

余英时、许倬云中国思想史体系的批判性分析

A Critical Analysis of the Chinese Intellectual-Historical Systems of Yu Yingshi and Xu Zhuoyun

——三大致命盲点与“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”的替代方案
——Three Fatal Blind Spots and the Alternative of the “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology”

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摘要 / Abstract

本文旨在对当代华人思想史学者余英时与许倬云的学术体系进行批判性分析。二人作为国际知名的中国思想史家，代表了20世纪下半叶以来海外汉学界和中国学术界对“儒家传统”的重估。然而，其思想史构建存在三个致命盲点：其一，过度儒家中心化，将中国思想史简化为儒学史；其二，忽视或误读老子及道家思想，未能把握其宇宙论和自然哲学维度；其三，缺乏科学基础，未能与现代科学的宇宙学、生态学和系统论相结合，思想史停留在文化怀旧与道德史的层面。本文提出一个替代性方案——以“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”为基础，重建中国思想史的整体视野：将“道”作为宇宙本源与自然法则，将老子思想与现代科学结合，从而实现从文化史向宇宙观史学的根本转型。

This paper offers a critical analysis of the intellectual-historical frameworks of Yu Yingshi and Xu Zhuoyun, two of the most prominent contemporary Chinese intellectual historians. They represent the late 20th-century reevaluation of the Confucian tradition within both overseas Sinology and Chinese academia. Yet their constructions of Chinese intellectual history contain three fatal blind spots: excessive Confucian-centrism, neglect of Laozi and Daoist thought, and lack of a scientific foundation. This paper proposes an alternative—the “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology”—to reconstruct the overall horizon of Chinese intellectual history, integrating Dao as the cosmic origin and natural law with Laozi’s philosophy and modern science, achieving a transformation from cultural history to cosmological intellectual history.

关键词 / Keywords: 余英时 / Yu Yingshi; 许倬云 / Xu Zhuoyun; 儒家中心主义 / Confucian-centrism; 老子 / Laozi; 科学基础 / scientific foundation; 老-杨创世纪宇宙观 / Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology

一、引言：学术背景与问题意识

I. Introduction: Scholarly Context and Problem Awareness

余英时与许倬云，作为20世纪下半叶以来最具代表性的中国思想史学者，以其扎实的史料功底和宏观的历史叙述影响深远。余英时强调“儒家内在理路”的延续，许倬云则主张“文化系统”的整体性解读。二人共同塑造了当代“中国思想史”的主流话语体系。然而，正是在这种看似宏阔的学术叙述中，隐藏着深层的局限：他们在学理上仍然是“儒学史”的叙述者，而非真正意义上的“中国思想史”建构者。

Yu Yingshi and Xu Zhuoyun, as two of the most representative intellectual historians of late 20th-century China, exerted great influence with their solid textual scholarship and broad historical narratives. Yu emphasized the continuity of the “inner logic of Confucianism,” while Xu advocated an integrated interpretation of the “cultural system.” Together, they shaped the dominant discourse of contemporary “Chinese intellectual history.” Yet methodologically, they remain narrators of “Confucian history,” not builders of a comprehensive “Chinese intellectual history.”

本文将从三个维度揭示其体系的致命盲点，并提出以“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”为替代方案的新方向。

This paper reveals the fatal blind spots of their systems in three dimensions and proposes a new direction through the “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” as an alternative framework.

二、第一大盲点：儒家中心主义的历史视角

II. The First Blind Spot: A Confucian-Centric Historical Perspective

2.1 儒学的唯一化与排他性 / The Exclusivism of Confucianism

余英时的思想史研究以“儒家为中心”的叙述为根基，认为儒家代表中国文化的核心价值；许倬云在文化史框架下，也以儒学作为秩序维系与文化延续的主干。这样的叙述逻辑，使思想史被浓缩为“儒学兴衰史”。

Yu’s research takes Confucianism as the central axis, arguing that it represents the core values of Chinese culture; Xu, within a cultural-historical framework, likewise treats Confucianism as the backbone of social order and cultural continuity. This logic reduces intellectual history to the “rise and fall of Confucianism.”

2.2 多元传统的被边缘化 / The Marginalization of Diverse Traditions

这种叙事直接导致其他思想传统（墨家、兵家、法家、黄老、佛学等）被边缘化甚至消声。特别是墨家的逻辑思想与科学精神，道家的宇宙论与自然智慧，均被削弱成“配角”，无法进入主舞台。

Such a narrative inevitably sidelines or silences other traditions—Mohism, military strategy, Legalism, Huang-Lao thought, Buddhism, and more. Mohist logic and scientific spirit, as well as Daoist cosmology and natural wisdom, are diminished to mere “supporting roles,” never entering the main stage.

2.3 后果：思想史的道德化与狭隘化 / Consequences: Moralization and Narrowing of Intellectual History

这种儒家中心的视角，使思想史成为一部“道德史”或“伦理学史”，失去了思想的多样性与开放性。中国思想因此被窄化为伦理传统，丧失了与世界哲学对话的可能。

This Confucian-centered view transforms intellectual history into a “moral history” or “ethical history,” erasing diversity and openness. Chinese thought is narrowed to an ethical tradition, forfeiting its potential for dialogue with world philosophy.

三、第二大盲点：对老子思想的忽视与误读

III. The Second Blind Spot: Neglect and Misreading of Laozi's Thought

3.1 老子作为“修辞性补充”的处理 / Laozi as a “Rhetorical Supplement”

在余、许的体系中，老子思想往往被简化为“对儒家不足的补充”，如“无为而治”被解释为一种政治调和，而非宇宙本体论的表达。这种处理方式严重矮化了老子的哲学地位。

Within Yu’s and Xu’s frameworks, Laozi is often reduced to a rhetorical supplement to Confucian insufficiency—e.g., “wuwei” interpreted as political compromise rather than cosmological ontology. This severely diminishes Laozi’s philosophical status.

3.2 老子宇宙观的缺席 / The Absence of Laozi’s Cosmology

老子“道生一，一生二，二生三，三生万物”的思想，蕴含着深刻的宇宙生成论和自然演化论。但在他们的思想史体系中，这一维度完全缺失。他们未能看到老子思想是对“宇宙本源—自然法则—人类秩序”的整体性洞见，而不仅仅是政治伦理的工具。

Laozi’s dictum, “Dao gives birth to One; One gives birth to Two; Two gives birth to Three; Three gives birth to the myriad things,” contains profound insights into cosmic genesis and natural evolution. Yet this cosmological dimension is entirely absent in their intellectual histories. They fail to see Laozi’s thought as an integrated vision of

“cosmic origin—natural law—human order,” treating it instead as a mere political or ethical tool.

3.3 后果：错失“自然哲学”的根基 / Consequences: Missing the Foundation of Natural Philosophy

由于忽视老子，他们的思想史完全没有形成“自然哲学”的维度。思想被禁锢在“人伦—社会—政治”的层面，而缺乏“宇宙—自然—生命”的整体观，无法与西方哲学中的本体论、自然哲学对接。

By neglecting Laozi, their intellectual histories lack a dimension of natural philosophy. Thought remains confined to the triad of “human relations—society—politics,” without encompassing “cosmos—nature—life.” Consequently, they cannot engage in meaningful dialogue with Western metaphysics or natural philosophy.

四、第三大盲点：缺乏科学基础与现代视野

IV. The Third Blind Spot: Lack of Scientific Foundation and Modern Perspective

4.1 文献学方法的局限 / The Limitations of Textual Philology

余、许的学术方法建立在传统文献学与思想史内在逻辑之上，基本没有与现代科学（宇宙学、物理学、生态学）进行

互动。他们的思想史仍然是“文本解释史”，而不是“宇宙解释史”。

Yu and Xu rely primarily on traditional philology and the internal logic of intellectual history, without meaningful engagement with modern science (cosmology, physics, ecology). Their work remains “textual interpretation history” rather than “cosmic interpretation history.”

4.2 现代科学的缺席 / The Absence of Modern Science

现代科学揭示了宇宙起源、星系演化、生命出现的规律，而这些与老子“道法自然”的思想高度契合。然而在余、许的体系中，科学的维度完全缺席，思想史与自然科学被人为割裂。

Modern science reveals the origins of the universe, the evolution of galaxies, and the emergence of life—all of which resonate with Laozi’s idea that “Dao follows Nature.” Yet in their systems, the scientific dimension is wholly absent, creating an artificial divide between intellectual history and natural science.

4.3 后果：思想史沦为“文化怀旧” / Consequences: Intellectual History Reduced to “Cultural Nostalgia”

在当代全球生态危机与科学革命的背景下，他们的思想史无法提供有效的解释框架与实践智慧。结果，中国思想史成了一种“文化怀旧叙事”，缺乏面向未来的创造力。

In the face of global ecological crises and scientific revolutions, their frameworks cannot provide effective explanatory models or practical wisdom. Chinese intellectual history, as they construct it, degenerates into “cultural nostalgia,” lacking creative force for the future.

五、以“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”为基础的整体视野

V. Toward an Integrated Horizon: The “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology”

5.1 理论核心：以“道”为宇宙本源 / Theoretical Core: Dao as the Cosmic Origin

“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”首先回到老子哲学的根本命题——“道”。在余英时与许倬云的体系中，道往往仅仅被视为一种政治治理的象征性概念，或儒家伦理的哲学补充。但在这里，道被重新界定为宇宙的本源和自然法则：

The “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” returns to Laozi’s fundamental proposition—Dao. For Yu and Xu, Dao is often reduced to a symbol of governance or a philosophical supplement to Confucian ethics. Here, Dao is redefined as the cosmic origin and natural law:

- **道作为宇宙本体 / Dao as Cosmic Substance:** 它不是抽象的空洞概念，而是宇宙运行的根本秩序，类似于现代科学所探讨的能量守恒、引力场、暗物质与暗能量之整体性。

Not an abstract void, but the fundamental order of the universe, akin to energy conservation, gravitational fields, dark matter, and dark energy in modern science.

- **道的生成逻辑 / The Generative Logic of Dao:** 老子“道生一，一生二，二生三，三生万物”的命题，不仅是哲学隐喻，更可理解为宇宙演化链条的早期表达，与银河形成、太阳系生成、地月系统演化、生命与文明诞生的科学路径相呼应。

Laozi's sequence—“Dao produces One, One produces Two, Two produces Three, Three produces the myriad things”—is not merely metaphorical but an early expression of cosmic evolution, resonating with the formation of galaxies, the solar system, the Earth-Moon system, the emergence of life, and the rise of civilization.

- **超越儒学中心 / Beyond Confucian-Centrism:** 道作为宇宙之本体，远超“仁义礼智”的人伦框架。它关涉的是“宇宙—自然—人类”的整体关联，而非仅限于“人际关系与社会秩序”的伦理模式。

Dao as cosmic origin transcends the anthropocentric frame of “benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom,” addressing instead the holistic linkage of “cosmos—nature—humanity.”

5.2 方法论突破：哲学与科学的整合 / Methodological Breakthrough: Integrating Philosophy and Science

“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”在方法论层面提出了突破：

The “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” offers methodological innovation:

- **跨越文献学局限 / Beyond Philological Limits:** 思想史研究不仅仅是古代文献的考证与解释，而是要将哲学命题与自然科学的发现放在同一框架中加以对话。

Intellectual history must go beyond textual exegesis, situating philosophical propositions in dialogue with scientific discoveries.

- **科学与哲学互证 / Mutual Verification of Science and Philosophy:** 老子所揭示的自然法则，如“道法自然”“无为而治”，在现代科学中可见对应：热力学第二定律、复杂系统的自组织原理、生态系统的动态平衡，均可视为“道”的科学显化。

Laozi’s natural laws, such as “Dao follows Nature” and “wuwei,” find resonance in modern science: the second law of thermodynamics, principles of self-organization in complex systems, and ecological balance can all be seen as scientific manifestations of Dao.

- **整体性视野 / A Holistic Horizon:** 突破“人文与科学”的二分，将宇宙演化、自然规律、生命起源、人类社会一并纳入解释框架，实现真正的“宇宙观史学”。

It breaks the dichotomy of “humanities vs. science,” encompassing cosmic evolution, natural law, the origin of

life, and human society within a unified interpretive framework—an authentic cosmological intellectual history.

5.3 学术价值 / Academic Value

在学术上，“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”为思想史研究开辟了新格局：

Academically, the “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” opens a new paradigm:

- 从“儒学史”到“宇宙观史学” / From Confucian History to Cosmological Intellectual History: 中国思想史不应再局限于“儒家为主干”的叙事，而应转化为以宇宙观为核心的思想演化史。儒、道、墨、佛、兵家等传统，都可以视为对“宇宙—自然—人类”关系的不同阐释，而非单纯的伦理学派。

Chinese intellectual history should no longer be confined to Confucian-centered narratives, but reoriented around cosmology. Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism, Buddhism, and others can all be reinterpreted as diverse responses to the relationship between cosmos, nature, and humanity.

- 多元性与整体性 / Pluralism and Wholeness: 这一框架承认并整合思想的多元性，突破了单一路径的主宰性叙事，使中国思想能够展现其复杂的、生态般的演化逻辑。This framework embraces plurality and resists monocentric narratives, allowing Chinese thought to reveal its ecological, evolutionary complexity.

- **全球哲学对话 / Global Philosophical Dialogue:** 在与西方哲学的比较中，“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”能够与柏拉图的“理念论”、亚里士多德的“自然哲学”、康德的“宇宙论”以及现代科学宇宙观对话，形成真正的全球哲学语境。

The “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” engages with Plato’s theory of forms, Aristotle’s natural philosophy, Kant’s cosmology, and modern scientific cosmology, situating Chinese thought within a genuine global philosophical discourse.

5.4 实践意义 / Practical Significance

“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”不仅仅是一种学术理论，更具有实践上的现实意义：

The “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” is not only a scholarly theory but also a resource for practice:

- **生态文明的指导原则 / Guidance for Ecological Civilization:** 老子“人法地、地法天、天法道、道法自然”的思想与现代生态学相呼应，提供了一种超越功利主义与人类中心主义的生态治理智慧。

In the face of ecological crises, Laozi’s dictum—“Man follows Earth, Earth follows Heaven, Heaven follows Dao, Dao follows Nature”—aligns with modern ecology, offering wisdom beyond utilitarianism and anthropocentrism.

- **人类社会的治理智慧 / Governance Philosophy for Human Society:** 无为而治并非放任，而是基于系统自组织

原理的治理哲学，强调尊重自然与社会内在的秩序，从而避免权力滥用与制度僵化。

Wuwei is not passivity but a governance principle rooted in self-organization, respecting natural and social orders and thus avoiding both authoritarianism and institutional rigidity.

- **未来文明的价值框架 / A Value Framework for Future Civilization:** 它不仅是对中国思想史的重建，更为人类文明的未来提供了哲学根基，使我们在全球化与科学革命的时代背景下，找到超越民族主义与狭隘文化自恋的普遍智慧。

It is not merely a reconstruction of intellectual history but a philosophical foundation for the future of human civilization, offering universal wisdom beyond nationalism and narrow cultural nostalgia in an age of globalization and scientific revolutions.

5.5 小结 / Summary

“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”所提出的替代方案，旨在弥补余英时、许倬云思想史体系的三大盲点：它以老子哲学为根基，以现代科学为桥梁，建立起宇宙—自然—人类的整体性思维框架。与其说这是对思想史的重建，不如说它是对人类未来文明的一次哲学预备——让思想史从文化怀旧走向宇宙智慧，从儒家伦理转化为生态文明，从民族传统上升为人类整体的生存哲学。

The “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” addresses the three fatal blind spots of Yu’s and Xu’s systems: by grounding itself in Laozi’s philosophy and bridging with modern science, it constructs an integrated framework linking cosmos, nature, and humanity. Rather than simply reconstructing intellectual history, it serves as a philosophical preparation for future civilization—transforming intellectual history from cultural nostalgia to cosmic wisdom, from Confucian ethics to ecological civilization, from national tradition to a universal philosophy of human survival.

六、结论 / VI. Conclusion

余英时与许倬云的思想史体系，在学术上具有开创性意义，但其“儒家中心—忽视老子—缺乏科学”的三大盲点，使其最终无法为当代人类提供真正的洞见与实践指引。唯有以老子哲学为根基，以现代科学为支撑，重建整体性的“中国思想史”，才能实现从文化怀旧到宇宙智慧的跨越。这正是“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”所提供的替代方案：一种融合宇宙本体、自然规律与人类文明的整体性思想体系，为21世纪乃至更长远的未来开辟思想的新路径。

The intellectual-historical systems of Yu Yingshi and Xu Zhuoyun are academically pioneering, yet their three blind spots—Confucian-centrism, neglect of Laozi, and lack of scientific foundation—ultimately prevent them from offering genuine insight or guidance for humanity today. Only by

rooting intellectual history in Laozi's philosophy and supporting it with modern science can we reconstruct a holistic "Chinese intellectual history" and achieve the leap from cultural nostalgia to cosmic wisdom. This is precisely what the "Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology" provides: a holistic intellectual system that fuses cosmic ontology, natural law, and human civilization, opening new pathways for thought in the 21st century and beyond.

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——Three Fatal Blind Spots and the Alternative of the “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology”

摘要

本文旨在对当代华人思想史学者余英时与许倬云的学术体系进行批判性分析。二人作为国际知名的中国思想史家，代表了20世纪下半叶以来海外汉学界和中国学术界对“儒家传统”的重估。然而，其思想史构建存在三个致命盲点：其一，过度儒家中心化，将中国思想史简化为儒学史；其二，忽视或误读老子及道家思想，未能把握其宇宙论和自然哲学维度；其三，缺乏科学基础，未能与现代科学的宇宙学、生态学和系统论相结合，思想史停留在文化怀旧与道德史的层面。本文提出一个替代性方案——以“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”为基础，重建中国思想史的整体视野：将“道”作为宇宙本源与自然法则，将老子思想与现代科学结合，从而实现从文化史向宇宙观史学的根本转型。

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一、引言：学术背景与问题意识

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本文将从三个维度揭示其体系的致命盲点，并提出以“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”为替代方案的新方向。

二、第一大盲点：儒家中心主义的历史视角

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这种儒家中心的视角，使思想史成为一部“道德史”或“伦理学史”，失去了思想的多样性与开放性。中国思想因此被窄化为伦理传统，丧失了与世界哲学对话的可能。

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3.1 老子作为“修辞性补充”的处理

在余、许的体系中，老子思想往往被简化为“对儒家不足的补充”，如“无为而治”被解释为一种政治调和，而非宇宙本体论的表达。这种处理方式严重矮化了老子的哲学地位。

3.2 老子宇宙观的缺席

老子“道生一，一生二，二生三，三生万物”的思想，蕴含着深刻的宇宙生成论和自然演化论。但在他们的思想史体系中，这一维度完全缺失。他们未能看到老子思想是对“宇宙本源—自然法则—人类秩序”的整体性洞见，而不仅仅是政治伦理的工具。

3.3 后果：错失“自然哲学”的根基

由于忽视老子，他们的思想史完全没有形成“自然哲学”的维度。思想被禁锢在“人伦—社会—政治”的层面，而缺乏“宇宙—自然—生命”的整体观，无法与西方哲学中的本体论、自然哲学对接。

四、第三大盲点：缺乏科学基础与现代视野

4.1 文献学方法的局限

余、许的学术方法建立在传统文献学与思想史内在逻辑之上，基本没有与现代科学（宇宙学、物理学、生态学）进行互动。他们的思想史仍然是“文本解释史”，而不是“宇宙解释史”。

4.2 现代科学的缺席

现代科学揭示了宇宙起源、星系演化、生命出现的规律，而这些与老子“道法自然”的思想高度契合。然而在余、许的体系中，科学的维度完全缺席，思想史与自然科学被人为割裂。

4.3 后果：思想史沦为“文化怀旧”

在当代全球生态危机与科学革命的背景下，他们的思想史无法提供有效的解释框架与实践智慧。结果，中国思想史成了一种“文化怀旧叙事”，缺乏面向未来的创造力。

五、以“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”为基础的整体视野

5.1 理论核心：以“道”为宇宙本源

“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”首先回到老子哲学的根本命题——“道”。在余英时与许倬云的体系中，道往往仅仅被视为一种政治治理的象征性概念，或儒家伦理的哲学补充。但在这里，道被重新界定为宇宙的本源和自然法则：

- 道作为宇宙本体：它不是抽象的空洞概念，而是宇宙运行的根本秩序，类似于现代科学所探讨的能量守恒、引力场、暗物质与暗能量之整体性。

- 道的生成逻辑：老子“道生一，一生二，二生三，三生万物”的命题，不仅是哲学隐喻，更可理解为宇宙演化链条的早期表达，与银河形成、太阳系生成、地月系统演化、生命与文明诞生的科学路径相呼应。

- 超越儒学中心：道作为宇宙之本体，远超“仁义礼智”的人伦框架。它关涉的是“宇宙—自然—人类”的整体关联，而非仅限于“人际关系与社会秩序”的伦理模式。

5.2 方法论突破：哲学与科学的整合

“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”在方法论层面提出了突破：

- **跨越文献学局限：**思想史研究不仅仅是古代文献的考证与解释，而是要将哲学命题与自然科学的发现放在同一框架中加以对话。
- **科学与哲学互证：**老子所揭示的自然法则，如“道法自然”“无为而治”，在现代科学中可见对应：热力学第二定律、复杂系统的自组织原理、生态系统的动态平衡，均可视为“道”的科学显化。
- **整体性视野：**突破“人文与科学”的二分，将宇宙演化、自然规律、生命起源、人类社会一并纳入解释框架，实现真正的“宇宙观史学”。

5.3 学术价值：重建中国思想史的格局

在学术上，“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”为思想史研究开辟了新格局：

- **从“儒学史”到“宇宙观史学”：**中国思想史不应再局限于“儒家为主干”的叙事，而应转化为以宇宙观为核心的思想演化史。儒、道、墨、佛、兵家等传统，都可以视为对宇宙—自然—人类”关系的不同阐释，而非单纯的伦理学派。
- **多元性与整体性：**这一框架承认并整合思想的多元性，突破了单一路径的主宰性叙事，使中国思想能够展现其复杂的、生态般的演化逻辑。
- **全球哲学对话：**在与西方哲学的比较中，“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”能够与柏拉图的“理念论”、亚里士多德的“自然

哲学”、康德的“宇宙论”以及现代科学宇宙观对话，形成真正的全球哲学语境。

5.4 实践意义：面向未来的思想资源

“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”不仅仅是一种学术理论，更具有实践上的现实意义：

- 生态文明的指导原则：在全球生态危机加剧的背景下，老子“人法地、地法天、天法道、道法自然”的思想与现代生态学相呼应，提供了一种超越功利主义与人类中心主义的生态治理智慧。

- 人类社会的治理智慧：无为而治并非放任，而是基于系统自组织原理的治理哲学，强调尊重自然与社会内在的秩序，从而避免权力滥用与制度僵化。

- 未来文明的价值框架：它不仅是对中国思想史的重建，更为人类文明的未来提供了哲学根基，使我们在全球化与科学革命的时代背景下，找到超越民族主义与狭隘文化自恋的普遍智慧。

5.5 小结

“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”所提出的替代方案，旨在弥补余英时、许倬云思想史体系的三大盲点：它以老子哲学为根基，以现代科学为桥梁，建立起宇宙—自然—人类的整体性思维框架。与其说这是对思想史的重建，不如说它是对人类未来文明的一次哲学预备——让思想史从文化怀旧走向宇宙智

慧，从儒家伦理转化为生态文明，从民族传统上升为人类整体的生存哲学。

六、结论

余英时与许倬云的思想史体系，在学术上具有开创性意义，但其“儒家中心—忽视老子—缺乏科学”的三大盲点，使其最终无法为当代人类提供真正的洞见与实践指引。唯有以老子哲学为根基，以现代科学为支撑，重建整体性的“中国思想史”，才能实现从文化怀旧到宇宙智慧的跨越。这正是“老-杨创世纪宇宙观”所提供的替代方案：一种融合宇宙本体、自然规律与人类文明的整体性思想体系，为21世纪乃至更长远的未来开辟思想的新路径。

A Critical Analysis of the Intellectual-Historical Systems of Yu Yingshi and Xu Zhuoyun

—Three Fatal Blind Spots and the Alternative of the “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology”

Charles X. Yang

Abstract

This paper offers a critical analysis of the intellectual-historical frameworks of Yu Yingshi and Xu Zhuoyun, two of the most prominent contemporary Chinese intellectual historians. As internationally renowned scholars, they represent the late 20th-century reevaluation of the Confucian tradition within both overseas Sinology and Chinese academia. Yet their constructions of Chinese intellectual history contain three fatal blind spots: first, an excessive Confucian-centrism that reduces intellectual history to Confucian history; second, the neglect or misreading of Laozi and Daoist thought, thereby failing to grasp their cosmological and natural-philosophical dimensions; and third, the absence of a scientific foundation, leaving their narratives unconnected with modern cosmology, ecology, and systems theory, and confining intellectual history to cultural nostalgia and moral history. This paper proposes an alternative—the “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology”—to reconstruct the overall horizon of Chinese intellectual history: taking the Dao as the cosmic origin and natural law, integrating Laozi’s philosophy with modern

science, and thereby enabling a fundamental transformation from cultural history to cosmological intellectual history.

Keywords: Yu Yingshi; Xu Zhuoyun; Confucian-centrism; Laozi; scientific foundation; Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology

I. Introduction: Scholarly Context and Problem Awareness

Yu Yingshi and Xu Zhuoyun, as two of the most representative intellectual historians of late 20th-century China, exerted great influence with their solid textual scholarship and broad historical narratives. Yu emphasized the continuity of the “inner logic of Confucianism,” while Xu advocated an integrated interpretation of the “cultural system.” Together, they shaped the dominant discourse of contemporary “Chinese intellectual history.” However, beneath this seemingly expansive scholarship lies a deep limitation: methodologically, they remain narrators of “Confucian history,” not true builders of a comprehensive “Chinese intellectual history.”

This paper reveals the fatal blind spots of their systems in three dimensions and proposes a new direction through the “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” as an alternative framework.

II. The First Blind Spot: A Confucian-Centric Historical Perspective

2.1 The Exclusivism of Confucianism

Yu's research takes Confucianism as the central axis, arguing that it represents the core values of Chinese culture; Xu, within a cultural-historical framework, likewise treats Confucianism as the backbone of social order and cultural continuity. This logic reduces intellectual history to the "rise and fall of Confucianism."

2.2 The Marginalization of Diverse Traditions

Such a narrative inevitably sidelines or silences other traditions—Mohism, military strategy, Legalism, Huang-Lao thought, Buddhism, and more. Mohist logic and scientific spirit, as well as Daoist cosmology and natural wisdom, are diminished to mere "supporting roles," never entering the main stage.

2.3 Consequences: Moralization and Narrowing of Intellectual History

This Confucian-centered view transforms intellectual history into a "moral history" or "ethical history," erasing diversity and openness. Chinese thought is narrowed to an ethical tradition, forfeiting its potential for dialogue with world philosophy.

III. The Second Blind Spot: Neglect and Misreading of Laozi's Thought

3.1 Laozi as a “Rhetorical Supplement”

Within Yu's and Xu's frameworks, Laozi is often reduced to a rhetorical supplement to Confucian insufficiency—e.g., “wuwei” interpreted as political compromise rather than cosmological ontology. This severely diminishes Laozi's philosophical status.

3.2 The Absence of Laozi's Cosmology

Laozi's dictum, “Dao gives birth to One; One gives birth to Two; Two gives birth to Three; Three gives birth to the myriad things,” contains profound insights into cosmic genesis and natural evolution. Yet this cosmological dimension is entirely absent in their intellectual histories. They fail to see Laozi's thought as an integrated vision of “cosmic origin—natural law—human order,” treating it instead as a mere political or ethical tool.

3.3 Consequences: Missing the Foundation of Natural Philosophy

By neglecting Laozi, their intellectual histories lack a dimension of natural philosophy. Thought remains confined to the triad of “human relations—society—politics,” without encompassing “cosmos—nature—life.” Consequently, they cannot engage in meaningful dialogue with Western metaphysics or natural philosophy.

IV. The Third Blind Spot: Lack of Scientific Foundation and Modern Perspective

4.1 The Limitations of Textual Philology

Yu and Xu rely primarily on traditional philology and internal logic of intellectual history, without meaningful engagement with modern science (cosmology, physics, ecology). Their work remains “textual interpretation history” rather than “cosmic interpretation history.”

4.2 The Absence of Modern Science

Modern science reveals the origins of the universe, the evolution of galaxies, and the emergence of life—all of which resonate with Laozi’s idea that “Dao follows Nature.” Yet in their systems, the scientific dimension is wholly absent, creating an artificial divide between intellectual history and natural science.

4.3 Consequences: Intellectual History Reduced to “Cultural Nostalgia”

In the face of global ecological crises and scientific revolutions, their frameworks cannot provide effective explanatory models or practical wisdom. Chinese intellectual history, as they construct it, degenerates into “cultural nostalgia,” lacking creative force for the future.

V. Toward an Integrated Horizon: The “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology”

5.1 Theoretical Core: Dao as the Cosmic Origin

The “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” returns to Laozi’s fundamental proposition—Dao. For Yu and Xu, Dao is often reduced to a symbol of governance or a philosophical supplement to Confucian ethics. Here, however, Dao is redefined as the cosmic origin and natural law:

- Dao as Cosmic Substance: Not an abstract void, but the fundamental order of the universe, akin to energy conservation, gravitational fields, dark matter, and dark energy in modern science.**
- The Generative Logic of Dao: Laozi’s sequence—“Dao produces One, One produces Two, Two produces Three, Three produces the myriad things”—is not merely metaphorical but an early expression of cosmic evolution, resonating with the formation of galaxies, the solar system, the Earth-Moon system, the emergence of life, and the rise of civilization.**
- Beyond Confucian-Centrism: Dao as cosmic origin transcends the anthropocentric frame of “benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom,” addressing instead the holistic linkage of “cosmos—nature—humanity.”**

5.2 Methodological Breakthrough: Integrating Philosophy and Science

The “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” offers methodological innovation:

- **Beyond Philological Limits: Intellectual history must go beyond textual exegesis, situating philosophical propositions in dialogue with scientific discoveries.**

- **Mutual Verification of Science and Philosophy: Laozi’s natural laws, such as “Dao follows Nature” and “wuwei,” find resonance in modern science: the second law of thermodynamics, principles of self-organization in complex systems, and ecological balance can all be seen as scientific manifestations of Dao.**

- **A Holistic Horizon: It breaks the dichotomy of “humanities vs. science,” encompassing cosmic evolution, natural law, the origin of life, and human society within a unified interpretive framework—an authentic cosmological intellectual history.**

5.3 Academic Value: Reconstructing Chinese Intellectual History

Academically, the “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” opens a new paradigm:

- **From Confucian History to Cosmological Intellectual History: Chinese intellectual history should no longer be confined to Confucian-centered narratives, but reoriented around cosmology. Confucianism, Daoism, Mohism, Buddhism, and others can all be reinterpreted as diverse responses to the relationship between cosmos, nature, and humanity.**

- **Pluralism and Wholeness:** This framework embraces plurality and resists monocentric narratives, allowing Chinese thought to reveal its ecological, evolutionary complexity.
- **Global Philosophical Dialogue:** The “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” engages with Plato’s theory of forms, Aristotle’s natural philosophy, Kant’s cosmology, and modern scientific cosmology, situating Chinese thought within a genuine global philosophical discourse.

5.4 Practical Significance: Intellectual Resources for the Future

The “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” is not only a scholarly theory but also a resource for practice:

- **Guidance for Ecological Civilization:** In the face of ecological crises, Laozi’s dictum—“Man follows Earth, Earth follows Heaven, Heaven follows Dao, Dao follows Nature”—aligns with modern ecology, offering wisdom beyond utilitarianism and anthropocentrism.
- **Governance Philosophy for Human Society:** Wuwei is not passivity but a governance principle rooted in self-organization, respecting natural and social orders and thus avoiding both authoritarianism and institutional rigidity.
- **A Value Framework for Future Civilization:** It is not merely a reconstruction of intellectual history but a philosophical foundation for the future of human civilization, offering universal wisdom beyond nationalism and narrow cultural nostalgia in an age of globalization and scientific revolutions.

5.5 Summary

The “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” addresses the three fatal blind spots of Yu’s and Xu’s systems: by grounding itself in Laozi’s philosophy and bridging with modern science, it constructs an integrated framework linking cosmos, nature, and humanity. Rather than simply reconstructing intellectual history, it serves as a philosophical preparation for future civilization—transforming intellectual history from cultural nostalgia to cosmic wisdom, from Confucian ethics to ecological civilization, from national tradition to a universal philosophy of human survival.

VI. Conclusion

The intellectual-historical systems of Yu Yingshi and Xu Zhuoyun are academically pioneering, yet their three blind spots—Confucian-centrism, neglect of Laozi, and lack of scientific foundation—ultimately prevent them from offering genuine insight or guidance for humanity today. Only by rooting intellectual history in Laozi’s philosophy and supporting it with modern science can we reconstruct a holistic “Chinese intellectual history” and achieve the leap from cultural nostalgia to cosmic wisdom. This is precisely what the “Lao-Yang Genesis Cosmology” provides: a holistic intellectual system that fuses cosmic ontology, natural law, and human civilization, opening new pathways for thought in the 21st century and beyond.