



Heaven & Earth ***from Yin and Yang***

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IN THE WAKE OF NEW ATTEMPTS IN THE NATURAL sciences to formulate an ecologically meaningful understanding of the world, J. E. Lovelock developed the so called Gaia hypothesis, which presents the entire earth as a living organism. This meant a rediscovery of an animistic conception of the world, one characteristic of traditional Chinese thinking. Admittedly, the Gaia hypothesis still lacked a certain dimension, by which it is not merely proposed to be a living object, but from the very outset is understood truly to be a living subject, namely the dimension of a geocentric sky. For the heavens are indeed nothing other than the physical environment of the earth, that is, the proper subjective horizon of Gaia, the surface upon which the pattern of its cosmic consciousness is produced. This is how the ‘Chinese’ Gaia hypothesis was conceived. One could also interpret this conception in the thoroughly modern sense of a fundamental

‘eco-logic’ of evolution. We will come back to this in chapter two with our examination of the *Yijing* system and its amazing congruence to the genetic code.

In the early epoch, the relationship of the Chinese to the heavens above them was, above all, extraordinarily concrete. So it was that in the 2nd millenium B.C.E. there were three verifiable conjunctions of all five of the planets visible to the naked eye. As the sinologist David W. Pankenier has pointed out, the record of these exceedingly rare celestial events have also come down to us through Chinese sources. These conjunctions took place in 1953, 1576, and 1059 B.C.E., and were understood as signals from the heavens, the legitimacy of which was understood in terms of “Heavenly Mandate” (tian ming) conferring the authority of rule to a new dynasty. In fact, these dates appear to agree with the reconstructed approximations of the founding of the three earliest dynasties—the Xia, Shang, and Zhou. Pankenier, who investigated the

astronomical origins of the Heavenly Mandate, concludes:

We have therefore every reason to believe that there was a firmly established mentality in the 2nd millenium B.C.E., whose distinguishing features are enmeshed in a dependency on regular examination of celestial phenomena. Not only the calendar but also the proper alignment of every sacred space, as well as the timely performance of religious sacrifices depended thereon, that the king exercised the cosmogical office of a calendrical priest. Among the various offices of the King, this was perhaps the most important, as all other functions depended upon his proper execution of this one role.

We can define this “firmly established mentality” in early Chinese history as a shamanistic sky-

religion. Admittedly, each facet of the definition has yet to be explained. For there is hardly any cultural phenomenon in history which seems stranger or more incomprehensible to the present day understanding. It is, however, precisely this archaic mentality that fostered the birth of Chinese culture.

In particular, a unique trait in Chinese thinking can be understood from this mentality that has come to signify the peculiar character of Chinese philosophy, namely the reciprocally analogous projection or correlation between the heavens and the realm of human beings, between macrocosm and microcosm. Benjamin I. Schwartz defined this essential feature as “correlative cosmology” or in the still more precise terminology proposed by him, as “correlative anthropo-cosmology.” For all practical purposes, this concept corresponds to the older term coined by J.J.M. De Groot, that of Chinese Universism.

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