



Warranted Neo-Confucian belief: Religious pluralism and the affections in the epistemologies of Wang Yangming (1472–1529) and Alvin Plantinga

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Abstract. In this article, I argue that Wang Yangming’s Neo-Confucian religious beliefs can be warranted, and that the rationality of his religious beliefs constitutes a significant defeater for the rationality of Christian belief on Alvin Plantinga’s theory of warrant. I also question whether the notion of warrant as proper function can adequately account for theories of religious knowledge in which the affections play an integral role. I demonstrate how a consideration of Wang’s epistemology reveals a difficulty for Plantinga’s defense of the rationality of Christian belief and highlights a limitation of Plantinga’s current conception of warrant as proper function.

The teachings of the Chinese scholar-official Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529) form the basis of what has become known as “The Learning of the Mind” (*xin xue* 心學), one of the two leading schools of thought in the history of Neo-Confucianism.¹ Wang’s philosophy has greatly influenced the development of Confucian thought in both Japan and Korea, and has inspired many important modern Chinese thinkers, such as Xiong Shili (熊十力 1885–1968) and Tang Junyi (唐君毅 1909–1978). This article offers an analysis of Wang’s central concept, the cognitive and affective faculty Wang calls the *liangzhi*² 良知. It explores whether the *liangzhi* can serve as a source of warrant for the beliefs produced by the *liangzhi* and examines some of the implications that follow from this. Alvin Plantinga, one of the most prominent epistemologists in recent decades, has described warrant as the feature that distinguishes mere true belief from knowledge. Plantinga has proposed a version of warrant based on a theory of proper functionalism and has used his account of warrant to explain how Christian belief can be warranted. In this article, I argue that some Neo-Confucian religious beliefs, which are antithetical to Christianity, can also be warranted, and that the rationality of Neo-Confucian religious belief constitutes a significant defeater for the rationality of Christian belief on Plantinga’s theory. I also question whether the notion of warrant as proper function can adequately account for certain theories of moral and religious knowledge, theories in which proper affective states play an integral role. I demonstrate how a consideration of Wang’s epistemology reveals a difficulty

for Plantinga's defense of the rationality of Christian belief and highlights a limitation of Plantinga's current conception of warrant as proper function.

The argument of this paper proceeds in three stages. First, I describe briefly what Wang thinks the *liangzhi* is and how it functions. In the second stage, I turn to the question of warrant and consider the theory of warrant as proper function. I examine whether the *liangzhi* can meet this criterion of warrant and conclude that it can indeed meet this criterion. The section concludes with a consideration of the problem of religious pluralism for the rationality of Christian belief. The third stage reassesses the conception of warrant as proper function in light of Wang's theory of *liangzhi* and his teaching of the unity of knowledge and action.

This article is intended to be of use and of interest to at least three groups that do not communicate with each other as often as one would like to see. First, I hope that the discussion of the implications of religious pluralism for the rationality of Christian belief and the analysis of the centrality of the affections in religious epistemology will be helpful to those philosophers concerned with similar issues in the Western traditions. Second, this article aims to interest Confucianists, those professionally concerned with the history of the Confucian tradition, as well as Sinologists in general by demonstrating how Neo-Confucian religious belief can be warranted and by underscoring and further clarifying the integral role of the affections in Wang's epistemology and moral psychology. Finally, I intend the article as a whole to be of interest to the steadily increasing group of Western philosophers who are interested in Chinese philosophy in its own right.

What is the *Liangzhi* 良知 and how does it function?

The *liangzhi* 良知 is the innate fully formed cognitive and affective faculty that enables one to know the *li* 理 (commonly translated as "principle") of the mind and universe. For most Neo-Confucians, *li* describes the way a thing or state of affairs ought to be.³ So when things or states of affairs are in accord with *li*, they are deemed "natural," and when they are not, they are deemed "deviant." All things possess all the *li* of the universe within them. In human beings, the *li* exist complete in the mind (*xin* 心). For Wang, though, the mind not only contains *li*, the mind is itself *li*: "Knowing (*zhi* 知) is the conscious aspect (*ling chu* 靈處) of *li*. If one speaks of it as master [of the body], one calls it mind. If one speaks of it as one's endowment, one calls it nature (*xing* 性)."⁴ This equating of *li* with the mind sets Wang's view of the mind apart from the Cheng-Zhu interpretation.⁵

From birth, all human beings possess this complete and perfect mind, what Wang calls the mind in its original state (*xinzhibenti* 心之本體) or the original

mind (*benxin* 本心). Wang expands on Mengzi's idea of the four dispositions (literally, "four minds" *si xin* 四心) that develop from the four sprouts,⁶ "Pure knowing is what Mengzi spoke of when he said, 'The mind of right and wrong is something all men possess.' The mind of right and wrong does not need to think to know and does not need to study before it can perform. This is why it is called pure knowing (*liangzhi*)!"⁷ The *liangzhi* 良知 operates as a faculty of the mind that discerns flawlessly, naturally, and spontaneously between right and wrong. It not only forms correct beliefs, it also produces correct affective responses.⁸

If our *liangzhi* is a perfect moral guide, how does Wang account for the bad moral choices we human beings seem to make regularly? In line with the rest of the Neo-Confucian tradition, Wang explains moral wrong by appealing to the concept of *qi* 氣 (variously translated as "material force" or "lively matter").⁹ All things in the universe are a combination of *li* and *qi*. *Qi* is the stuff of which the universe is made. It exists in various grades of purity. Although all things possess all the *li* of the universe within them, because of the impurity of the *qi* of which they are composed, some *li* are obstructed, thereby accounting for the differences between things.¹⁰ Against the Neo-Confucians who Wang claims have distorted Zhu Xi's original position, Wang maintains that *li* do not exist only in external things, but also exist in the human mind. In a key passage, Wang first quotes Zhu and then maintains that Zhu was correct about the "universal dispersion and unity [of *li*]," but that later generations have distorted Zhu's view and consider the mind to be separate from *li*. Wang thought that this idea could mislead people into believing the dangerous notion that *li* do not already exist in the mind, a notion antithetical to Wang's philosophy.¹¹

For Wang, human beings are unique in that we are able to purify our *qi* endowments, thus allowing all the *li* within us, or more accurately, within our minds to shine forth. The impure grades of *qi* in human beings are manifested primarily as self-centered desires (*si yu* 私欲), which Wang also refers to as the "self-centered mind" (*si xin* 私心), "self-centered ideas" (*si yi* 私意), and "self-centered thoughts" (*si nian* 私念).¹² He believes that because of the great obfuscatory power of our self-centered desires, we have lost touch with our original minds and with our *liangzhi* faculties. For the *liangzhi* of our minds to operate at its optimum effectiveness, we first need to eliminate our self-centered desires. Wang employs Buddhist-inspired similes to illustrate the relation between the *liangzhi* and self-centered desires. Just as the sun shining behind clouds or a clear mirror hidden beneath dust, the *liangzhi* must be unobstructed by the "clouds" and "dust" of self-centered desires for it to apprehend *li* and lead us to correct moral decisions and affections.¹³ I will assume in this article that Wang's Neo-Confucian beliefs as I have thus

far described them will appear to the reader as being obviously contrary to orthodox reformed Christian beliefs, at least as Plantinga seems to understand them.

Warrant and religious belief

Warranted belief

The theory of warrant as proper function has been most thoroughly developed by Alvin Plantinga in his trilogy on the notion of warrant.¹⁴ I have chosen to concentrate on Plantinga's theory of warrant not only because it is one of the most influential and well-developed accounts of warrant, but also because, in contrast to many other epistemologists, Plantinga has explicitly applied his theory to religious beliefs. Plantinga's basic definition of warrant is that quality or quantity enough of which distinguishes mere true belief from knowledge. His theory of what warrant requires is motivated in part by the perceived weaknesses in earlier internalist and externalist views of what makes true belief knowledge.¹⁵ These he canvasses in his first book, entitled, *Warrant: The Current Debate*. The second book of his trilogy, *Warrant and Proper Function*, develops his own notion of warrant in considerable detail. Briefly put, his theory of warrant argues that a belief *p* will have warrant for a person *S* if and only if *p* is produced in *S* by cognitive faculties functioning properly in a cognitive environment that is appropriate for *S*'s kind of cognitive faculties, according to a design plan successfully aimed at truth, and the degree of warrant *p* enjoys for *S* is directly proportional to the firmness with which *S* holds *p*. Moreover, a design plan that is successfully aimed at truth is one for which there is a high objective probability that a belief produced according to that plan will be true. This formula is meant to be the core of the concept of warrant. There is a penumbral area beyond the core where there is vagueness and imprecision in applying the formula, and Plantinga concedes that the application is so context sensitive that sometimes there is really no answer to the question whether a given case is a case of warrant.¹⁶

In the final book of his trilogy, *Warranted Christian Belief*, Plantinga applies this notion of warrant to Christian belief, and he argues that Christian belief can be warranted. Plantinga uses a model to demonstrate this. For Plantinga, to give a model of a proposition or state of affairs *X* is to show how it could be that *X* is true or actual. The model is supposed to show that *X* is possible, and that if the model is true, so is *X*. For his own models, which he calls the simple and extended versions of the Aquinas/Calvin model (A/C

model), Plantinga claims that they are epistemically possible, that there are no *de jure* challenges to the models that are independent of the *de facto* question, that the models are true (although he will not try to show that they are true), and that they are just two out of a whole range of possible models. Plantinga wants to be clear that he intends to counter *de jure*, not *de facto* objections. *De facto* objections speak against the truth of Christian belief, whereas *de jure* objections are to the effect that “Christian belief, whether or not true, is at any rate unjustified, or irrational, or not intellectually respectable, or contrary to sound morality, or without sufficient evidence, or in some other way rationally unacceptable, not up to snuff from an intellectual point of view.”¹⁷ As noted earlier, one of his aims is to show that all *de jure* objections are dependent on *de facto* objections.

Plantinga derives the A/C model from the Thomist and Calvinist teaching that all people are born with a capacity for knowledge of God that can be developed as people mature spiritually. Calvin calls this capacity the *sensus divinitatis*. Plantinga interprets the *sensus divinitatis* (SD) as “a disposition (or set of dispositions) to form theistic beliefs in various circumstances, in response to the sorts of conditions or stimuli that trigger the working of this sense of divinity.”¹⁸ The SD resembles perception, memory, and a priori belief in the sense that beliefs produced by the SD are occasioned by the circumstances and are not conclusions from them. They are properly basic beliefs with respect to warrant. The beliefs can have warrant even if the believer has no argument at all.¹⁹ They can have warrant because the SD is a belief-producing faculty that under the right circumstances produces belief that is not evidentially based on other beliefs. Moreover, on Plantinga’s model, the SD is designed and created by God. The purpose of the SD is to enable people to form true beliefs about God. Furthermore, Plantinga claims that when it functions properly, it ordinarily does produce true beliefs about God. On the A/C model, therefore, these beliefs meet the conditions for warrant, and if they are held strongly enough, they can have enough warrant for knowledge.

Warranted Neo-Confucian belief

According to the theory of warrant laid out by Plantinga, Wang Yangming’s Neo-Confucian beliefs could be warranted.²⁰ Wang could propose a model for Neo-Confucian belief based on his concept of *liangzhi*. Such a model could meet the requirements for warrant as proper function. First, the *liangzhi*, once it is discovered and utilized, is a properly functioning cognitive (and affective) faculty. Second, the world of *li* and *qi* is an appropriate cognitive environment for the operation of *liangzhi*. Third, the *liangzhi* faculty of our original minds is simply the conscious aspect of *li*, which is itself descriptive and normative

truth; *li* conveys the truth about the way things are when they are the way they should be. It would thus be reasonable to conclude that the conscious aspect of truth itself would operate in a truth-conducive and truth-preserving manner. Finally, much hangs on the answer to the *de facto* question of whether the Neo-Confucian view of ultimate reality, in which reality is composed of *qi* and our minds are identified with *li*, is true. For if it were false, it is probably not generated by cognitive faculties successfully aimed at truth. So if it were false, beliefs produced by the *liangzhi* would probably not be warranted. If Wang's view of ultimate reality were true, however, then the *liangzhi* probably is successfully aiming at truth, and the beliefs produced by the *liangzhi* probably are warranted.²¹ So the epistemic probability of Wang's Neo-Confucian beliefs being warranted, given the truth of Wang's view of ultimate reality and absent any significant defeaters, is high.²² Thus, the *liangzhi* can serve as a source of warrant for Neo-Confucian beliefs, and Neo-Confucian beliefs can be warranted.

What does this imply for Plantinga's position? Plantinga treats the problem of the rationality of other religions in the second half of the thirteenth chapter of his *Warranted Christian Belief*. He sees the problem of religious pluralism solely as a difficulty for the "exclusivist": someone who does not know of a demonstration or conclusive argument for the belief with respect to which he is an exclusivist, or does not know of an argument that would convince all or most intelligent and honest people of the truth of that proposition.²³

The version of the problem that Plantinga thinks is most cogent is the charge of arbitrariness, which is the claim that the exclusivist treats similar things differently.²⁴ This charge of epistemic arbitrariness constitutes a defeater for Christian belief because once the Christian believer comes to see this, he has a reason for giving up his belief, or at least, for holding it with less firmness.²⁵ Plantinga thinks that he can show that religious pluralism does not constitute a defeater for Christian belief. But I argue that it can be a defeater for Christian belief and for the validity of the A/C model.

Plantinga maintains that the charge of epistemic arbitrariness is effective only if the beliefs of the competing religions are epistemically similar. A person would not be epistemically arbitrary in believing the claims of Christianity rather than the claims of any other religions if that person thought that Christianity was epistemically superior to the others. Plantinga declares that this is the case for the Christian. The Christian thinks that Christianity is true and that whatever is incompatible with it is false. So for the Christian, the major religions are not relevantly similar, and the Christian is not treating similar cases differently. Plantinga admits that the Christian and those who

disagree with her could be internally on an epistemic par: they are equally convinced of the truth of their belief, and the internally available markers are relevantly similar, such as having evidence from other beliefs they hold or having similar phenomenology.²⁶

Nevertheless, Plantinga maintains that there is an important epistemic difference between the Christian and the non-Christian because if Plantinga's extended A/C model is correct, the Christian and the non-Christian are in different epistemic situations, and the Christian can claim a special source of knowledge. Plantinga asserts that for the objector's charge of arbitrariness to stick, the objector would have to assume, "unjustifiably and without argument, that neither that model nor any other according to which there is a source of warranted Christian belief is in fact correct and that there is no such source for Christian belief. That assumption has nothing to be said for it; the arbitrariness charge therefore disintegrates."²⁷

But is the adherent of a religion or worldview that is largely incompatible with Christianity, such as Neo-Confucianism, really arbitrarily assuming that Christianity is false? Letting "Neo-Confucianism" stand for Wang Yangming's version of Neo-Confucianism and letting "Neo-Confucian" stand for an adherent of Wang's version of Neo-Confucianism, one could say that a Neo-Confucian could believe that his claims about ultimate reality are true, and that whatever contradicts them is false.²⁸ Similarly, the Christian believes that the claims of Christianity derived from the *sensus divinitatis* are true and believes that whatever contradicts them is false. If this were so, then if the Neo-Confucian could rightly be accused of arbitrarily assuming the falsity of Christianity, then the Christian could rightly be accused of arbitrarily assuming the falsity of Neo-Confucianism. Plantinga's charge would then be self-defeating.

Perhaps what Plantinga really means is that the non-Christian objector is not arbitrarily assuming the falsity of Christian belief, but the falsity of the *source* of Christian belief, which on Plantinga's theory is the *sensus divinitatis*.²⁹ Even if this were so, is the Neo-Confucian objector still guilty of making an arbitrary assumption? This seems dubious. As I have demonstrated above, the Neo-Confucian could show how Neo-Confucian belief is probably warranted if Neo-Confucian belief is true. The Neo-Confucian and the Christian would thus be on an epistemic par, and the Neo-Confucian would not be arbitrarily assuming that the A/C model or something like it is wrong. So if Plantinga can justifiably accuse the Neo-Confucian of making an arbitrary assumption, then the Neo-Confucian can justifiably accuse Plantinga of making an arbitrary assumption. Both parties can show how their beliefs can be warranted if their religious systems are true, but in the scenario

that Plantinga has laid out, neither party can conclusively demonstrate the superiority of its position. So on the situation of religious pluralism, the Christian would be treating similar things differently if he were to continue to maintain the epistemic superiority of Christianity over Neo-Confucianism.

Plantinga has given no other reasons in his *Warranted Christian Belief* for supposing that the proponents of other religious views are incorrect in claiming that their beliefs are at least on an epistemic par with Christian beliefs. He simply states that if the Christian has the warranted belief that there is a significant difference between the epistemic situation of Christians and non-Christians, then the Christian can reasonably claim that Christian beliefs are epistemically superior to those of other religions.³⁰ But I have argued that the Christian cannot reasonably claim this when he knows it is reasonable for the adherents of many other religions to claim the same for their own religions.³¹ For Plantinga to escape the charge of epistemic arbitrariness, he must admit that non-Christian belief can be on an epistemic par with Christian belief. But this concession considerably weakens his argument for the rationality of Christian belief.

Therefore, the problem of epistemic egoism that results from awareness of the rationality of non-Christian religions can constitute a significant defeater for Christian belief. And if it is a defeater for Christian belief, it is *a fortiori* a defeater for the A/C model, which depends on the truth of Christian belief. This is true of the beliefs of any religion that employs a similar epistemic model, including Neo-Confucianism. Wang Yangming could thus be equally vulnerable to this charge. He has not, however, argued for the epistemic superiority of Neo-Confucian belief in this way. Rather, I have rationally reconstructed his response to Plantinga's position. I have shown how Wang *could* demonstrate that Neo-Confucian belief is warranted. Wang's own style of argument was much more therapeutic, challenging his listeners to first try out his way of seeing and living in the world.³²

Plantinga might argue that even if the Christian were somehow mistaken in thinking that she has a warranted and special source of knowledge, she "needn't be *culpable* in holding this belief."³³ But if the Christian knows that other religions that contradict Christianity, such as Neo-Confucianism, can demonstrate how their beliefs can be warranted, yet she lacks a conclusive demonstration or argument for the truth of her beliefs, she has a partial defeater for her Christian belief, and by implication, for the A/C model, and hence, she is at least partially culpable in holding her Christian belief.

Knowledge and affective states

Selflessness necessary for proper function

Although Neo-Confucian beliefs can be warranted in the contemporary sense of warrant as proper function, Wang Yangming's Neo-Confucian theory of knowledge demands more from a notion of warrant. If warrant is defined as the feature that distinguishes mere true belief from knowledge, then for Wang, warrant would also require the believer to be in the proper affective state. This is because Wang conceives of the *liangzhi* also as an affective faculty. To function properly, that is, to function the way it is supposed to function, the *liangzhi* must be free from the interference of self-centered desires. For one's *liangzhi* to be a properly functioning affective faculty, one must be in an affective state of selflessness, an affective state in which one's self-centered desires have been eliminated.

In this article, I use the term "affection" to signify a broad category covering what are commonly called feelings, emotions, moods, and attitudes. A precise formulation of a universal definition of any of these terms lies well beyond the scope of this paper. For the purposes of my thesis, however, I only need to consider the particular affections Wang uses in his examples – love and hate, attraction and repulsion, desire and detestation, self-centered desires, as well as the feelings of pain, hunger, and cold. The term "state" denotes the condition of a subject's affections at a specific, isolated point in time. I use this term to emphasize that the subject must be experiencing the affection at the relevant point in time. It does not matter, for the purposes of determining warrant, whether one has experienced the affection in the past or will experience it in the future. For one to have real knowledge, one must be feeling the emotion at the same time one is holding the belief. So "affective state" means the affections that the subject is experiencing at the specific moment when a potentially warranted belief is held.

By "selflessness," I mean the absence of self-centered desires. I use "self-centered" to translate Wang's *si* 私, by which he does not mean what we usually mean by "selfish" or "self-centered," which is to privilege one's own good at the expense of the good of others. Rather, Wang's *si* means to make oneself the center of one's world. In this sense of self-centered, one could at the same time, be self-centered but not selfish. One could be performing great acts of altruism, and placing the needs of others well above one's own needs, while at the same time, being unable to empathize with others in any meaningful sense.³⁴ Selflessness is simply the converse of self-centeredness. When one is acting selflessly in this sense, one is not thinking about oneself at all. One is completely unselfconscious and wholly unaware of any sense of personal agency. Wang's notion of self-centeredness arises from his belief

in the underlying metaphysical unity of the universe, a belief he shares with almost all Neo-Confucians.³⁵

Thus, the affective state of selflessness is necessary for the proper function of the affective faculty of *liangzhi*. The *liangzhi*, however, is also a cognitive faculty. Since the *liangzhi* is a single faculty encompassing both affective and cognitive aspects, it is understandable why Wang posits a very strong tie between affection and cognition. Indeed, he believes proper cognitive function is contingent on the possession of proper affective states. A similar point has been made in the philosophy of emotions; emotions play an important role in guiding reasoning and framing salience, as well as potentially distorting proper reasoning.³⁶ For Wang, the *liangzhi* cannot operate freely and properly when it is impeded by self-centered desires. Being in the affective state of selflessness is thus necessary to turn one's mere true belief into what Wang calls "real knowledge" (*zhenzhi* 真知) or simply "knowledge" (*zhi* 知), which for Wang is the highest kind of knowledge attainable, and in the religious and moral spheres, the only kind worth having.³⁷

Accordingly, a necessary condition for having real knowledge is being in a state of selflessness. How, though, does one eliminate one's self-centered desires and become selfless? Wang explains that the process begins with the "rectification of thoughts" (*gewu* 格物):

Knowledge is the original substance of the mind. The mind is naturally able to know . . . This is *liangzhi* and need not be sought outside [oneself]. If what emanates from *liangzhi* is not hindered by self-centered ideas, the result will be like the saying, 'If a man fully develops his feeling of compassion, his benevolence will be more than he needs.'³⁸ The ordinary man, however, is not free from the obstruction of self-centered ideas. He therefore requires the effort of the extension of knowledge (*zhizhi* 致知) and the rectification of thoughts (*gewu*) in order to overcome [his] self-centered ideas and recover *li* ("principle"). Then the mind's faculty of *liangzhi* will no longer be obstructed but will be able to penetrate and operate everywhere.³⁹

The two terms that have been translated "extension of knowledge" and the "rectification of thoughts" are drawn from the beginning of the *Daxue* <<大學>> (usually translated as *The Great Learning* or *The Learning of Adults*). The *Daxue* teaches that the extension of knowledge is contingent on and comes after the rectification of thoughts. Wang interprets this to mean that one must first "rectify" one's thoughts in the sense of purging one's thoughts of the impurities of self-centeredness, and only then can one continue with the task of the extension of knowledge, which results in the attainment of real knowledge. Theoretically, these two tasks are carried out separately. Wang,

however, prefers to emphasize their inseparability. I will expand on this in the next section.

As for *gewu*, Wang has a unique interpretation of the term, which is usually translated as “the investigation of things.” He explicitly rejects Zhu Xi’s explanation that *ge* means “to reach” (*zhi* 至) and *wu* means the affairs or principles of things in the external realm.⁴⁰ Wang believes that the word *ge* means to “rectify,” and the word *wu* means the “things in the mind,” which are simply one’s “thoughts.” Together, the phrase means “to rectify the things in the mind” or, in other words, “to rectify thoughts”:

The word *ge* in *gewu* is the same as the *ge* in Mengzi’s expression, ‘A great man rectified (*ge*) the ruler’s mind.’⁴¹ [*Gewu*] means to eliminate whatever is incorrect in the mind and preserve the correctness of its original substance. Wherever there is a thought, eliminate whatever is incorrect and preserve the mind’s original substance. Then in all places, at all times, the Heavenly *li* will definitely be preserved.⁴²

Wang’s explanation of *gewu* is in line with his view that the mind is *li* itself and that the proper place to discover *li* is in the mind itself, not in the outside world.⁴³ The more one eliminates incorrect thoughts, particularly self-centered thoughts, the more one’s mind will be able to function freely and to operate properly. The method of rectifying one’s thoughts, and thus the key to eradicating inappropriate desires, is to monitor constantly one’s thoughts. In carrying out this task, one is to be “like a cat catching mice – with eyes intently watching and ears intently listening. As soon as a single [self-centered] thought begins to stir, one must conquer it and cast it out . . . Do not indulge or accommodate it in any way. Do not harbor it, and do not allow it to escape.”⁴⁴

Since few people can eliminate their self-centered desires all at once, the task calls for continual effort. Every time one is successful at eradicating an incorrect thought, one’s *liangzhi* will be able to operate more freely. The more one’s *liangzhi* operates freely, the more easily one’s *liangzhi* can identify the incorrect thoughts and eliminate them. When one eliminates the self-centered desires relevant to a particular belief, and thus attains an affective state of selflessness in relation to that belief, one’s *liangzhi* constitutes a properly functioning cognitive-affective faculty relative to that belief.⁴⁵ This is what Wang has in mind when he gives the analogy of polishing the mirror, for only when there is no dirt on the mirror’s surface can it function properly and reflect the image before it.⁴⁶

The affective state resulting from action

Selflessness, however, only gets you part of the way to real knowledge. For on Wang's view, the cognitive-affective faculty of *liangzhi* could be functioning properly in an appropriate cognitive-affective environment, while at the same time producing beliefs with insufficient warrant for real knowledge. This would be the case if one has not extended (*zhi* 致) one's *liangzhi*. For Wang, the phrase *zhizhi* ("the extension of knowledge") carries the more specific meaning of *zhi liangzhi* ("extending one's *liangzhi*"): "The extension of knowledge is not – as later scholars say it is – 'filling out and broadening' one's knowledge. It is simply to extend the *liangzhi* of my own mind."⁴⁷

Extending one's *liangzhi* means to apply successfully one's *liangzhi* to the matters of one's daily life.⁴⁸ Since one cannot extend one's *liangzhi* if self-centered desires are obstructing it, the extension of *liangzhi* is contingent on first being in an affective state of selflessness in relation to the specific belief or item of knowledge. Only after the *liangzhi* is extended can one attain real knowledge. Hence, being in an affective state of selflessness is necessary to extend one's *liangzhi*, which in turn is necessary for attaining an affective state from action, which is the affective state resulting from fully extending the *liangzhi* in one's daily life. Further, this affective state from action is a necessary condition for true belief to constitute real knowledge.

In an ideal world, one's *liangzhi* would function properly and extend effortlessly. In the actual world, however, even if one has removed the barrier of self-centered desires and one's *liangzhi* is functioning freely, one can still be unable to extend fully one's *liangzhi*. "The *liangzhi* naturally knows, which is in fact quite easy. But often one cannot extend his *liangzhi* to the utmost. This shows that it is not difficult to know but difficult to act."⁴⁹ Why is it so difficult to extend one's *liangzhi*?

In some cases, one's self-centered desires still hinder the *liangzhi*. Wang states that "it is because one is driven by the considerations of praise and criticism or loss and gain [that one] cannot really extend one's *liangzhi*."⁵⁰ This points to the interdependence of the rectification of thoughts and the extension of knowledge that I alluded to earlier. Wang believes that by far the most effective way of unearthing one's incorrect thoughts is by attempting to extend the *liangzhi* in one's daily life. He strongly counsels against secluded and solitary introspection.⁵¹ When the attempted extension fails, the subject will then be in a much better position to identify the relevant self-centered desires, and when they are identified, she will be forced to confront them. Once she has eliminated them, she should then be able to extend her *liangzhi* successfully. Also, it is possible that the subject be unaware of her relevant uneliminated self-centered desires until she attempts to extend her *liangzhi*. Once she makes the attempt, though, she will be in a position to monitor

her mental responses to the situation. Then if she fails to extend her *liangzhi* successfully, she would be in a position to ascertain her relevant self-centered desires. She could then work on eradicating them, thereby rectifying her thoughts. This is the cyclical process of the rectification of thoughts and the extension of knowledge. Wang explains the link between the two:

The rectification of thoughts is the effort to extend knowledge. As one knows how to extend his knowledge, he also knows how to rectify thoughts. If he does not know how to rectify thoughts, it means he does not yet know how to extend his knowledge.⁵²

Nonetheless, this explanation seems to apply only to cases in which the subject has failed to eliminate the relevant self-centered desires. The question at hand, though, is whether, and if so why, one who has already eliminated all relevant self-centered desires still cannot extend the *liangzhi*. The answer lies in Wang's central doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action (*zhixing heyi* 知行合一). For Wang, the extension of *liangzhi* just is "acting" on the deliverances of the properly functioning *liangzhi*:

We know that the extension of knowledge has to consist in action, and it is clear that without action there can be no extension of knowledge. Does not the state of the unity of knowledge and action stand sharply in focus? . . . [W]henver the superior man is engaged in practical affairs or discussion, he insists on the task of knowledge and action combined. The aim is precisely to extend the *liangzhi* of his original mind. He is unlike those who devote themselves to merely talking and hearing as though that were knowledge, and divide knowledge and action into two separate things as though they really could be itemized and take place one after the other.⁵³

Wang's category of real knowledge applies only to knowledge combined with action. Knowledge without action is a lower kind of knowledge. In most cases, Wang simply refuses to give this lower level knowledge the honor of the label "knowledge": "There have never been people who know but do not act. Those who are supposed to know but do not act simply do not know."⁵⁴

By "action," Wang intends more than what we normally call actions. Within the category of "action," he includes the "acts" of thinking, feeling, intending, and doing. Among the many examples Wang uses to illustrate his concept of action, a favorite of his concerns the knowledge of the *li* of filial piety. Wang asks rhetorically whether it is possible to know that filial piety involves caring for the comfort of parents in both winter and summer and serving and supporting them without actually caring for and supporting and serving them.⁵⁵ Wang admits that one can know the details

or have right beliefs regarding filial piety, but unless one extends this lesser kind of knowledge by actually caring for and serving one's parents, one will never achieve real knowledge of the notion of filial piety. In this sense, "action" denotes what we usually mean by "action" – actually physically doing something. Under this type of action as doing, Wang mentions that certain things about archery and calligraphy can only be known by doing them.⁵⁶ In some cases, Wang could be seen as pointing to the distinction between "knowing how" and "knowing that."⁵⁷ However, even if Wang's archery and calligraphy examples can be construed as involving practical knowledge ("knowing how"), his other examples are clearly not concerned with practical knowledge. In the case of filial piety, for instance, the issue is not about whether the son knows the practical details about caring for his parents, such as how to operate efficiently the family furnace to keep his parents warm in the winter, but about whether the son applies what he does know.

Wang also speaks explicitly, however, about how "action" involves the emotions. Wang's example of filial piety applies here as well, for the emotions of love, concern, and respect for one's parents are an essential part of Wang's notions of caring and serving one's parents.⁵⁸ Furthermore, Wang adduces the examples of loving beautiful colors and detesting bad odors. Wang calls the perception of the beautiful color and the smelling of the bad odor knowledge, and the loving of the color and the detesting of the odor action. Also, he considers the knowledge of pain, hunger, and cold as dependent on feeling pain, hunger, and cold.⁵⁹ The same holds for the bitterness of a bitter melon, the knowledge of which depends on having personally tasted a bitter melon.⁶⁰ Moreover, Wang discusses how desires are actions. Specifically, he cites the desires for food and for travel.⁶¹ He contends that to know the taste of food and to know a road, one first must desire to eat and desire to travel. These desires are themselves actions. According to Wang, one has the desire to eat and travel before one eats and travels. Also, only after one eats and travels can one know that the food tastes good and the road is narrow. Wang even considers thinking to be an action. He maintains that as soon as a thought is aroused, it is an action.⁶² He also divides thinking into inquiring, learning, pondering, and judging, and holds that these are all actions. Forming a belief is itself an action.⁶³

Hence, "action" for Wang is a broad spectrum encompassing thinking, feeling, intending, and doing. It is not always clear in what sequence they proceed. At least three different sequences are possible.

In the first, the belief follows from, and is directly consequent upon, the doing and is sometimes an inference from it. This is the case with perceiving the beautiful color and smelling the bad odor. The admiration and detestation

immediately induces the belief that the color is indeed admirable and lovely and that the odor is detestable and revolting. The feelings of pain, hunger, and cold also fall under this sequence. The feelings induce the immediate beliefs that pain, hunger, and cold are unpleasant. This first sequence of action can be charted roughly as “doing (including experiencing and perceiving), feeling, and thinking,” with “intending” occasionally coming before “doing.”

The second sequence applies to the desire to eat and travel. Wang believes that the desire to eat and travel induces the intention to eat and travel, which leads to actually eating and traveling, which eventually leads to the right belief that the food tastes good and the road is narrow. This second sequence is “feeling, intending, doing, and thinking.” In these first two kinds of sequences, the doing is not consequent upon the initial belief. Rather, it leads to the belief.

In each case mentioned above, one could hold the same belief before the doing occurs. In such cases, one would be following the third kind of sequence. In the third possible sequence, the doing is induced by and follows from the belief. The example of carrying out the duties of filial piety most clearly follows this sequence.⁶⁴ The filial son has the belief that he should care for his elderly parents in the winter and summer and that he should serve and support them. He then feels filial love towards his parents, and his feelings induce in him an intention to act on his belief.

Sometimes, the carrying out of his intention may be hindered by factors beyond his control. Perhaps the rivers have suddenly burst their banks, thus effectively cutting off all transportation routes to his parents' village. Wang would probably say that in such a scenario, as long as he has the proper intention and tries his hardest to carry it out, he would be in the right affective state. So for this kind of knowledge-action relation, the affections are more important than the doing itself. This sequence of action could be charted as “thinking, feeling, intending, and doing.” The “doing” may in some cases be unnecessary, however, because the “doing” can be divided into “having the intention to do,” “attempting to do,” and “succeeding in doing.” These distinctions are important since success is sometimes contingent on factors extraneous to the deliberation. Wang would aver that what is most important is the intention to act, not the “act” itself, which may sometimes be beyond our power.

From this analysis of the different possible sequences of action, it is reasonable to conclude that Wang conceived of the continuum of action as fairly fluid, so that it does not really matter which sequence is followed as long as knowledge and action are both involved.⁶⁵ Wang perhaps would have even accepted other sequences of “action” as leading effectively to real knowledge.

Hence, the doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action, which is realized through the extension of *liangzhi*, is a continuum of thinking, feeling, intending, and sometimes, doing. The perfectly functioning *liangzhi* should, in theory, advance through the relevant continuum of “actions” spontaneously, effortlessly, and flawlessly. Real knowledge can be achieved only if one has experienced the entire sequence of actions, in whatever order, that are relevant to the belief. Knowledge is incomplete until the knower has achieved the affective state from action in regard to the belief. This is the meaning of Wang’s phrase, “Knowledge is the beginning of action, and action is the completion of knowledge.”⁶⁶

Real knowledge and real warrant

Thus, the notion of warrant that would make mere true belief into real knowledge would have to go beyond Plantinga’s formula of proper function. A fifth requirement is needed – that person S be in an affective state from action appropriate to belief p. Since the requirement stipulates the subject have a personal experience that produces personal affections, it rules out the possibility of warrant transfer from such sources as testimony.⁶⁷ Real knowledge must thus come by way of personal experience and affective states. For example, you could not have real knowledge that “filial piety demands that we love our parents” from my testimony that it does so unless you experience the entire continuum of action relevant to that belief yourself. Warrant cannot transfer to you through my testimony of my personal experience. You must personally respond in the appropriate way with the proper affections. Precisely how one is to determine whether an action is “appropriate” is a question that Wang neglects to address in any detail. His reliance on examples and avoidance of systematic explanations result in a degree of vagueness. Ambiguity, however, also attends contemporary accounts of warrant.⁶⁸

A parallel concept to real knowledge is real warrant, which is the feature that turns true belief into real knowledge. The resulting formula, which is a revised version of warrant as proper function, for real warrant derived from the *liangzhi* is:

A belief p will have real warrant for a person S if and only if S is in an affective state from action appropriate to belief p, and p is produced in S by a properly functioning *liangzhi* in a cognitive-affective environment that is appropriate for S’s *liangzhi*, according to a design successfully aimed at truth, and the degree of warrant p enjoys for S is directly proportional to the firmness with which S holds p.

A more general formula can be drawn from this that pertains to moral and spiritual beliefs in general:

A belief p will have real warrant for a person S if and only if S is in an *affective state appropriate to belief p* , and p is produced in S by properly functioning *cognitive-affective faculties* in an appropriate cognitive-affective environment for S 's *kind of cognitive-affective faculties*, according to a design successfully aimed at truth, and the degree of warrant p enjoys for S is directly proportional to the firmness with which S holds p .

An example of how one could achieve real knowledge of a religious belief is Wang's belief that p , where p is "I am metaphysically one with the universe."⁶⁹ Wang could claim to have real knowledge of his belief p if and only if p is true, and p is generated by his properly functioning *liangzhi*, which is designed to aim successfully at truth, in an environment appropriate to the *liangzhi*, and he is highly confident in his belief.⁷⁰ I have already discussed how the beliefs produced by the *liangzhi* can meet the requirements of warrant as proper function. A further condition is required for real knowledge of p , however. Wang must be in an affective state from action appropriate to p . In this case, that would mean that upon perceiving the relevant evidence, he immediately feels his harmonious unity with the universe. Relevant evidence could include things he has read, but it could also include the mere perception of starving and dying people, or trampled flowers and wantonly broken tiles and bricks.⁷¹ Wang testifies that he feels the suffering and bitterness of these people and of these flowers, tiles, and bricks as personal injuries to his own body. So he at least appears to have gone through the relevant continuum of action. Wang is hence in a position to claim warrant for his belief that p , and if p is true, he has real knowledge of p .

One could ask, however, what reasons there are to believe that we are metaphysically one with the universe. Why should we believe Wang's view of ultimate reality? A proper answer to this question would require going beyond the scope of this paper, for it would necessitate answering the *de facto* question. And all along, I have claimed that Neo-Confucian belief is probably warranted only if Neo-Confucian belief is true, and Plantinga has claimed the same for Christian belief. The *de jure* objection is dependent on the *de facto* objection. If Wang's description of ultimate reality is true, then Wang's Neo-Confucian beliefs probably are warranted. If it is false, then they are probably not warranted. In this paper, I have not attempted to determine whether Wang's Neo-Confucian beliefs are true. Nor has Plantinga, in his work on warrant, attempted to determine whether any Christian beliefs are true. The concept of warrant is concerned primarily with the issue of rationality, and is only incidentally related to the issue of truth. Hence, assuming that the truth of Wang's Neo-Confucian beliefs are as yet undetermined, in the sense that there is no conclusive "knock-down" argument for their truth or falsehood, it is possible that Wang's Neo-Confucian beliefs are warranted.

Plantinga's own theory of warrant as proper function seems to leave room for affections to play a role. First, in the last clause of his formula he states that "the degree of warrant p enjoys for S is directly proportional to the firmness with which S holds p ." In explaining this firmness of belief, Plantinga claims that "the more clearly I see a proposition to be true, the more firmly I believe it," at least in most cases.⁷² Plantinga describes the degree of firmness that typically guarantees sufficient warrant for knowledge as "psychological certainty" of the kind that is associated with self-evident truth and clear memories.⁷³ Any lesser degree of inclination to believe the proposition needs to be addressed on a case-by-case basis to determine whether the belief is held firmly enough for knowledge. This kind of firmness naturally, especially in the Christian context of his last book, reminds one of the role of faith in Christian epistemology. In talking about faith, Plantinga describes it as a confidence and assurance, a sure and certain belief, and a steady trust in, for example, the proposition that God exists.⁷⁴ He also argues that belief in God's existence can be a properly basic belief, which seems to the believer phenomenologically similar to beliefs produced by perception, memory, and *a priori* belief.⁷⁵ So there seems to be an unexplored role for the affections here.⁷⁶ If one feels doubtful and uncertain about a belief, these feelings could jeopardize the belief's warrant. Feelings of confidence, assurance, doubt, and uncertainty clearly differ, however, from Wang's notion of selflessness and the affective state from action. Still, the formula invites the question of the role of affections in determining warrant.

Second, Plantinga addresses the issue of the role of affections in Christian epistemology in his *Warranted Christian Belief*. He argues for the viability of a kind of knowledge Jonathan Edwards, the eighteenth century American theologian, called "spiritual knowledge" and he calls "experiential knowledge": "[A] person may know, in a way, that God *is* beautiful and lovely (perhaps she takes this on the authority of someone else), but there is a kind of knowledge of this loveliness she doesn't have (experiential knowledge), and it is precisely this kind of knowledge that is the spiritual knowledge of which Edwards speaks."⁷⁷ This sounds remarkably similar to Wang's notion of real knowledge. Plantinga even uses the example of knowing the taste and sweetness of honey. Wang goes further, however, by connecting his concept of real knowledge with intentions and with actual action, such as in the example of knowing the meaning of filial piety. In this sense, Wang's version of this higher kind of knowledge seems richer.

Unfortunately, Plantinga fails to incorporate his concept of experiential knowledge into his broader notion of knowledge. He spends considerable time discussing whether intellect or will is prior in the production of Christian belief and insists on a bifurcation between the domains of cognition and

affection: “Intellect is the province of belief; will, the province of affection.”⁷⁸ He even presents an analogue of warrant for affections, in which the affections have appropriate objects in the same way that the intellect is ordered to truth.⁷⁹ He is careful, though, to keep cognition and affection separate, and he seems blind to how the affections can play an integral role in the establishment of cognitive warrant. Wang’s point in his doctrine of the unity of knowledge and action is precisely that cognition and affection cannot be separated. The possession of the right affective states is necessary for proper cognitive function and for the attainment of real knowledge. For Wang, real knowledge, or “experiential knowledge” in Plantinga’s terminology, is the only kind of knowledge worth having, especially in the realms of ethics and religion.

Conclusion

Wang’s theory of *liangzhi* can provide a way for Neo-Confucian beliefs to meet the requirements of warrant as proper function. Beliefs produced by the *liangzhi* can thus be warranted. Furthermore, if the Neo-Confucian view of ultimate reality is true, the *liangzhi*-generated beliefs probably are warranted. This poses a serious difficulty and constitutes a significant defeater for Plantinga’s argument for the rationality of Christian belief. Moreover, the theory of warrant as proper function conveys an incomplete account of Neo-Confucian religious and moral knowledge and of religious and moral knowledge in general. According to Wang, the *liangzhi* is both a cognitive and an affective faculty, so for a theory of warrant to be universal, it must encompass the affective dimension of knowledge. Wang’s doctrine of the unity of knowledge and “action” thus reveals a lacuna in the theory of warrant as proper function. A fifth condition is required – that a person S be in an affective state from action appropriate to the belief p. I generalize this condition to cover moral and religious belief in general – that a person S be in an affective state appropriate to the belief p.

For the most part, Christian analytic philosophers have paid relatively little attention to the philosophical complexity and sophistication of non-Western religions, such as Confucianism, Hinduism, and Buddhism. A tantalizing topic beyond the scope of this paper is what insights some of these non-Western religions can contribute to the perennial problems of Christian philosophy. The strong points of one religion may be the weak points of another, and mutual consideration can yield fruit for both perspectives.⁸⁰ In developing theories of religious knowledge in particular, philosophers of any religion ought to take into account the epistemologies of the world’s other major religions.

In this paper, I have also tried to highlight the significant degree to which cognition can depend on affection.⁸¹ If Wang is right in claiming that certain affections are needed to have a special knowledge of religious and moral truths, then this would help to explain the widespread lack of agreement on religious and moral matters by intelligent, well informed, and honest people. It is hard to believe the disagreement is due to a lack of intelligence, obvious prejudice, unwillingness to consider objections, or simple philosophical obtuseness.⁸² Wang would probably ascribe it to a failure of the affections – either one’s self-centered desires are clouding one’s cognitive and affective faculties or one has not yet experienced the continuum of actions appropriate to the belief. Even if one does not share Wang’s metaphysical views regarding the nature of reality, one can still appreciate the strength and value of his argument that proper affections are needed for proper cognition.⁸³

Notes

1. The other leading school of thought, whose primary representative is Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), became known as “The Learning of Principle” (*lixue* 理學). Also, for a superb biography of Wang’s early years, see Tu Wei-ming, *Neo-Confucian Thought in Action: Wang Yangming’s Youth (1472–1509)* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).
2. *Liangzhi* is usually translated as “innate knowledge” or “pure knowing.”
3. For a lucid and succinct account of Neo-Confucian *li-qi* metaphysics, see Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co. Inc., 2000, revised edition), pp. 46–48.
4. *Wang Yangming Quanjì* <<王陽明全集>>, Wu Guang 吳光, Qian Ming 錢明, et al. (eds.) (Shanghai Guji Chubanshe 上海古籍出版社, 1992) (hereafter, WYQJ), vol. 1, p. 34 (1:34). The translation is adopted with slight modifications from Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yang-ming* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co. Inc., 2002, revised edition), p. 48. See also Wing-tsit Chan (trans.), *Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), section 118.
5. Named after Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200).
6. *Mengzi*, 2A6, 6A6. It should be noted that Wang’s interpretation of *Mengzi* is greatly influenced by Buddhist thought. For a superb treatment of this, see Ivanhoe, *Ethics*.
7. WYQJ, 2:971. Translation adopted with slight modifications from Ivanhoe, *Ethics*, p. 49. See also Chan, *Instructions*, p. 278.
8. I will discuss Wang’s concept of *liangzhi* and its relation to the affections in more detail later in this paper.
9. For Wang’s views on the relationship between *qi* and *xin*, see WYQJ, 1:62, 100–101. See also Chan, *Instructions*, sections 153, 242.
10. The standard Neo-Confucian view that “*li* is one but its manifestations are many” is also held by Wang, but, just as other Neo-Confucians before him, Wang uses the term *li* to refer to both the one *li* and the different manifestations of the one *li* embedded in *qi*.
11. WYQJ, 1:42–43. See also Chan, *Instructions*, section 133.

12. For a helpful discussion of *si yu*, see Antonio S. Cua, *The Unity of Knowledge and Action: A Study in Wang Yang-ming's Moral Psychology* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1982).
13. The sun behind clouds and the mirror under dust similes are not the only examples Wang uses, but they seem to be the most prominent. For the sun behind clouds imagery, see WYQJ, 1:11, 20, 23, 70, 73. See also Chan, *Instructions*, sections 21, 62, 76, 167, 171. For the mirror under dust imagery, see WYQJ, 1:93, 99, 103, 111. See also Chan, *Instructions*, sections 207, 237, 255, 289, 290.
14. Alvin Plantinga, *Warrant: The Current Debate* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); *Warrant and Proper Function* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). See also the volume of essays devoted to responses to Plantinga's epistemology: Jonathan L. Kvanvig (ed.), *Warrant in Contemporary Epistemology: Essays in Honor of Plantinga's Theory of Knowledge* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996).
15. For a lucid and succinct explanation of internalism and externalism in epistemology, see Laurence Bonjour's entry 'Externalism/Internalism', in Jonathan Dancy and Ernest Sosa (eds.), *A Companion to Epistemology* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1993).
16. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 156.
17. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. ix.
18. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 173.
19. This idea is an extension of Plantinga's earlier work on properly basic religious belief. For a superb discussion of this, see for example Alvin Plantinga and Nicholas Wolterstorff (eds.), *Faith and Rationality: Reason and Belief in God* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983), especially Plantinga, 'Reason and Belief in God', pp. 16–93.
20. A brief methodological note: In this article, by having Wang respond to Plantinga, I employ what Richard Rorty has termed "rational reconstruction," which is self-consciously anachronistic. This means that the terms of the discussion, such as knowledge being "warranted true belief," are those of contemporary epistemology. It could have been the other way around, with Plantinga responding to Wang in Wang's epistemological vocabulary, using such concepts as *li*, but that article would best come from Plantinga himself. Cf., Richard Rorty, 'The Historiography of Philosophy: Four Genres', in Richard Rorty, et al. (eds.), *Philosophy in History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 49–76. It should also be noted that this analysis of Wang's epistemology focuses on "belief," understood as a propositional attitude. This paper thus concerns the propositional content of objects of knowledge. By propositional content, I mean whatever property of objects of knowledge can be expressed by a declarative clause – as in "that there is rice in the bowl." I hope it will become evident by the end of this paper that although Wang does not discuss belief explicitly, he does have an *implicit* notion of belief. Indeed, it would be absurd to assert that Wang did not have any beliefs. Nonetheless, it is also true that Wang mentions objects of knowledge that are *non-propositional*, such as certain cases when he speaks of knowing persons. An examination of how non-propositional objects of knowledge fit into his epistemology would take this article beyond manageable bounds, so I shall leave this for future study. For excellent discussions of knowing persons in contemporary epistemology and ancient Greek philosophy, see Linda Zagzebski, 'Recovering Understanding', in Matthias Steup (ed.), *Knowledge, Truth, and Duty: Essays on Epistemic Justification, Responsibility, and Virtue* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 235–251; and Lloyd Gerson, *Knowing Persons: A Study in Plato* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), respectively.

21. This connection between the truth and warrant of religious belief highlights the dependency of the *de jure* question on the *de facto* question. This link applies also for objections. In the case of theism, a successful atheological objection has to attack the truth of theism. Plantinga's position is that no *de jure* criticisms are sensible when conjoined with the truth of theism.
22. There exists the possibility that the faculty designed to aim at truth malfunctions while another faculty not aimed at producing true beliefs also malfunctions with the result that the latter faculty produces the true belief. This would be a case of a kind of modified Gettier problem. Although this is a possible scenario, it is highly unlikely.
23. *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 440. Notice that the term "exclusivist" here does not apply to those who think they have a demonstration or conclusive argument for the belief with respect to which they are exclusivists. Although such people may call themselves exclusivists, they are not exclusivists in the sense in which Plantinga and I use the term. This may seem to be a strange constraint on the range of the term, but it is one Plantinga insists on (see *Warranted Christian Belief*, pp. 440–441).
24. This charge has a moral and an epistemic component. Plantinga concentrates on defusing the moral component, but I shall focus on the epistemic.
25. *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 443. Plantinga's definition of a purely epistemic defeater is long:

(D*) D is a purely epistemic defeater of B for S at t if and only if (1) S's noetic structure N at t includes B and S comes to believe D at t, and (2) any person S* (a) whose cognitive faculties are functioning properly in the relevant respects, (b) who is such that the bit of the design plan governing the sustaining of B in her noetic structure is successfully aimed at truth (i.e., at the maximization of true belief and minimization of false belief) and nothing more, (c) whose noetic structure is N and includes B, and (d) who comes to believe D but nothing else independent of or stronger than D, would withhold B (or believe it less strongly).

Warranted Christian Belief, p. 363.
26. *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 452.
27. *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 455.
28. Although I am introducing this for the sake of clarity, it should be noted that Wang Yangming's thought is generally considered heterodox in the Confucian tradition. As mentioned earlier, Zhu Xi's interpretation of the Classics was the touchstone of orthodoxy from the Yuan to the end of the Qing dynasties.
29. Plantinga also claims that warranted Christian belief can come by way of the process of faith or the internal instigation of the Holy Spirit. To keep this discussion to a manageable length, I have chosen to focus on the *sensus divinitatis*. However, my argument can be run equally effectively by substituting the *sensus divinitatis* with the other two sources of Christian belief.
30. *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 455.
31. If Christianity is true and the A/C model is correct, then on Plantinga's theory of warrant, the Christian *can* be warranted in claiming that Christian beliefs are superior and that Neo-Confucian beliefs are *not* warranted even if he knows that Neo-Confucians make similar claims. The objection of religious pluralism, however, presupposes that the truth or falsity of Christianity and of Neo-Confucianism is still an open question. I thank an anonymous reader for mentioning this point.

32. For more on the therapeutic/theoretical distinction, see Ivanhoe, *Confucian Moral Self-Cultivation*, pp. 64–65. This distinction also holds for many other Chinese philosophers, such as Zhuangzi.
33. *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 454.
34. Since it is difficult to see, though, how one could be selfish without also being self-centered, it seems that selfishness is a subset of the broader category of self-centeredness.
35. For more on Wang’s understanding of “self-centeredness,” see Ivanhoe, *Ethics*, pp. 28–30.
36. For instance, Ronald deSousa argues that emotions “take up the slack in the rational determination of judgment and desire, by adjusting salience among objects of attention, lines of inquiry, and preferred inference patterns . . . [T]heir existence grounds the very possibility of rationality at those more conventional levels.” *The Rationality of Emotion* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1987), p. 203. See also pp. 190–203. There has been a proliferation of literature on this issue in recent decades. In addition to deSousa’s work, see especially Robert Solomon, *Not Passion’s Slave: Emotions and Choice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Martha Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001).
37. Wang contrasts “real knowledge” with “[ordinary] knowledge.” Other pairs he employs include “applied learning” and “unapplied learning,” “higher knowledge” and “secondary sensory knowledge,” “knowledge acquired through personal realization” and “knowledge acquired through listening to discussions.” See WYQJ, 1:45–47, 51–52, 93. See also Chan, *Instructions*, sections 136, 140, 211. For further discussion of this distinction in Wang’s philosophy, see Cua, *The Unity of Knowledge and Action*, pp. 7–16.
38. *Mengzi* <<孟子>>, 7B:31.
39. WYQJ, 1:6. Translation adopted from Chan, *Instructions*, section 8, with minor modifications.
40. See WYQJ, 1:47–48. See also Chan, *Instructions*, section 137.
41. *Mengzi* <<孟子>>, 4A:20.
42. WYQJ, 1:6. Translation adopted from Chan, *Instructions*, section 7, with modifications. For a lucid discussion of Wang’s view of *gewu*, see Ivanhoe, *Ethics*, pp. 97–98.
43. This is not to say, however, that Wang believes that *li* are in the mind only and not in external things.
44. WYQJ, 1:16. Translation adopted from Ivanhoe, *Ethics*, p. 102, with minor modifications. Also see Chan, *Instructions*, section 39.
45. Again, in Neo-Confucian terminology, this would be expressed in terms of *li*, rather than “belief.”
46. WYQJ, 1:20, 23. See also Chan, *Instructions*, sections 62, 76.
47. WYQJ, 2:971. Translation adopted from Ivanhoe, *Ethics*, p. 49, with minor modifications. Also see Chan, *Instructions*, p. 278.
48. Wang’s doctrine of *zhi liangzhi* appears to be another one of his “expedient means.” He explains that his purpose behind the doctrine was to galvanize people into action. He admits that “[I]f one’s *liangzhi* is clear, it will be all right to try to obtain truth through personal realization in a quiet place.” See WYQJ, 1:104. See also Chan, *Instructions*, section 262. The effectiveness of this method is understandable since one’s mind is *li* itself. Still, this is obviously not the situation of the vast majority.
49. WYQJ, 1:120. Translation adopted from Chan, *Instructions*, section 321, with minor modifications. Wang is responding to a question about a passage from the “Counsels of the Great Yu” chapter of the *Shu Jing* 書經 (*Book of History*). For an excellent essay on Wang’s teaching of the unity of knowledge and action, see David Nivison, ‘The Problem of “Knowledge” and “Action” in Chinese Thought since Wang Yang-ming’, in Arthur

- Wright (ed.), *Studies in Chinese Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), pp. 112–145.
50. WYQJ, 1:59. Translation adopted from Chan, *Instructions*, section 147, with minor modifications.
 51. This is with rare exceptions. See for example, WYQJ, 1:104–105. See also Chan, *Instructions*, section 262.
 52. WYQJ, 1:59–60. Translation adopted from Chan, *Instructions*, section 148, with modifications.
 53. WYQJ, 1:49–52. Translation adopted from Chan, *Instructions*, sections 139–140, with modifications.
 54. WYQJ, 1:3–5. Translation adopted from Chan, *Instructions*, section 5.
 55. WYQJ, 1:3–5, 45–50. Translation adopted from Chan, *Instructions*, section 5, 136, 138, 139.
 56. WYQJ, 1:45–47. Translation adopted from Chan, *Instructions*, section 136.
 57. See Gilbert Ryle, *The Concept of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984 reprint, 1949 original), pp. 25–61.
 58. See WYQJ, 2–3, 5–6, 16–17, 112; 2:968–999. See also Chan, *Instructions*, sections 3, 4, 6, 43, 294, as well as his *Inquiry on the Great Learning* in Chan, *Instructions*, p. 273.
 59. See WYQJ, 1:3–5. See also Chan, *Instructions*, section 5.
 60. See WYQJ, 1:37. See also Chan, *Instructions*, section 125.
 61. See WYQJ, 1:41–42. See also Chan, *Instructions*, section 132.
 62. See WYQJ, 1:96. See also Chan, *Instructions*, section 226.
 63. See WYQJ, 1:45–47. See also Chan, *Instructions*, section 136.
 64. See WYQJ, 1:48–50. See also Chan, *Instructions*, sections 138, 139.
 65. One could also conclude that Wang’s philosophy is overly vague and ambiguous. Yet, since much of what we have of Wang’s teachings are recorded by his followers and in the form of dialogues, and, given that the aim of Wang’s philosophical style is primarily therapeutic rather than theoretical, in the sense that he tailored his teachings to the specific spiritual needs of his listeners, it would be reasonable to expect his philosophy to appear less strongly systematic.
 66. WYQJ, 1:3–5, 13. Translation adopted from Chan, *Instructions*, sections 5, 26.
 67. For warrant transfer, see Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, pp. 348–349.
 68. Cf. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 156.
 69. WYQJ, 1:79–80. Translation adopted from Chan, *Instructions*, section 179. For probing discussions of the Neo-Confucian idea of “oneness with the universe,” see the excellent articles on the Neo-Confucian conception of the self in Tu Wei-ming, *Confucian Thought: Selfhood as Creative Transformation* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985).
 70. Of course, the *liangzhi* is not aimed only at truth, but also at appropriate action, as I discuss below.
 71. WYQJ, 1:29–30, 79–80. See also Chan, *Instructions*, sections 101, 179.
 72. Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, p. 110.
 73. Plantinga, *Warrant and Proper Function*, pp. 8–9, 77.
 74. See Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, pp. 264, 293.
 75. See Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, pp. 175–177.
 76. I owe this insight to Philip J. Ivanhoe.
 77. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 299. See also pp. 294–309.
 78. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, p. 309.
 79. Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief*, pp. 309–323.

80. Two excellent examples of significant steps in this direction are Karen L. Carr and Philip J. Ivanhoe, *The Sense of Antirationalism: The Religious Thought of Zhuangzi and Kierkegaard* (New York: Seven Bridges Press, 2000); and Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtues and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990).
81. This same idea can be found in the Christian and ancient Greek traditions. In addition to the literature cited earlier, see also William Wainwright, *Reason and the Heart: A Prolegomenon to a Critique of Passional Reason* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); and Merold Westphal, 'Taking St. Paul Seriously: Sin as an Epistemological Category', in Thomas P. Flint (ed.), *Christian Philosophy* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), pp. 200–226.
82. Cf., Wainwright, *Reason and the Heart*, pp. 148–154.
83. Many thanks to Miranda Brown, Edwin Curley, David Elstein, Eirik Harris, Eric Hutton, T.C. Kline III, George Mavrodes, Robert Sharf, and William Wainwright for insightful comments and helpful suggestions. My special thanks go to Philip J. Ivanhoe whose constant support and inspiration have driven this project from the beginning. I am also grateful to Elmar Kremer for guidance in my early thoughts about Plantinga's theory of warrant. A version of this paper was presented at the 2002 AAR Annual Meeting in Toronto, Canada, and thanks are due to the members of the audience for their useful feedback.

