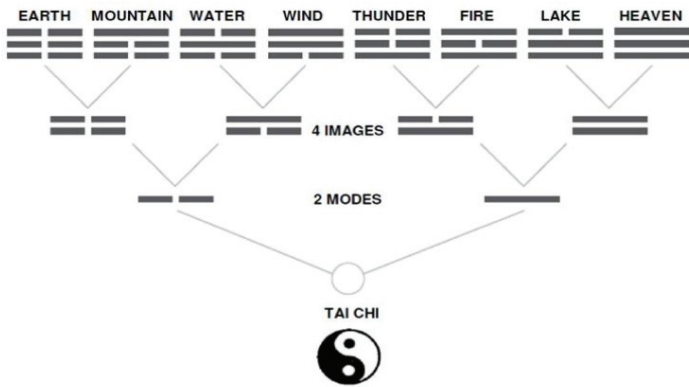


Figure 1. Graphic created by the author.

I created this graphic to illustrate the process presented in this paper. This is the first text in which the term *Tai Chi* appears, with the meaning “Supreme Ultimate” in the Wilhelm/Baynes translation. I have added the Tai Chi symbol because of its familiarity in the contemporary West, although it doesn’t appear until the 11th century when it is used as a symbol of the Supreme Ultimate among the Neo-Confucian philosophers. The martial art, Tai Chi Ch’uan, is not introduced until the 12th century.

The eight trigrams can be variously doubled to form a total of 64 hexagrams that function, (rather like the 64 DNA codons) to represent “all conditions under heaven.” As Western scientists sought units of matter, expressed in the Table of Elements, the ancient sages sought units of change, which they expressed as the system of *I*

*Ching* hexagrams. “They contemplated the changes in the dark and the light and established the hexagrams in accordance with them” (Wilhelm/Baynes 1977, 262).

In the context of the hexagram, the third is the realm of the human in the central position. The human is not separate from the Cosmos as Heaven-and-Earth but arises within it. The *Ta Chuan* speaks of the Three Ultimates or the Three Powers—Heaven, Earth and Human. Each of the Three Powers has its tao: “They determined the tao of Heaven and called it the dark and the light. They determined the tao of earth and called it the yielding and the firm. They determined the tao of [the human] and called it love [humane feeling] and rectitude. They combined these fundamental powers and doubled them” (Wilhelm/Baynes 1977, 262). The hexagram is a figure that is composed of two trigrams, one in the upper place of Heaven and one in the lower position of Earth. (In the diagram below I have shown the trigrams of Heaven, all yang lines, and Earth, all yin lines, in their matching positions). The hexagram figure also has a three-fold division representing the Three Powers in which the human realm emerges at the center, composed of a line of Heaven and a line of Earth—undergoing the often painful dialectic of those opposite forces to unite them through creative and procreative interaction.



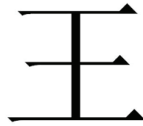
Figure 2.

Berry underlines the importance of this idea and expresses it in language relevant to our own times:

The Chinese have a definition of the human as the *hsin* [heart-mind] of heaven and earth.... Thus...the human is the “understanding heart of heaven and earth.”... The phrase has [also] been translated by Julia Ch’ing in the statement that the hu-

man is “the heart of the universe.”..We are “the consciousness of the world,” or “the psyche of the universe” (Berry 1990).

Three lines as an expression of these three realms appear in the word for “king,” with the addition of a vertical line for the upright figure of the human capable of uniting the three realms in his role as sovereign.



A description of the first legendary sage-king of China in *The Book of History* (ca. 7th century BCE) shows an embodiment of the human in this central role between Heaven and Earth and offers a response to the question posed by Joel Primack and Nancy Abrams about the possibility of a sacred relation to the expanding Cosmos, the role of the human, and a wisdom that could be practiced on a planetary scale, albeit in this case it is on the scale of a kingdom.

Yao...was reverent, intelligent, accomplished, and thoughtful.... He gave distinction to the able and virtuous, behaved with love toward the nine classes of his kindred and brought order and refinement, clarity and intelligence to the people of his domain. He brought unity and harmony to the myriad states of the empire, and the black-haired people were transformed. There reigned a universal concord....

Yao commanded Hsi and He, 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 the people. He separately commanded the second brother...respectfully to receive as a guest [*pin*] the rising sun, and to adjust and arrange, accordingly, the labors of the spring. The emperor said “go and be reverent.” (Author’s translation adapted from Legge 1960, 15.)

It is Yao's knowledge of the Cosmos, through his astronomical observations, that inspires his awe and reverence, and that he "respectfully delivers to the people" who have been brought into harmony by his love and his example. Yao sends his third brother Nan Jiao to "arrange the transformations of the summer, and respectfully to observe the extreme limit of the shadow.... The day, said he, is at its longest, and the star is in Huo. You may thus exactly determine mid-summer. The people are more dispersed, and birds and beasts have their feathers and hair thin and change their coats" (Legge 1960, 15). This is an "opening up" in all directions—to the heavens, to the earth (as the natural world) and his people—that puts all in accord with the Great Harmony; the continuous inter-relationship between all things within the Cosmos.

Yao became the model of the enlightened human for millennia in China. He was held up as a model for school children into recent times. Almost two millennia after his recorded reign, Confucius extolled his virtues. "Great indeed was Yao as a sovereign! How majestic was he! It is only Heaven that is grand, and only Yao corresponded to it. How vast was his virtue! The people could find no name for it" (*Analects* 8:19 in Legge 1971, 214).

There is yet another way in which the three lines combine: the character *jen*, which becomes the hallmark of Confucian thought and central to Chinese culture. Here is the quality of the human when active in the central position of consciousness, as heart and mind, between Heaven and Earth.

仁 *jen*: Tao of the Human

The character for *jen* provides the most helpful clue to its meaning. It is made up of the character for "two" (also denoting Heaven and Earth) combined with the abbreviated radical for the human:

人 + 二 : 仁

The earliest Chinese dictionary says simply that *jen* means "to love each other" and adds that "it is the benevolence that must link each person (人) with his neighbor (=); mutual, reciprocal" (Wieger

1965, 28). The character also shows the human embodying Heaven and Earth and in doing so, bringing the two realms into interpenetration as an expression of one's life.

Confucius gives this definition of *jen* in the *Analects* (12:2): "It is, when you go abroad, to behave to everyone as if you were receiving a great guest [*pin*]; to employ the people as if you were assisting at a great sacrifice; not to do to others what you would not wish done to yourself" (*Analects* 12:2, Legge 1971, 251). Here again is the "opening up" of *pin* that creates the whole and the holiness of Cosmos in a uniquely human activity and spirit that "receives as a guest" the morning sun, and each individual who enters one's presence.

One difficulty in catching hold of the deeper meanings of *jen* lies in our tendency to place it either in the inner or outer world—as a subjective quality or as an outward behavior divorced from the inner condition of an individual. As Peter Hershock points out, "The central value of the Confucian Chinese view of humanity resides neither in the inner cloister of the 'self' nor in the outer personality of the 'public,' but must be seen as an orientation toward what lies vibrantly in between" (Hershock 1996, 163). The person of *jen* is one of deep self-knowledge capable of responding compassionately and generously to the world from an inner authority rather than merely reacting to the world based on its collective conditions, consensus and pressures.

The figure of the hexagram is able to image this for us as a field whose extent encompasses the inner and outer worlds, another designation of the lower and upper trigrams respectively. In Hexagram 1, for example, we see the *chün tzu* (the "complete human") developing through six phases of change from the lowest or most interior point of line one, "Hidden dragon. Do not act," to the fullest expression of line 5: "Flying dragon in the heavens. It furthers one to see the great man." (The sixth line shows the danger of excess: "Arrogant dragon has cause to repent.") While *chün tzu* has been most frequently translated into English as "the superior man," this does poor justice to the term, given our current associations with "superiority," and "man" as gender rather than species. It has also been translated as "the self-cultivated person," "the profound person," the "noble person," and "the exemplar." But above all, the *chün tzu* is the "fully

complete human,” the person of *jen*” who expands “humanness”—the innate capacities of the human—to the furthest extent.

Berry provides a description of *jen* in his Riverdale paper entitled “Affectivity [*jen*] in Classical Confucianism.”

A mutual attraction of things for each other functions at all levels of reality as the interior binding force of the cosmic, social and personal life.... Confucianism saw the interplay of cosmic forces as a single set of intercommunicating and mutually compenetrating realities. These forces, whether living or non-living, were so present to each other that they could be adequately seen and understood only within this larger complex.... Because of the intensity with which the Chinese experienced this interior, feeling communion with the real, they set themselves on perfecting themselves and the universe by increasing this sympathetic presence of things to each other within a personal and social discipline rather than by intellectual analysis (Berry 1973, 1).

Berry beautifully captures here the relationship between the cosmic, the social and the person as “compenetrating realities.” The phrase “they set themselves on perfecting themselves” echoes the description of the early sages who “put themselves in accord with Tao and its virtue.”

To more fully understand this idea and its importance to Berry’s thought, we need to look at another character that is the subject of his article on “Authenticity [*ch’eng*] in Confucian Spirituality.”

誠 *ch’eng*: Sincerity/Authenticity

We have noted in the *Ta Chuan* a description of the Three Powers, or the Three Ultimates (expressions of the Supreme Ultimate) that places the human in a position of equal importance with Heaven and Earth in the creative activity of the Cosmos. The three powers act in harmony to bring to fruition the potential of each in a constant process of perfecting and completing one another. The process is captured in the character of *ch’eng*, which contains elements for

“speech” (left) and “complete” or “perfect” (right). *Ch'eng* is usually translated as “sincerity” but is more literally an “expression of completing/perfecting.” Nothing is complete but is being completed and perfected in the continuous process of creation. Another Confucian classic, the *Doctrine of the Mean*, tells us that “Sincerity [*ch'eng*] is the way [tao] of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the way of men. He who possesses sincerity is he who, without an effort, hits what is right, and apprehends, without the exercise of thought; he is the sage who naturally and easily embodies the right way” (Legge 1971, 413).

Clearly the English word “sincerity” is difficult to imagine as the tao of Heaven. But if we think of it as “the expression of completing or perfecting,” we are in fact speaking of the ongoing creativity of the Cosmos as evolution itself and within it, the self-cultivation of the individual human. From this perspective, evolution is not just something that happened to things and creatures long ago *out there*—as objects in a world apart and in a distant past. Evolution is something that rises up within each of us, within all life, constantly generating new forms on a macrocosmic and microcosmic scale. Berry summarizes these ideas by saying that the small self of the individual reaches completion in the Great Self of the universe (Berry 1999, 190). The *Doctrine of the Mean* tells us that what is being completed or perfected in the human is his or her individual nature. (*Ch'eng* has also been translated as “integrity” and “authenticity.” Here I follow Berry's choice of “authenticity”).

It is through [authenticity] that the self [the individual nature] is completed. Its way (tao) is that by which man must direct himself. Without authenticity, there would be nothing. On this account, the self-cultivated man regards the attainment of authenticity as the most excellent thing.

The possessor of authenticity does not merely accomplish the self-completion of himself. With this quality, he completes other people and things also. The completing of oneself shows one's perfect virtue. The completing of other people and things shows one's knowledge. Both these are virtues belonging to the nature, and this is the way by which a union is effected of the



external and internal.

Therefore whenever he—the entirely authentic person—employs them, that is, these virtues—their action will be right. (Legge 1971, 419)

Self-completion and the completion of others, through tending one's own deep nature and opening up to the unique nature of other living things, not only leads to a mutual flourishing but brings about the union of the internal and external, the subjective and objective realms. It is this fluid, creative movement out of the subjective, internal One toward a blossoming in the manifest, external world—without duplicity—that is the source and definition of right action. This is the human performing that essential role in the central position as the heart-mind, the consciousness, of Heaven-and-Earth.

Able to give its full development to his own nature, he can do the same to the nature of other men. Able to give its full development to the nature of other men, he can give their full development to the natures of animals and things. Able to give their full development to the natures of creatures and things, he can assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth. Able to assist the transforming and nourishing powers of Heaven and Earth, he may with Heaven and Earth form a ternion. (Legge 1971, 418)

We can look to Berry for a contemporary and more immediate description. Here he beautifully summarizes the entire process:

An original endowment which requires development throughout the entire course of our human lives, this nature has only its root form until, through the life development of a person, it comes to proper fulfillment. The basic obligation of humans is to perfect their nature. When this is accomplished we attain a complete interior spontaneity in our actions. That these actions accord with our nature, that they are spontaneous in the most profound sense of the word, that they are in harmony with all our social relationships, all this depends on the authentic

character of our being. The entire civilization was centered on achieving this authenticity [*ch'eng*]. (Berry 1970, 29)

### ***The Great Learning***

The means by which the human completes and perfects himself or herself is the subject of another of the Four Confucian classics, *The Great Learning*. This work develops the basic concepts of tao, *te* and *jen* into a coherent philosophy to be applied to the inner and outer worlds of the human and their expression within the social fabric of the culture. It would play a central role in the works of the 11th and 12th century Neo-Confucian philosophers of the Sung Dynasty and is still revered today. Here is a brief excerpt in which I have slightly adapted Legge's translation for clarity.

What the Great Learning teaches is—*ming ming te*  
to bear into the world [evolve] the inner light of one's nature/  
virtue;  
to bring the people into close and harmonious relationship;  
and to rest in the highest excellence.  
The resting point being known, the goal is then determined;  
and, that being determined, a calm composure may be at-  
tained to.  
Such calmness brings a tranquil repose.  
In such repose there may be mindful deliberation.  
Such deliberation will bring an attainment of the desired end.  
(Legge 1971, 356)

To paraphrase the rest of this section, “as things are investigated, knowledge becomes complete. As knowledge becomes complete, thoughts become sincere, hearts become rectified, persons become cultivated, families become regulated, states become rightly governed and the whole kingdom is made tranquil and happy.” It concludes:

From the Son of Heaven down to the mass of the people,  
all must consider the cultivation of the person the root of ev-  
erything besides.

It cannot be, when the root is neglected, that what should spring from it will be well ordered.

It never has been the case that what was of great importance has been slightly cared for. (Legge 1971, 359)

### **Tending the Root: The Return**

The role of the human is to gather knowledge of the universe to its “furthest extent” [science]; to apply it with humaneness [*jen*] and rectitude [*te*] in the world so that our actions, like those of Yao, “bring unity and harmony” [Cosmos]. Thomas Berry brings these ideas into the present as what might be called an ecology of being—“being Cosmos”—in which the inner and outer worlds of the human, society, nature and the universe represent a single system of compenetrating realities.

In this context the role of the individual human becomes especially significant; for the cosmic is not simply the dimension of humankind, it is the larger dimension of the individual human person. In this enlarged experience of the individual are all those qualities of the universe itself. While this exalted ideal of personal-cosmic communion was thought of primarily as an experience of the sage-kings of ancient times and of a few later sages, it was so deeply enshrined in the tradition as the basic human ideal that it became the encompassing context within which we saw most clearly the meaning of our existence and the cosmic function that we fulfilled. (Berry 1973, 2)

This is a leap beyond merely bridging two hemispheres, as we described it in the beginning. If we look again at the movement of creative action described in the *Ta Chuan* and illustrated in Figure 1, we can see the paired opposites of yin and yang as they arise from the oneness of Tai Chi. *But they are never separate*, as the later Tai Chi symbol illustrates. The Neo-Confucian philosopher Shao Yung (1011-1077) makes this very clear. “The Supreme Ultimate is *I* (One), which is unmoving tranquility. It brings forth two, which have creative power” (Quoted in Wu 1986, 3). What defines a sage

is the capacity, not only to observe the creative process that emerges from the One to the “ten thousand things” but also the capacity to move in the reverse direction, turning back through the multiplicity, through the duality, to the One.

Berry describes this process for us in a very personal and accessible way that expresses the psychological as well as philosophical implications of the “practice” of authenticity.

In developing an authentic existence the human must pass through a dialectical process of realization [through “two” as duality]. After an early period of naïve self-identity we go through a period of self-alienation; we lose our authenticity [lost in the Ten Thousand things]. This requires that we undergo a process of recovery and further interior cultivation until we attain re-establishment of our own reality [return to the One; the center]. (Berry 1970, 28)

Su Shih—another Neo-Confucian philosopher of the 11th century—describes the result of such a process in the “fully developed human” or “the sage.”

All the *li* (principles, patterns) under heaven have always been one, but the one cannot be held fast.... This is why the sages made it clear that the [yin and the yang] and variation and transformation originally came from one, but through interaction, arrive at the infinite *li*.... Now as for the coming forth from one but reaching the infinite, when people observe this, they think there are infinite differences. But when the sages observe this, wherever they go, it is one. (Quoted in Smith, Kidder, Bol et al. 1990, 74)

### **Science and Religion in the “Second Mode”**

In Ashok Gangadean’s interview with Thomas Berry in 2007, Berry expresses a similar idea. “The universe itself is primary in every attribute—it is one, it is diverse, and it is coherent. By ‘coherence,’ I mean the integrity of a pattern in which every created entity

is in a relationship to every other one. So there's a single but diversified universe and the understanding of the diversity and the coherence is the basic way of entering cosmology. I would say that such an understanding is the basis of religion, but it is not itself religion" (Berry 2007).

Berry is making a crucial connection here between Cosmos and cosmology in which "cosmology" is based on an understanding of the Cosmos as a single but diversified and coherent universe. The last statement, that this understanding is the basis of religion but is not itself a religion, seems particularly important. For millennia, religion has served as our access to the second mode; the source of spiritual inspiration and the vessel that holds the sacred life of a culture and defines moral action. Science has been our instrument for the "investigation of things" and for problem-solving worldwide. Yet the two have been as irreconcilable as our original definitions of cosmology and Cosmos.

By pointing to that wordless source in Oneness out of which all things arise, Berry identifies common ground for a human perspective in which religious and nonreligious people meet "at the root," however much they vary as they branch out from that point. In a secular democracy founded on religious freedom, I believe we need a collective "place-holder" for this—by whatever name—or we cannot successfully make the turn to the second mode and allow our scientific and religious traditions to be mutually enhancing.

Berry cautions that "science needs to function *within* a cosmology, not as if it *is* a cosmology" (Toben 2012, 57). His aim in presenting a new story of the universe with cosmologist Brian Swimme in their book *The Universe Story* was to open new ground in presenting a scientific explanation that did not banish the soul or ignore the inner depths and responsibilities of the human. "Scientific language," they write, "however useful in scientific investigation, can be harmful to the total human process once it is accepted as the only way to speak about the true reality of things. A more subjective language is needed to understand the subjective depth of things, to understand both the qualitative differences and the multivalent aspects of every reality" (Berry and Swimme 1992, 258).

In the same 2007 interview with Gangadean, Berry makes a rather

surprising statement, as a religious man (a priest of the Passionist order) well-versed in the scientific story of the universe: “We’re pre-occupied with a ‘science vs. religion’ issue, but I don’t think that’s the real problem. The problem with both science and religion is the lack of a cosmology.”

In the end, Berry provides a new definition of cosmology that transcends that division between cosmology and Cosmos that we noted at the outset. “The human story and the universe story is a single sacred story with the Divine as its origin and destiny. We can discern the numinous guidance that has accompanied the universe and the individual through all of its catastrophes and all of its transformations” (Toben 2012, 43). He is making the movement away from the dichotomies and polarities of the first mode in which subjective and objective are split off from one another to a new mode in which a “cosmology” embraces both, working in concert in the manner of the two modes, yin and yang. We can never “bridge” polarities from the realm of the Ten Thousand things. We can only go beneath them through the recognition of a “single but diversified universe.”

## Summary

At the outset, we saw a description of two different modes of seeing and experiencing the world. In the first mode, which characterized the modern period that reached its climax in the twentieth century, Richard Tarnas and Thomas Berry both describe a worldview in which the individual human exists as an isolated subject in a meaningless universe of objects.<sup>6</sup> To complicate matters further, the human can only come to understand the truth of this external world through the objectivity of analytical inquiry so the human too is divided between a subjective and objective self. The subjective self is seen as suspect; inadequate to perceive the true nature of “things.” When Berry calls for a communion of subjects, how could this be undertaken within such a worldview?

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6. The Modern Era technically began with the development of the scientific method in the 17th century, but was most visible from the industrial revolution in the late 18th century onward.

The answer to this question is a redefining of subjectivity itself, which requires a radically different way of seeing and being in the world. In Berry's definition—"Subjectivity, also called 'consciousness,' is the interior numinous component present in all reality. Communion is the ability to relate to all other species due to the presence of subjectivity and differentiation. Together these create the grounds for the inner attraction of things for one another" (Toben 2012, 80).

In this second mode, which we have seen present in the ancient Chinese Cosmos of the *I Ching* and Confucianism, everything arises out of the One, the Tao that is essentially without name and form, yet also referred to as Tai Chi, the Supreme Ultimate. The unfolding itself is the Way of Heaven, which is without doubleness as a manifest expression of the completing of each thing's nature (*ch'eng*) and the nature of the universe itself. This singularity is the virtue or *te* of Heaven and Earth. All things arise within it, including the human, as a flower is first hidden in the interiority of the seed, then blossoms outward into the manifest world to "complete" itself with qualities that enhance the flourishing of other things and creatures. All creativity, microphase to macrophase, issues from this "interiority"; from subjectivity. Virtue (*te*), authenticity (*ch'eng*) and love (*jen*) are all facets of the same thing—*i* or one, as "the essence, the practice and the function" of the Way.

In Berry's description cited earlier, "the Cosmos is encompassed in the human and the human in the Cosmos" (Berry 1973, 2). Humans are "being Cosmos" in every moment that they are whole in this way—combining "external and internal" through authenticity; the spontaneous result of being true to one's nature.

[The] total efficacy associated with authenticity indicates that virtue brings the human into higher realms of being. In a special manner it brings about the intersection of the divine, cosmic and human planes of reality. It also establishes a person at the cosmic center. The resulting transforming of things is the expression of what is deepest in the reality of things, for only by virtue of higher transformation do things achieve their real being, their authentic expression. (Berry 1973, 31)

Alfred North Whitehead, among other pioneering philosophers and scientists, articulated this second mode early in the last century. He regarded self-realization as the “ultimate fact of facts” (1979, 222) and introduced us to an expanded view of cosmology: “It must be one of the motives of a complete cosmology to construct a system of ideas which brings the aesthetic, moral, and religious interests into relation with those concepts of the world which have their origin in natural science” (xii). Berry’s contribution brought it forward in simple, personal language that could guide and inspire individual action in a variety of ways to appreciate and protect the beauty of the planet and come into a mutually enhancing relationship with all living forms.

I believe that an area of Berry’s work that deserves wider attention is his articulation of the radical shift in consciousness and world view that is necessary to ensure that individuals engaged in the Great Work of our time, creating mutually enhancing human-earth relationships, develop that added dimension of inner work to put themselves in accord with the One; the root out of which all things emerge, including our own action and awareness. This is essential to being “without doubleness” and acting with integrity, with authenticity. It is essential to *being* Cosmos.

I end with a favorite quote from Berry’s *Dream of the Earth*, which so eloquently expresses “the return to the One” in the words of a 21st century sage.

We are returning to our native place after a long absence, meeting once again with our kin in the earth community. For too long we have been away somewhere, entranced with our industrial world of wires and wheels, concrete and steel, and our unending highways, where we race back and forth in continual frenzy.

The world of life, of spontaneity, the world of dawn and sunset and glittering stars in the dark night heavens, the world of wind and rain, of meadow flowers and flowing streams,...all this, this wilderness world recently rediscovered with heightened emotional sensitivity, is an experience not far from that of Dante meeting Beatrice...where she descends amid a cloud of



blossoms. It was a long wait for Dante, so aware of his infidelities, yet struck anew and inwardly “pierced,” as when hardly out of his childhood, he had first seen Beatrice. The “ancient flame” was lit again in the depths of his being. In that meeting, Dante is describing not only a personal experience, but the experience of the entire human community at the moment of reconciliation with the divine after the long period of alienation and human wandering away from the center. (Berry 1988, 1)

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**Wade-Giles – Pinyin Equivalents**

I Ching - Yijing	Tao – Dao	i - yi
pin – bin	Ta Chuan – Dachuan	Tai Chi – Taiji
ch’eng – cheng	jen – ren	Fu Hsi - Fuxi

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