

A New Interpretation of Wang Yangming Doctrine of the Unity of Knowing and Acting

Cheng Chung-yi, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Wang Yangming's doctrine of the unity of knowing and acting (*zhi xing he yi* 知行合一) has long been interpreting as an elaboration on his teaching of moral knowing (*liang zhi* 良知). It is true that the doctrine was about moral knowing when Wang first advocated after his philosophical awakening at Longchang (龍場) and the following discussion with his student Xu Ai. However, Wang deepened and extended the doctrine to cover not only moral knowing but also knowing other than moral, while facing different challenges especially those from Cheng-Zhu scholars who upheld the doctrine of knowing is prior to acting (*zhi xian xing hou* 知先行後), resulted in the claim that the unity of knowing and acting is the normative structure of all sorts of genuine knowing (*zhenzhi* 真知), including both moral and other knowing. This paper aims to supplement for Wang his epistemological arguments for the claim and to show that the differences between moral and other knowing lie not on the unity of knowing and acting, but on their nature, effect and origin.