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Divine Illumination
Traditional Chinese Medicine and the spirit field theory of Wolfhart Pannenberg

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I, William L. Atkins, declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

Date________________ Signature _____________________
Abstract

The discussion of divine action in the field of science and religion is largely divided into two schools of thought, compatibilism and incompatibilism. Incompatibilists, in the main, discuss the physical and spiritual as separate phenomena that relate across some manner of causal joint. These arguments, while theological, are often situated in the contemporary monism of Western scientific naturalism, wherein the universe is considered to be fully natural. However, Western sciences, such as physics and biology, focus upon empirical or measurable phenomena, and do not provide for metaphorical explanations. Theories of divine action in the world based in the monism of scientific naturalism are therefore often dualistic, with natural and supernatural phenomena considered separately. A worldview that offers scientific inquiry of supernatural phenomena may, I suggest, move incompatibilist theories from dualism to monism—providing for more clear discussions of God’s immanent action in the universe.

It is therefore the purpose of this thesis to present a manner in which the spirit field theory of Wolfhart Pannenberg may be beneficially interpreted so that incompatibilist scholars in science and religion may employ spirit field theory in the discussion of divine action. I have chosen to address the incompatabilist view for three reasons. First, the incompatibilist school of thought in science and religion is comprehensively discussed in extensive publications, and indeed presents many well-structured arguments. While the compatibilist school of thought also displays several persuasive arguments, the incompatibilists are more widely published, and therefore present a more dynamic conversation partner. Second, the most critical assessments of spirit field theory come from those who subscribe to the incompatibilist school of thought. And finally, the dualistic nature of incompatibilist thought is the primary issue that this thesis will address. This manner of dualism is not often written of in the compatibilist school, and as such, the compatibilist perspective of divine action may not be as positively impacted by this work.

Spirit field theory may allow incompatibilists to view the immanent presence of God’s actions in an intelligible manner. However, incompatibilists have largely rejected this theory, labeling it as inappropriate to science and theology. I offer, that if the spirit field is interpreted through the lens of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), then many of the questions from incompatibilists may be answered. The cosmology of TCM, as well as the particular view of Qi in relation to the human body in TCM, affords a comprehensive and intelligible presentation of Qi in which natural and supernatural are not separate. Therefore, I suggest, that the worldview and language of TCM affords an advantageous perspective from which the actions of the Spirit in spirit field theory may be beneficially interpreted, in order to augment the incompatibilist view of divine action.

This argument will be presented by offering a comparative analysis between the actions of Qi in TCM and the actions of the Holy Spirit in spirit field theory. This comparison will be formatted in Jonathan Z. Smith’s five-stage morphological comparative model. In this, I will employ comparative systematics, rather than simply compiling a list of isolated comparable data. I will also: ground the pattern of comparison in processes, develop a complex mechanism for the discussion of the comparison, balance generalities and particularities in a structure integrating both, and finally use the power of pattern as a device for interpretation.
I will situate this comparative analysis in a Christian theological context through a critical discussion of the *Qi* and Holy Spirit comparison. In this, I will display various ways in which these phenomena have been considered similar. I will then advance the conversation by offering the perspective of TCM, suggesting that the TCM view of *Qi* may find consonance with Pannenberg’s thoughts on divine action in relation to the human body. An important feature of TCM is to determine how the actions of *Qi* in the body may affect health and wellness; therefore, the function of *Qi* in this comparison will be primarily situated in the human body. I will also present Pannenberg’s thought on the line of communication between God and humans, as this offers Pannenberg’s perspective of the spirit field in relation to the human person.

The primary aim of this thesis is to determine if the worldview and language of TCM pulse diagnosis can be fruitfully applied to the interpretation of spirit field theory. I will employ a comprehensive comparative analysis to place these views in conversation, suggesting that the TCM view of *Qi* may be a beneficial hermeneutical lens through which to better understand spirit field theory.
Lay Summary

This thesis is a comparative study looking at the actions of Qi as they are understood in Traditional Chinese Medicine, and the actions of the Holy Spirit in Wolfhart Pannenberg’s spirit field theory. A methodological analysis comprised of a five-stage comparative model is the structure through which these two active phenomena are displayed. I offer in the course of this comparison, that the actions of Qi and the actions of the Holy Spirit may be seen as comparable. This is done in order to add a new perspective in the discussion of divine action in the field of science and religion. In particular, I argue that the worldview from which Traditional Chinese Medicine understands metaphysical phenomena may be a beneficial lens through which to interpret Pannenberg’s spirit field theory, and further, that this view may be applied to research on divine action in science and religion more broadly.
This thesis is dedicated to my wife Deanna and our sān qiānjīn; Grace, Miriam, and Elyona.
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Chapter 1 Introduction

The active involvement of God in the world is a fundamental requirement of theistic Christian faith. Traditional theistic formulations of doctrine, such as Christology, pneumatology, soteriology, theological anthropology, and eschatology, collectively depend on the premise that God interacts with God’s creation. However, the relationship between divine action and mundane reality is not fully understood. There are several theological constructs which explain the need for divine providence, and the various ways in which God may be said to act, although the particulars of God’s actions and presence in the physical world are still an ongoing puzzle.¹

Understanding this divine and mundane interaction has been the subject of a great deal of research from the incompatibilist scholars of the science and religion community, most notably in the causal joint debate and in the work of the Divine Action Project (DAP).² And yet, even in the methodological world of science and religion, the incompatabilist models that have been created for understanding the absolute necessity of God’s action in the universe are widely varied, and in many cases in disagreement. There is therefore, I suggest, an opportunity to aid the incompatibilist discussion of divine action through the positive use of Wolfhart Pannenberg’s spirit field theory. I have chosen to focus on the incompatibilist view for three reasons. First, incompatibilism is more widely discussed in more publications than compatibilism, and therefore allows for a more extensive critical engagement.³ Second, the most critical assessments of spirit field theory come from those who subscribe to the incompatibilist school of thought.⁴ And

³ For a definition of Incompatibilism see appendix 1.
⁴ For a definition of the spirit field refer to appendix 1.
finally, the dualism inherent in the incompatibilist understanding is the chief issue that this thesis will specifically address. This manner of dualism is largely absent in compatibilism, and as such the compatibilist perspective of divine action may not be as beneficially impacted by this work.

A further issue that is present within the incompatibilist school, is that the investigation of divine action has most often been presented within the framework of Christian theology, and the sciences of molecular biology and physics. The use of other religio-philosophic traditions and non-Western sciences is quite nearly non-existent. As the activity of a divine other in the physical world is a crucial component of many traditions other than Christianity, all with different perspectives and worldviews, it may be reasonably stated that new theological perspectives may develop from as yet unused sources, both scientific and religious. If comparative models involving pneumatology were introduced into the incompatibilist discussion of divine action, wherein there may be a focus on the actions of the Holy Spirit compared and contrasted to the actions of metaphysical phenomena from other traditions, we may then be afforded a more helpful worldview from which to interpret theistic questions. It is for this reason that I allow a comparative study of Qi and the Holy Spirit may be of use in the incompatibilist discussion of divine action.\(^5\)

In order to better understand the imperative of God’s active presence, recent comparative theological work has explored the links between the Christian view of divine action and presence, specifically as it is demonstrated in pneumatology, and the Chinese perspective of Qi,

\(^5\) There is of course no singular incompatibilist view of divine action in science and religion, but rather there exist certain archetypes of divine action that are commonly accepted in science and religion research concerning God’s actions in the world. It is to these popular standards that I will compare to the actions of Qi. For a definition of Qi and archetypes see appendix 1.
as it is discussed in various Chinese religio-philosophic traditions.\(^6\) This thesis will expand the work currently being done by considering the actions of Qi as they are understood in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM), and the actions of the Holy Spirit as they are depicted in the spirit field theory of Wolfhart Pannenberg, two issues not so far considered in comparative studies.\(^7\) Further, I will situate the Qi and Holy Spirit analysis in the science and religion discussion of divine action, allowing that this manner of comparative work in theology may have a programmatic influence on scientific notions of metaphysical phenomena.

In Christian scripture and tradition, the work of the Holy Spirit is said to be universal in the giving and sustaining of all life. This is exemplified by scriptures such as Psalms 104:30, “You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; And You renew the face of the ground,” and John 6:63 “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life.” These biblical verses along with others such as Genesis 2:7 and Job 33:4, in addition to the Nicene Creed, “We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life” can all be taken as pointing to a Holy Spirit who is active in creation across all peoples and cultures. Wolfhart Pannenberg argues that the active presence of God is not only apparent in Christian scripture, but that it is also needful for revelation and ultimately salvific reconciliation.\(^8\) Accordingly, for Pannenberg, understanding the actions of God in the world is of great concern.

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\(^7\) For a definition of Qi refer to appendix 1.

The drive to better understand divine action was the impetus for his formation of spirit field theory.

In this thesis I work extensively with the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg; however, this is not a comprehensive commentary on his work more broadly. Rather, while I do have an in-depth engagement of Pannenberg’s work across his seminal texts and various other writings, my efforts are pointed to explain the spirit field, and how his views support and define it. Based on the work of Michael Faraday and his contemporaries, Pannenberg has put forth the idea of a theological field theory that brings together philosophy, science, and pneumatology, to explain divine action in the universe. In this, Pannenberg has offered we may consider the actions of God through God’s Spirit in the manner of a physical field such as an electromagnetic field. For Pannenberg, this metaphysical phenomenon of divine action is immanent in creation, perpetually active and intelligible.

In the course of this work I will employ the term metaphysical in contrast to physical to indicate what others may refer to as transcendent. My use of the term metaphysical is meant to reflect the TCM view that nothing is fully transcendent, as even so-called transcendent realities must have some exchange with the physical world. Deceased ancestors, gods, ghosts, and all manner of spirits are all considered to be, at least partially, related to the world-as-a-whole. While it is common in the West to place a separation between the spiritual and the physical, and to define divine energy as transcendent, spiritual, or supernatural, there is no such separation in TCM. Therefore, in the interest of finding an appropriate term that may be understandable in both dualistic and monistic perspectives, I have settled on the term metaphysical.
Within Chinese philosophies, religions, and sciences, \( Q_i \) is thought of in much the same manner as the Christian Holy Spirit.\(^9\) When speaking of \( Q_i \), James Legge noted that, “it is better to understand it \([Q_i]\) as the unsubstantial air which penetrates everywhere.”\(^10\) Legge’s interpretations of the original Chinese classics led him to offer this description of \( Q_i \) for his Western audiences. Legge’s definition is an appropriate amalgamation of how the various religio-philosophic traditions in China define \( Q_i \). However, the texts from which Legge worked largely reflect the views of Daoism and Confucianism, which are somewhat less specific in their descriptions of \( Q_i \) than TCM is.

Within TCM, \( Q_i \) is understood as a ubiquitous and eternal metaphysical phenomenon that acts on, and is present in, all physical and metaphysical reality.\(^11\) Further, \( Q_i \) is thought to be perpetually active and discernable, in part, as the function of change in the cosmos. \( Q_i \) is also considered to be neither a deterministic, nor fully reducible “force,” but rather a phenomenon that is beyond a mere element of reality. Subsequently, with a brief first inspection, the actions of \( Q_i \) in TCM would seem to find consonance with the manner in which Pannenberg writes of divine action. It is for this reason that I offer a further investigation of these views, and suggest that the TCM view of \( Q_i \) may be an appropriate hermeneutic lens through which to interpret the actions of the Spirit in Pannenberg’s spirit field theory.

TCM may be considered a suitable system of investigation as it is a dynamic medical science with an ancient heritage that is currently employed in TCM hospitals across the world. Further, TCM has, for thousands of years, progressively developed more refined theory regarding

\(^9\) For a definition of \( Q_i \) refer to appendix 1.
physical and metaphysical realities. As an example, the current understanding of Qi in TCM is based upon classical texts such as the *Huangdi Neijing* which was written between 475 and 221 BCE. However, historical engagement over the centuries, diagnostic and treatment applications in modern medical facilities, and contemporary research has augmented the ancient view, affecting conceptions of the actions of Qi in the universe. As such, the TCM view of Qi is presented through a systematic and methodological worldview that may be beneficial in the interpretation of metaphysical phenomenon, including, I will argue, divine action.

What does it mean to speak in fundamental terms of the relationship between the spiritual and the physical across all cultures and religions, and may the worldview and language of one tradition inform another? This thesis will investigate this issue from the perspective of Christian theology in order to bring new light to the study of divine action in the science and religion community. Therefore, I will not argue that Qi and the Holy Spirit should be regarded as two different perspectives of the same reality, nor will I attempt to meld the perspectives of Christian theology and TCM with no regard for the independent truth claims in each respective tradition. More simply, this will not be a work of pluralism wherein I attempt to argue that all roads lead to God and the TCM view of Qi is simply another road.\(^\text{12}\) Rather I will propose in the course of this thesis that the worldview offered by TCM, and the language it produces, may be beneficially applied as a hermeneutic device to interpret Pannenberg’s spirit field theory in a positive way.\(^\text{13}\)

As this is a work aimed at expanding the perspective of Christian theology, rather than an argument of pluralism, common terms employed in the study of the Holy Spirit will be

\(^{12}\) I do not intend here to disparage pluralism, indeed there are many scholars, such as Alan Race the Dean of Postgraduate Studies at St Philip’s Centre for Study and Engagement in a Multifaith World, who have done positive work in the field of pluralism. However, the argument I propose in this thesis is not focused on demonstrating different perspectives of an ultimate reality.

\(^{13}\) For a definition of the spirit field refer to appendix 1.
employed. However, in some cases, it is helpful to look at these terms from a new perspective. As I work to offer a new paradigm from which to view divine action, it is beneficial to critically examine the more common use of certain terms in light of another tradition which may have a more complete worldview regarding metaphysical actions. Francis Clooney, the Parkman professor of divinity at Harvard University, offers that comparative theology should begin in one tradition and learn “from one or more other faith traditions.”\textsuperscript{14} Therefore, I will situate this discussion in the field of theology and offer that the TCM view of holistic monism may present a more clear position from which to interpret the actions of the Holy Spirit in Pannenberg’s spirit field theory, allowing the opportunity to learn more about divine action.\textsuperscript{15}

TCM \textit{Qi} cosmology is a unique blend of Daoist and Neo-Confucian views which forms a holistically monistic paradigm.\textsuperscript{16} I refer to this paradigm as \textit{holistic} monism, as the TCM view of the universe includes metaphysical phenomena in addition to physical matter, rather than the monism of Western scientific naturalism which deals primarily with the measurable aspects of reality.\textsuperscript{17} TCM employs this holistically monistic view in order to better understand human health and wellbeing as, \textit{per} TCM theory, a person’s health and wellness is directly related to their relationship with the universe as a whole.\textsuperscript{18} TCM \textit{Qi} cosmology therefore engages universal

\textsuperscript{15} I will more clearly define the term holistic monism, and what it may mean as a worldview in the following pages.
\textsuperscript{16} Volker Scheid, \textit{Currents of Tradition in Chinese Medicine 1626-2006} (Vista: Eastland, 2007), 44-45. Unlike theistic cosmologies, or other such forms, there is not a multiplicity of TCM cosmologies. Rather, as TCM is a systematic medical science, there is a unified perception of reality and the function of \textit{Qi} in the universe. If this were not the case, and many different understandings existed, then systematic understanding regarding medical treatments would not be possible, as all treatments are based upon the action and presence of \textit{Qi} in the universe.
\textsuperscript{17} I remark upon the monism of science to offer that scientific inquiry does not include metaphysical reality, as the metaphysical is by definition beyond what the sciences engage with. However, for a more broad treatment of monism generally, refer to: Simon Blackburn, "\textit{Monism.}" \textit{The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy}, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), and Todd Weir, \textit{Monism: Science, Philosophy, Religion, and the History of a Worldview}. (New York: Palgrave, 2012).
phenomena that can be found in all things, physical and metaphysical. As there is no fully separated transcendent reality in TCM, the holistic monism wherein TCM views “transcendent” and mundane phenomenon as one reality may afford a more clear understanding of how immanent and transcendent actions may be mutually existent in the actions of the Holy Spirit.

Those unfamiliar with TCM may assume that it stems from a worldview vastly different from those held by many in the field of Christian theology, and science and religion in particular, and as such assume that any comparison would merely be the grossest kind of syncretism; wherein two traditions are melded together with no regard for the independent truth claims in either tradition. However, what may seem to be the primary difference, is in truth a binding similarity. Both TCM and Christian theology are chiefly concerned with the nature of physical and metaphysical relationships. For the theologian, the focus is upon the interaction of the divine with the human person, while the TCM physician is primarily occupied with the action of Qi in the human person. As I have written, this is not a work of syncretism, therefore I will allow the texts to speak for themselves. While I would not presume to say that Qi should be defined using terms associated with Christian theological cosmology, indeed many of the terms are inadequate in dealing with Qi, I will offer that it is helpful to note the similarities in concepts that could in the end afford a worldview which may offer a better understanding of Pannenberg’s spirit field.

1.1 Objectives

The primary objective of this thesis is to offer that the worldview of TCM is an appropriate and beneficial hermeneutic lens through which to interpret Wolfhart Pannenberg’s spirit field theory, a theory which has found little support among incompatibilist science and religion scholars. The incompatibilist view of divine action in the science and religion field, largely seen in the Divine
Action Project (DAP) and in causal joint debates, has for years produced many insightful and nuanced arguments.\(^{19}\) However, incompatibilist scholars in science and religion often operate from a dualistic worldview, and have, in the main, dismissed the spirit field theory of Pannenberg.\(^{20}\) Spirit field theory may, if more helpfully interpreted, offer a new and beneficial perspective in the discussion of divine action. This may move incompatibilists away from dualism and towards holistic monism, presenting a more full understanding of immanent divine action in the world.\(^{21}\)

This is the purpose of this thesis, to present a manner in which spirit field theory may be interpreted so that incompatibilist scholars may beneficially apply spirit field theory in the discussion of divine action in science and religion. This argument will be presented by offering a comparative analysis between the actions of \(Qi\) in TCM and the actions of the Holy Spirit in spirit field theory. Through this analysis I will argue that the TCM worldview may afford an advantageous perspective from which to interpret the actions of the Spirit in spirit field theory. The chief aim of this thesis will be addressed through the answering of three questions.

The first challenge is to find if the actions of \(Qi\) in the universe may be considered comparable to the actions of the Holy Spirit in a Christian theological context more broadly. There exist both current and historic works in the \(Qi\) and Holy Spirit comparison detailing the various ways in which these phenomena may be considered similar. However, my investigation will break new ground in that I offer the comparison from the perspective of TCM. The complex

\(^{19}\) For a definition of the causal joint see appendix 1.
\(^{21}\) For a definition of Incompatibilism see appendix 1.
cosmology of TCM as well as the particular view of \( Qi \) in relation to the human body affords a more comprehensive presentation of \( Qi \) that may augment the historic work done in this comparative analysis, which often focuses on Daoism and Neo-Confucianism.

The second question to be asked is whether the TCM view of \( Qi \) finds consonance with Pannenberg’s thoughts on divine action in relation to the human body. As the focus of TCM is human health and wellness, the function of \( Qi \) in this comparison will be primarily situated in the human body. It is therefore helpful to understand Pannenberg’s view concerning metaphysical action as it is related to the human person, rather than a wide treatment of divine action in the universe at large. I have therefore examined Pannenberg’s thought on the line of communication between God and humans, from both the divine perspective and the human view. This offers Pannenberg’s perspective of the Holy Spirit’s actions with humanity through spirit field operations.

The third and final question to be accomplished in this comparative work is to determine if the worldview and language of \( Qi \) in TCM pulse diagnosis can be fruitfully applied to the interpretation of spirit field theory.\(^{22}\) The lack of appropriate terminology is often referred to as a key problem in the critique of spirit field theory. Some scholars, as I will demonstrate in chapter five, argue that the spirit field is a weak analogy, and others that it fails even in that, as Pannenberg appropriates scientific terms which are not fitting to a theological construct.\(^{23}\) Meanwhile, Pannenberg argues that the spirit field should not be considered analogous to fields in physics, but rather that it is a real field in theological terms. This dispute is most often due to the various perspectives of the, seemingly, separate nature of physical reality and the

\(^{22}\) For a definition of pulse diagnosis and the spirit field refer to appendix 1.

metaphysical nature of God’s transcendence. However, the problem of language is, I offer, only representative of the larger problem—which is the dualistic worldview that is common in the West, and in the work of incompatibilist scholars in particular. Employing a perspective in which the physical and metaphysical are not separate, but rather considered unified in a holistic monism, may allow new understanding of divine action with a new body of descriptive terms that are conducive to a more coherent comparative analysis.

While my primary objective is original, the secondary questions concerned with Qi and Holy Spirit have been the subject of other scholarly works. However, while these other arguments may be said to have merit, and indeed to offer useful insight into both Qi and the Holy Spirit, there are also some uncertainties in these other works that my thesis may positively impact.24 These will be covered more extensively in the following chapter; however, it is also beneficial to highlight some of the issues here in order to demonstrate how my work may impact this field.

The initial issue, seen in many Qi and Holy Spirit comparative works, is that Christian theology understands the Holy Spirit to be personal, while Qi is a non-personal phenomenon. As the pluralist’s arguments, which I will more fully discuss in chapter two, work to present Qi and the Holy Spirit as two perspectives of the same reality, there is little attention given to the detail that the Holy Spirit is a divine person. However, if one wishes to present an interpretation of a particular theory of Christian theology, the fact that the Holy Spirit is a divine person and that Qi is an impersonal phenomenon is a fundamental difference that should not be ignored. I therefore do not compare Qi to the divine person of the Holy Spirit, rather, in this analysis, I employ

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24 For a definition of Qi refer to appendix 1.
Pannenberg’s view that the actions of the Holy Spirit should be considered apart from the Holy Spirit’s identity or essence. Succinctly, I do not base my comparison on the argument that Qi is God or even a perception of God’s divine person, but rather that understanding the actions of Qi may aid us in understanding the actions of the Holy Spirit.

A further difficulty, often seen when scholars compare Qi and the Holy Spirit, is a lack of an organized and methodologically focused theological treatment of the Holy Spirit. This issue stems from the fact that comparative scholars often employ the views of several theologians, who are not always in agreement, to bring the concept of Qi into conversation with the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit. This is done because it has largely been assumed that no single Christian pneumatology is compatible with the Qi cosmology of Daoism and Neo-Confucianism, and so a combination of views is needed. I have addressed this by specifically employing the spirit field theory of Wolfhart Pannenberg in a systematic manner. I will not therefore present a broad and unfocused view of various pneumatologies, but rather one particular scholarly view that I may comprehensively engage with.

As a further note on this important point of method, my work centers on TCM, rather than the large scope of religio-philosophic traditions in China. As such, I employ models of understanding Qi which are more specific and systematic, and therefore more easily compared to my theological model in a straightforward manner. The overwhelming majority of research thus far compiled in the Qi and Holy Spirit comparison has been primarily concerned with Qi as it may be understood in Daoism, Buddhism, and Neo-Confucianism. Frequently, authors will construct a framework in which to fit all three of these very diverse traditions and their views of Qi. As such, Qi is most often classified as a cosmological construct in the broadest sense. The use of TCM as a more particular mode of understanding Qi has been almost completely absent
from the discussion. The diagnostic application of $Qi$, as well as the description of $Qi$ in the human body, is comprehensive in TCM texts. Rather than the sweeping, and therefore ambiguous, definition that ultimately arises from a three-part religio-philosophic amalgamation, TCM presents a consistent and systematic perspective. More simply, TCM offers a more historically authentic framework in which to examine $Qi$ cosmology than constructs involving three religio-philosophic traditions somehow fused together.

Through the progression of this thesis I will utilize a morphological comparative analysis to address the primary objective in its three constituent parts. I will consider these three supportive questions not as separate and unrelated issues, but rather as an arch of questions leading to the ultimate objective of the research. The goal is to provide a new, holistically monist, worldview and language that may be considered appropriate for a deeper understanding of Pannenberg’s spirit field theory.

1.2 Relevance

Pannenberg’s spirit field theory can be thought of as an innovative and forward-thinking model of understanding divine action. Further, Pannenberg’s work on the spirit field has been extensive in its engagement with popular theological doctrines, as he investigated the ramifications of the spirit field in many different theological constructs. However, the interpretations and reception of this theory, in the incompatibilist science and religion community in particular, has been less than positive. There have been many questions concerning the validity of spirit field theory, and of its appropriateness for use in theology and science. What may be considered a groundbreaking theory that integrates science and theology, has largely been either rejected, or contrary to Pannenberg’s intent, relegated to an analogy.
Pannenberg’s use of field theory in theology was not meant to be an analogy but rather a viable theory through which God’s actions may be more clearly understood.²⁵ For Pannenberg, spirit field theory is not a fully physical field in the manner of electromagnetism; however, it was meant to be a field in very real terms, not simply an analogical construct. Pannenberg worked to find a manner in which divine action and the physical world may be seen in concert, allowing for the interpretation of God’s actions to become more intelligible. Further, it was Pannenberg’s goal of spirit field theory to bring his philosophy and theology together with contemporary science in order to address the ultimate questions in the universe, not simply the penultimate ones.²⁶ In the end, Pannenberg was unsuccessful in convincing many of his peers that spirit field theory was the answer to the most complex questions facing theology and science.

However, there exists here a wonderful opportunity to expand knowledge by synthesizing the mundane and spiritual into a more holistically monistic worldview. Truly integrating the physical and metaphysical would benefit both, whether the field of inquiry is theology or science. This is the core premise of TCM. As anthropologist and TCM expert Elisabeth Hsu has written; “in order to remain relevant and stay true to its enterprise of the unity of truth, the next step in integration may be to expand its scope beyond the Western cultural belief system to include the voices of the rest of the world.”²⁷ Adopting this position may afford the diagnostic function of Qi in TCM to be applied to spirit field theory, and in so doing may lead to a better understanding of the Spirit’s actions in the world.

²⁵ Pannenberg, “The Doctrine of Creation and Modern Science,” 47
²⁶ Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, Volume 1, 12
This thesis will be an investigation into whether the worldview and language of TCM Qi pulse diagnosis can be fruitfully applied as a hermeneutic lens to better understand divine action in the spirit field.\textsuperscript{28} This of course presents some methodological difficulties concerning the comparative exercise between TCM and Christian pneumatology. However, employing a clear comparative form will present a systematic operational template allowing for the hermeneutical lens of TCM to be applied to Pannenberg’s thought in a positive way.

\textbf{1.3 Method}

In such a complex, nuanced, and new comparison, it is helpful to be aware of both the perspective from which the concepts are initially presented, and the guidelines which direct the comparison, when considering the relationship of the concepts being investigated. This is of special significance in this work as these traditions have never, to my knowledge, been in dialogue before, and further because they stem from what are, on the surface, very different traditions. As comparative scholar Jonathan Z. Smith has written, “Comparison has to be undertaken both in terms of aspects and relations held to be significant, and with respect to some category, theory, question, or model of interest to comparatists.\textsuperscript{29}” Simply, there must not only be a similarity of attributes but also of relationship within each system. Additionally, they must be joined by some common area of interest to the individual who instigates the comparison.

While I will employ translated works of key primary sources in TCM, my particular engagement will also incorporate contemporary work in the field. TCM scholars, researchers and physicians such as Ted Kaptchuk, Paul Unschuld, Liu Yanchi, Volker Schied, and Elisabeth Hsu,\textsuperscript{28} For a definition of pulse diagnosis refer to appendix 1.\textsuperscript{29} Jonathan Smith, "The end of comparison: re-description and rectification," in \textit{A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative Religion in the Postmodern Age}, ed. Kimberley Patton and Benjamin Ray (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 239.
will form the basis for my contemporary engagement. These women and men are world
renowned experts in the field of TCM and, together with current work in research science along
with recent bioinformatic research related to pulse diagnosis, present a comprehensive view of
the actions of Qi in the universe and in the human body in particular.

The work of this analysis is rather more complex than a typical compare and contrast
between two religious traditions; therefore, a more systematic framework is helpful. For this I
have employed the work of Jonathan Z Smith, a noted scholar who has published extensively in
the field of comparative studies. Smith writes that there are five different approaches that one
may employ in order to form an effective methodical comparison; ethnographic, encyclopedic,
morphological, statistical, and evolutionary.30 Of these options I have chosen to format my
analytical framework in Smith’s morphological comparative method, which I will discuss in the
following paragraphs. I will therefore offer a comparative analysis in the morphological method
between the actions of Qi as they are understood in TCM, and the actions of the Holy Spirit as
depicted in spirit field theory.

I have chosen this particular method because it has been employed by comparative
scholars who have used Eastern traditions to interpret Western theology and worldviews. In
particular, Harvard professor of World Religions Kimberly Patton has made use of the
morphological method, and has critically examined its effectiveness in bringing varied traditions
together in a comprehensive way. Further, this method has been the subject of analysis by
Barbara A. Holdrege, chair of the South Asian Studies Committee at the University of
California, who also employs this method in comparative work focusing on the human body and

30 Jonathan Smith, “The end of comparison: re-description and rectification,” in A Magic Still Dwells: Comparative
Religion in the Postmodern Age, eds., Kimberley Patton and Benjamin Ray (Berkeley: University of California
the divine. Both scholars laud the usefulness of the morphological method when attempting to use one tradition to inform another, specifically using Eastern forms of religion, philosophy, and myth, to interpret Western perspectives, and Christian views in particular. Further, the morphological method offers a more complex and nuanced structure than the compare and contrast typically used in Qi and Holy Spirit comparisons, an issue I will more fully discuss in chapter two. Therefore, I have found Smith’s morphological method to be an appropriate and beneficial structure for the analysis that comprises this thesis.

According to Smith, the morphological method of comparison requires that the researcher build the analysis through five stages. The researcher must: (1) place priority on comparative systematics over listing isolated comparable data, (2) ground the pattern of comparison in processes that ignores historical and geographic context, (3) develop a complex mechanism for its transmission, (4) balance generalities and particularities in a structure integrating both, and finally (5) use the power of pattern as a device for interpretation.31

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I will describe each of these stages in turn; however, it is helpful to have an overall understanding of how this process works to comprehensively compare two concepts. The goal of the morphological method is not to list similar traits, rather it is to demonstrate that the worldview of one tradition may beneficially interpret another, while respecting the truth claims...
of each through careful consideration. The comparative analysis is therefore built in stages that relate to each other while displaying various facets of each tradition and the many ways that each concept is understood in each worldview. There is a complex integration of analysis on several levels that displays the comparative subjects without relying on a historiography of the concepts alone. In this thesis, the morphological method will offer the TCM view of Qi, and Pannenberg’s understanding of divine action, in five different, yet related and interconnected, comparative structures. This will ultimately, I suggest, present TCM as an appropriate hermeneutic lens for Pannenberg’s thought.

The first stage in the morphological method indicates that one should place priority on comparative systematics, over listing isolated comparable data. Essentially, when one begins to situate the comparison, note should be taken of how concepts are written of in each tradition and compare that which is presented systematically throughout said traditions. This enables the reader to better understand the concepts under study, (i.e. in the manner of building a systematic theology, or a philosophical worldview based on certain principles or systems) so that the comparison may be understood at different levels. Stage one will be the method applied to chapters three and four, in which I describe Pannenberg’s theology and how it supports spirit field theory. Through the stage one analysis I will offer the Qi and Holy Spirit comparison at the various levels of Pannenberg’s theology that intersect with spirit field theory. Worldview, language, psychology, science, and finally divine action will all be included in this analysis. In this, the elements that form the basis of the comparison may be displayed.

The primary text will be the Mai Jing, Zhen Mai, and Elisabeth Hsu’s translation of the journals of Chunyun Yi in addition to Wolfhart Pannenberg’s seminal theological texts; however, both concepts are written of extensively in their respective disciplines of medical science and Christianity.

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32 The primary text will be the Mai Jing, Zhen Mai, and Elisabeth Hsu’s translation of the journals of Chunyun Yi in addition to Wolfhart Pannenberg’s seminal theological texts; however, both concepts are written of extensively in their respective disciplines of medical science and Christianity.
After establishing the particulars of the concepts, as displayed through comparative systematic engagement, the second stage is to create a pattern of comparison based on these particularities and to ground that pattern in processes that ignore historical and geographic context. Pattern is a word used often by Smith to describe the demonstration of a concept in a comprehensive manner through the systems of understanding in which it is used. As an example, if one were to compare the art of wood carving to the art of stone carving, the first step would be to identify what aspect of the two art forms is to be compared. If the comparison was focused on the use of chisels, then the particulars of the concepts would be a description of chisel use in all of its forms in each medium, stone and wood. The “pattern of comparison” would then be a combined view of these various elements, brought together in a systematic conversation.

The morphological comparison is formatted around these patterns of comparison. In other words, specific archetypes that may be systematically compared in a structured pattern, as the intricacies of patterns in comparison presents a stronger analysis. As an example, one may not compare the use of sandpaper in wood carving to the use of a hammer in stonework—care must be taken to compare action to action, or substance to substance in such a manner that one may inform the other. In this structure, time and place must be ignored, so that all data related to the archetypes may be displayed without the need to place each concept in its own historiographical arc. Simply, in this example, the “archetype of chisel use” would be the combined presentation of chisel use in all of its forms from each art. Forming this pattern from the component descriptions is the aim of stage two.

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33 Smith, A Magic Still Dwells, 28-29.
34 For a definition of archetypes see appendix 1.
Stage two will be employed as the grounds of chapter five, wherein I offer the definition of the spirit field, and in chapter six, which offers the definition of Qi. Through these two chapters the pattern for the comparison will be formed from the comparisons in the preceding chapters and the particular nature of the definitions themselves. The pattern formed in this stage in the comparative analysis will be the archetypes of action for both Qi and the Holy Spirit, and the processes associated with that action in the universe. For this, I have chosen to present the archetypes of action for Qi in TCM through TCM Qi cosmology, and archetypes of divine action as they are written of from the incompatibilist view in science and religion.35

As a third stage in morphological comparisons, Smith asserts that one should develop a complex mechanism for the comparison’s transmission. The aim of the morphological method is to allow that one tradition may inform or helpfully interpret another. Therefore, one must establish the framework through which this may occur. Once particularities are comparatively assessed in systems, and those component particularities are formed into archetypes, it then becomes needful to have a mode by which the archetypes may be placed in conversation so one tradition may be situated to interpret another. This third stage of the analysis will comprise the first half of chapter seven and introduce the complex mechanism of pulse diagnosis as a mode by which the analysis may be more specifically understood. For this, I will offer the particular nature of spirit field theory and allow that it may be comparable to the worldview of TCM. This will be situated in the incompatibilist discussion of divine action in science and religion. In this, I may present the lens of TCM as an appropriate hermeneutic device for the transmission of spirit field theory in discussing divine action. To accomplish this, I will display spirit field theory by

35 For a definition of Incompatibilism see appendix 1.
discussing the views of Pannenberg that support it, situated within a comparative framework commensurate with the worldview of TCM.

Smith further writes that, as a fourth stage, a scholar working in the morphological model should balance generalities and particularities in a structure that integrates both. It is at this stage in the analysis that the particular nature of the mode of transmission, in this case pulse diagnosis, must also be demonstrated to fit within the larger constructs that began the comparison. More simply, stages one through three establish the grounds of the comparison and the means by which it will be transmitted. Stage four begins the application of the analysis by placing it in a position to address the questions which began the work. This will be accomplished in the second half of chapter seven wherein I will present spirit field theory. More specifically, I will offer how the worldview and language of TCM Qi pulse diagnosis may be beneficially applied to Pannenberg’s thought on the spirit field in relation to the human body. This will comprise the final section of the comparative analysis, bringing together the more general cosmological views that will precede chapter seven, and offering a specific view of how they may be integrated into a particular model.

The fifth stage of the morphological method, which allows that comparisons should use the power of pattern as a device for interpretation, is the summary of the system, the goal of the method, and a directive that should be evident in all preceding stages. As I have written earlier, the pattern is the systematic engagement of a concept within a tradition. The power of pattern is then these concepts placed in conversation in various ways. In this analysis, I will offer that the pattern I have described through four stages of analysis, archetypes of action, is appropriate. And

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36 For a definition of pulse diagnosis refer to appendix 1.
further, that the form and function of this analysis will in the end present the lens of TCM as an appropriate hermeneutic device for the interpretation of Pannenberg’s spirit field theory. As this stage embodies the overall objective of the comparison, this aspect of the morphological method will be seen as the common intent in each comparative chapter, as well as the end goal of the entire analysis. The binding thread of this analysis will be the pattern of archetypes of action, without a discussion of the divine person. As such, in each chapter, I will aim the discussion to include the fifth stage directive, a comparative pattern of actions and not identity. This has been done in order to safeguard against the argument that the Holy Spirit and Qi differ in that the former is personal in Christian theology whereas the latter is not.

The five-step morphological comparative method is a beneficial framework for my analysis. However, considering the complexity of this work, I allow that a further step in exposition is helpful. Barbara A. Holdrege has employed this method herself, and has written of some common pitfalls in this mode of comparison. In particular, she writes of three insufficiencies which can weaken a morphological comparison. The first is insufficient attention to differences. She has observed that often, in an effort to establish connections, crucial differences may be overlooked, ignored, or poorly addressed. The second is insufficient attention to the diachronic dimension. More simply, she cautions that religious phenomena are set apart from history, as the method suggest, and are therefore often removed from any relationship to the physical world. The third deficiency which often occurs is an insufficient attention to context. She writes that authors,”do not give enough attention to the distinctive contours of each specific religious manifestation as shaped by the particular context—textual, historical, cultural, social,
and or religious. Succinctly, she notes that many who employ the morphological method present comparative phenomena in a limited fashion based on the context from which the author operates. This myopic treatment can compromise the comparison by failing to offer a comprehensive presentation.

In order to address these issues, Holdrege employs a three-phase method she calls the “comparative historical method,” in order to support her morphological analyses. Holdrege employs this technique in her own work on the comparison of Judaism and Hinduism. Holdrege’s first step in this process is the pattern of interpretations. In her own comparative study, she analyzes each network of symbols separately, within the context of its respective tradition. For her investigation, the texts of Hinduism and Judaism were the symbols she employed as, according to Holdrege, each tradition has “defined the parameters of their respective traditions through compiling a set of discrete documents as a textual repository of normative values and practices.” This resolution is appropriate to my own analysis as the texts of TCM have been compiled for millennia, indicating normative treatments of key subjects such as Qi. Therefore, in the first of the five steps of morphological comparisons in my own thesis, I allow that the interpretive frameworks I have engaged with regard to Qi are not drawn from a Western worldview. More simply, I do not employ the more dualistic Western worldview or language to describe Qi, rather I display Qi as it is defined through its own traditions, according to the texts.

38 Ibid., 80.
39 Ibid., 79.
Holdrege’s second step is critical in the comparative analysis. In this, the structural similarities between the symbol system and practice are highlighted; however, note is also made of the specific differences to each tradition. This will be relevant to my own work as I will be focusing on one idea in particular; specifically, how the actions of Qi and the Holy Spirit are perceived and engaged, with specific focus on the human body. As I present Qi through its own tradition, conflict of terms and difference in perception are also allowed for. Simply, in the formation of Smith’s third stage, forming the mechanism of transmission, theological terms will be discussed in the comparison, but I will not employ theological terms to characterize TCM phenomena.

Holdrege’s final step is cultural interpretation. She examines the significance of the similarities of the symbol structures in light of the broader context. I will also employ this tactic displaying how TCM and Christianity in general react to the texts on their respective entities; Qi and the Holy Spirit. This will be an important aspect of the fifth step in the morphological comparison, as I intend to offer that the worldview of TCM Qi pulse diagnosis, and the language it produces, is not only comparable to Pannenberg’s view of divine action in the spirit field, but that indeed it may offer a helpful hermeneutic lens to describe it.

The comparison will begin in chapter three with the order of the analysis as follows; chapters three through five will offer the first stage of the model, chapter six will present stage two. Stage three will be seen in the first half of chapter seven while stage four will be employed in the second half of chapter seven. Stage five will be the guiding directive for all chapters as well as the specific format for chapter five. Holdrege’s thought will be considered in the analysis.

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40 Ibid., 79–82.
as appropriate, however, her work is primarily a preventative measure to ensure accurate comparisons, rather than a structural subset of the morphological method, and as such will not affect the format of the analysis.

1.4 Background

My work in bringing the perspective of TCM into the world of theology began over eight years ago. The perspective of TCM is, in my view, of great benefit to science and religion separately, and as the unified field in which I now am privileged to research. The systematic manner in which TCM views metaphysical realities, and the orderly manner in which TCM defines them, may both be helpful to those for whom metaphysical reality is of interest. Further, TCM is a venerable tradition with a history that stretches back for millennia, and across many diverse people groups and religio-philosophic traditions. TCM is therefore a rich field for the study of cultural anthropology, theology, religious studies, and, specific to my interest, science and religion.

While I do offer original thought in this comparative study, the manner in which I engage Qi within TCM is not a new construction. The systematic treatment of Qi in TCM has been extensively documented over several thousand years.41 The novelty of my work lies in the fact that I employ the contemporary codified and comprehensive TCM definition of Qi in a comparative study with core premises of Christian theology. While a more full description of Qi based upon these documents will be the focus of chapter six, it is helpful to offer a working definition here, as Qi is mentioned in the following paragraphs. The phenomenon of Qi is not a philosophical construct or symbolic representation of metaphysical reality. Rather, Qi is a reality

in TCM, as well as Neo-Confucianism and Daoism. *Qi* has been defined as the essence of life, the foundation of reality, the process of change, and the manifestation of action in the *Dao*. However, to frame *Qi* more simply, one may think of *Qi* as a phenomenon that is both physical and non-physical, or perhaps as both action and substance. In this manner, *Qi* is an immutable phenomenon that pervades all reality and is constantly active.

My comparative analysis of *Qi* and the Holy Spirit is original in that I compare the actions of *Qi* and the actions of the Holy Spirit. In order to provide an appropriate framework that is neither syncretistic, nor presents *Qi* outside its own context, my analysis is based on the perception of the Holy Spirit’s action rather than the Holy Spirit’s identity. Furthermore, my utilization of the Holy Spirit and *Qi* comparison is not simply a contrivance in order to elucidate the causal joint problem or questions of divine action and pneumatology more generally. This model is in fact central to the investigative work I intend, and further, it demonstrates a worldview that may be of benefit in other inquiries.

Other researchers, such as Grace Ji-Sun Kim and Koo Dong Yun, have presented *Qi* and the Holy Spirit as two entities of similar stripe which can be used as a communicative tool in order to bring varied disciplines together. These scholars employ comparative analyses involving *Qi* in order to achieve a goal unrelated to the comparison, such as defining “otherness” in Christianity. Therefore, their comparative analysis is formed in a more simple manner, similar to Smith’s ethnographic model. In comparative works such as these, the comparison is not often a comprehensive and complex analysis. It is therefore difficult to apply the worldview of *Qi* as an interpretive device in these comparisons, as they are often merely a list of similar traits. Because

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42 For a definition of the causal joint see appendix 1.
of this, many of the current comparative works miss some subtleties which I will address. My work is in fact inextricably linked with the comparison itself in a complex description through which I compare and contrast the language and worldview related to metaphysical actions in TCM and the spirit field. In the end, I will offer that the physical and metaphysical discipline of TCM may be a more beneficial mode of investigation than the models thus far employed to interpret Pannenberg’s spirit field theory, and, in the end, that TCM may possibly be employed in other models of investigation related to divine action.

1.5 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this first chapter has been to explain the overall argument, and where it fits in the field. This chapter has also outlined the methodology, discussed how my argument is new, and finally why I consider it to be of importance.

Chapter two will establish the position of my argument, and the arenas in which it may be of benefit, by featuring a review of the current literature concerning the *Qi* and Holy Spirit comparison as well as causal joint theory.\(^\text{43}\) It is my suggestion that the incompatibilist view of divine action, most clearly displayed in the work of the DAP and the causal joint debate, may benefit from a new reading of Pannenberg’s spirit field theory. I allow that Pannenberg’s work may be more helpful than many incompatibilist scholars believe, if it is interpreted through the hermeneutic lens of TCM. An understanding of spirit field theory situated in the holistic monism of TCM could offer a new perspective on divine action that may address some of the issues that I will highlight in my critical analysis of incompatibilist scholarship. This chapter will also

\(^{43}\) For a definition of the causal joint see appendix 1.
display recent work in the Holy Spirit and \textit{Qi} comparison that I believe could be more specifically, and methodologically presented.

In chapters three and four I will begin the comparative analysis of the actions of the Holy Spirit and the actions of \textit{Qi} by engaging with the thought of Wolfhart Pannenberg and situating the worldview of spirit field theory in conjunction with TCM through the first stage of the morphological method.\textsuperscript{44} In this, I will discuss Pannenberg’s specific views of the God-to-human line of communication. I focus on this in particular for two reasons. First, Pannenberg writes expansively on this topic, and as such his views of divine action may be more clearly understood in this presentation. And second, because discussion of the God-to-human line of communication in Pannenberg’s writings offers his view of the Holy Spirit’s action in relation to the human body in a specific fashion. This bears importance as Pannenberg considers the spirit field to be a ubiquitous phenomenon, as is \textit{Qi}, and attempting to discuss the spirit field in relation to \textit{Qi} cosmology across the span of the entire cosmos would be too large a scope of investigation to adequately explicate in the space allowed for this work. Therefore, I have centered my attention on the human body, as this will allow a more narrow discussion that may find agreement with the premise of TCM. Further, this will clarify the definition of \textit{Qi} by highlighting certain aspects of TCM \textit{Qi} cosmology that will be defined in later chapters.

Chapter three will contain Pannenberg’s view of the line of communication between humans and God from the divine perspective. More simply, I will display Pannenberg’s position on God’s immanence, transcendence, and activity in the world. This will deal primarily with Pannenberg’s three volume Systematic Theology, supplemented with his other writings on divine action. Chapter four will disclose Pannenberg’s view of the divine and human relationship from

\textsuperscript{44} For a definition of \textit{Qi} and the spirit field refer to appendix 1.
the human perspective, based on Pannenberg’s theological anthropology. For this I will largely employ an interpretation of Pannenberg’s *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, structuring my chapter in a similar format to the manner in which Pannenberg organizes this book. In both chapters three and four, Pannenberg’s thoughts concerning divine action will be placed in conversation with TCM *Qi* cosmology in order to demonstrate that the worldview of TCM is not only compatible with Pannenberg’s thought, but that it may also afford a perspective from which to better understand Pannenberg’s views. This will allow me to display the particular views concerning divine action, and the actions of *Qi*, that will coalesce into the pattern of comparison that shall be formed more fully in chapter five.

Chapter five will continue into stage two by situating the elements that form the pattern of comparison, archetypes of action. This will be done by offering an exposition of Pannenberg’s pneumatology in relation to the spirit field. Spirit field theory impacted Pannenberg’s theology in multiple ways, and therefore is present in many of his writings that deal with other aspects of divine action. I will highlight many of these works to present the spirit field in as clear a manner as possible. In addition, I will present the critical reception of spirit field theory from the incompatibilist scholars in science and religion, as well as questions raised by the scientific community. This will allow me to introduce many of the core questions that have been leveled against spirit field theory. Finally, in this chapter, I will offer an introduction of how the worldview of TCM *Qi* may offer a helpful interpretive framework for the spirit field of operations, and how the perception of *Qi* in TCM may be helpful in answering some of the critics of spirit field theory. This will begin to draw the particularities of the comparative analysis thus far described into the pattern of comparison, archetypes of action.

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45 For a definition of archetypes see appendix 1.
46 For a definition of the spirit field refer to appendix 1.
The first five chapters will serve the functions of stating the problem (incompatibilist views of divine action are insufficient), framing the question (may TCM provide a beneficial hermeneutic lens to interpret spirit field theory), and defining and situating the argument (may this new look at spirit field theory augment the incompatibilist view of divine action). I am arguing from the perspective of Christian theology; therefore, it is important to have a clear stance from which to operate as a comparative study of this nature is most beneficial if the structure of the conversation is coherent. Carefully working through Pannenberg’s view of divine action in a succinct manner, in comparison to $Qi$ in its own context, will allow a clear view of the direction of the argument and the basis for the comparisons. Further, as the spirit field is the key feature, it is helpful to understand how it may be said to exist in a pneumatological framework. Finally, it is beneficial to demonstrate that the theological framework in which Pannenberg situates spirit field theory is consistent with the TCM definition of $Qi$, most notably within the cosmology of $Qi$ I will present in chapter six.

In chapter six I will more comprehensively define $Qi$, and offer how it may be considered in a Christian theological framework. This will be done in order to base the argument in a theological context, and to allow those unfamiliar with the central principals of TCM insight into the worldview I allow is useful in the interpretation of spirit field theory. While I will work from the investigative posture of Christian theology, I will offer the definition of $Qi$ as it is understood within TCM without misrepresenting the quintessence of the texts or incorporating inappropriate terminology. I will employ both ancient primary source material and descriptions from the contemporary medical understanding.

The work of defining $Qi$ will be done in a comparative manner, offering that the perception of $Qi$ in TCM is consistent with the manner in which incompatibilist science and
religion scholars write of divine action. In this, I will discuss the actions of Qi and the actions of the Holy Spirit, not the Holy Spirit’s identity or essence. In defining Qi, I will employ the second stage of the morphological method in order to avoid any misconstrued views concerning the practice of TCM. Further, I will display the worldview that forms the basis of TCM Qi pulse diagnosis in relationship to the incompatibilist view of divine action as it is understood in science and religion. This will complete the formation of the pattern of comparison begun in chapter five.

Chapter seven will present the culmination of the comparative analysis and the apogee of the thesis. I will draw the comparison to a close by employing the third and fourth stage of the morphological method, applying the pattern of comparison to the question I have asked. In this chapter, I will offer that the holistically monist view of Qi in TCM, and the language it produces, may be helpful in better understanding spirit field theory. I will employ a recent textual analysis of an ancient TCM text on pulse diagnosis as well as two recent experiments centered on pulse diagnosis done by teams of researchers in the field of bioinformatics.

Chapter eight will conclude the argument by drawing the results of the five-stage comparative analysis together. I will highlight key features in the arguments I have made, and the implications of the results. I will then situate the argument in the field of science and religion, presenting where it may positively affect incompatibilist discussions of divine action and the causal joint.

1.6 Definition of terms

In the course of this thesis I will employ terminology particular to TCM, science and religion, and Pannenberg’s theology. In order to offer a more clear view of the discussion, I have included a list of these technical terms and their definitions. These terms will also be present in appendix 1 for reference.

Incompatibilism (with special reference to divine action theory). Incompatibilism is the school of thought that claims deterministic laws of nature are incompatible with human free will and
with divine action. This intimates that God must intervene into the fixed natural order in order to perform an action.

Archetypes. Archetypes are patterns formed of component parts. In this thesis, the pattern for divine action is a composition of the various ways divine action is presented in Panneneberg’s theology. The pattern for the action of $Qi$ is comprised from the various ways TCM presents the actions of $Qi$.

Causal Joint. In a theistic view of the God-world relationship, this is the membrane between natural and supernatural realities, the joint across which divine action may have an effect on physical reality.

Dao. The Chinese word *Dao* means a way or a path. In the religio-philosophic traditions of China, and TCM in particular, the *Dao* is the way of universe as a whole—both physical and metaphysical action in an overall pattern of active existence.

Feeling (in terms of Pannenberg’s theology). Feelings are the way in which humans participate with, and relate to, the self, the other, and to God. Feelings, both emotional and physical, characterize human life and enable us to experience the Divine Thou from which all life issues.

Field. In physics, a field is a region in space-time in which each particle experiences a force. The term ‘field’ is a metaphor for the presence and action of this force, as there is no literal field in the manner of an area of open land. Therefore, the term field lends itself to use in Pannenberg’s theology.

Li. The eternal and orderly cosmic principle; it is the logical order found in the *Dao*.

Monism (as it relates to this thesis). The universe wherein all phenomena are considered natural.

Pulse Diagnosis. A diagnostic technique used in Traditional Chinese Medicine to determine $Qi$ flow in the body and to asses illness based on imbalances of said flow.

$Qi$. A ubiquitous, and active, eternal phenomenon that encounters and is present in all reality as a physical reality and as the function of change in the cosmos.

Religious Thematic. The theme of God which is the dynamic presence and action of God in the universe.

Spirit Field Theory. A way to describe the activity of the Spirit in creation, as the universes’ animating and unitive property, through a ubiquitous and immersive field of divine action.

Theory of correspondence. The principal that every phenomenon in the cosmos is both physical and metaphysical, and that these two aspects have a reciprocal relationship in all things.

Ti yong. $Ti$ and $yong$. These are separately the Chinese terms for substance and function, respectively. $Ti$ is used to denote the fundamental nature of a thing, while $yong$ is the action of that thing. When employed together they depict the physical and metaphysical unity involved in the realization of a phenomenon’s essence in the world.
**Tian.** The Chinese term for the celestial aspect of the cosmos, often translated as "heaven." It is a key concept in Chinese mythology, philosophy, and religion and is naturalistic in nature.

**Wissenschaft.** The German language term for any study that involves the systematic pursuit of knowledge. The term is commonly translated as science; however, *wissenschaft* is a more broad term that includes all systematic areas of study, including the arts and humanities, often combining different views and methods in the scholarly pursuit of knowledge.

**Wuxing.** An empirical science that Traditional Chinese Medicine uses to explain cosmic cycles and the interaction between internal organs. The five phases are wood, fire, earth(soil), metal, and water. The system of five phases is used for describing interactions and relationships between phenomena.

**Yin Yang.** An empirical science that displays the interconnected and interdependent relationship between all things physical and metaphysical. *Yin yang* offers that the physical and metaphysical are interconnected, and interdependent in all things and that they give rise to each other as they interrelate to one another.

**Yuan Qi.** Original Qi which proceeds from the Tian and fully engages the universe providing life, warmth, thought, emotions, and mobility.
Chapter 2 Literature review

I have written in the previous chapter that the problem I wish this thesis to address is the limited perspectives found in the theories of divine action that are currently offered by incompatibilist scholars in science and religion. While these scholars have presented thoughtful and compelling works on divine action, and indeed I find many of the arguments compelling, I have also found that their views are often dualistic in nature, and therefore may be considered reductive, or perhaps limited in scope. I suggest that the spirit field theory of Wolfhart Pannenberg was his attempt to address the dualism commonly found in such theological inquiries; however, many incompatibilist scholars rejected this theory. It is my intention, therefore, to offer a new manner in which to understand spirit field theory in order to have a positive impact on the incompatibilist view of divine action. I suggest that the worldview of TCM Qi pulse diagnosis may provide an appropriate hermeneutic lens through which to more fully interpret spirit field theory, providing a view from which the dualism seen in incompatibilist scholarship may be addressed. I have offered that this will be attempted through a comprehensive comparative analysis between the actions of the Holy Spirit in the spirit field and the actions of Qi in relation to the human body. It is therefore helpful to engage recent scholarship related to both the incompatibilist views of divine action, and scholarly work focused upon the comparison of the Holy Spirit and Qi.47

The causal joint debate is one area of divine action scholarship in which incompatibilist scholars have written prolifically. As such, this field of study has seen many theories from several well qualified scholars. However, the majority of these investigations have been driven

47 For a definition of Incompatibilism see appendix 1.
by an understanding of the universe based in the monism of scientific naturalism, wherein the universe is considered to be fully natural.\textsuperscript{48} The difficulty with this approach is that many of the sciences, such as physics and biology, do not provide for metaphysical explanations but rather focus upon purely natural phenomena. Theories of divine action in the world based in Western science are therefore often dualistic, with natural and supernatural phenomena considered separately. If one wishes to gain knowledge of divine action in the universe, the very crux of causal joint theory, scientific naturalism may not provide the most helpful worldview for the inquiry. To highlight this issue, I will engage with three prominent incompatibilist theories on the causal joint, to display both the useful aspects and possible deficiencies regarding the dualistic worldview that comes from a dependence on Western mainstream sciences.

Qi and the Holy Spirit have been compared and contrasted by Western theologians since the days of the Jesuit missionaries in the 16\textsuperscript{th} century.\textsuperscript{49} Initially, this analysis was used by missionaries to understand Chinese religio-philosophic traditions such as Daoism and Neo-Confucianism in a Christian context.\textsuperscript{50} Qi, they found, was described as wind, breath or vital energy.\textsuperscript{51} Missionaries such as Matteo Ricci, James Legge, and Hudson Taylor then compared this description to their own knowledge of the Holy Spirit, written of in the Christian Bible as wind, or breath which gives vitality or life.\textsuperscript{52} Currently, this situation has effectively reversed. It is now more common to read the work of Chinese and Korean theologians interpreting the Holy

\textsuperscript{48} For a definition of monism refer to appendix 1.
\textsuperscript{51} J. J. Clarke, \textit{Oriental Enlightenment the Encounter between Asian and Western Thought}. (London: Routledge, 1997), 38–42.
Spirit through their understanding of Qi. This is often done in an effort to add new perspectives to pneumatology, Christian ethics, or theological ecology.

However, the current body of work in the Qi and Holy Spirit comparison demonstrates two key difficulties. The first is the premise for the comparison, namely that between the divine person of the Holy Spirit and the non-personal phenomenon of Qi. In many cases, this is either not discussed at all, or, labeled as an inexplicable contradiction. The second problem is the lack of a meticulous and orderly theological engagement. In many cases writers conflate *pneuma*, *ruach*, and *logos* without consideration given to the respective functions they serve in Christian theologies of creation. Additionally, many authors employ a confusing approximation of the Trinity in action, without a systematic theological framework. I will highlight some of these disparities in the course of my critical analysis in order to demonstrate how my own work on the subject may be helpful; and further, how my own comprehensive analysis avoids these pitfalls and presents a more clear comparison through which Pannenberg’s thought may be considered.

### 2.1 Causal joint theory

Arthur Peacocke, John Polkinghorne, and Robert Russell are three of the incompatibilist scholars who figure prominently in discussions of divine action and the causal joint.\(^{53}\) Therefore, in order to demonstrate how dualistic worldviews may be present in this work, I will explicate the popular theories these three have refined in recent years. I will begin by offering the original positions each of these researchers assumes on the causal joint through a presentation of their various works on the subject. Specifically, I will consider their varied views on physical and

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\(^{53}\) For a definition of the causal joint see appendix 1.
metaphysical interaction. I will also demonstrate the critical interaction these men have had with one another in addition to my own views concerning their theories and perspectives.

### 2.1.1 Arthur Peacocke

Perhaps the most expedient way to present Arthur Peacocke’s theory regarding divine action is through an analogy. If it is assumed that the “mind” equals the brain as a whole (being “larger” than the brain while yet including it) which in turn acts on the parts of the brain, the neurons for instance, then we can understand Peacocke’s view of the world-as-a-whole being acted on in the same manner by God.54 In this analogy, the “mind” is God and the physical universe (or the world-as-a-whole) is the brain. Therefore God, while yet being immanently present in the world-as-a-whole, is also the supervenient presence of the world-as-a-whole affecting the component parts of the world through intra-causation. In the following paragraphs I will endeavor to unpack this analogy by examining Peacocke’s writings on divine action and the causal joint.

Peacocke writes that, “the ontological gap(s) between the world and God is/are located simply everywhere in space and time…[t]hence, mediated by the whole-part influences of the world-as-a-whole on its constituents, God could cause particular events and patterns of events to occur.”55 For Peacocke, God’s supervenient presence may have causal interaction with all aspects of creation. This is distinguished from God’s creative and sustaining actions in that this is aimed to “particular intentions of God for particular patterns of events to occur.”56 Essentially, God acts at the supervenient level on the world in toto. This influence on the world may occur through communication with individuals as an input of information. Peacocke postulates that

54 Peacocke, *God’s Action in Nature’s World*, 198
there may be “a distinctive layer or level within the totality of human personhood that has a unique way of coming into direct contact with God,” allowing for this direct influence.\(^57\) This of course would indicate special divine action, something which some scholars, such as John Polkinghorne, have taken issue with.

Polkinghorne believes that divine action should be seen as God’s constant interaction with the created order, and that there is no such thing as special divine action. Rather, humans label it as special, or direct, based on our perception; our “noticing” it makes it special or specific. If God is indeed always interacting in a causal or supportive manner, then when we have cause or location to focus on the action it seems to us to be specific. Peacocke responds to this issue noting that perception of divine action in this manner points to a deterministic universe. For Peacocke, a constant state of causal action, which is only occasionally noticed, intimates a God in complete causal control. Therefore, according to Peacocke, there must be room for the specific acts of God independent from God’s sustaining action in creation.\(^58\)

However, specific or special divine action also presents difficulties, such as interventionism. As an example, if God, being in possession of knowledge humans are bereft of, may affect macroscopic events by directing microscopic occurrences in a special manner, then, according to Peacocke, “this would then be no different in principle from the idea of God intervening in a deterministic, rigidly law-controlled, mechanistic order of nature of the kind thought to be the consequences of Newtonian dynamics.”\(^59\) In other words, specific action in particular instances would violate God’s creation in that the natural laws that govern the universe

\(^{57}\) Peacocke, " Biological evolution-a positive theological appraisal" in *Neuroscience and the Person.* ed., Russell, Robert. (Berkeley: Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 1999), 244.


\(^{59}\) Ibid., 154.
would need to be interrupted. This is of course the argument against miracles made popular by David Hume. Therefore, it would seem, Peacocke objects to both constant general divine action, as it displays a deterministic universe, and he further argues against special divine action, as it pits God against God’s own creation. However, special divine action is indeed possible for Peacocke as the Newtonian view of the universe is not one from which he operates. The difference then, for Peacocke, lies in the current knowledge of quantum indeterminacy, and the idea that even God does not possess complete knowledge of all outcomes.

Peacocke’s understanding is that the world-as-a-whole is a complex system wherein actions on the lower levels may impact the overall state of the system; it is not a strictly top-down deterministic relationship. He writes that this “helps us to model more convincingly that interaction, dialogue even, between human decisions and actions, on the one hand, and divine intentions and purposes on the other.” For Peacocke, the world-as-a-whole is a vast interconnected materiality, and the smallest parts may influence the direction of the whole. Therefore, acts such as prayer by an individual may influence the supervenient presence of God in a dynamic relationship between the parts of a system and the system as a whole. According to Peacocke, this relationship is reciprocal. He writes that, “if God can influence patterns of events in the world to be other than they otherwise would have been but for the divine initiative—then it must be possible for God to influence those patterns of events in human brains which constitute human thoughts.” Peacocke uses the term influence, rather than direction, to indicate that God’s actions are not determinative, but rather relational. God’s actions may then be

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63 Peacocke, Neuroscience and the Person, 244.
eschatologically directive in that they point to an end while allowing for manifestations of free will in the process, similar to Pannenberg’s view of individual action in the spirit field, a subject I will more fully disclose in chapter five.

Within this framework, God may influence the world by affecting patterns in the largest or smallest degrees. As an example, God may affect the world by being present in the pattern of contingencies that affect history, or by affecting the neural synapses in a single person’s brain in order to provide the opportunity for more specific revelation. For Peacocke, this is possible through God’s immanent presence. If God is indeed continually and pervasively present in all the universe, then God’s actions must also be omnipresent. We may not point to one location where the actions of God “touch” the world, as that would be reductionist. Therefore, for Peacocke, the causal joint is everywhere.

Peacocke offers a manner in which to understand pervasive causal interaction between God and humanity in his discussion of epistemological anti-reductionism. Peacocke writes that, “each hierarchically stratified system has its own internal set of higher to lower levels with distinctive nondeductible relations between its processes.” And further, that systems may be “type different at their higher levels, even if they have similar processes occurring at their lower ones.” This occurs in a system comprised of tiered levels of consciousness as well as graded levels of physical existence, or perhaps, if Polkinghorne is correct and epistemology models ontology, the model of divine and mundane relationships. Therefore, God may exist in relation to the world-as-a-whole if the world-as-a-whole is within God and organized in a complex series of “levels” between physical reality, and a “wholly other” God.

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64 Ibid., 247.
65 Ibid., 247.
Peacocke describes this stratified relationship through the analogy of human thought. He argues that the “lower levels” of physical reducibility, such as neurons firing, are related to the “higher levels” of conscious thought, even though thought and physical reality are wholly different. He further posits that organized social groups are also composed of levels that gradually produce higher levels of complexity, from hand signals to verbal communication, and eventually artistic expression. However, Peacocke does not offer that God may also possess these levels, nor does he investigate whether humans communicate on a higher supervenient level with God, or if humans exist at a lower level of God’s reducible processes. However, if we postulate that the causal joint is indeed a place where God’s “lower level” of reducibility encounters the created order through God’s actions, it may be argued that these actions are in some manner discoverable.

Peacocke maintains that we should think of God’s influence on the world-as-a-whole as an input of information rather than energy. Peacocke states that, as God is a personal being, this information should be thought of as communication. Further, he notes that this communication is a mode of information transfer that is singular to God. 66 Peacocke admits the difficulty in understanding how a transfer of information may occur with no transfer of energy or matter; however, he offers no explanation to resolve the problem. He restates that God may act as a causal agent influencing the world-as-a-whole in the same manner our supervenient “mind” directs our bodies, but that the mechanism is only perceptible from God’s level. Humans, at the lower levels of the system, lack the ability to fully comprehend this system, and so we may not fully explain it through language. 67

66 Ibid., 161–62.
67 Ibid., 163.
Peacocke’s theory, while well-constructed and somewhat consonant with my own work, does not offer any understandable mechanism of divine action. Rather, it describes the framework of thought that may be applied to investigations related to such a mechanism. Further, Peacocke argues that there is an “ontological gap” between God and the world, suggesting two realities that somehow engage. Even though he may consider that the “gaps” exist everywhere, one cannot dismiss the fact that, in his view, there is a separation between God and God’s creation. Peacocke works to understand how God may be immanent in a panentheistic manner, and yet his worldview in effect limits his descriptive language.

If we indeed subscribe to Peacocke’s theory that reality exists in a tiered system from simple to complex, and that humans have a special way to relate to God in this system, then we are still left to ask at what level humans encounter God. Even if we consider the causal joint to be everywhere, we cannot at once look at the universe in total, and so this view is unhelpful. Peacocke’s theory, in practical application, returns to the dualistic conundrum— if divine action is separate from humans, then where do they meet? If one were to look at the universe from a holistically monist perspective, then layers would not be needful. In holistic monism there may yet be complexity and simplicity existing in the system; however, there would be no need to individually classify it. Divine action could then exist immanently, without the difficulty of either pointing to one location, or the equally unhelpful notion of attempting to point everywhere.

### 2.1.2 John Polkinghorne

John Polkinghorne, like Peacocke, argues that the causal joint is in effect everywhere. There is no specific place to look, rather it may be seen in all reality. What separates the views of these two scholars is how divine action and identity are understood. Polkinghorne does not conceive of
the universe, presently, as within God. Rather, for Polkinghorne panentheism is “an eschatological destiny.” According to Polkinghorne the whole of reality, as it is known now, is a complex, chaotic, and indeterministic system he refers to as the world-as-a-whole; in which God is an immanent presence. Polkinghorne argues that, as God is immanent in this system, there may be instant communication from God to the world. Essentially, God exists in the whole of the system, and so may affect the system with no distance to cross, negating the problem of signal decay. Further, this input of information is accomplished without the expenditure of energy, because the divine actions, presence, as well as the subjects of divine actions, all exist in relation to God; there nothing is added to the system.

Polkinghorne adds that the actions of God in this system are only realized as a whole, and cannot be reduced to the smaller components of the system. This offers another disparity from Peacocke, in that Polkinghorne does not argue for a graduated system of levels between God and the world. Rather, Polkinghorne’s position is more akin to the supervenience of a superpersonal God. The relationship is less mechanical in that the system, the whole of the universe, is within God. The whole system then influences in the way the supervenient mind influences the parts of the brain. God may then have causal influence over the states of the system through the indeterminism of chaos theory.

69 Signal decay, or attenuation, is the gradual loss in intensity of any kind of flux through a medium. Essentially, if energy of any kind travels a distance of any length there is a loss of intensity - the original signal does not arrive complete. This would intimate that divine action crossing any distance to reach mundane reality would lose intensity and therefore not meet the physical world with the same amount of information or energy. For more on signal decay in relation to the human brain and thought refer to: Maier, and Mulkern. "Biexponential Analysis of Diffusion-related Signal Decay in Normal Human Cortical and Deep Gray Matter," Magnetic Resonance Imaging, no. 7 (2008): 897-904.
71 Chaos theory is a mathematical theory that looks at the sensitively of certain systems. Per chaos theory, small changes in the starting position of a system eventually produce significant change. For more on this refer to: Al Naimee Kais, ed. Chaos Theory. Open access peer-reviewed edited volume at IntechOpen 2018.
Polkinghorne writes:

The physical world is subtle and supple in its construction. It is open to causal influence by the exchange of energy between its constituent parts and also to the operation of holistic pattern-forming agencies which can be thought of as “active” information. The deterministic equations, from which classical chaos theory has been derived, are to be understood as downward emergent approximations to that more subtle physical reality.\(^{72}\)

Divine action, for Polkinghorne, may therefore be thought of as the input of information into these seemingly deterministic equations, which then develop into the chaotic systems as influenced by other causal factors. God is in effect “leading” or “guiding” through this input of information rather than directing by “naked power.”\(^{73}\) Polkinghorne, like Peacocke, does not address the mechanism of this information input, rather he points to the mind/body relationship as an analogy for God’s causal relationship to the world.\(^{74}\)

Polkinghorne writes that:

our mental powers do not result from the aggregation of the psychic residues of the electronic and nuclear matter of our own bodies, any more than the wetness of water derives from residual moisture present in each H\(_2\)O molecule. These properties are ones that can be perceived only in the whole, for they arise from relationships expressible only in the whole.\(^{75}\)

The mind therefore is not an emergent quality of the brain, but rather a holistic system that is only realized as a whole. However, if the mind is not at least partially physical, then it may have no physical mechanism to transfer energy as information. Further, if the system of the mind were


not physical, but rather existing in some “other” manner, the principle of conservation of energy would preclude the mind from introducing information into the body. This manner of direction would only be possible if it were assumed that every time a mind introduces energy into the world in the form of information, an equal amount of energy would be removed from the universe due to a perfectly organized and unknown capacity the universe possesses. Therefore, there must be an integrated relationship between the mind and the body; a relationship wherein the mind is not fully reducible to the brain, and yet not separate either.

Polkinghorne expands this view arguing that humans are a kind of matter/mind amphibian, existing in both the material and mental worlds simultaneously and so able to relate to both.\textsuperscript{76} And further, when speaking of the energy and essence distinction found in the theology of Gregory Palamas, Polkinghorne argues that understanding the “divine energy” may in the end “provide a strong account of effective divine presence without endangering the distinction between creatures and their creator.”\textsuperscript{77} In other words, for Polkinghorne, humans may indeed be able to participate in the physical world while also having an interaction with the spiritual. Polkinghorne writes that, generally, humans have difficulty viewing the physical and spiritual interaction in this manner; however, if the holistic monism of the TCM worldview is employed to this end, we may have a mode for understanding the “amphibian” existence Polkinghorne speaks of.\textsuperscript{78}

There are aspects to Polkinghorne’s view which seem to have similarities to the worldview of TCM and the spirit field Pannenberg strove to popularize. Polkinghorne writes of

\textsuperscript{76} Polkinghorne, \textit{Science and Providence}, 33.
“holistic pattern-forming agencies,” and that God may only be realized as a whole.\textsuperscript{79}

Polkinghorne even makes use of Palamas, one of the theologians Pannenberg himself engages in the discussion of the spirit field. However, Polkinghorne still views humans as “mind matter amphibians.” This definition suggests, in rather clear dualistic terms, that there are two worlds and humans are somehow involved partially in both. If we were to apply the spirit field in a positive way to Polkinghorne’s thought, then perhaps the world-as-a-whole would indeed be more whole in the manner of holistic monism, rather than some manner of physical and metaphysical dual reality that humans are caught between.

\subsection*{2.1.3 Robert Russell}

Robert Russell has developed the non-interventionist objective divine action (NIODA) model to explain how God may work in the universe. It is a mode of divine action which is in agreement with his understanding of mainstream Christian theology. Russell then applies this theologically based operational framework to the world of quantum mechanics to offer his perspective on the causal joint. His theory begins by addressing the manner in which God may affect material reality, without creating theological contradictions concerning God’s character.

For Russell, God chooses not to intervene in the natural processes that God has established in the created order, as this would display a contradiction. God may not, according to NIODA, establish a natural law and then break that law in order to have an effect. Therefore, divine action must be non-interventionist. Further, for Russell, special divine action may take place apart from the creative and sustaining action in universe more broadly. However, it is only special in that it is discerned by noting events that transpire in an unusual but still lawful

\textsuperscript{79} Polkinghorne, in Richardson and Wildman, \textit{Religion and Science}, 247.
manner.\textsuperscript{80} More simply, divine action is constant: it is only our noticing unusual specific instances that makes it special to us as the observer.

Additionally, Russell sees this as an objective and direct action, that is, there are no preceding immanent causes to the divine act. According to Russell’s theory, if God’s actions were indeed traceable in a chain of events, then every degree of interaction could be detected. In this event, the causal joint, the last “link” in the chain, would be an absolute, and as such would be discoverable. For Russell, this reductionist view of divine action is not congruent with his view of God. Therefore, for Russell, God must be able to act without a “causal sequence.”

Working within these parameters, Russell’s assertion is that the best option for a NIODA mode of divine action should be based on a “bottom up” scenario with God working at the quantum level. Quantum physics demonstrates that the behavior of subatomic level is at least partially indeterministic.\textsuperscript{81} For Russell, this means that God may act directly in the cases God chooses, while allowing for randomness in others. The fact that the quantum universe is still very much mysterious offers space for direct action, or inaction as the case may be. Therefore, if not all quantum events are decided by God, then there must be other causal influences, such as human will.

However, one problem which arises from this position is the issue of theodicy. This is pointed out by one of NIODA’s critics Michael Ruse. Ruse has noted that,

\begin{quote}
if God can and does do that which is good—create humans—why not at the same time avoid some of that which is bad? If God can move quantum events around to God’s purposes, why not do a bit
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{81} For more on this refer to: Josh McHugh, ”Time’s Up, Einstein: Time and Classical and Quantum Mechanics Indeterminacy vs. Continuity,” \textit{Wired} 13, no. 6 (2005): 124-126.
more and (for instance) avoid some of those horrendous mutations that leave people with a lifetime of sickness and pain? 82

This is one of the problems Russell faces when attempting to situate his divine action model into a theological framework: he invites more specific theological criticism.

Further, as he bases his theory within Western mainstream science, Russell is bound by scientific theory which may not allow for divine action. However, Russell makes positive use of science when he argues that randomness at the quantum level may have an effect on the macro world. This is grounded in the proposition that “all processes at the higher levels are restrained by and act in conformity to the laws of lower levels, including the levels of sub atomic physics.” 83 However, Russell’s position does not allow for the fact that there is no way to distinguish between routine and special wave collapses at quantum level. 84

This produces an additional difficulty from the theological side of the argument. As Niels Henrik Gregersen points out:

it is not possible to separate primary and secondary causality at quantum level; here, nature is the exercise of God's creativity. Otherwise we would have to posit two ultimates: a quantum reality operating on its own (perhaps sustained by some general divine activity), and God sometimes acting within this realm (in episodic special actions). 85

For Gregersen, God may not involve God’s self in some quantum events, rather God must be active in all.

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84 For more on this refer to: Alexy Melkikh, "Nonlinearity of Quantum Mechanics and Solution of the Problem of Wave Function Collapse." Communications in Theoretical Physics 64, no. 1 (2015): 47-53.
85 Niels Henrik Gregersen, "From MCI to NIODA and FINLON: An Appreciative Response to Robert John Russell's Opus." Theology and Science 9, no. 2 (2011), 250
Russell offers a response to this criticism, noting that he has “no overwhelming objection to viewing quantum laws as having an ontological status as long as one asserts that God creates these laws *ex nihilo* along with the universe they govern.”  

However Russell’s views on the status of laws in his theological interpretation are not specific. We are left to wonder if God creates the laws of nature which are then held in place by God’s immanent action, or if God manages particular quantum events in a meticulous manner that produces a law-like universe.

In his work, Russell constructs a framework which is tightly bound to physics. While this does offer a view of divine action in relation to the world, the primary aim of spirit field theory, Russell situates his argument within the science, rather than having scientific theory inform his theological view. In this, he presents a dualistic model, as physics does not measure metaphysical phenomena. If Russell’s lawlike apparatus were to include metaphysical phenomena, in the manner of holistic monism, then there may be more room for theological discussion. Moreover, if the view of Pannenberg’s field theory were applied to Russell’s understanding of divine action, then there may be a manner of engagement that could support his ontological supposition of divine action at the quantum level.

### 2.1.4 Causal Joint Summary

I have offered that the incompatibilist view of divine action displayed in these three theories may be construed as dualistic. I suggest that this limits the perspective of divine action, and that for a more full understanding of God’s actions in the world, a new perspective would be beneficial. However, there are positive aspects to the incompatibilist views. First, while I suggest that these theories are too closely associated with the edifice of Western mainstream science, they are yet

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helpful in that they attempt to understand divine action in the world in a systematic fashion. This is also the aim of spirit field theory, to determine a manner in which we may understand God’s intelligible actions. Further, the effort to understand metaphysical phenomena acting in the world is the cornerstone of TCM medical practice. However, incompatibilist views still largely stem from a dualistic paradigm. 87

Spirit field theory is Pannenberg’s effort to go beyond the dualism one encounters in theological arguments that rely too greatly on science. 88 Pannenberg offered that science was ultimately reliant on divine constructs, and that the laws of science may therefore point to the divine reality; however, he did not believe that spirit field should be a scientific theory, but rather a theological one. 89 Many science and religion scholars have rebuffed this effort and labeled the spirit field theory as unhelpful. As I will demonstrate in chapter five, these criticisms are largely due to the dualistic worldview from which they operate. If the spirit field were to be understood through a new lens, one with a holistically monistic worldview and language, then Pannenberg’s work may be positively applied to incompatibilist theories. This effort of interpretation may require the use of one tradition to better understand another.

I suggest that employing the Qi and Holy Spirit comparison in this may be helpful. By employing the understanding of Qi to more clearly view the actions of the Holy Spirit, it may be possible to better understand what Pannenberg was trying to accomplish. However, the Qi and Holy Spirit comparative analysis, like the work done in causal joint theory, includes some

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87 For a definition of Incompatibilism see appendix 1.  
88 For a definition of the spirit field refer to appendix 1.  
89 Pannenberg, “The Doctrine of Creation and Modern Science,” 47
deficient arguments. I will now offer some of the current work being done in this field, and offer how my approach may be more comprehensive.

2.2 Qi and the Holy Spirit comparative analysis

Grace Ji-Sun Kim, Koo Dong Yun, Bede Bidlack, and Robert Cook are four researchers who have recently written on the comparison of Qi and the Holy Spirit. While the Qi and Holy Spirit comparative analysis has been present in scholarly debates for centuries, I have chosen the most recent work on the subject, as my analysis will also be placed in a modern context. My focus will then be to engage the areas of method, theory, and doctrine, rather than history.

2.2.1 Grace Ji-Sun Kim

In The Holy Spirit, Chi, and the Other, Grace Ji-Sun Kim speaks to imperialism, colonialism and the concept of the “other.” Her argument is that an understanding of God as Spirit-Qi will allow Christian pneumatology to appreciate harmony, and therefore bridge racial divides, eliminating the concept of otherness. Kim offers that this new paradigm “will break down barriers that post-colonialism has securely built up,” moving humanity “toward emancipation and liberation.” Kim’s comparative study aims to present similarities between the concepts of the Holy Spirit and Qi, offering that a worldview wherein the Holy Spirit is viewed as Qi is more beneficial when attempting to overcome racism. Both Kim and I have similar goals, to employ the worldview of Qi to augment existing theories. However, in Kim’s work, the issue is the somewhat broader question of otherness in practical theology, while my own argument is more closely linked to

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90 For a definition of the causal joint see appendix 1.
pneumatology in a science and religion context. Therefore, there are areas of her argument that may not be as specific as my own.

Kim initially situates her discussion of Qi historically, offering that the concept of Qi can be traced back as far as 1751 BCE. She writes that, over time, Qi came to be known as several things, including “something that is central, hidden, right or righteous, high, supreme, remote or distant. Chi also means that which can be pursued to the ultimate end, or the final cause; as well as that out of which everything is produced, or the first cause.”92 In what Kim refers to as “classical Western Christian theology,” the ultimate cause is understood to be God. Therefore, she asserts, there is “a potentially strong connection between God and Chi, as they are both portrayed as the first cause.”93 Kim employs a wide array of Daoist, Buddhist, Confucian, and other classical Chinese works in an effort to describe Qi in this manner. Her interpretive framework is creative, and useful to demonstrate how one may construct such a comparative model in broad terms.

Kim works to offer a description of Qi that is both acceptable to Western audiences and helpful to her argument by presenting her own definition of Qi. She bases this on the radical formation of the character Qi (氣) found in classical literature.94 Employing her textual method of analysis, Kim concludes that Qi should be defined as a divine presence which must remain

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92 Ibid., 4. Here it may be noted the variation in spelling, from Qi to Chi. Kim, along with some other scholars, employs the older Wade-Giles manner of transliterating Chinese rather than the modern pinyin I employ.
93 Ibid., 10.
94 The character Qi is a compound ideograph, a class of characters which are also referred to as associative compounds or logical aggregates. Essentially, they are compounds of two or more pictographic or ideographic characters combined to suggest the meaning of the word to be represented 氣. It is Kim’s supposition that understanding the root radical formation of the character Qi offers insight into what it was originally considered to be. For a full treatment of this topic refer to: Tung, The Six Scripts or the Principles of Chinese Writing by Tai Tung, (Cambridge: Cambridge University press 1954), 114.

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present, and in balance, for life to continue.\(^95\) Kim works to support her definition through the medical understanding of \textit{Qi} as used by \textit{Qi-gong} practitioners. She writes that;

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\text{just as a medical scientist thinks of healing as multifaceted, including chemical, psychological, electromagnetic, and environmental components, so Qi-gong practitioners compartmentalize the concept “Chi” into several different categories.}\(^96\)
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She identifies these categories as: breath, food, and constitution. She allows that these categories separate \textit{Qi} into both internal and external forms.\(^97\) Kim’s further descriptions of \textit{Qi} include— \textit{Qi} as the origin of the universe, as life substance, and as life energy.

Kim writes that \textit{Qi}, “is embedded within the Asian people’s everyday discourse and concept of the world. Over time many different faces of \textit{Chi} developed, and distinctive names for specific stages or levels of \textit{Chi}.”\(^98\) Her language describes \textit{Qi} as a concept which is affected by the process of changing perception. She offers that the concept of \textit{Qi} has developed along with the societies that acknowledge it. In her view, it is not an immutable reality; it is not change itself, but the result of change. Her position seems to indicate that \textit{Qi} is an evolving philosophical concept. Kim’s description is original, and singular to her argument.

Kim argues that this view of \textit{Qi} may be helpful for those studying the Holy Spirit in Christian theology. She writes that, “the Asian understanding of \textit{Chi} can nurture a stronger theological perspective of the Holy Spirit that can help us in our daily lives by working against the negative consequences of the Western understanding of dualism. It may also help clarify

\(^{95}\) Kim, \textit{The Holy Spirit, Chi, and the Other}, 15.  
\(^{96}\) Ibid., 12.  
\(^{97}\) Ibid.  
\(^{98}\) Ibid., 16.
some of the tangled discussions of the doctrine of the Trinity.”

Indeed, the holistic monism found in many Chinese religo-philosophic traditions allows for an informed discussion of divine action; this is in fact the premise of my own work.

Kim’s comparative methodology has much to recommend it. She attempts the difficult task of comparing phenomena that are written about from two very different worldviews. Her aim, and much of her method, is helpful to my own work; however, there are some inconstancies in her book that I work to avoid. As an example, Kim writes that:

if the Asian concept of Chi is found to be similar to and largely the same as the Christian concept of the Holy Spirit, there will be a stronger basis for arguing that what the other believes and understands to be God is quite similar to the Western understanding of God.

This is a Westernization of Qi that is often found in this comparison. However, Qi, in the various Chinese traditions that describe it, is not seen in the sense of a personal deity; it is action in motion, not a person acting. If her comparison were from action to action then her theory holds; however, she does not make that distinction. She also does not disseminate between the preeminent actions of the Trinity. She writes that, “Spirit-Chi is salvific and negotiates a space to save those who are living in the liminal spaces between us.” This however confuses the work of the logos in the incarnated Christ with the work of pneuma, which is what her comparison is meant to center on. Kim, later in the work, also likens Qi to divine wisdom, or sophia, which is again more closely related to logos not pneuma or even ruach.

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99 Ibid., 36.
100 Ibid., 60.
101 There is of course the reference in The Book of Changes (Yijing) where Qi is connected with Taiji that gives birth to all creation; however, this is seen as a naturalistic function of the universe in the manner of generation—not a deity in action.
102 Kim, The Holy Spirit, Chi, and the Other, 61
103 Kim, The Holy Spirit, Chi, and the Other, 63.
Further, Kim’s use of the terms first and final cause is not appropriate to a description of Qi; as the balance of thinking in both Neo-Confucian and Daoist Qi cosmology would tend to preclude such a creation point. Further, there is no eschatology in either tradition to which a final cause may point. Kim’s use of these terms does not reflect the cyclical and continual nature of the universe, or Qi, as seen in any of the texts she works from. Rather, she interprets the texts from the point of view of Christian theology, appropriating terms which are not fully descriptive of Qi. Although her conclusion finds some resonance with the classics of Neo-Confucianism and Daoism, her definition is built from a Christian perspective, allowing that Qi is divine in the manner of transcendence.

As a final point, Kim writes that, “through the process of its enlargement, Chi became elevated to a universal concept and ultimately to a philosophical category.” Kim presents the idea that Qi is either a human construct that gained popularity, or possibly some manner of revelation that was then applied to non-Christian cosmological constructs in China. The possibility of truth in the revelation of Qi is undermined in Kim’s presentation of its historic and ritual engagement. Her argument is similar to that of the early Jesuit missionaries who thought of Tian Qi as the Chinese “misunderstanding” of God’s presence. Kim does not allow for the possibility of divine revelation in Qi permeating Chinese culture producing a religious awakening. Rather, Kim argues that Qi is essentially the Holy Spirit being understood in a different way. Apart from the limitation she seems to place on the apprehension of Qi in the

104 Ibid., 4.
107 Spence, The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci, 114–15. Tian Qi is the Qi which circulates in the heavenly realms and comes into contact with humans as yuan Qi or original Qi. The various forms of Qi will be expressly defined in chapter six.
Chinese context, her theology is also insufficient. She does not engage the Holy Spirit in any systematic manner. She does not employ any significant theologians or indeed offer a description of the Holy Spirit acting as part of the Trinity. These are all points which I address in my work on the subject.

If a succinct examination of *Qi* is to be made in comparison to the Holy Spirit, then it is beneficial to employ a very particular pneumatological engagement and a narrow focus. Further, it is helpful to define *Qi* within its own traditions, rather than to use a personally contrived definition of *Qi*. Finally, it is beneficial to situate the discussion within a worldview (such as TCM) that is consonant with both paradigms involved in the comparative analysis, rather than to re-shape concepts to fit a space unsuited to them. These are all points which I address in my own comparison.

### 2.2.2 Koo Dong Yun

In *The Holy Spirit and Chi (Qi): A Chiological approach to pneumatology*, Koo Dong Yun begins from the perspective that there is an “Ultimate Reality.” This Ultimate Reality, according to Yun, is represented by personal beings in some religions, such as Christianity with the Trinity, and by impersonal beings in others, such as the Way in Daoism.\(^\text{108}\) Yun situates his theological position in the work of Karl Barth and Paul Tillich. This is done in an effort to reconcile the work of the Spirit in creation with Chinese *Qi* cosmology. Yun argues that Barth’s pneumatology, specifically his thoughts on modes of the Spirit, are commensurate with an explanation of the physical presence of *Qi* in the world. Yun writes that the three phases or

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“weights” of Qi may be considered as similar to the “shape” of the Spirit. Yun’s use of these theologies is a beneficial map to follow when attempting to explain the cosmology of Qi.

Yun maintains that the reason he engages the Qi and Holy Spirit comparison is to cross from thought into praxis with regard to theology. He writes that we should “do theology” not just engage in discussions and thought experiments. He argues that the Holy Spirit and Qi comparison makes this possible as it allows for the Christian theologian to see how God has revealed God’s self in other cultures. This, he believes, moves pneumatology from thought to action, seeing how the Spirit moves in a more practical, or intelligible, way. He labels this the “chiological” approach to pneumatology, employing the older Wade-Giles manner of romanization for Qi. In this argument, Yun attempts to present pneumatology as a science rather than an area of theology. In his view, by moving to practical investigations, we may more clearly understand the movements of God in the world.

This is an argument to which I address my own efforts, understanding the action of the Holy Spirit. Yun asserts that employing the Chinese, or Korean, view of Qi as the Holy Spirit may help Christian theologians see the acts of the Holy Spirit more clearly. He works from the Book of Changes (Yijing) and other Chinese religio-philosophical texts to define and compare Qi to the Holy Spirit. Yun remarks that Qi is “the formless creativity in the I Ching.” Yun also describes chapter 42 of the Dao de Jing, noting the progression of one, to two, to three, to all. He likens this cyclical evolution to a creation narrative, wherein the all, which is the final progression resulting in the Dao, is the Christian concept of God. For Yun, it is the creative

109 Yun, The Holy Spirit and Ch’i, 5.
110 Ibid., 24.
111 Ibid., 126. I Ching is the Wade-Giles spelling of Yijing
112 Ibid., 25.
action of change in *Qi* that allows this to occur. Yun acknowledges the fact that *Qi* is thought of as change, and moves to argue that understanding the “Ultimate Reality” in this manner is helpful for Christian theologians.\(^\text{113}\)

Like myself, Yun sees a possible theological ally in Wolfhart Pannenberg, suggesting that Pannenberg’s spirit field theory is similar to the description of *Qi* as force or energy. Following this, Yun attempts to use his chiological approach to interpret Pannenberg’s pneumatology, allowing that we may consider the spirit field theory to be the manifestation of God’s love. Yun asserts that, according to the *Yijing*, *Qi* can also be thought of as love in a relational manner.\(^\text{114}\)

While his depiction of *Qi* bears no direct relation to any major religio-philosophical tradition; he effectively defines *Qi* on his own terms in a way that is approachable to Western audiences and that finds some consonance with Pannenberg’s thought.

Yun’s argument adds to the field by attempting a theological interpretation of *Qi* that is not apologetically focused. Additionally, he strives to employ Christian pneumatology in the conversation. Yun brings important perspectives to the table and outlines some significant questions which should be addressed in further work. The format of Yun’s argument is a beneficial guide for those attempting to reach a Western audience. However, in his work to make the Chinese concept of *Qi* approachable, Yun ends by representing *Qi* in a limited, and on occasion inappropriate, manner.

As an example, the formation of the cosmos in *Qi* cosmology is not so easily compared to the creative work of the Spirit. Specifically, creation theology assumes a beginning point,

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\(^\text{113}\) Ibid., 128.

whereas Qi cosmology displays an eternally continual cycle of change.\textsuperscript{115} Also, creation, in Christian theology, is the work of a divine agent: there is no such top-down causation in Qi cosmology, and even less so a personal deity.\textsuperscript{116} Qi is change, but it is not the creative director of change, this again would intimated a person, or at the very least a center of thought that directs creation. The change which results from Qi simply \textit{is}, there is no “creativity.” Change occurs as a natural function of the existence of Qi, resonating in the pattern of all things, because Qi is change.\textsuperscript{117} Qi is in fact the act of progressive being in the continual sense even while it is the nature of all physical reality and the potential manifestation of the universe. In other words, Qi is the essence of a verb and noun as one which may only exist as one. Understanding Qi in this manner makes it more plausible to discuss the \textit{actions} of the Holy Spirit, rather than the essence, as Qi is action.

Yun also argues that the Dao in Daoism is Qi. While the Dao bears resemblance to Qi, and indeed is confused often, they are not the same phenomenon. The Dao is the way, it is the resonant pattern of existence, incorporating all reality.\textsuperscript{118} Qi, on the other hand, demonstrates the action of the Dao. Qi, as the phenomenon of change, displays the pattern of the Dao, and for that reason is ubiquitous and undivided; however, it is not the Dao.\textsuperscript{119} As such, Yun’s use of Qi in this discussion is unsupported. Yun’s seeming lack of familiarity with the various Chinese traditions that employ Qi in their cosmology and philosophy limits the presentation of Qi in his analysis. It is to avoid broad assertions, and the incomplete descriptions of complex religio-

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{115} Volker Scheid, \textit{Currents of Tradition in Chinese Medicine}, 43.
\item \textsuperscript{116} Alexander Chow, \textit{Theosis, Sino-Christian Theology and the Second Chinese Enlightenment} (New York: Macmillan, 2013), 121.
\item \textsuperscript{118} For a definition of the Dao see appendix 1.
\item \textsuperscript{119} Isabelle Robinet and Phyllis Brooks, \textit{Taoism : Growth of a Religion}. (Stanford: Stanford University press, 1997), 17.
\end{itemize}
philosophic phenomena such as this, that I employ the texts of TCM in a methodical comparative model.

Further, there are some deficiencies in Yun’s theological positions. As an example, Yun attempts a summary of Pannenberg’s position on the immanent and economic Trinity. In this, he suggests that the Spirit is the creative force behind creation. However, he fails to address the manner in which Pannenberg argues for preeminent action in the Trinity. Yun simply assigns creative acts to logos. Pannenberg does speak to the logos in creation, and how it may be seen in relation to Trinitarian action; however, Pannenberg’s view is subtle and is not fully described by the rather brief comparison Yun attempts to employ. Further, Yun does not address Pannenberg’s view on the separate persons of the Trinity and what their role is in creative acts, nor what Pannenberg understands to be creation more broadly.

Additionally, Yun attempts to interpret Pannenberg’s creation theology through Qi. However, Qi may not be characterized as an action or presence with a “beginning,” as there is no beginning or ending of Qi. Further, Qi may not be considered the creative entity behind the formation of the universe, as that would intimate conscious intent. Rather, in Qi cosmology, the formation of the physical universe is a result of Qi being what Qi is, the phenomenon of change that drives the formation of physical matter. It is for this reason I do not employ any manner of “Qi creationism,” rather I concisely outlined my position regarding Qi cosmology which lies in

121 Medley points out in his own work that “Pannenberg does not use the exact term “field theory of information” in his systematic” although he does work to link the two. For a detailed argument refer to: George Medley, “The Inspiration of God and Wolfhart Pannenberg’s field Theory of Information,” Zygon 48 no 1 (2013).
122 Kaptchuk, The Web That Has No Weaver, 15.
accordance with TCM and is supported by the Chinese religio-philosophical traditions of Daoism and Neo-Confucianism.

While I have found the structure of his work appealing, his method of analysis, theological interpretation, and definition of terms would not be helpful in the specific comparison that I am employing. I have therefore used a more complex and comprehensive comparative model in my own thesis.

2.2.3 Bede Bidlack

Bede Bidlack is yet another scholar who attempts to understand Qi through a comparison with the Holy Spirit. Bidlack writes in “Qi in the Christian Tradition” that, “Qi is not a philosophical or theological concept of a reality, it is a reality.”

Bidlack engages the practical and physiological aspects of Qi through yoga. In particular, he writes of his personal experience with the feeling of Qi flowing in his body, and the similar feeling described by J.M. Dechanet, a Benedictine monk who practices Christian yoga. Bidlack then concludes that the feelings are the same, ergo the substance is the same.

Bidlack’s argument is helpful when working to present certain realities that stem from, what some refer to as, alternative medicine. Essentially, he offers that one may see the actions of Qi in the human body through practices that are more familiar to Western audiences, namely the practice of yoga.

Bidlack is creative in his attempt to describe the physical reality of Qi through human experience, intimating that humans may perceive Qi flow in their physical bodies. He works to

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123 Bede Bidlack, “Qi in the Christian Tradition,” Dialogue and Alliance 17, no. 1 (2003), 52
124 Ibid., 53. Meridians are often, and incorrectly, associated with the circulatory and nervous systems as either blood vessels or nerve fibers. However, meridians are neither. Rather, the meridians are a lattice of communicative connections that facilitate Qi flow in the body. A more full description of the various meridians will be offered in chapter six on the definition of Qi.
move the conversation from philosophical conjecture to empirical reality. This is an underrepresented aspect of the Qi and Holy Spirit dialogue, and Bidlack is one of the few to write on it. Further, his analysis does not stem from a Western view, rather he offers Qi as a reality described in a monistic worldview. While Bidlack does not explicitly describe this view, nor the differences it has with the dualism that is popular in the West, his treatment is none-the-less a helpful model.

Bidlack’s personal account offers an endearing narrative, but his method is somewhat vague as he introduces a third variable to the comparison. He writes that, upon finding very little primary source material on Qi in the Christian tradition, he moved onto the early comparative works on Hinduism. While Qi and Prana do indeed share characteristics, involving another concept to draw similarities to, then attempting a third part comparison to Christianity invites a degree of separation which is unnecessary.

Further, Bidlack’s use of Falun Gong Qi gong limits him in that he must assume a certain stance on the operation of Qi, namely that it is completely malleable, as this is a core principle of Falun Gong Qi gong practice. This is his primary argument against Qi being interpreted as the Holy Spirit, as from his point of view, humans may have no influence on the movement of the Holy Spirit. While his theological stance presents several weak points which may be

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125 Ibid., 53.
126 The concept of prana bears some similarities to Qi; however, this comparison is not within the scope of this work. For more on this refer to: Connolly, P. Vitalistic thought in India: a study of the “Prāṇa” concept in Vedic literature and its development in the Vedānta, Sāṃkhya, and Pāṇḍarātra traditions. (Delhi: Sri Satguru Publications, 1992)
127 Bidlack does not expressly state that his practice of Qi gong is of the Falun Gong style; however, the terminology and practice he describes in his article is used almost exclusively by the followers of Falun Gong and their contemporaries who adhere to the principle that Qi may be fully controlled through focused conscious effort. For more on the practice of Falun Gong refer to: David Ownby, Falun Gong and the Future of China. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).
128 Bidlack, “Qi in the Christian Tradition,” 56
debated, I prefer to address his interpretation of Qi. He is of the opinion, common to modern Falun Gong Qi gong practitioners, that we may control Qi in all instances. This is not an accurate presentation of Qi in any tradition other than modern Falun Gong Qi gong.\textsuperscript{129} According to Laozi, a person able to control Qi in this manner would be a true sage, and as such attain immortality, an accomplishment Laozi deemed nearly unique.\textsuperscript{130} Further, while the TCM basis for diagnosis and treatments centers on the movement of Qi, Qi in TCM is not considered to be a phenomenon that may be manipulated in the manner of command and control.

Bidlack’s work is most helpful in that, unlike many authors in this field, he addresses the practical engagement of Qi in the human body. Further, his presentation of Qi offers that one may describe Qi to a Western audience without changing the description to fit within a dualistic worldview. His work on the subject is the closest to the methodology that I employ, and indeed my comparison will also address the presence of Qi in the human body as a tangible reality, an active phenomenon with a mode of perceptible interaction. However, in contrast to Bidlack, I will employ a specific manner of interpretation via TCM and a clear theological engagement employing Christian theology.

2.2.4 Robert Cook

Robert Cook, in his article “Alternative and Complementary Theologies: The Case of Cosmic Energy with Special Reference to Chi,” argues from a predominantly scientific standpoint. Cook points to experiments conducted in 1986 by Robert Chuckrow, an experimental physicist and taiji chuan practitioner. Cook maintains that Chuckrow’s results led him to believe Qi was

\textsuperscript{129} Liu, The Essential Book of Traditional Chinese Medicine vol 1, 8. 
\textsuperscript{130} The 4\textsuperscript{th} and 48\textsuperscript{th} hexagram of the I-Ching
equated with an electromagnetic force.\textsuperscript{131} Cook continues Chuckrow’s line of inquiry by examining the properties of field theory in relation to \textit{Qi} and concludes that \textit{Qi} should be thought of as a form of energy field. The aim of Cook’s work is to present \textit{Qi} as a type of cosmic energy field that humans have had a perception of throughout history and, as such, have depicted in varying religious and philosophical traditions.\textsuperscript{132}

Cook, unlike many who write in the \textit{Qi} and Holy Spirit comparison, does engage TCM in order to support his argument. He is of the opinion that \textit{Qi}, as it is written of in TCM, is a type of energy that animates tissue.\textsuperscript{133} He likens it to the way Frankenstein’s monster was brought to life by an electrical discharge in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelly’s classic novel.\textsuperscript{134} Cook offers a presentation of \textit{Qi} that is more friendly to the interpretation of Western audiences. Cook argues that a purely scientific presentation of \textit{Qi} is needful as a materialist view of \textit{Qi} is the only manner in which \textit{Qi} may be dealt with theologically.

Cook maintains that a scientific description of \textit{Qi} in relation to Christian doctrine is possible if a panentheistic view of God, drawn from process theology is employed. This, he argues, offers a theological worldview by which \textit{Qi} may be introduced into Christian theology.\textsuperscript{135} Cook argues that if we view the world as in God, and progressing with God in change, then \textit{Qi} may simply be some manner of natural field by which we are given life and offered communion with our creator. His analogy is that of a mother carrying a child in her womb.\textsuperscript{136} The life-giving

\textsuperscript{131} Rob Cook, “Alternative and Complementary Theologies: The Case of Cosmic Energy with Special Reference to Chi,” \textit{Studies in World Christianity} 6, no. 2 (January 1, 2000),180.
\textsuperscript{132} Cook, “Alternative and Complementary Theologies,” 176.
\textsuperscript{133} Ibid., 181.
\textsuperscript{135} Cook, “Alternative and Complementary Theologies,” 182.
\textsuperscript{136} Ibid., 182.
sustenance, in this instance the electromagnetic animating field of Qi, is part of the mother and offered to the child.\textsuperscript{137}

Cook’s scientific treatment of Qi engages the physical reality of Qi which is helpful. Additionally, his use of field theory and TCM finds some consonance with my own research. However, in his reliance on the sciences, Cook abandons the idea of Qi as a metaphysical reality. Cook is therefore not able to offer a comprehensive description of Qi. While Cook’s analogy is creative, the manner in which he describes Qi is not found in the Chinese religio-philosophic traditions that feature Qi, nor does it find full agreement with the depiction of Qi in TCM. Within these various traditions, and in TCM in particular, Qi is much more than an electric field, as Qi plays a significant role in the formation and evolution of the cosmos. Cook’s practical use of science in the Qi and Holy Spirit comparison is accessible, and helpful to the inclusion of science in my own comparison. However, his view does not account for the metaphysical aspects of reality that are inherent in the Chinese worldview. This limits Cook to a largely Western interpretation of Qi. Further, Cook offers little in the way of Christian theology to support his view of process theology and panentheism.\textsuperscript{138}

Cook’s comparison offers the view of a panentheistic God acting in creation by employing Qi as a physical phenomenon. While this bears some similarity to my own view, Cook’s argument includes a limited presentation of divine action. Additionally, Cook does not offer a view of the work of the Spirit in creation. Finally, there is very little serious discussion of Qi as it exists in a metaphysical sense. Cook’s use of science is helpful; however, removing metaphysical reality from the analysis to support an empirical model is more appropriate to

\textsuperscript{137} Ibid., 187
\textsuperscript{138} Ibid., 176-180
Western dualism, and therefore out of place in my argument. It is for this reason that I offer the holistic monism of TCM, in order to include metaphysical reality in my analysis.

**Summary**

In this thesis I suggest that the incompatibilist view of divine action, most clearly seen in the causal joint debate, stems from a dualistic worldview that may not fully incorporate physical and metaphysical phenomenon. I further offer that the spirit field theory of Pannenberg was an attempt to reconcile physical and metaphysical realities, moving beyond dualism into a holistic view of the universe, but that it was largely rejected by incompatibilist scholars. To demonstrate the dualism that I suggest exists in the incompatibilist view of divine action, I have offered three prominent theories and commented upon both their strengths and possible weaknesses.

Russell, Peacocke, and Polkinghorne have developed their theories over several years and many books and articles. The argumentation these men have presented displays a thoughtful and comprehensive disclosure of thoughts concerning divine action. As such, I am able to view the evolution of their ideas in relation to their theology more broadly, and how it impacts their other work. In this, it becomes apparent that a key issue to resolving their questions to each other, and indeed to answer the questions they raise for themselves, is their dualistic worldview and the language that it produces. In each instance, across many publications, there is a constancy in the dualism of their viewpoint. This is a worldview that may be benefited by a new perspective.

It is for this reason that I suggest that the hermeneutic lens of TCM Qi pulse diagnosis, may allow spirit field theory to be applied to the incompatibilist science and religion discussion of divine action in a positive way. To situate this argument, I have presented recent work that has been done on the Qi and Holy Spirit comparative analysis to show where the current scholarship
is wanting in regard to my argument, and how my own comparative structure may be more helpful.

Kim and Yun both offer a comparative analysis in the form of a monograph. While the structure in both volumes is helpful, there are some aspects of their arguments that I allow are not sufficient. Kim attempts to present \( Qi \) in a manner acceptable to her largely Western audience, and in so doing brings \( Qi \) into a worldview that is not wholly appropriate it. Further, as Kim could, ostensibly, not find a definition of \( Qi \) that fits the dualistic view of the universe popular in the West, she invents her own definition. Her framework is not without merit; indeed, I find it helpful as I too write for a Western audience. However, in her attempt to define \( Qi \), she moves too far from the worldview from which \( Qi \) is written. Yun also works to bridge the divide between dualistic and monistic worldviews, by employing a pluralistic argument. However, this is difficult to reconcile with many of the principles of mainstream Christian theology. Yun’s theology is rather broad, and therefore unfocused and tenuous.

Bidlack and Cook, working in the more limited medium of journal articles, also offer beneficial insight into the \( Qi \) and Holy Spirit comparative analysis. Bidlack, like myself, makes an effort to explain \( Qi \) as it exists in the physical universe. His approach is practical in that he does not rely on philosophical writings alone. Further, Bidlack presents \( Qi \) within a monistic worldview, without employing terms more common to dualism. However, Bidlack’s work is limited in primary source material and critical engagement. Cook as well looks to the physical representation of \( Qi \), from a more scientific perspective. While the use of science in his article is helpful to my own presentation of \( Qi \) in bioinformatics, Cook removes the metaphysical from the discussion. Both scholars attest to the phenomenon of \( Qi \) in a practical manner; however, as one
employs only science, and the other only metaphysics, both researchers present a limited view of Qi in their analysis.

Therefore, while I find the methods of these authors to be helpful, I believe that my own framework may be of greater benefit to my argument. In my analysis, I preserve Qi in an authentic context, presenting Qi based on consistent historic and contemporary engagement. Also, I am concerned to work within a single author’s theological system, in order to preserve consistency. Further, in my presentation I deal with one specific theological model, namely the spirit field theory of Wolfhart Pannenberg. The aim of this is not to explain Qi to Westerners using Western terms and worldview. Rather, it is to present the holistic monism of TCM and to demonstrate that spirit field theory may be more helpfully be displayed through it.
Chapter 3 God-to-human

This thesis works towards a better understanding of the spirit field theory of Wolfhart Pannenberg through $Qi$ as it is understood in TCM. While both TCM $Qi$ and the spirit field act on, in, and through all reality, I have focused my attention on actions involving the human body. Consequently, it is helpful to understand how God is thought to act in relation to the human person in Pannenberg’s view, and if TCM $Qi$ cosmology is appropriate to this understanding. Therefore, in the following chapter, I will explore Pannenberg’s view of God’s actions in the God-to-human relationship, as well as the actions of $Qi$ as they are described in TCM $Qi$ cosmology.

In order to present the worldview of TCM $Qi$ as a beneficial hermeneutic to Pannenberg’s thought on divine action, this chapter will offer a comparison through the use of stage one in the morphological method.\(^{139}\) In stage one, the researcher must place the priority on comparative systematics, rather than listing isolated comparable data. Further, as stage five in the method is a common directive for this thesis, I will work through the systematic description of archetypes of action.\(^{140}\) Archetypes of action are the patterns that demonstrate the actions of $Qi$ and the Holy Spirit in the universe. For Pannenberg, God’s actions towards humans may be categorized by three criteria. According to Pannenberg, God’s action in relation to humans may first be understood as continual, in that they are both eternal and ongoing. Secondly these actions are immanent, both in terms of action on God’s part and in terms of a connective or relational action between God, humanity, and the world-as-a-whole. Third, and, perhaps most importantly for

\(^{139}\) Refer to figure 1.

\(^{140}\) For a definition of archetypes see appendix 1.
Pannenberg, divine action in relation to humans is intelligible, as we may in part understand God’s actions through our participation in the spirit field.

TCM Qi cosmology also works to understand Qi by classifying the actions of Qi in the universe. In TCM the actions of Qi are thought of as continual, pervasive, and intelligible. These will be highlighted in parallel sections, displaying the three-part system in which both divine action and Qi are active. In this, I may avoid compiling a list of similar traits, and rather offer how the pattern, archetypes of action, may be formed and employed as a device for interpretation.

3.1 Pannenberg and God

Pannenberg is consistent across many of his writings as to the relationship that God has with God’s creation. Pannenberg argues that God may be best understood in this relationship through God’s actions. He writes that, “we must not think of God’s existence as simply transcendent, as an existence outside this world. We must think of it as an active presence in the reality of the world.”¹⁴¹ Understanding God through God’s active presence in the world is an imperative for Pannenberg. Thus, Pannenberg has developed his own view of God’s existence by working to understand God’s activity, expressing that God’s actions may be thought of as continual, immanent, and intelligible. As Pannenberg situates his view of God within this framework, I will offer that the actions of Qi in TCM are also considered to be continually active, pervasive, and intelligible.

The spirit field is a key aspect to Pannenberg’s thought regarding divine action. It is through the actions of field operations that Pannenberg offers we may have a more full view of

¹⁴¹ Pannenberg, Systematic Theology Volume 1, 357.
divine action. According to Pannenberg, spirit field theory, “could be used in theology to make the effective presence of God in every single phenomenon intelligible.” This statement from Pannenberg identifies some particular traits that he associates with divine action.

Firstly, this passage points to the importance of field theory (a subject I will more fully discuss in chapter five) in the work of interpreting of God’s actions. Pannenberg writes that it is through this theory that we may come to know the nature of God’s actions, if in a limited manner. As I will offer in the following pages, this is a matter of great importance for Pannenberg, as being aware of God’s actions in creation demonstrates the whole of reality and human destiny. This bears weight for my own investigation in that spirit field theory may not be considered a casual proposal, or trivial thought of Pannenberg. Rather, it is a key feature to his view of God and is therefore reflected in his views of divine action in many of his writings.

Secondly, this quote offers important insight into Pannenberg’s view of the nature of God’s actions in the world. He writes that God is first of all active, as God’s presence is effective. Therefore, the presence of God, for Pannenberg, is not a passive existence, nor it is simply a static framework of connections in the manner of a metaphysical support structure for the universe. Rather, Pannenberg states that God is effective. And as, per Pannenberg, all persons at all times come to know God through God’s actions, the acts of God are also pervasive in the universe throughout all space and time. This is also seen in Pannenberg’s eschatology, as he argues for divine action from the future manifesting in the present, or as he phrases it

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143 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology Volume 1, 357.
prolepsis. Divine action is therefore, according to Pannenberg, in constant motion, and perversely present in the universe.

Further, Pannenberg writes that God is effective in *every single phenomenon* as all phenomena are touched by God in an ongoing manner. Pannenberg’s use of the term phenomenon indicates that he understands God to interact with every situation as it happens on an individual basis. There is an “active being” in the context that all things, as they exist, persist in their actuality through action. Things are, because they “are” in the active sense. In this, every phenomenon, existing moment to moment, is in relationship with God through God’s actions. All things, including those that may seem to be at rest, are effectively existing in an active state as a condition of reality; they are active agents in that their very existence is as a state of active being. Even that which is, from the limited human perspective, as yet non-existent, is potentially manifested in God’s actions and therefore in relationship with God.

Finally, for Pannenberg, divine action is intelligible. We may therefore, in a limited fashion, understand it. God’s actions in the world are the source of revelation, and humanity’s access to the saving grace of Jesus Christ. For Pannenberg, if God’s actions were not in some manner intelligible we would have no indication of our ultimate destiny which, for Pannenberg, is reconciliation with God.

Succinctly, Pannenberg’s description of the spirit field in this quote summarizes the paradigm from which he operates in his understanding of divine action. For Pannenberg, God’s actions should be thought of as continual, immanent, and intelligible. This view may be seen

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145 Pannenberg, ”Doctrine of creation and modern science”, 39.
146 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology Volume 1*, 357.
recurrently in Pannenberg’s three-volume systematic theology, his theological anthropology, and his writings that deal with pneumatology more broadly. I will now explicate these views in turn by highlighting key texts in Pannenberg’s body of work, in this I will follow the systematic pattern of actions that are also employed in the description of Qi in the second section of this chapter. It is again important to note that these are descriptions of action, not identity, as this thesis does not work to understand the divine person of God or the essence of the Holy Spirit but rather how their actions are present in the spirit field. It is the particularities of these actions that combine to form the archetypes of action that are the pattern of comparison.

3.2 God as continually active

According to Pannenberg, God is continually active in a progressively evolving system. Pannenberg writes that, “God guarantees as well as makes possible the emergence and persistence of continually existing forms of creaturely reality.”

Pannenberg writes that God is not only the guarantor, but also the one who makes reality possible. Therefore, God’s activity is not limited to supporting creation, rather there is an active component. This is not a deterministic action, as Pannenberg writes that God makes all aspects of creaturely reality “possible.” There is, for Pannenberg, space for creative movements within God’s creation. God may guide creation to an end point of reconciliation from the future; however, this is not necessarily accomplished in an absolutely directive or a deterministic fashion.

Pannenberg also indicates that the creative actions of God are not limited to a single point in spacetime, rather that the continual progress of evolution, of all creaturely reality, owes its continuing existence and development to God’s actions. Further, the emergence or creation of

anything new is also within the purview of God’s actions. There is not a single point of creation from which all things flow in a single directive; rather creation is a continual occurrence, as all things are in a continual state of being. Divine action must therefore, per Pannenberg, be continual, as it is involved in the advancement of the universe in an ongoing manner.

Further, Pannenberg writes that, “theologically one may see in the rise of each particular form a direct expression in creaturely reality of the workings of the logos, of the divine Word of Creation.” He characterizes the actions of God through the work of creation, allowing that creation is an ongoing process, rather than a single event. In each new creative event, the mark of God may be seen. It is through God’s pervasive and ongoing actions in the world-as-a-whole that we may see God, unlimited by time or space. The participation of God in the world is therefore a continual, and creatively involved, action.

This does not, however, intimate that God is dependent on God’s creation. Rather, for Pannenberg, the continual action of God in the world is a key factor in the designation of God’s attributes, in relation to God’s creation. He writes that, “contingency characterizes the existence of the world as a whole, as well as of each of its parts. This contingency of the creatures is the correlate and expression of the freedom of God in his activity as creator.” The contingency of creation upon God, as well as God’s freedom from that contingent existence, is, for Pannenberg, most easily characterized through God’s activity as creator. This creative action of God, as seen previously, is for Pannenberg an ongoing process. Simply, we may view the contingency of creation in that the ongoing being of the world-as-a-whole needs the creative action of God to be

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present in every single phenomenon. However, as these creative acts are done though the freedom of the creator, God does not need creation for God’s continuing existence. God’s acts may not be present apart from something to act upon; however, God needs no such association as God is the source of free action. It can be seen even in the early stages of this thesis that there is a separation in Pannenberg’s thought regarding the nature of divine actions and the divine person.

While it may be seen that Pannenberg places great importance on divine action for revelation and eventual salvation, the actions of God in this process must, as previously mentioned, be considered separate from God’s essence. According to Pannenberg, the outward action of the divine will should be thought of as “an activity which produces effects that are different from itself.” It is not a full joining between humans and God, nor anything approaching pantheism. Pannenberg writes that, while the Spirit is active in the world, “it is a mark of the organic that [the organic] has an inner relation to the future of its own changes and also to its spatial environment.” There is an action of the divine Spirit in humanity; however, the progression marked as future changes and spatial existence signifies the “mark of the organic,” not the Spirit. Succinctly, humans may change, and the world may evolve, but God’s essential nature is beyond such considerations.

For Pannenberg, God’s immanent action in creation is the grounds of physical existence; however, the active engagement of God is more than just some manner of metaphysical substratum. God actively participates in, with, and through, God’s creation via the spirit field. In this, God offers input, but also receives information which may then have an influence on the

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150 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology 1*, 385.
divine reality. In particular Pannenberg points to “modes of community,” such as the Lord’s supper and prayer, allowing for participation in God’s eschatological future through faith in Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{152}

This reciprocal influence is mutually affective, albeit in a limited fashion. Human actions in the field may affect the Spirit but they may not direct the Spirit. For Pannenberg, “decisive significance attaches…to the work of the Spirit as the creative origin of all life.”\textsuperscript{153} Humans may therefore have some creative influence in the process of relationship, affecting God’s actions, but the overall direction, the decisive significance, comes from the origin of the system. Therefore, God is in every instance present through God’s actions in relationship with humanity, but in relationship, not as an absolute determinative force.

God is, for Pannenberg, continually active in the progression of the universe in the manner of relationship. Pannenberg understands this relationship, as I will display in the following chapters, to exist in the form of a spirit field. Therefore, when attempting to interpret Pannenberg’s view of divine action in the spirit field, it is helpful to assume a position that lies in consonance with the idea of a continually active metaphysical phenomenon that exists relationally in a progressively evolving universe. The $\text{Qi}$ cosmology of TCM, as I will more fully explicate in the second half of this chapter, offers this perspective.

### 3.3 God’s actions as immanent

For Pannenberg, God is involved in “every single phenomenon,” through God’s immanent activity. Pannenberg writes that:

\textsuperscript{153} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 3, 31.
God is always present already in all human life. He is there for us and our world even though he is not known as God. He is there as the undefined infinite which is formed by the primal intuition of our awareness of reality, as the horizon within which we comprehend all else by limitation.\textsuperscript{154}

Effectively, God is pervasive in creation, even for those who may not be aware of, or believe in, God. As I will offer in the next chapter, Pannenberg believes God to be the root of our consciousness. Therefore, although he writes that God is the “undefined infinite” that is formed by our awareness, this is not meant to demonstrate that God is in some manner an emergent property of our minds. Rather, God is present to our awareness as the basis for that awareness, which in turn becomes familiar with the infinite nature of God in an undefined way. More simply, God is present to us in the reality of our consciousness, revealing God’s self to us. God is, for Pannenberg, the basis of reality through which humanity experiences the world-as-a-whole.

However, Pannenberg argues that we are aware of the nature of God’s immanence through God’s actions, not through the presence of God’s essence. For Pannenberg, “every objectification of God into being (Seiendes) falls short of the biblical idea of an almighty God as the reality which determines everything.”\textsuperscript{155} We may not therefore think of God as substance, in the manner of pantheism as God is in the world and yet beyond mere materiality. Therefore, while we may receive impressions of God’s transcendent essence through revelation, the manner in which we experience that revelation is through divine action. This action is present to all of human life, which, for Pannenberg, is the wholeness of our reality, as he further states that God

\textsuperscript{154} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology 1}, 356
is there for the world. We may see then that God is active in all things at all times, present as the horizon of human comprehension and all that is beyond it.

According to Pannenberg, “in its manifestation in the world, God's existence proves also to be transcendent over the world.” God acts in the world; however, God’s transcendent nature is not compromised in this. For Pannenberg, we may realize this if we are to understand God’s actions as immanent in creation. If the nature of God’s acts in the spirit field are pervasive, then we may consider God’s essence, or identity, to be transcendent while still allowing that God may act creatively anywhere in spacetime. Therefore, when speaking of the action of God in the spirit field, we may think of God’s actions as immanent in relation to creation, even as we also acknowledge the transcendence of God’s essence.

Pannenberg further writes that “the creation of all things, even including things that belong to the past, takes place out of the ultimate future.” Creation is continual, and dependent on God; it is also in such a state for all time in all places. Even things of the past, in different locations in spacetime, are affected by God’s actions from the ultimate future, the culmination of creation. As Pannenberg writes, “the infinite whole of simultaneous presence that is God's eternity” works in creation through God’s Spirit. Pannenberg makes a significant statement here. He writes that God is active through the Spirit, and also that God’s presence is an infinite and simultaneous whole. In relation to time then, God is whole and infinite, occurring all at once. There is a continual existence of God in reality, manifested in the Spirit through simultaneous action in relation to all things as they actively exist.

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156 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 1, 358.
157 Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, 230.
Finally, for Pannenberg, the actions of God may be considered immanent in that they allow for revelation in countless acts. He writes that, “the unity of God’s eternal essence and therefore of his activity does not prevent us from speaking of a plurality and multiplicity of divine actions that are summed up in the unity.”¹⁵⁹ The immanent presence of God in the world-as-a-whole may therefore be thought of as the unification of a countless number of instances wherein God is present through God’s actions. God’s actions and essence should therefore be considered separately prior to the eschaton, as they do not ultimately display God’s essence until then.

God, for Pannenberg, is in constant interaction with God’s creation in a myriad of ways, all together comprising revelation of the divine presence. This may be conceived of as God’s acts, whether they are classified as revelatory, non-deterministically directive, or creative, perpetually inputting information into the universe across a distance of zero, even as they are present in the system as an infinite whole. There is a distance of zero because, as God’s actions are immanent, there is no distance to cross. Further, the immanence of God’s actions in the universe indicates that there is no information input from “outside” the universe. Pannenberg’s view then neatly answers the questions of information entropy concerning the loss of information across distances, and the challenge of thermodynamics regarding the addition of energy into a closed system.¹⁶⁰

For Pannenberg, the summation of God’s immanence in relation to the world is therefore most helpfully displayed in the immanent presence of God’s actions, in particular through the

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¹⁵⁹ Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 2, 42.
¹⁶⁰ For more on how these scientific premises have affected theological constructs refer to: Gary Patterson, "Theology and Thermodynamics: In Praise of Entropy," Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith 64, no. 4 (2012): 242-250; and George Medley, "The inspiration of God and Wolfhart Pannenberg’s ‘field theory of information.’" Zygon 48 no 1 (2013): 93.
spirit field. This allows for a conceptual framework wherein we may consider divine action, rather than the divine person. Therefore, the actions of $Qi$, as I will shortly indicate, may be beneficially applied as a hermeneutic lens through which to view Pannenberg’s’ spirit field theory. This will be done in an effort to better understand how pervasive metaphysical actions encounter the human body, rather than a comparative analysis purposed to define the divine identity of an immanent God.

**3.4 God’s actions as intelligible**

Pannenberg argues that God’s actions in the world are continually active, immanent, and finally intelligible. Pannenberg writes:

> The loftiness of the divine reality makes it inaccessible to us unless it makes itself known. Where God and the gods are viewed as an incomparably transcendent and holy power, or as a power that encompasses and determines all things, the knowledge of God is self-evidently possible only as a knowledge that God himself discloses.\(^{161}\)

This statement makes several important points. First, that humans may be aware of God and God’s actions. In other words, divine action is intelligible. This is stated rather plainly; however, Pannenberg goes further in his argument. He writes that our awareness is dependent on God choosing to disclose God’s self. In this it can be seen that our awareness of God’s actions is not due to our investigative powers alone, lest God be considered a substance that is reducible. Rather God chooses to make God’s self known through intelligible acts. The structure of the universe that is God’s creation may therefore offer revelation of God, but only in that God makes the free choice to do so. Physical laws, evolution, even the fabric of spacetime may include a divine revelatory experience, but not in a reductionist manner. We may not, as an example, come

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\(^{161}\) Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology I*, 189.
to know the full nature of God by studying black holes. We may see the form and function of God’s actions, but only insofar as God allows it. Simply, God’s actions in the world are intelligible, but not tied to physical reality in a manner that is reducible.

Pannenberg also writes that our view of God is impossible unless God makes God’s self known.\(^{162}\) This is an active arrangement, as Pannenberg allows that there is no passive revelation of God. Even general revelation is the result of continual and purposeful divine action as God freely chooses to make God’s self known. General revelation, for Pannenberg, is not some manner of unconscious active being on God’s part. Further, Pannenberg allows that this is the case whether God is “viewed as an incomparably transcendent and holy power, or as a power that encompasses and determines all things.”\(^{163}\) For Pannenberg, it does not matter if one views God as a fully transcendent holy other, or as a fully immanent God who is present to all creation, the result is the same; simply, God is known only through perpetual action.

Pannenberg writes that we may understand this in a particular manner through human consciousness. He writes that, “the confused intuition of the infinite, which lies, prethematically, at the basis of all human consciousness, is already in truth a mode of the presence of God.”\(^{164}\) The basis for human consciousness is in reality the presence of God. Pannenberg writes that the informed intuition we have of metaphysical reality compels us to engage in actions that display it. It is then through ritual play or ‘spiritual activities,’ that we are “lifted ecstatically above our own particularity and are thus able to grasp that which is beyond us and distinct from our own existence.”\(^{165}\) The orderly and intelligible nature of God’s action is therefore a key component in

\(^{162}\) Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology 1*, 189.

\(^{163}\) Ibid.


\(^{165}\) Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology 3*, 17.
the makeup of human consciousness that allows us to receive revelation. God makes God’s self known through our conscious awareness, even as God makes that awareness a possibility. More simply, our revelation of God is indeed intelligible through the perpetual action of God, as God is active in relation to our consciousness.

Pannenberg argues that, although God’s actions in the world are intelligible, they are not reducible. He further states that, while we may consider that God’s actions are the basis for our consciousness, they are none-the-less separate from God’s essence as our conscious mind does not take part in the Divine identity. Pannenberg writes that, “the Spirit of the knowledge of God in Jesus is the Spirit of God only insofar as believers distinguish themselves in such knowledge from God as creatures.”\(^{166}\) Pannenberg makes a distinction between the actions of God in relation to God’s creation, and God’s essence. While God’s essence is not imbued into our consciousness through revelation, God’s actions are. We may participate in the Spirit of knowledge, that is we may understand revelation in our conscious mind, only if we realize that our creaturely nature is separate from God’s divine and transcendent person. In this view, natural theology or general revelation are not considered to be an aspect of God’s essence, rather the divine nature may only be realized in God’s actions, and only then through the free will of God.

While, according to Pannenberg, God’s actions are separate from God’s identity, they are not fully removed but rather correlative. He writes that, “we cannot set God’s relations to the world in antithesis to his essence, as though this were unaffected by the relations.”\(^{167}\) Although God’s identity is not fully revealed through God’s actions, we may none-the-less see that they are linked. The actions of God are related to God’s identity in that they are an expression of the

\(^{166}\) Pannenberg, *Jesus--God and Man*, 176.
divine will and person, and further, the relational interaction of God’s action in the world may have an influence on God. More simply, God acts, and God engages in mutual relationship with the results of those actions.

This view of reciprocal relationship also allows that our awareness of God’s actions is in the manner of relationship, rather than absolute direction. According to Pannenberg, when we have an awareness of God, when we come to know God’s actions, it is not in the manner of a set structure of the universe in which we perform as if mindless cogs in a machine. We may see divine action and become aware of God, and then participate in those actions in such a manner that they may have an effect on God.\textsuperscript{168} God’s actions are therefore not deterministic, rather they are corelative both within the person of God and between God and God’s creation.

God’s actions then, for Pannenberg, are dynamic, pervasive, and intelligible in the manner of a correlative relationship. Pannenberg attests that this pervasive and active relationship is most helpfully made knowable through the spirit field. Pannenberg writes that God communicates to humanity through “inspirations in imagination.”\textsuperscript{169} The actions of God, manifesting as the religious thematic, influence human consciousness to perceive divine revelation.\textsuperscript{170} We are inspired in our vision of the universe, both empirically and through our imagination, to see the constant action of God in the active being of all things.

Further, this communication occurs with the “gestalt and field of the universe.”\textsuperscript{171} The universe is, for Pannenberg, an organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its parts.

\textsuperscript{169} Wolhart Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1999), 381.
\textsuperscript{170} For Pannenberg, the religious thematic is the theme of God which is “inseparable from the living of human life, even if…the theme does not always find expression in monotheistic or even theistic terms.” Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 233.
\textsuperscript{171} Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 381;383.
parts because of the immanence of God’s actions revealing God. Pannenberg envisages God acting in this manner *via* an interactive spirit field in a manner capable of revelation. In this way, Pannenberg argues, we may come to know the intelligible actions of God, within the structure of the universe that God is continually creating, and through our conscious awareness, without taking part in God’s essence.

We may investigate the spirit field then, not as an abstract concept, nor as a static structure of physical laws alone, but rather as a combination of physical reality and metaphysical revelation. God makes God’s self known through continual metaphysical influence that is manifested in the physical universe. This is done with a subtle separation of action and identity that allows humanity to view the physical universe as a means for understanding, at least in a limited fashion, the revelation of God, as the whole of the universe exists in reciprocal relationship to God’s pervasive, intelligible, and eternal actions.

Therefore, according to Pannenberg, the discipline of physics provides a helpful springboard for discussion of divine action in the universe. For Pannenberg, “the development of field theories in physics have made it possible again to relate the function of the divine Spirit in the creation of the world to the way in which physics describes nature.” Pannenberg bases his view of spirit field operations on the scientific investigations of Michael Faraday, writing that Faraday’s research brings us closer to an understanding of how an immanent God may act in creation. The pneumatological perspective of this theory will be further explicated in chapter

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172 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 2, 82.
five; however, as a basis for understanding intelligible divine acts, Pannenberg suggests that field theory may be thought of as a beneficial model of understanding.

According to Pannenberg, the biblical statements about the Spirit of God are much closer than the classical idea of *nous* to Michael Faraday’s idea of a universal force field in relation to which all material, corpuscular constructs are to be regarded as secondary manifestations.174 This is an important point for Pannenberg in understanding divine action in field operations. Pannenberg writes that field theory is helpful because it allows for the criteria that he argues are needful for divine action, specifically, in relation to this argument, that they are intelligible. While Pannenberg allows that his theological spirit field theory is different from the classical field theory used in physics, spirit field theory shares the characteristic that we may see the actions of the field and in some manner understand them practically.175 It is for this reason, for the need of intelligibility, that Pannenberg brings science into conversation with his theology.

Pannenberg does not view this marriage of science and religion as inappropriate, or as a convenient modern contrivance. Rather, he writes that it, “does justice to the history and concept of the spirit, if we relate the field theories of modern physics to the Christian doctrine of the dynamic work of the divine Spirit in creation.”176 Divine action, for Pannenberg, may be most fruitfully investigated if modern physics, specifically field theory, is engaged. Pannenberg further argues that:

> the divine spirit could very well have been conceived as field, especially in view of the fact that the ancient Stoic ideas about pneuma as a cosmic principle... were the "immediate" conceptual precursor of the field concept of modern physics, were remarkably

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175 For a definition of the spirit field refer to appendix 1.
176 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 2, 82.
close to the root meaning of the biblical concept of spirit as "air in movement" like breath or wind.\footnote{177}

He frequently links the presence and action of God in spirit field theory to the concept of fields in physics. Pannenberg’s use of physics, and his move towards a scientific understanding of divine action more generally, is an effort to display divine action in a functional system that may relate the divine to the mundane in more intelligible terms.

Pannenberg endeavors to offer this view through the spirit field by allowing that a theologically based field theory of operations may illustrate how metaphysical divine influence may have an effect on physical matter. Pannenberg writes that:

\begin{quote}
the Trinitarian grounding and structuring of a theological account of the participation of the Holy Spirit in the work of creation through field concepts leads us to expect that using this terminology in theology will give evidence both of similarities and of characteristic differences as compared with its scientific use.\footnote{178}
\end{quote}

Pannenberg offers that the classical field theory employed in physics may be seen as a basis for the use of fields in theology, and that through this new paradigm we may come to know the actions of God in the universe.

Pannenberg asserts that this is possible through field theory for several reasons. First, it is through the free acts of God in God’s creation that we have divine revelation, we do not see the face of God in physics unless God actively offers God’s self to be known. Therefore, we may look to the structure of the universe to see God’s actions without participating in God’s essence. Second, as God is continually active in our consciousness, any revelation that may be understood is, at its root, the work of God. More simply, for Pannenberg, we may not through our own

\footnote{177 Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Problems between science and theology in the course of their modern history." 
\textit{Zygon} 41 no. 1(2006), 109.}

\footnote{178 Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 2, 84.}
mathematical investigations “find” the divine presence. As such, a theological field theory need not be a reduction of divine reality. Finally, spirit field theory offers a manner in which God may make God’s self known in intelligible terms.

Pannenberg’s view of the God-to-human line of communication from God’s perspective occurs through the spirit field, a more comprehensive definition of which will be offered in chapter five. Simply, God’s actions for Pannenberg must be intelligible. Therefore, a system of understanding that views metaphysical action as intelligible would be an appropriate interpretive device for Pannenberg’s thought. The Qi cosmology of TCM, as well as the particular diagnostic function of pulse diagnosis in TCM, meet this criterion. In TCM, the actions of Qi are metaphysical, and discernable in relation to the world and the human body in particular.179

3.5 TCM Qi Cosmology

The morphological method indicates that comparisons should not be organized as a list of similar characteristics, but rather in a pattern comprised of particular traits that demonstrate the concepts being compared. I have composed this chapter in such a manner as to demonstrate the particular traits of action that will combine to form the archetypes of action as directed by stage five of the method.180 I have offered that Pannenberg views God’s actions in relationship to humans in a particular manner that may be classified through three criteria of action. I will now offer the comparison to Pannenberg’s view by presenting three criteria of action that may aptly describe Qi in TCM.

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179 For a definition of Qi and pulse diagnosis see appendix 1.
180 For a definition of archetypes see appendix 1.
Qi in TCM employs a holistically monist worldview that may, I argue, offer a new perspective from which to interpret spirit field theory. However, while the Neo-Confucian and Daoist views of Qi have been present in theological discourse, there has yet been no theological treatment of Qi as it is understood in TCM. Therefore, in order to put the TCM view of Qi in conversation with Pannenberg’s spirit field theory, it is helpful to situate TCM Qi cosmology in relation to Pannenberg’s framework of God’s divine actions.

I will first offer that the Qi cosmology of TCM presents Qi as a continually active phenomenon in a similar fashion to Pannenberg’s view of God’s ongoing action. Secondly, I will display how the active movements of Qi in TCM are considered eternal, and so may be beneficially displayed in relation to Pannenberg’s understanding of God’s eternally effective actions. And third, as TCM Qi is distinctly understood through the empirical sciences of wuxing (the five phases of earth, metal, water, wood and fire) and yin yang, I will demonstrate how Qi may fulfill Pannenberg’s final qualification for divine action, that of intelligibility. It is the purpose of this comparative analysis to offer that the understanding, for both Pannenberg and TCM, regarding metaphysical action are similar, and further that the three-part system displayed herein may appropriately display both.

### 3.6 Qi and continual action

Within TCM, Qi is quite literally the activity of life, and although it is “also viewed as one of the fundamental materials of construction of the body,” it is considered an active presence. According to TCM, “yang Qi flows upward on the right side of the body and yin Qi flows

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181 Wuxing, or the five phases, is a Chinese religio-philosophic and scientific principle used to describe action and relationships between all things. The five phases are understood to be the fundamental pillars of the universe between which interactions occur. Yin yang displays the interconnected and interdependent relationship between all things physical and metaphysical. These concepts will be more fully defined in chapter six on the definition of Qi.

downward on the left.” In the macro sense, there is a general circulation between left, right, up and down as $Qi$ is constantly in motion in the body as a whole. In the micro sense, this flow can be seen in individual organs, as well as the connective meridians. When $Qi$ is examined in the $zhang$ organs and meridians, the movement is seen to flow in four primary directions; ascending, descending, entering and leaving. $Qi$ flows into the body, from the heaven, air, food, etc., and continues to act in motion, serving the five primary functions of the body that will be described in chapter six. Simply, in TCM, the starting point for discussing $Qi$ in the universe, and in the body specifically, is continual movement.

The constant circulation of $Qi$ provides information and energy distribution into the entire system of the human body. $Qi$ is not only a physical component, it is also the constant action of change that provides space for the body to move, breath, and grow. Further it provides direction to the body in order for the body to maintain balance with the flow of the universe. If the flow of information/energy is blocked or otherwise prevented from reaching its intended

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183 Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, growth and decline of energy, 299
184 There are twelve major meridians, in addition to the governing vessel and conception vessel, which together comprise the fourteen prime meridians. These are complimented by six smaller meridians that fan out from the fourteen main meridians. Each of the prime meridians connects to a different organ and flows in a specific direction, while the smaller meridians fan out from the primary network. Liu, *The Essential Book of Traditional Chinese Medicine* vol 1, 103-133.
185 Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, 246 Zhang fu organ theory teaches that there are five zhang organs and six fu organs in the body. Zhang organs include the heart, lungs, kidneys, liver, and spleen. While fu organs include the gallbladder, large intestine, small intestine, the bladder, and the triple burner. There is no organ in Western bio-medicine which corresponds to the triple burner, as Western bio-medicine does not consider connective tissue to be an organ. The triple burner is the connective tissue that separates the thoracic, abdominal and pelvic cavities, three distinct areas of the body that prevent infection and bleeding.
186 Heaven, in this sense, is not the Christian concept of God’s abode on high. Rather, *tian* (天) is the Chinese term for a metaphysical plane of existence that is in fact naturalistic in nature, and a key concept in Chinese mythology, philosophy, and religion. It is the celestial aspect of the cosmos, often translated as “heaven.” During the Zhou dynasty, *tian* became synonymous with *Shangdì* (上帝, "Lord on High") or *Di* (帝,"Lord"), and as such has often been identified with the Christian concept of a spiritual resting place where God dwells. In Daoism and Confucianism, *tiān* is mentioned in relationship to its complementary aspect of *Dì* (地), often translated as “Earth;” however, one should not equate *tian* with heaven in the Christian manner.
187 Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, the six atmospheric influences, 246
location, the body may not sustain its continual existence, nor may it function as it should within the flow of the universe.

The action of change, the direction to the organs, even the perception of the environment, are all dependent on the constant flow of Qi in the body. In TCM, the ongoing movement of Qi offers guidance to the zhang and fu organs regarding proper function, including the heart Qi function of cognition. This is not determined through some manner of top down directives, but rather in a reciprocal feedback loop, active within the system.

As an example, we may look to the relationship between emotions and Qi. In TCM, “when one is angry, the Qi rises upwards; when one is joyous the Qi disperses; when one is sad, the Qi becomes exhausted; when one is fearful and frightened, the Qi descends.” These are just four of the nine emotional responses which correspond to the movement of Qi. In TCM the movement of Qi is affected by emotions, but it may also cause emotional responses. These emotive states may be motivated by personal interaction, environmental changes, or possibly physical maladies; however, they are all indicative of a relational person who, through the function of Qi, is actively participating in the flow of the universe. Qi may therefore be seen to be a constantly active presence that stimulates, and is stimulated by, various factors.

While TCM focuses primarily on how the perpetual flow of Qi in the body aids in health, TCM also allows that this constant movement is active in the universe as a whole as well. Qi, as

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188 Liu, The Essential Book of Traditional Chinese Medicine 1, 75.
189 Ni, Huangdi Neijing, growth and decline of energy, 299
190 I refer here to living subjects, not the emotional responses of ghosts or other spiritual entities and phenomena that are often engaged with in Chinese religio-philosophic traditions. For more on this refer to: Carol Stepanchuk, and Charles Choy Wong, Mooncakes and Hungry Ghosts: Festivals of China. (San Francisco: China Books and Periodicals, 1991); and Stephen Teiser, The Ghost Festival in Medieval China. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996).
191 Ni, Huangdi Neijing, differentiation of pain, 147
an active presence, is always in motion as the phenomenon of change, and this movement is manifested in the changes of the cosmos. Birth, growth, maturation, death, celestial movements, and seasonal changes may all be understood as the material indications of Qi’s constant motion. According to TCM theory, this occurs because “the Qi of heaven and earth transforms and changes.”\textsuperscript{192} It is the active movement of Qi that drives change in the cosmos. This is not only seen in the evolution of species, or movement in the stars, the movement of Qi is also responsible for all variety in creation, from color to taste.\textsuperscript{193}

In TCM Qi cosmology the universe is considered a unified whole, depicted in the Dao. The Dao is understood to be in constant movement, it is quite literally the flow of the universe.\textsuperscript{194} Qi is the phenomenon of change that reflects the action of this movement, offering a glimpse of the constant movement of the Dao. While the full measure of the Dao’s motion may not be known, in the Tian (heaven) or on earth, we may understand that it is in constant motion because the phenomenon of Qi which demonstrates the logic of the Dao is always in motion. Therefore, as Qi is a reflection of the Dao, Qi is also perpetually active as change, providing space for all movements in the Tian and on earth.\textsuperscript{195} It is this universal movement and change that allows difference and variety to exist. Per TCM, the reason the whole world is not grey, or that all food does not taste like maize, is because of the constant change that is the Dao manifested in variety—more simply, motion re-orders things and provides variations.

In TCM, it is the movement of Qi that is the key to understanding Qi’s function in the body. The active movement of Qi is needed for the body to operate properly, and the absence of

\textsuperscript{192} Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing}, energetic cycles of the universe, 36
\textsuperscript{193} Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing}, Diagnostic importance and the collapse of the meridians, 58
\textsuperscript{194} This will be more comprehensively described in chapter six on the definition of Qi. For a definition of the Dao see appendix 1
\textsuperscript{195} For a definition of Tian refer to appendix 1.
free-flowing \( Qi \) is the cause of illness and eventual death. This action is not absolutely directive in a top down manner, as the person’s behavior, the environment, as well as the resonant and unpredictable influence of \( Qi \) from other people may have an effect on the flow of \( Qi \). There is therefore the aspect of probability when considering how \( Qi \) may share energy or information in the universe and in the body in particular.

TCM considers the human body to be a complex system which requires information and/or energy input to function. This is accomplished through the movement of \( Qi \). The \( Qi \) of the body flows “in accordance with the changes of heaven and earth” and the motion of these changes is what demonstrates the information input \( Qi \) has in the system.\(^{196}\) The activity of \( Qi \) is understood to pervade all creation in a constantly active state, offering information input and energy transference without absolute direction.

Pannenberg views the actions of God in a similar manner, specifically that they are continual. As the morphological method does not support line item comparisons, but rather looks to patterns, we may look to the understanding \( Qi \) in TCM that I have highlighted here, and how it fits into the first of the three criteria I have outlined through depiction of Pannenberg’s thought. TCM \( Qi \) cosmology describes the continual action of \( Qi \) through changes in the cosmos, movement of the \textit{Dao}, and operation of the body in particular. These various viewpoints all offer that \( Qi \) is, and must be, in continual motion. In a like manner, the theology of Pannenberg argues for the need of God’s continual action in creation, for revelation, and the eventual purpose of reconciliation. These are not simple traits that may be identified in isolated writings. These are

\(^{196}\) Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing}, diagnostic importance and discussion of the collapse of the meridians, 58
well described components of metaphysical action that are consistent in TCM and the theology of Pannenberg.

3.7 Qi’s pervasive action

Chinese medicine teaches that $Qi$ is everywhere, linking humans “with every other form of life, whether of animals and birds, of trees and plants, or even the less perceptible life of material things.”\(^\text{197}\) Inside the human body, $Qi$ “surrounds the organs and tissues of the body’s interior and is found in the interstitial spaces between the skin and muscles as well as the exterior of the body.”\(^\text{198}\) TCM also operates on the principal that $Qi$ is both a physical and metaphysical phenomenon, which may be understood through the logic of $yin$ $yang$ and wuxing.\(^\text{199}\) In TCM, $yang$ $Qi$ is the metaphysical “energy,” while $yin$ $Qi$ represents physical matter. $Yang$ $Qi$ is not material, and yet it is inextricably linked to its physical $yin$ counterpart, both within and beyond material reality.\(^\text{200}\) This allows for $Qi$’s pervasive presence in the universe since $Qi$ is not categorized as a physical element or metaphysical phenomenon alone, but rather it is both. Therefore, there is no space where $Qi$ may not exist.

From the dualistic Western perspective, the nature of $Qi$ thus described may be seen as a contradiction; however, in the holistic monism of TCM, there is a systematic engagement which offers revelation of how the physical and metaphysical relationally coexist. TCM offers that, “pure $yang$ $Qi$ ascends to converge and form heaven, while the turbid $yin$ $Qi$ descends and condenses to form the earth.”\(^\text{201}\) This is not a single creation point, but rather it is the constant

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\(^\text{199}\) Ted Kaptchuk, *The Web That Has No Weaver*, 8. For a definition of wuxing and $yin$ $yang$ refer to appendix 1.
\(^\text{200}\) *Ni, Huangdi Neijing*, The manifestations of $yin$ and $yang$, 15
\(^\text{201}\) *Ni, Huangdi Neijing*, The manifestations of $yin$ and $yang$, 15
state of flow in the Dao, the converging and condensing are continually occurring throughout the universe. Qi, as a reflection of the action of the Dao, makes possible all reality through the constant action of movement. The actions of Qi, existing in all of the universe, are therefore in a constant state of movement, both converging and condensing, in an ongoing manner—pervasively.

Importantly, in this model of cosmology, there is no clear line of demarcation between the heaven and the earth. The actions of Qi, as an example, do not create and set aside spiritual realms from the mundane. Instead, in this operation, the phases of Qi are fully integrated. Although the various functions of Qi are understood within a complex categorical system, this is a holistically monistic system in which physical and metaphysical do not exist separately. In this view, the metaphysical yang Qi and the physical yin Qi, are one.

Qi is therefore understood to be the universe’s underlying structure, even as it is the action of motion in the universe’s continual progression. As such, the pervasive actions of Qi are considered to be the basis for existence. However, this does not mean that Qi is a supporting framework of reality, nor does it intimate that Qi is some manner of a connective bridge between physical and metaphysical realities. Rather, as TCM operates to form a holistically monistic view, the universe is understood to be unified, and the pervasive actions of Qi demonstrate the flow of the unified universe. Qi may categorically distinguish the relationships of various elements, even while it flows in and through them in the pattern of existence, because Qi exists in several forms. These are not different phenomena, rather they are a diverse representation of a single phenomenon that is pervasive in the pattern of reality.

202 Kaptchuk, The Web That Has No Weaver, 44.
In TCM this relationship between physical and metaphysical is flexible because *Qi* exists in a complex structure as both substance, and the constant phenomenon of change.\(^{203}\) This is most easily seen in the human body through the structures of the meridians and *zhang* organs in relation to the *yin yang* and *wuxing* of the various elements.\(^{204}\) It may also be seen in the environment at large of course, as *Qi* is ubiquitous; however, for the TCM physician, the finite space of the body provides an excellent vehicle for understanding this complex relationship discerned through the function and presence of *Qi*.

In order to offer an interpretation of spirit field theory, the worldview employed must offer an understanding of immanent metaphysical phenomena. However, it is also beneficial to present a worldview that may describe this immanent phenomena in finite terms, otherwise we may be left with the argument that actions are everywhere—a difficult premise from which to discuss intelligibly as there is no particular location to investigate. Further, as *per* the morphological method, this must be understood through a system that may include the two traditions one wishes to place in dialogue. As I have offered, TCM presents just such an understanding. In the universe as a whole *Qi* is ubiquitous; and yet may be understood in relation to individual human persons; just as Pannenberg understands God’s actions in the universe to be immanent, and yet discernable in relationship with individual people. Both TCM and Pannenberg’s theology describe immanent metaphysical phenomena in a way that may be placed in conversation.

**3.8 Qi’s intelligible action**

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\(^{203}\) Zhang Zai. *Zheng Meng*, Ch. 6

\(^{204}\) For a definition of *wuxing* refer to appendix 1.
The actions of Qi in TCM are discernable within the cosmological laws that are employed to categorically organize TCM treatments, the laws of wuxing and yin yang. In TCM, all movements of Qi in the universe, and in the human body in particular, are understood to reflect the orderly principle of the Dao which is explained through these empirical sciences. In TCM, the principles of wuxing allow physicians to “understand all transformations in the universe.”

As I will more explicitly offer in chapter six, wuxing describes how the actions of Qi demonstrate the logical flow of the Dao, the Li of the Dao, through empirically verifiable changes in the world-as-a-whole. This is possible as there exists no separation of physical and metaphysical in the TCM worldview.

According to TCM theory, “the physical nature of the human being cannot be discharged from the influence of yin and yang in regard to various energy conditions of the universe.”

This programmatic function is necessary for any coherence in the full system of medical treatments, as the transformations in the universe, which are the actions of Qi as change, affect balance in the body. There is, therefore, a need for natural laws that offer a clear view of how Qi operates within the universe. However, in contrast to the Western interpretation of natural law, the TCM understanding is situated in a holistically monistic view of the universe. The metaphysical, or what in Western terms would be called a “divine other,” is not beyond the scope of TCM, but rather needful in it. The actions of Qi are then, and in truth must be, considered intelligible.

TCM theory holds that the Li within the Dao presents certain standards in the ordering of the universe. More simply, there are certain observable rules that the universe adheres to. The

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205 Ni Huangdi Neijing. The preservation of health, 100
206 Ni, Huangdi Neijing. The preservation of health, 102
*Tian* (heaven), are measured by the rule of six, and earth and human beings, are standardized by the rule of nine. In the *Tian*, there are six sixty-day cycles of energy which comprise a year. On earth, these correspond to the nine orifices on the body and the nine continents. The combination of the six cycles of energy in the *Tian* and the nine physical counterparts on earth produces the 365-day year, and the 365 energy points on the human body. There is a link between the energy of the *Tian* (*yang* *Qi*) and the physical nature of the world-as-a-whole (*yin Qi*) in relation to the movements of the stars in a calendar year.

There is an intimate association with change in heavenly circulation, understood through the movement of *yang Qi* as the energy and *yin Qi* as the physical counterpart in harmonious relationship. For over two millennia, TCM scholar-physicians, philosophers and astronomers carefully observed celestial movements and meticulously studied the world around them. They then proposed a complex system of natural law, consisting of several subsystems, to account for all possible variables, in the forecast of macroscopic influence on the world. These laws are understood through the ongoing transformations in the universe, the phenomenon of change which is discernable in the action of *Qi*.

Understanding the actions of transformation and causal interaction in a law-like complex system, is of great importance to TCM understandings of *Qi* in the universe. *Per* TCM theory, *Qi* in the universe is “the invisible force and the physical forms that combine to form the basis for intelligent universal change.” *Qi* is the basis for change, and so the actions of *Qi* are understood through change in the universe, which for TCM practitioners is prescriptive, orderly

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207 *Ni, Huangdi Neijing*, The energetic cycles of the universe and their effects on human beings, 35. The nine continents as referred to here is meant to indicate the nine continental climate regions.

208 *Ni, Huangdi Neijing*, The energetic cycles of the universe and their effects on human beings, 36.

209 *Ni, Huangdi Neijing*, Effects of the five elemental phases and the six atmospheric influences, 250

210 *Ni, Huangdi Neijing*, Energy almanac, 235
and to some degree predictable. The action of Qi in providing space for the processes of birth, growth, maturation, and death may only be applied to physical healing if there are consistent parameters.\textsuperscript{211} These parameters are understood and classified through the laws of wuxing and yin yang. According to the practice of TCM, wuxing and yin yang demonstrate the governing law of the universe.\textsuperscript{212} This law exposes the relationships of all things, as all exist within the Dao. Wuxing and yin yang make known the actions of Qi as the function of all transformations of the universe. They do not govern or otherwise direct the growth, development, and eventual destruction of all things; however, they make the actions of Qi in these processes intelligible.\textsuperscript{213}

Qi described by natural law is needful for the consistent practice of TCM. An example of this may be seen in the use of control subjects in various campaigns for public health in China and the surrounding nations; such as the work done to curb plague in Manchuria in 1911 and 1912, the fight against malaria in Taiwan from 1910 to the 1980’s, the measures employed to contain schistosomiasis in the lower Yangzi delta in the decade following the 1948 outbreak, and finally the work done to combat the SARS epidemic in South China, Taiwan and Singapore in 2003. All of these large scale public health endeavors demonstrated the use of control subjects when TCM doctors sought containment measures and treatment options.\textsuperscript{214} Current research in the TCM treatment of stroke victims also shows the adherence to law like rules of nature.\textsuperscript{215} Further, there is evidence in ancient TCM texts of clinical trials involving, what we would call

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\textit{Ni, Huangdi Neijing, The manifestations of yin and yang,16.}
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\textit{For a definition of wuxing and yin yang refer to appendix 1.}
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\textit{Ni, Huangdi Neijing, Energy Almanac, 235}
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\textit{Angela Leung and Charlotte Furth, Health and Hygiene in Chinese East Asia (Raleigh: Duke University press 2011), 17.}
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today, control subjects. All of these examples demonstrate the need for TCM treatments to operate within the constraint of natural laws. If \( Qi \) were to act haphazardly without the restriction of these laws, then control subjects across so many years and miles would not be possible.

Further, TCM scholars, such as Ted Kaptchuk and Shigehisa Kuriyama, write that the TCM treatment of \( Qi \) is elucidated by the holistically monistic natural laws of \textit{yin yang} and \textit{wuxing}. According to Kaptchuk and Kuriyama, these laws are a coherent cosmological system that has developed as a result of critical thinking, clinical observation and testing over thousands of years. Other TCM experts, such as Angela Ki Che Leung and Charlotte Furth, point out that TCM has systematic methods, a specific manner of diagnosis and precise rules for clinical trials, all of which produce tangible and quantifiable results within these natural laws. There are written records of treatments, patient records, and documented cases of TCM experiments, all of which have been historically verified, to support this view.

The actions of \( Qi \) are understood through these laws; there are no actions of \( Qi \) that contradict \textit{yin yang} and \textit{wuxing}, rather the actions of \( Qi \) exemplify them. As an example, \( Qi \) may be understood through \textit{wuxing} to describe the transformation of things from metaphysical material to material, such as the solidification of earthquakes. Further, this classification may find several sub categories all of which intersect and influence each other. This method is

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219 \textit{Ni, Huangdi Neijing}, Effects of the phases and influences, 256-257. Metaphysical energy from the \textit{Tian} flows freely through the earth, if there are blockages due to human activity—such as the building of a dam—the energy then becomes a solid block unable to flow which causes tremors.
220 Li Shizhen, \textit{Bencao Gangmu, Mulu} (1578).
employed to determine the nature of reality and its ontological source without natural inconsistency.

TCM endeavors to empirically deduce the effects of Qi in the environment, in plants and animals, and in the human body. TCM practitioners have worked for centuries to organize and condense this knowledge into testable and repeatable treatments for patients. This is not a matter of interpretation alone. Rather the process used by TCM doctors to systematically organize various aspects of the universe, specifically concerning how these various aspects interact and relate to each other, has a long and meticulously recorded history. In this, the discernable nature of the actions of Qi are paramount. We may then state with relative confidence that the actions of Qi are not only intelligible, but that the entire edifice of treatments within TCM is based upon this intelligibility.

There exist modes of understanding in prescriptions, cosmology, and diagnoses that involve the intelligibility of Qi. TCM does not make a simple proclamation, that Qi is an intelligible metaphysical phenomenon, rather it can be seen in the systematic engagement of TCM practitioners and researchers as the process of action, and the pattern of that action is consistent. Similarly, Pannenberg’s theology demonstrates, and indeed demands, that metaphysical action in relation to the human person is at least in part intelligible because God, who acts, does so in an orderly way.

**Summary**

According to Wolfhart Pannenberg, the actions of God follow certain criteria. Divine action must be continual, immanently present, and intelligible. I have offered that this view is seen

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consistently across many of Pannenberg’s works, including his seminal text, *Systematic Theology* one through three, *Jesus God and Man*, and *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, all of which have been liberally cited in this chapter. Further, I have offered that the cosmology of *Qi* in TCM demonstrates that *Qi* is constantly active, pervasive in the universe, and finally that the actions of *Qi* may be seen as intelligible when viewed through the Chinese empirical sciences of *wuxing* and *yin yang*.\(^\text{222}\)

Pannenberg worked to bring science and religion together in the formation of spirit field theory. His intention was to offer that areas of study in scientific naturalism may offer consonance with theological models of field theory, and so offer a more intelligible view of God’s actions. However, according to scientific naturalism, everything, including the mental realm of human beings, may be understood through scientific enquiry. Therefore, a communicative interaction with the divine would not be found in science because, “there is no room for a supernatural cause.”\(^\text{223}\) In instances where Western mainstream scientists do acknowledge the divine, they often place it in a philosophical or theological category that is removed from physical reality.

These limits of mainstream Western science are encountered when dealing with supernatural, divine, or metaphysical phenomena, as the Western view is largely dualist. There is an underlying and yet popular belief that if something is physical, it cannot at the same time be metaphysical. This inhibits enquiries that make use of modern scientific thinking when attempting to disclose divine influence or presence in the world-as-a-whole. However, while Western science, or indeed even some forms of Western theism are monistic or at least they

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\(^{222}\) For a definition of *wuxing* and *yin yang* refer to appendix 1.

claim to be, TCM incorporates metaphysical influence to present a framework for discussing divine action in the physical world. It is for this reason, I suggest, that TCM may be an appropriate manner in which to situate Pannenberg’s view of God’s actions in the world.

The archetypes of action, the patterns that demonstrate the actions of Qi and the Holy Spirit in the universe, are the form for this comparative analysis. In this chapter, I have employed the first stage of the morphological comparative method by displaying how the various components that form the archetypes of action in relation to the human person are engaged with in the systems of TCM and Pannenberg’s theology. I have written of the manner in which metaphysical action is understood from Pannenberg’s perspective; that it is continually active, immanent and intelligible (I have defined these components parts in comparison as they form the basis of the archetypes), and how this system may also beneficially display the archetypes of action for Qi in TCM. In the following two chapters I will further explore the archetypes of action as they are engaged with from the human perspective and how they are present in spirit field theory in particular.\textsuperscript{224} The aim of this analysis is to offer that the particular elements that comprise the archetypes of action for TCM Qi are congruous to Pannenberg’s views of divine action in a systematic fashion, not through a list of similarities—and further that TCM Qi pulse diagnosis may be a beneficial hermeneutic lens through which to better understand Pannenberg’s spirit field theory.\textsuperscript{225}

\textsuperscript{224} For a definition of the spirit field refer to appendix 1.
\textsuperscript{225} For a definition of Qi and pulse diagnosis see appendix 1.
Chapter 4 How Humans receive and interpret divine action

I have chosen to focus my discussion of divine action in Pannenberg’s spirit field by looking narrowly at the human body. This is helpful in that it concentrates the scope of my investigation into one finite and testable area with which TCM is chiefly concerned. Therefore, it is helpful to have a clear view of how divine action on the human body may be said to take place. More specifically, it is beneficial to determine Pannenberg’s theological understanding of how humans may receive information from God through divine communication, and how the human person may interpret this information. Further, it is advantageous to establish if Pannenberg’s view may be comparable to the manner in which TCM views Qi providing information and energy into the human body.

This chapter will offer further data in the form of stage one in the morphological comparative analysis while maintaining the overall directive of comparing archetypes of action, not personhood or divine identity. I will therefore display Pannenberg’s thought on divine action in relation to the system of understanding that is exemplified in TCM. Pannenberg’s view of how humans receive and participate in divine action is most fully expressed in his work *Anthropology in Theological Perspective* (ATP). Therefore, the comparison of action in this chapter will follow this work.

In the ATP Pannenberg presents a three-part understanding of human nature; *the person in nature, the person as a social being, and the person in the shared world*. These subdivisions display functionality, relationality, and practicality respectively. TCM also offers that the actions of *Qi* in relation to the human person are functional, relational, and practical. This will therefore be the system of comparison. I will present these three criteria of metaphysical action on the
human person, offering how humans may engage with, participate in, and receive information from a metaphysical source.

This chapter will follow a parallel course of systematic comparisons, as did the previous chapter, offering how the understanding of metaphysical action in both systems of thought, TCM and Pannenberg’s theological anthropology, may be comparable. However, in this chapter, I will also begin the integration of ideas in the comparative analysis by presenting critical reception of Pannenberg’s work and the manner in which it may be more clearly understood through the actions of Qi as they are depicted in TCM. Further, the comparative model in this chapter foreshadows the stage two analysis that will comprise chapter six (the definition of Qi) by introducing TCM concepts that will be more fully disclosed in relation to a broad view of divine action as it is written of in science and religion. Stage two, as can be seen in figure 1, offers that the particularities are brought together to form the pattern of comparison which is archetypes of action.226

The system of comparison will then be structured in three sections, again as directed by Pannenberg's thought—that divine action in relation to the body is functional, relational, and practical. I will first offer the basis for this system through a description of Pannenberg’s view concerning the human person’s interaction with divine action. I will then display how the TCM worldview concerning Qi may be appropriately displayed in this system. Each of the three points in the second section will begin with a critique of Pannenberg’s view, and offer how the TCM worldview is not only compatible with Pannenberg’s thought, but that the TCM worldview may offer an answer to Pannenberg’s critics through a TCM centered adjustment in perspective.

226 For a definition of archetypes see appendix 1.
The first section of the ATP, *the person in nature*, I refer to as functional in that it discusses the *imago Dei* and how humans maybe understood as formed with a purpose. For Pannenberg, the human body is designed to receive information, or revelation, from God pointed toward the purpose of reconciliation.\(^{227}\) The actions of *Qi* in the system of the human body are thought of in a similar fashion as they are not random, but rather they perform particular functions. In TCM, the human body is considered to be designed in such a way to facilitate the flow of *Qi*; the purpose to which *Qi* flow guides the function of the body is balance in the overall pattern of existence known as the *Dao*.\(^{228}\) In this, the various forms of *Qi* in the human body have particular purposes, each with a set function that affect the operation of the body’s physical processes, and make conscious thought possible.\(^{229}\) The function of the *zhang* and *fu* organs as well as the meridians all point to this end. Therefore, if an interactive human-to-God framework is to be examined in concert with TCM, it is beneficial to have a *modus operandi* which is in some sense functional.

Secondly, *the person as a social being*, may be considered relational as it relates the reciprocal nature of human relations, with each other, with the environment, and with God. Pannenberg argues that divine action in the world is relational in that all parts of the system will interact and affect each other in a reciprocal relationship.\(^{230}\) This is of importance to the conversation regarding TCM in that the TCM understanding of *Qi* can be described as a feedback loop between the parts of a system and the whole of it. While both Pannenberg and TCM incorporate the whole of the universe in this view, it may be specifically located by both

\(^{228}\) Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, Determining of life and death, 83-84.
\(^{229}\) Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, Energetic cycles of the universe, 40.
systems of thought as centering on the human person. More simply, both the actions of God in
the process of reconciliation, and the actions of Qi as they are described in TCM may be affected
by human action in the manner of relationship. According to TCM medical theory, there is a
two-way relationship when considering the actions ofQi. This may be considered comparable to
Pannenberg’s model of participation; however, like Pannenberg’s understanding, TCM does not
consider this to be a fully equal partnership.231 The function ofQi in TCM ultimately displays
the flow of the Dao, which is beyond human intervention. Therefore, there is a manner in which
metaphysical actions may be participated in, sharing some degree of causal interaction, with the
source of direction influenced, but not fully controlled by, the human agent.

The third and final section, the person in the shared world, may be called practical in that
it details how the human person practically engages the world around them and works out the
manner of human existence, which, for Pannenberg, is pointed towards reconciliation with God.
Pannenberg’s theological anthropology explains how humans may receive metaphysical energy
in a practical manner, in that he focuses upon tangible actions in the body and in human
consciousness. This is also the primary aim of TCM, to discern howQi may be said to
practically engage in the operation of the human mind and body, in relation to the flow of the
Dao. TCM therefore includes specific empirical interpretations of the actions ofQi and is not
constrained to philosophical theory or thought experiments. However, the focus upon practical
engagement and empirical indication of action does not intimate a reduction to full explanation
through physical laws. In TCM neither the Dao nor Qi are considered fully reducible
phenomena; however, the form and function of Qi in relationship to the human body, in TCM, is

231 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology, 3, 12.
considered a practical concern.\textsuperscript{232} Therefore, a manner in which to conceive of the practical application of divine action, or at the very least a mode by which action may be said to take place with intelligibility, is more conducive to a comparative analysis that features TCM. More simply, TCM is based upon discernible metaphysical action in the human body, and Pannenberg’s field theory operates on a similar basis of intelligible divine action.

\textbf{4.1 Pannenberg’s Anthropology}

Pannenberg writes that his anthropology:

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does not argue from dogmatic data and presuppositions, but rather turns its attention directly to the phenomena of human existence as investigated in human biology, psychology, cultural anthropology or sociology - with the goal of interrogating the findings of these disciplines in terms of their religious and theological implications.\textsuperscript{233}
\end{quote}
\end{quote}
\end{quote}

Pannenberg looks to the work of psychologists, biologist, and behaviorists in order to present a more comprehensive explanation of anthropology, investigated from a theological perspective. While he dealt extensively with these various sciences, he did so from within a Christian theological framework. His aim was to offer a theological anthropology that may find consonance with a wide array of scholarship, and thus make the relationship between God and humans more comprehensible. This is also, as I have shown in the previous chapter, a key point in his view of divine action more broadly, and the ultimate goal of spirit field theory. As such, Pannenberg’s view of how the human person may receive and take part in divine action is integral to his theology.

\textbf{4.2 Divine action as functional}

\textsuperscript{232} For a definition of the \textit{Dao} see appendix 1.
\textsuperscript{233} Pannenberg, \textit{Anthropology in Theological Perspective}, 15.
According to Pannenberg, human beings must be understood as being established by the intentional and creative acts of God. Pannenberg does not write here of our physical and spiritual existence separately. Pannenberg refers to the “being” of individuals as a physical, mental, and spiritual, creation of God. Further, he writes that humans are intended toward reconciliation with God, although we have not yet fulfilled that objective. Humans are, to put it plainly, a spiritual/mental/physical work in progress, and have been so since the days of pre-history. It stands to reason then, if God indeed calls humanity to a destiny of fulfilment along evolutionary lines, there must be a physical and spiritual unity in our construction that may be affected by God’s will, as we join with God in the process. I will, in the following paragraphs, outline how this may be understood functionally.

Pannenberg writes that “the relation of human exocentric existence to the infinite or unconditioned is always given only through the mediation of a finite content.” Pannenberg’s use of exocentric is meant to indicate that humans find their center not in themselves, but outside of themselves in a transcendent reality. This is indicated, he writes, by the fact that human beings are able to objectively relate to the other as other. We may be acutely aware of past and present, ergo, we can be present in a manner exclusive to our species. This allows us to experience a present moment outside of ourselves, viewing the other with objectiveness. And, as we are able to objectively comprehend a terrestrial other, we are also uniquely situated to be aware of a spiritual other, or infinite reality. We are therefore specially equipped to seek and find a center outside of ourselves.

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234 Ibid., 60.
236 Ibid., 70.
237 Ibid., 240.
Pannenberg further argues that the exocentric relationship humans have to the infinite reality is moderated through our finite persons. While we may have a singular relationship with the divine, we are yet bound to experience this relationship in our physical selves. The transcendental basis for reality, which for Pannenberg is God acting in and through the spirit field, can be found in the spiritual and physical unity of the human body, allowing for the mediation of our perception of the infinite.238

How may this physical and spiritual integration be understood in the make-up a human? What in fact makes humans uniquely related to God in such a way that we may be aware of the connection; even to the point of finding our center in an infinite or metaphysical reality? Pannenberg notes that the question of humanity’s unique awareness of the infinite was initially dealt with by investigating introspectively, looking inward to find some transcendental existence.239 The result was a kind of deus ex machina, effectively inserting a “soul” into an animal body. As this manner of dualism began to lose popularity, researchers, according to Pannenberg, turned to behaviorism and philosophical anthropology. Pannenberg claims that, by observing the external behavior of humans, anthropologists hoped to access the inner reality of the human psyche and determine what allowed humans a unique connection to the other.240

Pannenberg however distrusts this method, writing that behaviorism could also be used to deduce that certain animals exhibit intelligence in their behavior in the same way humans do. This could then be employed to denounce the existence of consciousness, making any argument that humans have a special awareness of the infinite moot.241 There must, for Pannenberg, be

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238 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 2, 204.
239 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 17-19.
240 Ibid., 28.
241 Ibid., 29.
something special about human intelligence that points to a divine other, some manner of spirit within the human person that sets humanity apart from the rest of the animal kingdom. However, Pannenberg does not believe that the argument for human uniqueness should be left to the old metaphysics of the soul. Rather, he writes, any theology of human uniqueness, “like behaviorism itself, must appeal to the bodily conditions and peculiar characteristics of human behavior.”

More simply, for Pannenberg, there must be a physically-functional realization of humanity’s spiritual nature.

Pannenberg therefore builds upon the ideas of German behaviorists, who largely follow the Kantian tradition, that the varied manner in which people or animals respond to the same stimuli is due to innate behavioral schemas. This internal set of instructions is not seen in reactions per se, but rather in the human capacity to override our more animal instincts. As an example, we are able to act against our need for food or desire to reproduce based on our reasoning, which is a function of internal schemas.

Pannenberg develops this theory by beginning with the work of Max Scheler. Scheler indicated that our resistance to instinct stems from the “human spirit,” which is part of our makeup, but is none-the-less spiritual and therefore not reducible to biology. While Pannenberg saw the merits of this argument, specifically the discussion of spiritual influences on the human person, for Pannenberg it did not go far enough in explaining human evolution. Further, for Pannenberg, Scheler was “obscure” in his description of the spirit. Pannenberg writes that Scheler’s position was dualist in one manner, in that the spirit “intervenened from without in the life processes of the human,” while it on the other hand was monist in that the

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242 Ibid., 29.
243 Ibid., 32.
spirit was the center of life for the human.\footnote{Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 65.} Pannenberg allows that spiritual influence does indeed take place, as this is the core of spirit field theory; however, for Pannenberg, it must be more discernable than the mode Scheler argues for.

Pannenberg subsequently looks to the work of Arnold Gehlen, who views the internal schema, not as an innate brand of knowledge, but rather as the result of humanity’s deficient early development. It was Gehlen’s supposition that humans have a gap between stimuli and reaction as we are born too early and are unable to fend for ourselves. Humans then compensate for this evolutionary gap by developing language and culture. Therefore, according to Gehlen, our inhibition is not the result of a spirit, but rather the actions we take to compensate for undeveloped instincts.\footnote{Arnold Gehlen, Der Mensch: Seine Natur Und Seine Stellung in Der Welt (Man: His Nature and His Position in the World) trans. Karl-Siegbert Rehberg (Verlag: Vittorio Klostermann, 2016), 11.} While this theory is more friendly to the sciences, as Gehlen avoids the theme of the spirit or indeed any metaphysical reality, for Pannenberg, it is not fully appropriate to a theological anthropology because there is no space for influence from the infinite.\footnote{Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 37.}

According to Pannenberg, both Gehlen and Scheler’s theories have value in explaining the human condition, but it is J.G. Herder, whose philosophy offers a mingling of the two positions, that Pannenberg finds the most compelling.\footnote{Ibid., 55.} Herder argues that there is indeed a “gap” as Gehlen pointed out, due to our incompleteness, but that we are driven to fully realize ourselves as completed beings by a divinely supplied direction, the “human spirit” of Scheler.\footnote{J.G Herder, Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man. trans. T. Churchill British Critic: A New Review, February 1803, 229.}
attested that humans should be understood as a unified being, a combination of physical and spiritual natures working towards completion, or the closing of the developmental gap.²⁵⁰

In Herder, Pannenberg finds a philosophy that depicts the human being as a spiritual and material unity in the process of development, driven by a spiritual other. This is, for Pannenberg, the most helpful view from which to build his own theological anthropology, which he does by expanding the work of Herder in relation to the doctrine of the imago Dei. For Pannenberg, humans do not reflect the image of God, nor is it something we have lost, rather the imago Dei is the destiny of humanity. It is our evolutionary call, the desire for perfect union with God in God’s image that is placed in us by providence.²⁵¹ The imago Dei is, for Pannenberg, the manifestation of the spiritual drive to evolution that Herder writes of. However, for Pannenberg, humans are not simply led in the process of development by a spiritual other, as in Herder’s theory, but rather humans are participants in the process, both in interaction with the world and other humans.²⁵² Further, Pannenberg draws special attention to the physical nature of humanity, the finite aspect which encounters the direction of the infinite. For Pannenberg, our physical bodies must in some manner be available to influence by divine action: there must be a unity of physical and spiritual form to facilitate God’s communication of the imago Dei. Pannenberg argues that this unification may be seen in the presence of spiritually driven internal schemas in human consciousness.

The Spirit, from Pannenberg’s position, offers direction through these schemas in relationship as the Spirit is enmeshed in, and the basis for, human consciousness. This is not to

²⁵¹Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 2, 55-56.
²⁵²Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 55–58.
say that the Spirit is possessed by humans as an anatomical aspect of our physical selves, but rather the Spirit comes to humanity, actualized in our consciousness through divine action. The Spirit is therefore inextricably linked with our personhood, without being a “part” of our person. Pannenberg writes that “human beings are body and soul, but they are not spirit in the same way.”

For Pannenberg, the Spirit is not to be understood as a mark of human uniqueness through the gift of consciousness; rather, the soul is the body as living and the Spirit provides the grounds for life.

For Pannenberg, the Spirit should be understood as, “that which alone makes possible both consciousness and subjectivity and that, at the same time, makes possible the unity of social and cultural life as well as the continuity of history amid the open-endedness and incompleteness of its processes.” The human being is a synthesis of infinite and finite in the process of reconciliation, as directed by the integration of the Spirit which comes to us and makes our consciousness possible. There is, for Pannenberg, a cooperative unity of our consciousness and the Spirit, which may, at least partially, be understood in our physical selves.

To better understand how the consciousness, and by extension physical nature, of the human person may exist in relation to the infinite, Pannenberg investigates the relationship between sin and the human psyche. Pannenberg views sin as a disruption of our development to the imago Dei, either as a loss of personal identity in the unity of creation, or as the incomplete process of reconciliation with God, either of which produce fear, frustration, sadness, or anxiety. For Pannenberg, separation from God, or more specifically the incomplete

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254 Ibid., 520
255 Ibid., 98.
256 Ibid., 99.
reconciliation with the Spirit directed schemas, results in an emotional response. He therefore argues that our physical selves are affected by the spiritual reality of sin as there is a link between brain functions and emotional states.

Pannenberg also speaks to the universality of death and its relationship to the universality of sin. While he does not advocate the scholastic view of universal inherited sin, he does allow that sin and death may indeed be linked. He explains the relationship between sin and death through the biological understanding of cell function, and the degradation of that function unto death in a physical sense. For Pannenberg, the metaphysical concept of sin as a separation from the *imago Dei* is inextricably linked to our physical bodies through both emotive responses in brain states, and in the cellular decay which results in death. In his view of sin, there is a proven “constitutive link between humanity and the religious thematic.”

Our physical bodies are, *per* Pannenberg, functionally related to the metaphysical religious thematic as the spiritual aspect of our physical nature drives us towards reconciliation with God in the *imago Dei*, and our separation from the *imago Dei* in sin causes empirically-verifiable changes in our brains, and ultimately death and decay.

Pannenberg’s interest in a biological understanding of sin and death is not to offer a new perspective on the epistemic pole of humanity in theological anthropology. Rather he seeks to display a theological interpretation of the ontic pole from which human beings are comprised. The ontic pole is, for Pannenberg, the religious thematic which drives human creation and development. He writes of the physical relationship in a constitutive fashion, noting that, “the

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257 Pannenberg, *Jesus God and Man*, 263.
259 Ibid, 234.
260 For a definition of the religious thematic refer to appendix 1.
spirit is more intensely present in the ecstatic movement of love and is, in addition, present in a special way in human consciousness as the medium of the presence of the person’s own identity, as distinct from, though united with, the truth of things." Pannenberg attests that the manifestation of the Spirit, or the religious thematic, is seen in human reason, and love, resulting in the formation of complex schemas which transcend individuals. It is supervenient to the individual, physically related to the person through brain states, and yet, as Spirit led, is non-reducible.

Pannenberg situates his functional argument concerning the human-to-God interaction in the emotional responses of the mind and physical activity in the brain. This is not a strictly physicalist account, as those espoused by such scholars as Wesley Wildman who writes that, “the human brain furnishes the cognitive, emotional, and motor capacities underlying the extraordinary range of religious behaviors, beliefs and experiences.” For Pannenberg our brains do not produce conscious awareness due to aggregated neural activity which then develops into language and rationality producing religious belief. Rather, according to Pannenberg, the brain functions in a religious manner, wherein understanding and rationality are developed through direction from an outside source, the Spirit enmeshed in our consciousness leading humanity to the imago Dei.

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This is possible as, for Pannenberg, the brain is a setting specifically built for the religious thematic to act upon.\textsuperscript{265} This does not expressly commit one to the idea that our cognitive faculties are more than the product of synaptic connections, rather one may intimate that our synapses are in place to receive input from the Spirit which is then interpreted as firing neurons. The religious thematic is not generated as a supervenient entity \textit{via} rational thought, in the manner of emergence. Rather the religious thematic \textit{produces} rationality as the result of direct connection to God’s supervenient and immanent presence. As Pannenberg writes, “the religious thematic … precedes the acquisition of language and plays a constitutive role in this acquisition.”\textsuperscript{266} The religious thematic develops consciousness, which then produces language that in turn develops the symbolic representation of the religious thematic; therefore, it may be argued that the relationship is designed with a purpose.\textsuperscript{267}

According to Pannenberg, human rationality is the result of engagement with the religious thematic which produces language developing a rational description of the metaphysical. Pannenberg argues that this is due to an innate sensitivity to the spirit field that, from the very beginning of development, takes concrete form in human experiences.\textsuperscript{268} Pannenberg argues that consciousness is subsequent to the human person being in relationship with the Spirit driven schemas of the religious thematic. It follows that, for Pannenberg, the action of the Spirit may then be said to have a direct influence on the physical nature of the brain, through the development of rational thought.\textsuperscript{269} However, Pannenberg’s understanding also

\textsuperscript{265} For a definition of the religious thematic refer to appendix 1.
\textsuperscript{266} Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 348.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid., 360.
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid., 350.
\textsuperscript{269} Ibid., 354–60.
offers that this action is not reducible to pure physicalism, as the seed of consciousness is found in the infinite religious thematic.270

To more specifically understand how the religious thematic may be said to affect the internal schemas of the brain, we may look to spiritual realities, other than sin, that Pannenberg associates with the religious thematic; such as revelation, or divinely orchestrated sensory experiences. According to recent work in the area of neuroscience, experiencing these religious realities would require no special capability, rather these instances would supervene on common experiences.271 Divine revelatory vision, as an example, may involve the same neural capacities that produce hallucinations.272 Further, sensory perception experiences including the feeling of pain, heat, cold, or touch, may be seen to activate certain lobes in the brain.273

The influences of the religious thematic may therefore be understood as normative sense perception events which are interpreted by our brains, forming synaptic connections. For Pannenberg, this neural activity would not be due to any specific function on our part, but rather it would be dependent on the relational existence with God.274 In other words, this communication could not come from within, even from within the supervenience of emotions. For Pannenberg, the influence of the religious thematic in the human person, something he avows is a necessary reality, indicates divine intent in addition to a design of some sort as the communication would be done with purpose. Therefore, to assume Pannenberg’s position, a receptive mechanism for that communication would necessarily be fashioned in ourselves.

270 Ibid., 361.
272 Brown, et al., Whatever Happened to the Soul?, 144.
273 For a definition of how Pannenberg understands feeling refer to appendix 1.
274 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 3, 565-566.
Summarily, Pannenberg’s view is that humans receive information from God in the form of internal schemas which are directed by the religious thematic. It is these schemas that allow humans to have a unique perception of the other, and so offer a manner in which humans may then be aware of a divine other. This is manifested in our consciousness by the production of language which then displays the source of information. The Spirit formed internal schemas that humans receive from the religious thematic function in the capacity of revelation. These metaphysical schemas affect our physical selves in relationship, directing humanity towards the purpose of reconciliation with God in the *imago Dei*.

According to Pannenberg, these schemas, that are enmeshed in human consciousness, may then be considered both purposeful and designed, or in other terms functional. The objective of the comparative analysis I offer is to more clearly interpret this functional metaphysical action. As such, it is helpful to offer a framework from which metaphysical action is understood functionally. This is the purpose of my engagement with TCM. As I will more fully disclose in the second half of this chapter, TCM views the actions of *Qi* in the universe in a systematically similar fashion to the manner in which Pannenberg describes the functionality of divine action. This allows the opportunity to present Pannenberg’s thought through the lens of TCM, as there is not simply a similar flavor to the positions of TCM *Qi* cosmology and Pannenberg’s theology, but rather a systematic understanding of the universe that lies in concert.

**4.3 Divine action as relational**

The individual human person, according to Pannenberg, does not develop in isolation. Rather, Pannenberg refers to identity as a sociopsychological subject. In effect, our psychological identities, or egos, are shaped by our social and cultural context. This does not however intimate that our cultural *milieu* dictates our individual identities, as our social and cultural context is also

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affected by ourselves in relationship.\textsuperscript{275} Further, this relationship may be seen in our material persons, as he also argues that our physical brains are not separable from our personal egos.\textsuperscript{276} Therefore, according to Pannenberg, “the social relations of individuals can be thematized even at the level of biological theory.”\textsuperscript{277} Social behavior, a necessary component to individual identity in Pannenberg’s view, may then be presented as enmeshed in the physical self, a social ordering of behaviors seen in relationships. This is also mutually constructive as the relational existence between ourselves and any other which we may encounter exists in a reciprocal manner.

Pannenberg argues that this manner of interaction also includes the relationship between God and humanity. He writes:

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Only a biological theory of evolution that accepted the perspective of the activity of the divine spirit in all living things could trace the evolution of life on into human cultural history without being compelled to pass to a new methodological threshold where humanity as such begins its development.\textsuperscript{278}
\end{quote}

For Pannenberg, biological evolution does not fully answer the question of how humans have developed, as the religious thematic is also responsible for the creation of our social world.\textsuperscript{279} Therefore, for Pannenberg, a reciprocal relationship with the religious thematic in our physical selves is accountable for our evolutionary social development in addition to our physical evolution.

Pannenberg explores this through the I-Thou relationship, or more specifically the I-divine Thou. Pannenberg writes that “individuals do not exist simply by themselves but are

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 2, 181.}
\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{Anthropology in Theological Perspective}, 163.}
\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{Anthropology in Theological Perspective}, 160.}
\footnote{Ibid., 161.}
\footnote{Ibid., 162.}
\end{footnotes}
always constituted by their relation to the other, the Thou.” Pannenberg’s position that we are only able to fully realize ourselves through the actions of God in our lives, then this too must be understood as a relationship, in this case with the divine Thou. We are formed in, and by, our relationship to God as well as each other.

Pannenberg writes that understanding how this relationship unfolds is a difficult subject. He notes that some thinkers, such as Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber, have looked to language, or more specifically dialogue, to understand the I-Thou relationship. Buber indicated the inadequacy of using dialogue, writing that the I-Thou relationship is best understood in silence. Buber writes that humans are “addressed by the mystery” that is mediated through “the world as sacramental inasmuch as the world in its totality is more than world.” Succinctly, the world-as-a-whole is a sacrament which fills the space between the sacred and the mundane even as the world itself exists in the mundane.

Pannenberg writes that both Rosenzweig and Buber look to understand the communication between the I and the Thou, specifically the space between the two and how it may be bridged. Pannenberg employs this research to demonstrate how the I-divine Thou relationship may be said to exist. While Pannenberg agrees with Rosenzweig and Buber’s assessment that a space exists which needs to be traversed, he believes their conclusions are not adequate to his own task. Rosenzweig and Buber do not, for example, include the reciprocal

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280 Ibid., 180.
281 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 2, 198.
282 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 181.
284 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 48,68.
relationship that Pannenberg avows must exist as we join with God in the progression of our
development to reconciliation. It is therefore a more particular understanding of this space
between God and humans that Pannenberg tasks himself with.

Pannenberg argues, by referencing Karl Barth, that the space between the I and the divine
Thou, is “the origin that constitutes both of them and grounds the special nature of the I-Thou
relation.” Essentially, it is a reciprocal relationship in which each is known by the other. It is
not an I-it relation as normally seen from the side of human logic, rather it is something much
deeper. In this, the divine Thou is not “at the beck and call” of the I, as the I is existent only in
relationship to the divine Thou. Further, there is no objective space to cross through an outside
communicative apparatus, rather the relationship is based in the immanent presence of the divine
Thou.

To further explain this position, Pannenberg looks to the relationship between the mind
and the body. He writes that the body is the “indispensable basis for speaking of the ego and
self.” This indicates, for Pannenberg, a psychosomatic unity of physical and metaphysical in
which the body and ego, or self, are linked in a non-reductionist manner, since neither the ego
nor the self may be separated into neurons, tissues, or other component parts. However,
Pannenberg also writes that the explanation of self-consciousness, or rather the formation of it,
can only be understood in the expression of it socially. This brings the other into the
conversation as well, as social expression may only be done in the company of another in
addition to the I and divine Thou. The relationships between the I, the divine Thou, and the

285 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 183.
286 Ibid., 183.
287 Ibid., 206.
288 Ibid., 206.
289 Ibid., 206–7.
other, are also necessary components to the self-identification found in the psychosomatic unity of the individual person.

Therefore, according to Pannenberg, a person may only be understood as a person in relational existence between the psyche, the body, the other, and the divine Thou. Pannenberg outlines the form, or components, of the relationship; however, if we are purposed to expand Pannenberg’s ideals into a more understandable framework, it is useful to see how Pannenberg envisages the communication between the various components of a person’s identity. Is the divine thou a directive presence at some supervenient “top level” acting autonomously to mold the form of human nature with no input from the other contributors to personal identity? Or is there an equal distribution of input acting within some unknown function of the universe? To see how Pannenberg addresses this, it is helpful to move further into Pannenberg’s work on consciousness and the revelation of God’s creative intent.

For Pannenberg, it is the consciousness associated with the human brain, or perhaps more to the point the physical and metaphysical interaction found in the I-divine Thou relationship, which allows for revelation of God’s creative intent without top-down directive influence. Pannenberg writes:

Since human beings themselves are involved in the question of their human destination, it is not possible that this destination, though grounded in the divine creative intention, should remain purely external to them; rather, their being must be understood as constituted by the divine creative intention.\footnote{Ibid., 60.}

The very being of humans is grounded in the “divine creative intention.” Pannenberg writes that the creative actions of God are not only responsible for the creation of humans, but they are also
inextricably linked to the moment-to-moment progression of every person’s individual realized self-hood, the ultimate destination to which each person is called. There is a revelation of divine creative intent which bridges the gap between the I and the divine Thou and which equips humans to realize themselves, as themselves, in their totality. However, Pannenberg also writes that humans are involved in the process, and that it may not be wholly external to them. Therefore, the progress of the human destination, grounded in God, is also affected by the individual. God may therefore be influenced in this process, as the relationship is reciprocal, with both parties exerting influence even though the entire process is situated within God.

Human identity is then sociopsychologically formed in a reciprocal relationship of the I, the other, and the divine thou, situated in God but affected by the human person. However, for Pannenberg, the relationship between physical and spiritual in humans is not a simple assertion that spirit and matter co-exist and so equally affect each other. Rather, the relationship is defined by who the players are, and what their role is. He writes that, “human beings are constituted as a relation to the infinite, not by themselves but by something else.”291 He goes on to identify the “something else” as the divine Thou. Further, he writes that through this relational existence to the infinite we come to ultimately know ourselves. Therefore, there is a supervenient presence in the communicative relationship that prevents the I from controlling the divine Thou.

This is not to say that Pannenberg’s view of the human-to-God relationship is then a model of top down causality. Rather, there is a fluid relational existence, with feedback into the system at all levels, without substantive changes to the higher levels. The feedback loop that exists in this mode of communication may have causal effects that travel back and forth along

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291 Ibid., 98.
the chain of communication; however, the effects are limited in scope to the various factors involved. This is similar to the way TCM views Qi acting in the body, as Qi can indeed be affected in the human body but not substantively changed. Qi will continue to be Qi just as God will continue to be God. For Pannenberg, in the human-to-God relationship, God’s identity is not altered; however, the actions of God may be affected by the human respondent. The only recorded physical alterations of identity are fostered upon the physical person or the I.

These alterations may occur as the physical nature of Pannenberg’s human-to-God relationship suggests a relational transference of information on the cellular level, specifically in the brain.292 Professor Leon Turner, a senior research associate for the psychology and religion research group at Cambridge University, offers an accessible way to present the physical nature of Pannenberg’s reciprocal relationship with the I, the divine, and the other. Turner writes that:

relations in which we engage with others, mediated through universal neurological systems, really are constituent components of our social cognitive processes—they are parts of the cognitive processes themselves not merely the causes of them.293

This is an understanding of reciprocal whole-part constraint as mediated through neurological systems, in particular sensory input. Relationships, Turner writes, are not the result of our rational mind, they are constituent parts. As Pannenberg argues that the rational mind is formed in relationship with the Spirit, we may then see how our relationships with the other and the divine Thou may affect neurological systems.

This is further developed by Ian Barbour in his discussion of sensory perception. Barbour has written that the eyes and ears convert physical input into neural impulses and that:

292 Ibid., 59.
the communication of information in the brain is a holistic property of a whole system. In itself, the frequency of firing of a neuron tells us very little about the information that is being communicated. Information is effective only in a context of interpretation and response.²⁹⁴

There is a communicative interaction which causes physical responses. This manner of informational transference and interpretation focuses Pannenberg’s view on the human in social relationships. Essentially, the information input affects the person who then interprets the data having a formative effect on it. As an example, the color blue is seen as the result of the eye receiving stimuli, however it only becomes the color blue after the human brain interprets the signals of light, then categorizes and names it. The place of blue in the world is a matter of sensory input in one direction and formative thought of the brain on the other. There is a formative and relational flow of information that can only be reasonably understood in relationship.

According to Pannenberg, the human person must be understood in relationship to divine action, specifically through the spirit field. For Pannenberg, the actions of God in the spirit field in conjunction with human action is the basis for our continued existence. This worldview provides space for the TCM view of Qi to be placed in the position of interpretive lens, as TCM too understands the human person in reciprocal relation to the universe as found in the pattern of the Dao. Through the holistic monism of TCM, there are no fully independent phenomenon, but rather all exists together, affecting one another in the pattern of existence through the actions of Qi. As I will demonstrate, relational active being is integral to the practice of TCM, and is the

basis for all diagnoses and treatments and may therefore offer a worldview beneficial to the interpretation of spirit field theory.

4.4 Divine action as practical

Pannenberg demonstrates his understanding of the communication between God and humanity via the spirit field, the religious thematic, and the mind/soul of the person. Further he offers how this relationship may affect the individual in progressive evolution without top down directedness through a reciprocal whole-part constraint paradigm. This presents, per Pannenberg, a logically organized view of how a person may be seen to interact with, and be influenced by, the religious thematic through the spirit field.295

However, for Pannenberg, the logical argument does not go far enough in coming to terms with the God-to-human relationship, as a logical view is primarily a philosophical argument. For Pannenberg, there must be a practical function of the relationship. It must in some way be perceived as working in the world-as-a-whole. To resolve this, Pannenberg links his theology and philosophy together by anchoring his logical thought paradigm in physical reality through culture in the shared world.296

Culture is a broad term, one which has been the subject of contentious debates among scholars for decades. The pursuit of this definition is, for Pannenberg, an unproductive endeavor as, “human habits, convictions, products, and systems of learning become ‘cultural’ only because they are the expression of a particular culture.”297 Simply, the things which are typically

295 For a definition of the religious thematic and the spirit field refer to appendix 1.
297 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 316.
employed to define a culture, such as music, religious observations, food, and social units, are
only considered cultural values because they are associated with a particular culture.

Pannenberg writes that it behooves us to move beyond the endless circle of defining
‘culture’ to instead work to understand what “grounds the unity of a culture,” as this may be the
only means by which to understand humanity’s part in it.\textsuperscript{298} Culture is important to Pannenberg
because, from his view, “what is specifically human is not the fact that the shared life of
individuals has a ‘social structure’ but rather the cultural character of this life.”\textsuperscript{299} Culture is what
sets humans apart, as other animals which also form groups have a social way of life with
peculiarities specific to them. Culture is then both impossibly difficult to define, and an
imperative in understanding what is distinctly human. Pannenberg therefore looks beyond the
human attempts at defining culture to seek what the ultimate \textit{cause} of culture may be said to be,
the unifying grounds of it.

Pannenberg argues that we should look neither to symbolizing activity such as language,
nor the organization of social institutions to understand the unifying ground of culture. Rather we
must look to “a third level which is distinct from individual and society and on which the
symbolizing activity of the individual is related to the foundations of social life.”\textsuperscript{300} Essentially,
neither language, nor social institutions, offer sufficient grounds to support culture, as they may
not be considered distinct from society. The evolution of cultural exemplars such as these has
followed along a parallel track with the evolution of people; they are not set apart, and are,
according to Pannenberg, products of culture rather than the grounds of it. Pannenberg argues

\textsuperscript{298} Ibid., 316. 314–16.
\textsuperscript{299} Ibid., 315.
\textsuperscript{300} Ibid., 319.
that culture is generated from something beyond these things, a third level from which cultural archetypes develop.

Pannenberg notes that this third level has often been understood mythologically. However, for Pannenberg, mythology is also an insufficient explanation of the third level, as myth is not independent of the individual, but rather a construct of human creative activity. Therefore, mythology cannot be seen as anything beyond the natural outgrowth of humanity’s interpretation and proliferation of symbols. And while he admits that humans, “do contribute by their creative activity to the shaping and revision of their cultural world…there is no question in this activity, even in art and technology, of a creation out of nothing.” For Pannenberg, the unifying ground of culture cannot be a mythological human creative work. Such a view would intimate a human initiated creation out of nothing, as all cultural elements are subsequent to the culture they represent. Rather, the unifying ground of culture must begin in a transcendent reality, specifically the religious thematic, which is then known to humans through consciousness. The religious thematic “discloses itself to lived human experience, at least in a partial way; human beings even contribute to forming it, but they do not first bring it into existence as such.” It is not a mythological human creation, but rather another reality in which humans take part.

This does not dictate that the transcendent reality, which for Pannenberg is the religious thematic, creates various cultures into which human beings are then fitted and predestined. Instead, “it is the tension between the claims of the mythical and religious tradition, on the one side, and the changing life experience of individuals and community, on the other, that provides

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302 Ibid., 320.
303 Ibid., 520.
the field in which the life-style of a culture is formed and renewed.\textsuperscript{304} The give and take of relationship, between God and humanity, is the foundation of culture and the impetus for the progression of it. Culture then begins with the religious thematic and is shaped by the interaction of humans in a creative and reciprocal relationship.

To understand how humans engage in this formative activity in our material reality, Pannenberg offers the phenomenon of play. He writes that human play is reflective of liberated freedom from instinct and goal oriented behavior, and thus more aligned with the unaltered origins of culture.\textsuperscript{305} Pannenberg writes that imitative and symbolic games first find expression in the play of humans.\textsuperscript{306} This “symbolico-imaginative transport that occurs in games prepares the way for the future free identification of the child’s real self.”\textsuperscript{307} As play is free from any “agenda” related to productivity, Pannenberg sees it as an engagement with the third level of the religious thematic. This occurs, he argues, since play is how humans begin to realize themselves apart from the expectations of the world.\textsuperscript{308} In play, humans begin to work out their true identities which, for Pannenberg, exist in reconciliation with God, through direction of the religious thematic. It is the formative cooperation between humans and God where actionable engagement finds expression in culture.

Pannenberg further states that free play, at its base, is representational. Not in the manner of mimicry, rather it is more in the manner of role play or, as he phrases it, representational play. Representational play demonstrates our connection to the religious thematic. Pannenberg writes that:

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{304} Pannenberg, \textit{Anthropology in Theological Perspective}, 321.
  \item \textsuperscript{305} Ibid., 370-372.
  \item \textsuperscript{306} Ibid., 323.325.
  \item \textsuperscript{307} Ibid., 325.
  \item \textsuperscript{308} Ibid., 366.
\end{itemize}
Representational play finds its fullest embodiment in ritual that represents the mythical order of the cosmos. Just as every fully developed game is self-contained and complete, so in ritual a world that is complete in itself stands over against the profane world. This setting apart is achieved by the spatial separation of the cultic area and by the removal of the time of a feast from ordinary time.\textsuperscript{309}

It is Pannenberg’s view that our participation in the divine is best understood as an engagement in this manner of role play. It is through this representational action that we encounter God. He writes that, “Jesus Christ by his promise linked his bodily presence with the sharing of a meal of bread and wine; he linked it, that is, with the performance of an action.”\textsuperscript{310} Essentially, when we look to understand a physical engagement with the divine presence we may only participate in such a sharing through the performance of ritual.

Pannenberg offers that we may more fully grasp the actions of the human-to-God relationship in play through the themes of language and reason. He writes that:

\begin{quote}
in language, meaning achieves presentation, and by means of its expression in language it is communicated. Reason, on the other hand, detaches the content of meaning from its linguistic form. It is able to do this because it precedes language and speech, even though it remains dependent on language as the medium for presenting meaning.\textsuperscript{311}
\end{quote}

To once again employ an earlier analogy, the color blue achieves presentation as the color blue through articulation. However, the “blueness” of the color blue exists prior to our expression of it \textit{via} language and reason.

Ritual performance, or representational play, is expressed and given form in language, however it does not find its formation in language, or even reason, but in the existence of the

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[309] Ibid., 326.
\item[310] Ibid., 329.
\item[311] Ibid., 339.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
religious thematic which is prior to both. Language and reason in ritual play are expressive
devices, enjoying a place of reciprocal creation in the ritual while not being the original impetus
for it. Pannenberg works to offer an exacting view of this by presenting the development of
language in evolution.

For Pannenberg, the process of evolution in communication from hand signals and
gestures to verbal utterances, is not simply a change in method of communication. This would
not be consistent with the typical understanding of progressive evolution, as one would expect a
more complex gesture system, rather than an entirely new means of communication. Rather,
what is seen in human development is a significant and progressive divergence in the move from
symbolic gestures, designed to elicit a particular response from another, to naming, which
instead depends on objects and a new form of communication based in verbal cues. Pannenberg
writes that, “The prehistoric transition from signal to symbol and therefore the discovery of the
symbolic meaning of words as names have correspondingly been connected with play and, more
specifically, with the festal play that is the origin of cult.”312 The leap in communication is,
according to Pannenberg, intimately linked with cultic representational play. In this manner,
objects, which may include gods in any form, represented by symbolic language may be present,
even though they are physically absent. Further, “the object is not simply present in a general
way but is present as acting.”313 It is a living presence capable of interaction and revelation,
driving key aspects of behavior through the grounds of culture.

The religious thematic therefore begins conscious thought and reason which in turn
develop the spoken word which then displays, through ritual play and acting, the religious

312 Ibid., 358.
313 Ibid., 359.
thematic. There is a practical mode of revelation, in relation to cultural development, that is specific to humans. “This does not make language any less a human creation; it means, however, that language, like every human creative activity, owes its existence to an inspiration that raises human beings above themselves.” The religious thematic may be present as acting in human development, even though it may not be seen as physically present. The third level can in this way be active in the physical world, affecting reason and conscious thought, represented by language.

According to Pannenberg, this cultic play then manifests the grounding unity of culture. Pannenberg writes that:

The ordered meaning that attaches to the institutions of communal life and to their interconnection in the political order of society with its religious or quasi-religious foundations has enabled the human beings of every age to experience as present their common destiny, namely, a life springing from a shared center that transcends the limitations of individuals.

The “shared center” is the religious thematic, binding all of culture together. It is the unifying ground which defines culture and thereby offers insight into the psychosomatic nature of humans.

This is, according to Pannenberg, a representation of the human-to-God line of communication for all people of all times. Pannenberg writes that all human beings, “find their center outside of themselves in the shared world and its order, although only to the extent that these become for them the place where the divine reality is present.” It is neither the shared world, nor the institutions or symbols of culture per se themselves, it is instead these things as they

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314 Ibid., 360.
315 Ibid., 409.
316 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 490.
are rooted in the divine reality. The culture to which human beings owe their distinct personal
definition, is anchored in the religious thematic. Divine reality is then, according to Pannenberg,
the absolute constraint in which human activity plays itself out. In this, any divine interaction
with mundane reality must conform to the form of divine reality: the physical is practically
dependent on the metaphysical. Therefore, there must then be, as Henry Drummond once wrote,
spiritual laws related to the religious thematic that humans may find to order themselves and
their institutions.\textsuperscript{317} The practical actions of individuals would be operable only within those
spiritual laws of the religious thematic. We must then understand our physical bodies as centered
and focused on a religious thematic which drives communication and provides a practical
connection. The realization of this connection is seen in the formation and progression of culture
in the social order.

Pannenberg writes that:

\begin{quote}
The religious meaning of the social order and its presupposed correspondence to the cosmic order explain why throughout lengthy periods of human history any changes in the social order were contained within narrow bounds and, above all, why changes in this order could not be regarded as valuable in themselves.\textsuperscript{318}
\end{quote}

Whether we examine the Neolithic revolution of animal domestication, or the imperialism of
high culture thousands of years later, the shifts in the social order are, for Pannenberg, directed
by human engagement with the religious thematic. As humans have sought their exocentrically
located center, there has been a pursuit of cosmic meaning that has driven change. These changes
in culture, like the shared world, are not valuable for their own sake, but as a representation of
human engagement with the divine reality.

\textsuperscript{317} Henry Drummond, \textit{Natural Law in the Spiritual World} (Luton: Wilder Publications, 2009), 10–17.
\textsuperscript{318} Pannenberg, \textit{Anthropology in Theological Perspective}, 490.
According to Pannenberg, this engagement is possible as the human response to stimuli may apply to transcendental as well as physical stimulus. Pannenberg writes that:

the question of the structures that determine behavior is broadened so as to move beyond the Kantian problematic of subjectivity as the ground of all experience and thus become a radical acceptance of empirical theory formation, so that the Kantian opposition between the empirical and the transcendental is now abandoned.\textsuperscript{319}

Pannenberg is speaking specifically here of a transcendental “\textit{a priori} behavioral schema.”\textsuperscript{320}

Essentially, humans do not respond to stimuli based on the subjective nature of environmental factors alone, but rather there is also a communicative response to the world based in a transcendental reality.

This may occur as there is a physical chain of communicative joints between things observed and the observer. These things, which include spiritual realities in our perceptible spacetime, are then ordered and interpreted in such a way to produce more than a simple arrangement of empirical data. There is a practical mode of interaction, as attested to by the observer, in light of the fact that something is observed. Further, whether one operates from the Kantian transcendentalist perspective, or Pannenberg’s view, that the \textit{a priori} transcendentalism of Kant proceeds from a transcendent source, it is clear that a mere physicalist account of reaction to stimuli does not offer a full explanation of human behavior.\textsuperscript{321} There exists a third level from which communication originates, unseen yet actionable and therefore practical.

The third level for Pannenberg, the unifying grounds of culture, is the religious thematic, as offered through the spirit field forming culture. Humanity’s part in expressing culture is the practical working out of our relationship to God. According to the work of Pannenberg, this is

\textsuperscript{319} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{320} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{321} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 2, 194.
practically accomplished through responses to the religious thematic, which, as I have offered, may be empirically demonstrated through neural activity and emotional responses. This practical, and mutually constructive relationship, stemming from the unifying ground of culture, sets humans apart from other animals and is necessary for humans to understand who and what they are.

According to Pannenberg, the practical function of divine action may be perceived as working in the world-as-a-whole. In TCM, pulse diagnosis is a practical performance by which the actions of *Qi* in the human body are understood. This is a two-part engagement wherein the physician participates in the actions of *Qi* and how they may be affecting the patient. There is a practical working out of the relationship between humans and the metaphysical actions of *Qi*, accomplished in a discernable fashion. The understanding of *Qi* in this manner may, I offer, present a useful paradigm through which to more comprehensively investigate practical divine action in spirit field theory.

### 4.5 *Qi* as functional

Pannenberg goes to great lengths to articulate his view of humanity’s functional design by incorporating several scientific disciplines into his theology. However, as the sciences from which Pannenberg operates are dualistic in nature, understanding the form and function of this position becomes more complex when one attempts to apply Pannenberg’s theory to the human body. What does it mean to say that humans are designed in such a manner as to accept and participate in metaphysical action? It is at this point where the interpretation of a holistically monist worldview is beneficial.

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322 For a definition of pulse diagnosis see appendix 1.
For Pannenberg, humans relate exocentrically to the infinite as finite beings. Some of Pannenberg’s critics, such as Colin Gunton, have written that this premise begs the follow up question of how humans may receive and interpret metaphysical actions in their physical bodies. If the functional design of the human body is understood to include metaphysical actions, then there must be a method of interaction. While Pannenberg goes to great lengths to justify his argument for a spirit led existence, incorporating psychology and other scientific theories, he still seems to operate from a dualistic worldview. His language suggest that his motivation is to move beyond dualism; to present a human body with seamlessly integrated metaphysical actions. However, his Western worldview makes the description of such a functional design in the human person difficult to illustrate, which brings criticism of his theory.

However, if we change the perspective of interpretation, there may be a more clear understating of Pannenberg’s functional design. TCM allows for just such a perspective, as the foundation of TCM practice is based upon the premise that the human body receives metaphysical information and energy that allows it to function. According to TCM, the body is comprised of meridians and organs whose function is to receive and interpret the metaphysical actions of Qi. This does not add some manner of a “spiritual other” into the body, rather the understanding is that the metaphysical actions of Qi are part of who the person is, on all levels. In TCM, there are specific types of Qi which are responsible for particular functions that operate in a discernable fashion. Succinctly, the system Pannenberg sought to explain, that which allows the human body to receive metaphysical energy and information, exists in TCM as a matter of course.

324 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 233.
As an example, in TCM practice the human body finds balance with the *Dao*. The logical form of the *Dao* is the center from which all the universe finds its flow.\(^{325}\) The mental and physical functions of the body receive energy and information in the form of *Qi* that supplies the encouragement and necessary indicators to be within the flow of the *Dao*.\(^ {326}\) All things in the universe are ultimately directed to be within this flow.\(^ {327}\) Simply, there is metaphysical action that the person receives in the form of information and energy that encourages the person to a place of balance and reconciliation with the universal *Dao*. These are effective in that the human person is a metaphysical and physical entity with internal schemas that allow for this energy and information to be received and interpreted. It may then be argued that the idea of this action is similar to Pannenberg’s view. There is a systematic harmony between the actions of *Qi* as described here, and the manner in which Pannenberg describes divine action in the human body.

To offer a further perspective, one may examine how TCM views the function of consciousness. In TCM, heart *Qi* is responsible for cognition and mental activity. This is not limited to thinking or emotive response, rather in TCM mental activity is the term employed for life in general.\(^ {328}\) More simply, as mental activity is the whole of human life, the heart *Qi* function of the body is the horizon of all life experience. One may find balance in the universe through engagement with the present moment because of the presence of heart *Qi*. This is not due to a metaphysical “other” granting conscious thought. Rather, in TCM, there is a clinical explanation of how *Qi* may flow in and through the body in various ways to connect one with the *Dao* and allow for life pointed to reconciliation with the *Dao*. It is the holistically monist view that provides the basis for TCM thought in this manner. The holistic monism of TCM is a

\(^{325}\) For a definition of the *Dao* see appendix 1.


\(^{327}\) Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, effects of the phases and influences, 258.

\(^{328}\) Liu, *The essential book of Traditional Chinese Medicine 1*, 75.
paradigm that allows one to view the universe as an integrated whole. Therefore, the operation of metaphysical actions in the human person are not difficult to conceptualize, indeed there are hundreds of texts devoted to explaining this function in detail. If one may adjust the position from which Pannenberg’s argument of functionality is read, moving from dualist to holistic monism, then Pannenberg’s argument may be understood more clearly.

The alternative worldview of TCM may not offer an exact model for Pannenberg’s argument of a functional human design. However, what it does offer, is that in the tradition of TCM the idea of a functionally designed human body that may receive and participate in metaphysical action is not an outlier. Rather, this perspective is the foundation for the entire field. There is no question in TCM of a physical and metaphysical unity in the human person that allows for metaphysical information to be received in the body. The work in TCM is focused upon understanding this action. If we are to draw appropriate parallels between the actions of Qi and the actions of the Holy Spirit; or even if we are to allow that both Qi and the Holy Spirit demonstrate metaphysical actions on the physical body, then the worldview and language of TCM may be fruitfully applied to more clearly understand Pannenberg’s position on functionality in divine action.

4.6 Qi as relational

For Pannenberg, the complete physical and metaphysical human person may only be properly understood in relationship to the actions of God.\(^{329}\) Presenting the I, the divine thou, and the other as relationally existing is therefore a key concern in explicating Pannenberg’s view of divine action as, for Pannenberg, it is the actions of God in relationship that form the basis of

\(^{329}\) Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, 98.
human consciousness. Critics such as Phillip Devinish have asked, if the spirit is responsible for consciousness, how may it exist in a reciprocal relationship? For Devinish, the idea that humans may have an affect on God negates God’s omnipotence. Further, Devinish sees no manner in which humans may relate to God and the universe in a real sense without partaking of God’s essence.

However, Pannenberg did not view the actions of God in this system as fully being God’s essence. Divine action, for Pannenberg, provides the grounds for humans to relate to God, the universe, and each other in a formative fashion; however, humans do not participate in God’s essence in the same way. The source of this metaphysical relational communication is inviolate. Again, it is the perspective of Western dualism that makes Pannenberg’s model difficult for some to accept. How may humans participate in the universe as a part of the universe, and not apart from it? Further, how may we participate in the actions of God without participating in God’s essence?

It is possible to understand Pannenberg’s theory in a manner more suited to Pannenberg’s intent if one operates from the paradigm of TCM holistic monism. TCM views the actions of Qi as a pervasive connective phenomenon that links all of the universe together in a reciprocal relationship. As an example, in TCM, people are not thought of as individuals who are formed as a fully separate entity apart from the universe, rather the form and function of the human person exists “in the overarching pattern of existence.” The whole person is therefore only a person in relationship to the universe through the actions of Qi. Further, these actions may be affected by the person in relationship, they are not top-down directives. According to TCM, Qi provides

\[\text{Kaptchuk, The Web that has no Weaver, 174.}\]
energy and information into the body which directs the function of the organs.\textsuperscript{332} However, as I will more fully explicate in chapter six, this is done within a reciprocal feedback loop that includes all things in the universe, including the will of humans. One may affect the function, or action, of \textit{Qi} in many ways, including diet, medical treatments, and through the emotional relationships one engages in.\textsuperscript{333} The actions of \textit{Qi} are not the single formative factor in the human person, but the pervasive nature of \textit{Qi} allows the universal relationships one needs to exist in the pattern of the universe.

The actions of \textit{Qi} are therefore universally relational, and formative in a reciprocal fashion. However, while the actions of the person may affect the actions of \textit{Qi} they may not alter \textit{Qi} as a phenomenon. In TCM, the actions of \textit{Qi} are present in a prescribed manner, otherwise the premise of TCM would be called into question. Heart \textit{Qi}, as an example, will always be fire and not another element, no matter the human effort.\textsuperscript{334} The fundamental being of \textit{Qi} may not be altered, the actions may be encouraged in some instances to change; however, \textit{Qi} itself is beyond human interference. Further, the form of the \textit{Dao}, (the flow of the universe that \textit{Qi} displays, and in which all find their active existence) is likewise not altered by human behavior.\textsuperscript{335}

In TCM, the actions of \textit{Qi} encourage all of the universe to flow in accordance with the \textit{Dao}. This metaphysical action allows the human person to be formed in a reciprocal relationship with the whole of the universe. Further, while humans take part in this metaphysical energy and information, they may not affect the source of the action, it is beyond human interference. This is understood in real terms, supported with medical theory and academic texts. Therefore, if a

\textsuperscript{332} Liu, \textit{The Essential Book of Traditional Chinese Medicine} 1, 70.
\textsuperscript{333} Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing}, manifestation of \textit{yin} and \textit{yang}, 24.
\textsuperscript{334} Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing}, seasonal organ pathology, 90.
\textsuperscript{335} Unschuld, \textit{Medicine in China}, 101.
worldview is sought that may more clearly explicate Pannenberg’s view of divine action as a relational phenomenon that forms the human person in a reciprocal relationship, the worldview of TCM may be helpfully applied.

4.7 Qi as practical

For Pannenberg, the practical working out of humanity’s relationship to God is the expression of culture. According to Pannenberg, the unifying grounds of culture may be understood as the actions of the religious thematic, as offered through the spirit field, that allows humans to realize their personhood. Divine action may then be understood in a practical manner, as humans engage in ritual play that models the religious thematic. This is done in response to the metaphysical actions of the religious thematic, which is the grounds of culture and the basis for human consciousness. There is then, for Pannenberg, a practical and mutually constructive engagement of metaphysical action that is necessary for humans to understand who and what they are.

Some of Pannenberg’s critics are not convinced of this system of understanding. One such commenter, Kam Ming Wong, has written that Pannenberg’s depiction of this action indicates that God would control all of reality directly. Wong argues that, in God’s omnipotence and omnipresence, the human-to-God relationship is entirely based upon God’s grace, and, as such, human activity may have no effect. For Wong, the chief area of conflict is Pannenberg’s insistence that immanent divine action must be linked to the physical world in a practical manner. In Wong’s view, if this is the case then God would not be the grounds of culture, but rather the grounds of all action, making God’s will inescapable in every instance. This interpretation of Pannenberg’s thought presupposes that the whole part constraint paradigm of

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free will may not coexist with the divine will, and that the metaphysical action of God in the world would need to have absolute control.

Others have written that Pannenberg’s argument is not helpful as there is no means by which to measure it. Pannenberg critic Hans Schwarz has written that, “claims concerning God’s activities cannot be examined against their object.” For Schwarz, the metaphysical actions of God may not be measured in physical reality, and therefore cannot find direct expression in a practical manner. Therefore, the grounds of culture may not be divine action, as humans would have no method to model it in the way Pannenberg describes. The view from which Schwarz operates does not allow for the possibility of a practical engagement of divine action. There is a dualistic separation in Schwarz’s thought that precludes the possibility of metaphysical action being included and known in the physical world. This creates problems for Schwarz when he attempts to apply Pannenberg’s ideas, as, from Schwarz’s perspective, the physical and metaphysical may not perceptibly interact.

However, if the worldview from which Pannenberg’s work was read included an alternate understanding of the universe, then an interpretation of Pannenberg’s thought may come closer to his intent, without the conflicts that Wong and Schwarz describe. Pannenberg’s first point is that divine action must be perceived as working in the world. While divine action in the world is not altogether a controversial topic, Pannenberg argues that divine action must be known as working in a practical manner; that is, in a discernable fashion. This is one point that Schwarz has taken issue with, the idea of measurable affects on reality by metaphysical actions. However, if one were to embrace the holistic monism of TCM, wherein there is no clear

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separation between physical reality and metaphysical action, there is room for more discussion of Pannenberg’s point. TCM is in fact based upon the principle of metaphysical action on physical matter.

As an example, in TCM, the actions of Qi in the body are known in a practical and measurable fashion through the use of prescription medicine. The Bencao Gangmu, a foundational text in TCM dealing with prescriptions, indicates that “material incarnations of Qi …could exhibit: softness, or hardness, movement or stillness, spirit or soul, feelings or senses, and shape or form,” the metaphysical aspects of Qi then exhibit the same characteristics in action.\(^{339}\) To extend the example, in TCM, a particular medicinal herb may have a sour taste, a material indication of the wood phase which would hold the body’s soil in check and also have a cold yin element to bolster the body’s defense against hot yang influence.\(^{340}\) In this instance, the metaphysical action found in the element is responsible for the formation of the physical elements, specifically the sour taste. This in turn has a measurable effect on the persons yang Qi, their metaphysical nature. This one instance is a multilayered and reciprocal example of metaphysical action on physical matter. The metaphysical action in an element has a formative effect on the physical characteristics, which then have an effect on the metaphysical action in the human body.

However, this does not intimate that Qi is considered a fully measurable phenomenon. As I will offer in chapter seven, contemporary bioinformatic and medical research has attempted


\(^{340}\) It should be noted here the difference between the wuxing classification of soil and another term also employed in TCM for waste material produced by the body, “night soil.” While I do not discuss night soil in this work a full treatment of it may be found in Marta E Hanson’s dissertation— "Inventing a tradition in Chinese medicine: From universal canon to local medical knowledge in south China, the seventeenth to the nineteenth century" (University of Penn, Paper# AAI9814853, 1997).
to measure $Qi$ in pulse diagnosis, and, while the TCM physicians involved in the study were able to offer diagnoses that were in part quantified, there were several aspects of the metaphysical actions that could not be captured by the most advanced computer models. The metaphysical action of $Qi$ in TCM, exemplified here through the use of prescription medicine, is not fully knowable; however, there are systems of understanding to explain it.

Wong’s critique of Pannenberg’s position on the practical nature of divine action is largely based on the premise that there may not be a practical engagement of immanent metaphysical action in the world, as that would demonstrate God’s absolute control. Yet, Pannenberg writes of a complex model that allows for this reciprocal relationship to exist in a practical manner. Wong is however bereft of the worldview that would be helpful to interpret Pannenberg’s system. Pannenberg argues that divine action proceeds from a third level, a reality beyond the physical world that humans take part in but may not fully know. From a Western, or otherwise dualistic perspective, this may be a difficult concept to accept. However, in TCM, the holistic monism inherent in TCM $Qi$ cosmology allows for not only immersive metaphysical action, but also a logical form to that action that allows for practical engagement and description.

As an example, yuan $Qi$, or original $Qi$, descends from the Tian, then finds expression in language through engagement with humans. Yuan $Qi$ flows into the body through the liver and then travels along the meridian network having an effect on the body.\textsuperscript{341} The Tian is, to a degree, beyond the physical world; however, it is also considered to be “present in all reality.”\textsuperscript{342} Further, once in the body, the organs in the body have a formative effect on yuan $Qi$. Per TCM, yuan $Qi$

\textsuperscript{341}Gao Wu, 鍼灸聚英 1529 CE (Gao Wu’s treatise on acupuncture) trans. Guang Yang (Shanghai: Shanghai University Press, 1961). For a definition of yuan $Qi$ refer to appendix 1.

\textsuperscript{342}Liu, The Essential Book of Traditional Chinese Medicine 1, 70. For a definition of Tian refer to appendix 1.
flows along the meridian known as the conception vessel and then penetrates the spleen. The movement and action of this metaphysical phenomenon is measurable, even though it proceeds from a source not altogether within the physical world, a place Western scholarship may define as the spiritual realm. Once yuan Qi enters the spleen, it is transformed into spleen Qi, the actions of which are needed for upward movement. Not only is there a manner of practical engagement, but also there is the reciprocal affect that the body has on the yuan Qi. If one is to view the actions of the Spirit in spirit field as coherently presented in comparison to the actions of Qi in TCM, then this view may offer an answer to the questions raised by Wong.

As a further point in his argument for practical divine action, Pannenberg argues that ritual performance offers a view of metaphysical action in that our acting out of sacred rituals models the religious thematic. Essentially, for Pannenberg, the religious thematic is the basis for our consciousness, and the actions of the religious thematic in the spirit field provide the means by which humans attempt to describe and model the religious thematic. Ritual performance then offers a representation of metaphysical action in the world, and this is the grounds of culture. Therefore, if one is to fully embrace Pannenberg’s view, it is helpful to operate from a position that is able to model metaphysical action through performance, models, and language. The function of pulse diagnosis in TCM allows for just such a view. I will more fully engage pulse diagnosis in a comparative structure with the spirit field in chapter seven; however, it is beneficial to offer a brief description, so that one may envision how Pannenberg’s view of practical divine action may be helpfully displayed in TCM.

In TCM, pulse diagnosis is a ritual of systematic and practical performance in which the actions of *Qi* are determined. More simply, in pulse diagnosis there exists a practical response to metaphysical stimuli that is understood and described through performance. To offer an example, in TCM pulse diagnosis, the physician begins with an observation of the patient’s complexion, facial color, scent, and the appearance of their tongue. This is followed by a series of questions to determine where the patient lives, what their occupation is, and what their relationship status may be. This is a ritual of diagnosis that precedes all physical contact. Once these various factors have been noted, the physician will take the patient’s pulse though palpation of seven pulse points. The manner in which the physician engages these points is prescribed; a more full presentation of which will follow in chapter seven. However, it is through this ritualistic engagement that the physician is able to detect *Qi* flow in the body, and then quantify this action into language that forms the models of diagnosis. Whether the pulse is slow, thin, or thready, there are specific conditions identified through the performance of pulse diagnosis that allow for both doctor and patient to understand the nature of the metaphysical action.

### Summary

I have in this chapter worked to display and develop Wolfhart Pannenberg’s model of the human-to-God line of communication. I have allowed that this view presents Pannenberg’s three-part anthropology as functional, relational, and, practical.

I have written that Pannenberg’s view is first functional, in that his *person in nature* demonstrates design and purpose. Pannenberg believed that “the soul is not another component part of a human being over and above the body, as in Cartesian or Platonic dualism; it is simply

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345 Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, the manifestation of *yin* and *yang*, 25.
346 The various pulse conditions listed here will be defined in chapter seven along with a description of the pulse diagnosis process.
the bodily being as living.” Simply put, the human body is an integrated spiritual and physical whole. As Pannenberg argues for a divine creation in which God purposes the human being towards reconciliation with God’s self, this would indicate that humans were created a spiritual and physical entity by design. This is an important point for arguing divine action in the spirit field, as humans would need a mode of interaction; and yet, this is also a difficult point to argue from the perspective of Western dualism. However, the worldview of TCM understands the human body to be an amalgamation of both physical and metaphysical realities. The diagnoses and treatments of all ailments are all based upon this understanding. Additionally, the intricate webbing of meridians and subtle balance between zhang organs points to a specific design. If one wishes to better understand Pannenberg’s argument, I offer that it may be beneficial to situate the conversation in the worldview of TCM.

According to Pannenberg, the human design has a purpose. Pannenberg believes that the Spirit enmeshed in the human body is a divinely active presence which offers life and directs that life to reconciliation with God. He does not however believe that this life-giving Spirit is necessarily an identifiable “part” of the human body. Pannenberg writes that, “the divine creative spirit causes human beings to have life within them, and to that extent the spirit is internally present to them, although it does not on that account become a ‘part’ of them.” Yuan Qi, or original Qi is also considered to proceed from the Tian, or heaven, to give life, while not being a “part” of the human body. Yuan Qi is fully integrated and responsible for warmth, thought, emotions, and mobility, but it is not a verifiably singular aspect of the human anatomy. However,

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348 Ibid., 523.
purpose in the function of $Qi$ may be seen as the actions of $Qi$ in the body encourage the body to be in balance within the *Dao*.

Second, Pannenberg’s view is relational as the *person in nature* presents the human person as existing in social relationships with God, the world, and the other. Pannenberg has argued that “the movement of life or the ‘soul’ that is in every living thing consists in a movement beyond the limited corporeal life of the individual into the environment in which that life is lived.” Humans live their lives seeking their center outside of themselves. They are defined socially even as they have an impact on the social institutions of which they are a part. Relational existence is key to development with the shared world and with God. Within TCM, $Qi$ is not only present in the human body, $Qi$ is also actively engaged in the physical world and ultimately responsible for life itself. This is a relational engagement between the physical and metaphysical seen in both Pannenberg’s theology, and may be further exemplified through the TCM understanding of $Qi$.

And third, Pannenberg’s view is practical, as the *person in the shared world* offers a tangible means by which the human person may practically operate in reality, not theory alone. According to Pannenberg, “the spirit is more intensely present in the ecstatic movement of love and is, in addition, present in a special way in human consciousness as the medium of the presence of the person’s own identity, as distinct from, though united with, the truth of things.” Pannenberg attests that the dynamic manifestation of the actions of God, that he refers to as the religious thematic, is seen in human reason, and love. And further, that our sociopsychologically formed identities are distinct and yet united with all things. The presence of

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349 Ibid., 524.
350 Ibid., 528.
the religious thematic in the God-to-human line of communication then forms the grounds of individual consciousness, and the communities which transcend individuals.\textsuperscript{351} This is not a top down direction from the divine but rather reciprocal, as humans also have a measurable effect on society as we join with God in the process of reconciliation. Further, for Pannenberg, there is a practical working out of this God-to-human line of communication that can be seen in ritual play. Within TCM, the actions of Qi are both reciprocal in relationship to human activity, and practical in that they have an effect on human health and wellness. However, in TCM, the metaphysical action of Qi in this manner is accomplished in an explicit system with documented cases of action. TCM may therefore afford a systematic worldview that not only lies in concert with Pannenberg’s view, but may also perhaps offer an even more helpful way in which to interpret Pannenberg’s theory.

Pannenberg’s view of how humans may receive and interpret information from God through divine communication follows certain criteria. I have formatted this chapter as a system of comparison based upon these criteria. I have also offered that the TCM understanding of how humans receive energy and information from Qi (through TCM Qi cosmology) fits appropriately within the construct of Pannenberg’s thought. Further, I have suggested that the TCM understanding of metaphysical action may offer a perspective from which to more fully understand Pannenberg’s views of divine action in the spirit field, as it relates to the human body. Pannenberg’s views, I have offered, do not lie in contradiction to the worldview of TCM, rather they are conducive to a comparative understanding. In this, I suggest that TCM may be a

\textsuperscript{351} For a definition of the religious thematic refer to appendix 1.
beneficial hermeneutic lens through which to interpret spirit field theory—the subject to which I now turn my attention.
Chapter 5 Spirit field pneumatology

The contribution of the theologian in the dialogue with natural science might not be confined to taking notice of what already happened in science, but might also extend to exploring the horizon of further conceptual developments.


The Spirit field theory of Wolfhart Pannenberg offers a persuasive framework to understand how God may be said to act in the world. Further, it is an important aspect of Pannenberg’s theology and a key feature in his understanding of divine action. According to Pannenberg, “the presence of God’s Spirit in his creation can be described as a field of creative presence, a comprehensive field of force that releases event after event into finite existence.” Pannenberg writes that God’s presence may be thought of as a “field of creative presence.” For Pannenberg, spirit field theory demonstrates God’s essence through God’s actions. Pannenberg does not write that this field is a static feature of the universe, as in some manner of metaphysical support structure. Rather, for Pannenberg, the presence of God is dynamic, and known through action and active being. Our ability to describe God is then limited to God’s actions, as the divine presence is known through God’s creative actions. For, as I have written earlier, God’s actions and essence should be considered separately as they do not fully display God’s essence until the eschaton. The field, for Pannenberg, displays the actions of God, offering revelation in such a

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352 For a definition of the spirit field refer to appendix 1.
way that God may, in part, be described. God’s identity is then linked to God’s actions in that God’s essence may be more fully known through God’s creative acts.

Further, Pannenberg writes that the Spirit’s actions are a comprehensive field of force. This should not be equated with an electric field, gravitational field, or other such field represented by a tensor that has a value for each point in space and time; for although these fields may have a widespread presence, they are not fully comprehensive in the manner Pannenberg describes. Pannenberg’s field is the presence of God’s Spirit, and is therefore an omnipresent creative phenomenon of action, active in all aspects of reality. The comprehensiveness of Pannenberg’s field would then extend into the spiritual realm as well, unbound by spacetime, even as it is related to it. The supernatural or metaphysical realities that scientific naturalism may not reach, or even include in its theory, is not beyond the bounds of Pannenberg’s field.

Pannenberg also writes that the spirit field “releases event after event into finite existence.” The continuing of creation, the action of the universe in its flow of movement and change, is the result of the spirit field’s function. Pannenberg does not write that the spirit field creates each event in a determined pattern of activity, rather he states that each event is released into finite existence, it is permitted entry into physical reality and allowed to extend its existence. The absolute direction is not determined, rather the actions of the Spirit in the field provide the space for each event to take place—they are released. There is an overall logic to the actions of God, as God is involved in all events, but not complete direction in the manner of determinism. The field is, for Pannenberg, the immanent creative and active presence of a transcendent God.

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354 Pannenberg, An Introduction to Systematic Theology, 49.
continually manifested in physical reality through a directed but non-deterministic connection to all phenomenon in our spacetime.

The spirit field theory brings together Pannenberg’s views on God’s immanence and transcendence, Trinitarianism, and the action and identity of the Holy Spirit into a unified theory of divine action. This is not, as I shall discuss further in section six of this chapter, simply an analogy to scientific fields of force. Rather, this is Pannenberg’s attempt to join science and religion into a field concept that is part of both physical and metaphysical realities, thus making God’s actions in the world knowable.

I will now more clearly define the spirit field theory, and the particular manner of its operations. In the following pages I will clarify the following: how Pannenberg defines the spirit field, how the Trinity is represented in spirit field theory, how Pannenberg separates the Holy Spirit’s action from the Holy Spirit’s identity, whether the spirit field theory should be thought of as a literal construction, or as an analogy, and finally how spirit field theory may be understood in Pannenberg’s view of wissenschaft. Additionally, I will offer the popular criticism of spirit field theory and how these questions will be addressed in my own work on the spirit field in chapter seven.

While the primary aim of this chapter is to define the spirit field in the various capacities that Pannenberg employs it, there is yet a comparative analysis in play that is helpful to keep in mind. As I will ultimately suggest that the lens of TCM is an appropriate hermeneutic device for the interpretation of Pannenberg’s spirit field theory, in this chapter I will employ the second stage of the morphological comparative method in which the overall pattern of comparison,

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355 For a definition of wissenschaft refer to appendix 1.
archetypes of action, is formed from the various particularities.\textsuperscript{356} Therefore, in this chapter, it is beneficial to bear in mind certain characteristics of $Qi$ that are inherent in the pattern of action related to the ongoing processes of the universe, and in the human body in particular. First, that $Qi$ in the universe is a constantly moving phenomenon that demonstrates the directional but non-determinist logic of $li$ in the *Dao*.\textsuperscript{357} Second, that the actions of $Qi$ allow for the active being of all things in the universe, and display the manner in which all things are related in the *Dao*. And third, that $Qi$ offers a partial view of the *Dao*, and the logic of $li$ that is inherent in it, through $Qi$’s constant flow. These aspects of $Qi$, which I will define more fully in the following chapter, are present in the TCM worldview, and are useful to consider during the explication of field theory which follows in the ensuing paragraphs.

### 5.1 Spirit field theory

For Wolfhart Pannenberg, understanding God’s actions through pneumatology is an important facet of theology. Pannenberg works to advance his understanding of pneumatology and divine action by appealing to field theory as it has been developed in modern physics. He writes that, “the field concept could be used in theology to make the effective presence of God in every single phenomenon intelligible.”\textsuperscript{358} Pannenberg uses the term phenomenon to indicate that God’s presence and action is not limited to static objects, or physical matter.\textsuperscript{359} For Pannenberg, the actions of God also exist in action itself. The progressive movement of change, and the active being of continual existence are also within the purview of God’s actions, as every occurrence,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item For a definition of archetypes see appendix 1.
\item The *Dao*, as I have previously written, is the pattern of all existence. *Li* is the eternal orderly cosmic principle found in Neo-Confucianism. It may also be translated as "rational principle," or "law," and in TCM $Qi$ cosmology is considered to be the underlying reason and order of the *Dao*. Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 196.
\item Pannenberg, “The doctrine of creation and modern science,” 12
\item Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, 523.
\end{enumerate}
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event, or happening would involve God’s actions.\textsuperscript{360} Further, as Pannenberg asserts this is a field of God’s divine action, then the pervasive action would not be limited to the physical world, since all physical and metaphysical reality would be included, joined in relation through the creative actions of God.

Pannenberg also writes that God’s presence is effective in every instance in the universe. It is the activity of God, God’s effectiveness, that is made intelligible through the spirit field, not a fixed image or passive revelation. We would not, for example, see the face of God in the beauty of a tree, rather we would come to know the presence of God through God’s effective action in relation to the tree, its germination, growth, maturation and death. Even the moment to moment active being of the tree would reveal God’s creative action: the key is God’s activity. This applies to all of existence as, \textit{per} Pannenberg, God is effectively involved in every single phenomenon as the divine creative presence, from the material of the smallest single quark to the action of that quark as it decays. The spirit field then should not be considered as a static field holding reality in place, or as a field of matter or energy to which all physical objects are related. Rather, the spirit field is in constant movement and action, actively relating all reality through God’s creative action.

Pannenberg argues that the concept of a spirit field, thus understood, may make God’s creative, effective, and pervasive actions in creation intelligible. Even instances of divine action which may otherwise be seen as the work of other persons in the Trinity may be more fully revealed through the spirit field. As an example, the resurrection, which may be seen as an act of the Son, in this way, is accomplished by the power of the spirit field, as significance is attached to the work

\textsuperscript{360} Ibid.
of the Spirit, specifically, as the creative origin of life. Succinctly, the spirit field plays a central role in Pannenberg’s view of divine action, and his pneumatology more broadly.

Pannenberg bases his spirit field theory on the work of Michael Faraday. While Faraday did not explore the metaphysical implications of his work, and indeed stated that his theory was not metaphysical but physical, his thoughts are relatable to Pannenberg’s view of God’s immanent and active presence in the world. Faraday observed that:

[T]he earth moves in its orbit in time; the crust of the earth moves in time; light moves in time; an electro-magnet requires time for its charge by an electric current: to inquire, therefore, whether power, acting either at sensible or insensible distances, always acts in time, is not to be metaphysical; if it acts in time and across space, it must act by physical lines of force.

What Faraday refers to as “physical lines of force” is a manner in which to describe what he saw as unexplainable actions at a distance. Faraday developed the idea that this action occurred because the force itself is the only real physical substance, and further, that all matter is interconnected through this field of force. Faraday argued that, though the nature of this force was undeterminable, it seemed to be a pervasive and continually active phenomenon that connected all of reality and was, in the end, the only “real” materiality in the universe.

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361 Ibid., 31
362 Modern field theory, as it is understood in physics today, began in the nineteenth century with the development of the theory of electromagnetism. Initially scientist such as André-Marie Ampère and Charles-Augustin de Coulomb could work within the constraints of Newtonian physics which expressed the forces between pairs of electric charges or electric currents. However, as science progressed use of field theory enabled more accurate calculations, therefore it was appropriate to employ the field approach and express these laws in terms of electric and magnetic fields; in 1849 Michael Faraday became the first to coin the term “field.” Steven Weinberg “The Search for Unity: Notes for a History of Quantum Field Theory”. Daedalus 106 no.4 (1977): 17–35.
364 Mark William Worthington, God, Creation, and Contemporary Physics (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2000), 117.
365 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 2, 444.
The way in which Faraday describes force fields may indicate some close similarities to the manner in which God is spoken of in Christian theology, specifically that God is immanent, eternal, and active. However, Pannenberg does not look to Faraday’s description as a literal “discovery” of the Holy Spirit working in the universe. Nor does Pannenberg simply employ the fields of Faraday as an analogy. Rather, Pannenberg applies the structure of Faraday’s theory of field operations to the study of divine action in order to offer a new understanding of how the creative actions of the Spirit may be understood; beginning with what he perceives to be the attributes of the Spirit.

For Pannenberg, the action of the Spirit may be considered constantly in motion, systematic, pervasive, and ultimately knowable, at least in part. Pannenberg writes that, “the theologically based idea of a dynamic of the divine Spirit working creatively in all events as the power of the future is by no means alien to a philosophy of nature. It stands in demonstrable relation to the basic data of science.” Pannenberg argues that the creative actions of the Spirit occur as a system which is in the constant process of change. Further, power of the future, which may perhaps be better translated as a performance by the future, demonstrates Pannenberg’s view of the future as eschatology, and his position that God’s actions are retroactively present in our spacetime through the immanent actions of the Spirit. For Pannenberg, “the framework of eschatology and the concomitant idea of the future shaping the present... allows us to conceive of contingency as a manifestation of such a field.” More simply, God’s actions may then be

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367 Ibid., 99. Original German: Die in der schöpferischen Dynamik des göttlichen Geistes sich manifestierende Macht der Zukunft ist nun aber nicht nur als Ursprung der Kontingenz des Einzelgeschehens zu verstehen. In the first section of this quote, “The power of the future manifesting itself in the creative dynamic of the Spirit” I have allowed that the power of the future manifesting may be an active performance or creative engagement of the future in the present through the actions of the Spirit.
pervasive in all time, non-deterministic, and yet still directive if considered as a field of operations with specific manifestations.

Additionally, the term science, in this instance, is not one of the disciplines of the physical sciences such as biology or physics. Rather, this is the German word *wissenschaft*, which is a term for any study that involves systematic research. The basic data Pannenberg refers to may then be considered any data generated by systematic research. Pannenberg further adds that the action of the divine spirit stands in relation to this data, indicating that systematic study of divine action is possible. This view, Pannenberg writes, is theologically based, and commensurate with philosophy of nature which is, *per* Pannenberg, the metaphysical foundation of modern science. Pannenberg then explores his view of divine action further by applying the principal of *wissenschaft*, using Faraday’s field theory as a beginning framework, to develop the concept of a spirit field.

Pannenberg’s spirit field theory incorporates the creative action of God, through the Spirit, which is pervasive in creation and in constant motion as the process of progressive change from the future. Further, Pannenberg sees the spirit field as the underlying metaphysical connection of all reality that affords the possibility of relationships. This field, which could aptly be described as the creative working of the Spirit of God, is linked to time and space in its sphere of operations.

The form of the spirit field’s function in the physical world is more clearly disclosed in Pannenberg’s work concerning the Spirit of God and humanity. According to Pannenberg,

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369 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 2, 83.
370 For a definition of *wissenschaft* refer to appendix 1.
371 Ibid., 189.
372 Ibid., 110.
human evolution and eventual reconciliation with God is accomplished through the work of the spirit field. Pannenberg argues that the Holy Spirit is the life-giving principle in all of creation “to which all creatures owe life, movement, and activity.” Life is set beside movement and activity to indicate that the action of the Spirit is a universal phenomenon that demonstrates life in the various movements and activities of creatures. The concept of motion, the activity of being, is then seen in the actions of the Spirit across all of the cosmos. The form of the Spirit’s function then is one of continual movement which then makes possible the active being of the universe, which is life. However, for Pannenberg, this is not life without purpose; there is direction from God. Therefore, the cosmic flow of the Spirit allows for active being and encourages that active being towards reconciliation with God.

Further, the work of the Spirit in directing the universe towards reconciliation, the logical flow of the Spirit’s actions, are not separate from the function of the Spirit in maintaining life, rather the actions are the same. Pannenberg writes that: “this work of the Spirit takes place in full and continuous connection with his work in the world of nature as the origin of all life.” There is a full and continuous connection between the function of the Spirit as the life-giving principle and the actions of the Spirit encouraging the universe to follow the orderly flow of those actions to reconciliation with God. This action takes place from the future and has an effect on the universe in all times: past, present, and future. Pannenberg does not say that the Spirit is the material substance of the universe in simple terms, but rather the action of the Spirit provides the basis for the active being of physical matter. This presents a view of an immanent and

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374 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 2, 79.
376 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 2, 77.
permanently active field of operations, with a logical flow, that exists in a complex form as both
Spirit and matter.

For Pannenberg, the actions of the Spirit in progressive reconciliation, the directions from the flow of the Spirit, are the same kind of actions as seen in the maintaining of active being in physical matter in the universe. He writes that, “the dynamics of reconciliation are not something secondary to the creative activity of God, but unconditional, creative, and reconciling love characterizes the activity of the creator himself.”377 The directions from the flow, or movement and action of the Spirit, are not a secondary concern of God, rather they characterize who God is. The actions and movements of the Spirit are not the essence of God, but they offer a glimpse of the wondrous whole divine identity. There is a perpetual motion of the Spirit that reflects the dynamic and continual being of God. This may occur in the manner of field operations as, per Pannenberg, the spirit field relates all things, physical and metaphysical, throughout all spacetime, and directs them to reconciliation.378 Therefore, the actions of creation of physical matter and the eschatological concerns of reconciliation are joined in that the dynamic action of the Spirit does both.

The spirit field is pervasive, fully active, logical in its direction, and relational to all things in the universe physical and metaphysical. However, this does not make humans “one with God” in the spirit field in the manner of pantheism. Pannenberg allows that the concept of a field allows for God’s immanent and continual action in the world-as-a-whole, partially

378 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 2, 78.
demonstrating the essence of God, while maintaining God’s transcendent existence in relation to material reality. Pannenberg writes that field theory, can help to make understandable how the activity of the Creator in his creation can coexist with the proper activities of the creatures themselves. The key presupposition here is that field effects can be superimposed upon one another. Specific fields can be regarded as manifestations of more comprehensive fields. There is no competition, then, between the creator Spirit of God and created agencies. Rather, as the omnipresence of God permeates all the space of the creatures, so God’s Spirit permeates all-natural forces and the life of the creatures, and thereby empowers them in their own activities.\textsuperscript{379}

Pannenberg writes that the spirit field may interact with and influence other fields which are related and, according to his views on creation, are derived from the same divine source. There are overlying fields of operations, as well as specific manifestations of the prime field, which can in turn be thought of as fields themselves.

These “smaller” fields may have a manner of independence, allowing for free will, even as they participate in the greater field of God’s actions. This may occur as, according to Pannenberg, there are no fully independent fields existing without connection to the prime field. Rather, the prime spirit field is the connective reality, and the overall field of existence through which other fields may exist as specific manifestations. According to Pannenberg, “The working of the Spirit in living creatures does not mean that [God] is a constituent part of the creature. Rather, it means that creaturely life has an eccentric character, that it is referred to the divine power of the Spirit that works upon it.”\textsuperscript{380} More simply, God creates that which is other than God, although God maintains an immanent relationship to God’s creation through fields of increasing complexity; not unlike Peacockes’s top-down causation, or Nancey Murphy’s

\textsuperscript{379} Pannenberg, \textit{The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Science}, 369.
\textsuperscript{380} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 2, 186.
supervenient non-reductive physicalism. We may then participate in the actions of God through the field without partaking of God essence which is the full field that humans are individual manifestations of.

For Pannenberg; “the Spirit of God can be understood as the supreme field of power that pervades all of creation. Each finite event or being is to be considered as a special manifestation of that field, and their movements are responsive to its forces.” All phenomena are then a manifestation of the spirit field and subject to its influence. However, this does not negate personal autonomy, nor the biblical accounts of angels as the messengers of God. According to Pannenberg, “if we understand the description of angels as spirits in analogy to what we have said about the Spirit as field, what is meant is not in the first instance a personal figure but a force.” Angels, as the messengers of God who carry out the will of God in the Bible, may be thought of as special manifestations in the divine field. Further, in regard to human manifestations, the movement is responsive to God, not deterministically directed. There is therefore the possibility of free will even while humans may live in and through God in God’s creation, as Pannenberg believed that the spirit field interacted with other “lesser” spirit fields that were manifested in the prime field.

As an example, Pannenberg makes reference to the “absolute Spirit” of God in relation to angels, who are, by his account, independent spirit creatures. He notes they act as independent

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384 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 2, 105.
spirits interacting with the prime Spirit, even to the point, in some cases, of acting in opposition to the primary spirit field. Therefore, evil spirits or demons do exist, as do the good or angelic spirits which maintain the desired direction of the prime Spirit.\textsuperscript{385} These forces that are in the service of God’s lordship over creation “may obviously become autonomous centers of power.”\textsuperscript{386} While his creation theology points to the view that all of the created order proceeds from God, there are individual distinctions which, as aforementioned, are particular manifestation of the prime spirit field. Although there exists a degree of separation, that allows for both free will and the transcendence of God’s essence, there yet exists one direction to which the actions of God point. There is a logical flow to the spirit field, pointed towards reconciliation with God. While there may be rebellions within the flow, all reality, physical and metaphysical, finds its basis, the source of its active being, within the flow and constant action of God’s creative movements in the spirit field.

Pannenberg writes that:

\begin{quote}
God is always present already in all human life. He is there for us and our world even though he is not known as God. He is there as the undefined infinite which is formed by the primal intuition of our awareness of reality, as the horizon within which we comprehend all else by limitation.\textsuperscript{387}
\end{quote}

For Pannenberg, God cannot be thought of as merely a transcendent entity existing outside our own reality, God must be immersed in God’s creation.\textsuperscript{388} God must therefore be conceived of as the unifying grounds of the whole universe, if God is to be conceived of as creator and redeemer of the universe. For Pannenberg,

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{385} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 2, 105–8.
\textsuperscript{386} Ibid., 105.
\textsuperscript{387} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 1, 356.
\textsuperscript{388} Ibid., 357.
\end{flushright}
everything which exists should be shown to be a trace of the divine reality…this requirement applies; however, not to objects in abstract isolation but to their unbroken continuity: all, as used in the concept of an all-determining reality, refers not to each individual thing on its own but to each in its continuity with all others.389

There is a unified existence, related through the function of spirit field operations. God’s immanence is understood to systematically engage with humanity: pervasive, and creatively active. For Pannenberg, religious experience runs counter to the type of consciousness that limits itself solely to contemplation of infinite things.390 For Pannenberg, there must be a physical manifestation of God’s will with which humanity could somehow interact, as “God by definition includes the empirical reality by which the idea of God must be tested.”391 For Pannenberg, field theory presents that possibility.

According to Pannenberg, the actions of the spirit field provide the basis for the active existence of all physical matter. Similarly, as I will demonstrate more fully in chapter six, Qi in TCM allows for the active being of all the universe.392 Further, in TCM, the active being of all reality is encouraged to reconciliation with the Dao. The field of action that is Qi in the universe is both constantly creative, as it demonstrates change itself, and intelligible, as it offers a glimpse of the flow of the Dao. These particular traits that form a pattern of action, the archetypes of action that describe how Qi acts in the universe, will be more fully defined in the following chapter.393 However, it is helpful to note at this juncture that these characteristics of action that depict Qi in relation to the universe and the human body are not in conflict with those that describe the spirit field, but rather they are congruent. Therefore, if we are to use the pattern of

390 Ibid., 15.
391 Ibid., 300.
392 For a definition of Qi refer to appendix 1.
393 For a definition of archetypes see appendix 1.
action as an interpretive device, it may be reasonably argued that TCM Qi offers appropriate grounds for displaying the metaphysical actions of the spirit field.

As one may look for an interpretive device from which to understand the spirit field, it becomes apparent through this presentation that certain aspects of metaphysical action must be present. Further, if indeed we are to employ the morphological method, then the interpretive device should use the power of pattern. Summarily, one discipline may not inform another if it simply shares a few traits, the system of understanding must be equally applicable to both traditions. The actions of Qi in TCM, as I will more fully demonstrate in chapter six, may be organized into archetypes of action that adhere to the system of divine action seen in Pannenberg’s theology, and may therefore, I offer, serve as an appropriate interpretive device.

5.2 Trinitarianism and the spirit field

Recent scholarship in the Qi and the Holy Spirit comparative analysis argues that our perception of Qi may either be considered a perception of God’s essence, or an understanding of the Ultimate Reality, which is also generally considered to be God. However, as I emphasized in chapter two, this is not a position I assume. Rather, I have suggested that the actions of the Holy Spirit may be considered separate from the Holy Spirit’s divine identity in the spirit field. However, this then raises questions of Pannenberg’s position regarding the Trinity and Trinitarian actions in the spirit field. It is the purpose of this section to offer Pannenberg’s view considering how the Trinity may be said to act in the spirit field, and further, how the Spirit’s actions may be considered separately from the divine person in a Trinitarian view. This offers a helpful position from which the actions of Holy Spirit may be considered apart from the Holy Spirit’s divine identity, and therefore compared to Qi without arguing that Qi is God.
Pannenberg was a believer in the Trinity, and his theology was based upon a Trinitarian view. The spirit field theory is a then a reflection of this understanding and, according to Pannenberg, offers a more particular view of the Trinity’s actions in the world than that offered by scholasticism. The work of the Latin Scholastics suggests that when God acts in the physical world, *vis-a-vis* creation, the Trinity cannot be separated. This position was supported in particular by St. Augustine of Hippo.\(^\text{394}\) However, for Pannenberg, it seemed as though this was not a comprehensive treatment of Trinitarian divine action in the world. Rather, Pannenberg argues that individual distinctions must be made in the relationship of the immanent Trinity, as one may not have a relationship with another unless there first exists a distinction between them.\(^\text{395}\) This then extends to the economic Trinity and finally to the actions of the Trinity in creation. According to Pannenberg, accepting this view would allow the three persons of the Trinity to be more fully understood, as their actions would demonstrate their person. For Pannenberg, the spirit field presented a manner in which the Trinity could act as a field of operations with the Spirit being the *primus inter pares*, demonstrating a more clear understanding of the Trinity.\(^\text{396}\)

According to Pannenberg, “the autonomy of the field demands no ordering to a subject such as is the case when the Spirit is understood as *nous*. The deity as field can find equal manifestations in all three persons.”\(^\text{397}\) For Pannenberg, the use of the spirit field could provide a more apparent distinction for the divine person of the Holy Spirit than that applied by the scholastics, while still maintaining a Trinitarian theology. Further, when one views the actions of

\(^{394}\) Ambrose De fide 4.6.68 (CSEL, 78, 180, 32-35); Augustine De trin. 1.4.7 (CChrSL, 50, 36, 22-24), where Augustine argues that as the three are inseparable, they work inseparably.

\(^{395}\) Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 2, 4.

\(^{396}\) Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1, 383.

\(^{397}\) Ibid.
the Spirit in creation through the function of field operations, there is not, according to Pannenberg, a need to order the Trinity. Simply, we may look to the actions of the Spirit in creation without relegating the Spirit to some manner of energy or consciousness that is a product of God and therefore lesser, or at least less distinct.

Pannenberg asserts that this is a more complete view of Trinitarian divine action, and further that it may be needful if God’s actions as Trinity are specifically investigated. According to Pannenberg, the “mutual self-distinctions” which are seen economically in the Trinitarian relationship, must exist immanently in order to maintain consistency in Trinitarian theology.\footnote{Pannenberg, "Father, Son, Spirit: Problems of a Trinitarian Doctrine of God," \textit{Dialog: A Journal of Theology}: 26, No.4 (1987): 251.} Pannenberg writes that:

\begin{quote}
The action of the one God in relation to the world is not wholly different from the action in his Trinitarian life. In his action in relation to the world the Trinitarian life moves outward, moves out of itself, and becomes the determinative basis of relations between the Creator and the creatures.\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 2, 5.}
\end{quote}

Put simply, for Pannenberg, God may not be three divine persons in one instance and one divine person in another.\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 1, 321.} This then extends to the actions of God, as the actions must also in some manner be separable. Pannenberg provides scriptural examples of this separated immanent Trinitarian action, such as Matthew 1:18, to support his view.\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 2, 7.} “Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.”

\begin{quote}
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\end{quote}

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for understanding how an immanent God may be fully present in creation while maintaining a transcendent identity.

Pannenberg further offers that we may consider individual action in the Trinity in practical terms by allowing that the communal work of the three is simply allocated to one, specifically the Holy Spirit, acting in a preeminent fashion through the spirit field.\textsuperscript{402} He writes that we may then:

think in Trinitarian fashion of the relation of the one God to the world, i.e., as Creator, Reconciler, and Consummator so that the reciprocal action of the persons always lies beyond the relation of the one God to creatures and the relation of creatures to the one God.\textsuperscript{403}

For Pannenberg, it is appropriate to discuss the separate workings of the immanent Trinity, in the same manner as the economic Trinity, with one divine person as the primary actor. This then supports the various interactions God has with the world, while maintaining God’s Trinitarian existence.\textsuperscript{404}

The spirit field, for Pannenberg, demonstrated the singular relationship identified in the Trinity through the creative action of field operations. For Pannenberg, the action of creation (which may be considered the maintaining of active being in the universe) is attributed to the work of the Spirit as a perpetual flow of motion. In this action, the Trinity demonstrates the ability to act as persons. Pannenberg writes that, “it is part of the concept of action that that one who acts leaves the self by an act of freedom, producing something different from the self or acting on it or reacting to it.”\textsuperscript{405} The very act of creation, according to Pannenberg, necessitates a

\textsuperscript{402} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 2, 5–8.
\textsuperscript{403} Ibid., 6.
\textsuperscript{404} Wolfhart Pannenberg, \textit{Jesus--God and Man}, 180–83.
\textsuperscript{405} Ibid., 5.
separation of the Trinity into the Trinity’s divine persons, as something other (the universe) is produced. This is a key point in Pannenberg’s view of the Trinity. For Pannenberg, action is that which distinguishes the unified Trinity, and action is the form and function of the spirit field in creation, pervasively and eternally.

Pannenberg argues that the Spirit operates in a distinct way in the creation of the world, and in the direction of that creation to reconciliation. Further, he asserts that this action displays how the divine persons of the Trinity may act semi-autonomously in the spirit field.\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology 1}, 319.} Pannenberg writes that “if the Trinitarian relations among the Father, Son and Spirit have the form of mutual self-distinction, they must be understood not merely as different modes of being of one divine subject but as living realizations of separate centers of action.”\footnote{Ibid., 319.} By referring to the divine persons of the Trinity as “centers of action,” Pannenberg draws closer to his position on manifestations in the spirit field. In this way, he may demonstrate individual action as a particular manifestation in the spirit field without disjoining the unity of the Trinity. Pannenberg places an emphasis on the free acts of the individual divine persons of the Trinity, moving as far from modalism as he may, in his view of action in the spirit field.\footnote{See Pannenberg’s personal correspondence with Timothy Bradshaw recorded in Timothy Bradshaw, \textit{Trinity and Ontology: A Comparative Study of the Theologies of Karl Barth and Wolfhart Pannenberg} (Lewiston: Edwin Mellen, 1992).}

Pannenberg writes that, “the real multiplicity within the unity of divine action is no mere appearance. Nor is it proper only to the creaturely side.”\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology 2}, 8.} Essentially, it is appropriate to think of the action of the economic Trinity as well as the immanent Trinity as a unified multiplicity. In this, one divine person may act primarily while in a relational existence with the others.\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology 2}, 31.}
Further, this is not, as he puts it, a mere appearance. This is the manifestation of the “real multiplicity.” In short, our apprehension of the Trinity, for Pannenberg, comes through our engagement with the separated actions which offer a view of the relational existence of a Trinitarian God.

To illustrate this point, Pannenberg points to instances when it can be seen that one divine person of the Trinity seems to be in prime control of a particular interaction. Pannenberg writes, “On the one side, the Spirit is the principle of the creative presence of the transcendent God with his creatures; on the other side, he is the medium of the participation of the creatures in the divine life, and therefore in life as such.” There are specific acts which, according to Pannenberg, belong to the Spirit. The Spirit acts as the creative presence within the economic Trinity even while the Spirit allows for the formation of relationships immanently. The Spirit is then the grounds for life, creation, movement, and universal relationships both physical and metaphysical.

For Pannenberg, these active relationships are most adequately described in the manner of field operations. According to Pannenberg:

The idea of the divine life as a dynamic field sees the divine Spirit who unites the three persons as proceeding from the Father, received by the Son, and common to both, so that precisely in this way he is the force field of their fellowship that is distinct from them both.

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411 Pannenberg, *Jesus--God and Man*, 181.
412 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 2, 32.
413 This is not to say that Pannenberg asserts the view that the Holy Spirit is the non-conscious bond of love between father and son, rather that the relationship is possible because there are different aspects which may relate to each other and the separation of those aspects is the necessary element which provides the opportunity for relationship. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 2, 31.
414 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology* 1, 383.
Per Pannenberg, the Holy Spirit acts creatively in the physical world in conjunction with the will of God and the presence of the Son. Divine action, or the will of God in the created order, may then be seen as the actions of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit does not act independently in some instances whereas the Son or the Father may act in others.\textsuperscript{415} Rather, the act of creation, and the sustaining of creation, is the essential work of the three in concert with certain divine persons acting in the principal role. For Pannenberg, we may best understand this divine Trinitarian operation through field theory.

If we are to view Pannenberg’s understanding of Trinitarian action in the spirit field through the comparative model I have described, we may consider the actions of $Qi$ in relation to the $Dao$. Per TCM, the $Dao$ is the overall pattern of existence to which all actions and active being flows.\textsuperscript{416} While it would not be accurate to state that the $Dao$ has an identity in the manner of a person, it may be stated that, in TCM, the $Dao$ is considered to be a metaphysical phenomenon that is the basis for all reality. The $Dao$ may not even be rightly named, much less fully known; however, according to TCM theory, the principle of $li$ makes the form and function of the $Dao$ logical and partially discernable.\textsuperscript{417} This may be known through the pattern of action that is $Qi$. A more full description of this will be disclosed in chapter six.

\textbf{5.3 Divine action and identity in the spirit field.}

Pannenberg argues that a specific focus on the actions of the Spirit in creation allows for a Trinitarian view of the spirit field, if we may look to the actions of God separately from God’s identity. This is needful as the spirit field is ubiquitous, and if the fullness of God’s essence were

\textsuperscript{415} Oliver Crisp, \textit{Christology, Ancient and Modern}, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 35.
\textsuperscript{416} Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing}, determining life and death, 83-85. For a definition of the $Dao$ see appendix 1.
\textsuperscript{417} Schied, \textit{Currents of tradition in Chinese Medicine}, 43.
thus distributed, then the spirit field may be construed as pantheistic. The question then becomes, for Pannenberg, how may we distinguish God’s essence from God’s actions in the spirit field and at the same time view them as inseparably linked, so that the actions of God are really the qualities of God’s self?  

Pannenberg begins to work through this question by examining the theology of St. Gregory Palamas. Pannenberg writes that Palamas engaged the question of whether God’s actions and identity may be separated in Palamas’ 14th century work, *The Triads*. When speaking of God, Palamas wrote that, “He who is beyond every name is not identical with what He is named; for the essence and energy of God are not identical.” Pannenberg argues that Palamas makes a distinction in this statement between the *essence* of God and the *energy* of God. This conversation is based in Palamas’ thoughts on participation, specifically through meditative prayer. According to Palamas, there is an indisputable division between the essence of God and the essence of creation as he writes that, “there is only one single essence without beginning, the essence of God, and the essences other than it are seen to be of a created nature.” The essence, or identity, of God must therefore be separate from creation, as God is an eternal being and the rest of the universe is created. However, there must also be a manner of interaction to make participation possible, some way to bridge the gap between the Holy and eternal transcendence of God’s essence and the mundane reality of the universe. This, in Palamas’ view,  

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418 Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology I*, 361.  
419 The Triads is an extensive work of theology written largely as a response to Barlaam of Seminara in defense of Hesychasm. This was a significant controversy with many works on either side of the debate. This is an important discussion; however, disclosing the breadth of this debate is beyond the purview of this work. For more on this subject refer to: Hart, Teresa. "Nicephorus Gregoras: Historian of the Hesychast Controversy." *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 2, no. 2 (1951): 169.  
421 Ibid., 92.  
422 Ibid.
is accomplished through the energy, or actions, of God. Therefore, the actions of God, while themselves uncreated, must be considered separately from God’s essence, as the actions of God “are not identical” to the divine person of God; and further, they are the only means of engagement between God and God’s creation.\footnote{Ibid., 97.}

It is this view that Pannenberg favors when he writes that, in the act of creation, the Trinity “move out of what they have together, namely the divine essence.”\footnote{Ibis., 92.} However, for Pannenberg, there is a problem with the way that Palamas separates energy and essence. Specifically, he notes that Palamas adds a fourth aspect to the Trinity by separating the qualities of God. Pannenberg argues that:

\begin{quote}
if we try to trace back the multiplicity of the qualities that are attributed to God, in distinction from the unity of his essence, to the multiplicity of his outward relations, and in this way to rescue the unity of the divine essence, there follows not only an abstract and empty notion of the essence but even more fateful a fundamental contradiction in the idea of God that has destructive consequences for the whole concept of God.\footnote{Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 1, 362.}
\end{quote}

For Pannenberg, we cannot assume that God’s attributes or individual actions are separate functions of the divine will. The action of God must be as unified as the essence of God, linked together and immanently present. If, he argues, we allow for independent attributes or actions separate from the whole to exist, then the idea of a unified Trinity either falls apart or becomes a some manner of a four part divine entity.

The answer, for Pannenberg, is that, “God is not to be really distinguished from his attributes but is to be distinguished from the functions that form the stuff of his attributes as
something that stands behind them.\textsuperscript{426} The action of God is not an attribute to be considered separately or independently in every instance. Rather, the action of God is the realization of God’s creative attribute in the world. The actions of God offer a glimpse of God’s essence, they are not fully separate, nor are they a full disclosure of God’s divine self. Further, this activity is unified in the field through all time and space as the actualization of the will of God through Trinitarian relationship. This is the distinction made in spirit field theory: the actions and presence are separate but in a more specific manner than that espoused by Palamas.

For Pannenberg, the actions of God cannot be within God, as God is wholly other, they must be a manifestation of God’s attributes.\textsuperscript{427} As an example, Pannenberg writes that:

\begin{quote}
A distinction is here made between God's essence and his causal relation to the world, since he brings forth the world freely and not by any necessity of his nature. Yet the qualities that are ascribed to him rest on his relations to the world which correspond to the relations of creatures to him.\textsuperscript{428}
\end{quote}

God’s essence is free and creative, unconstrained by physical reality. However, in the act of creation, the world becomes dependent on God’s immanent action. The actions of God in the world create contingency in one direction, with regard to God’s essence, but not God’s actions. Therefore, we may see that the actions of God may indeed be tied to physical reality, as the actions of God need something to act on. However, the action of God in creation is an act of free will which is not constrained by the reality that the actions have created. God may then be non-contingent, even though God’s actions are enmeshed with that which they act upon.

\textsuperscript{426} Ibid., 362.
\textsuperscript{427} Ibid., 365.
\textsuperscript{428} Ibid., 364.
Pannenberg argues that this complex relationship of identity, action, and contingency may be explained through his view of the spirit field in spacetime. Pannenberg writes that “assertions about a divine reality and divine actions can be tested by their implications for the understanding of finite reality.” He argues that, if one wished to see how the actions of God may be thought of in the world, one must test the theories against the laws of physical reality. For Pannenberg, the actions of God in the field cannot be described as movement along a linear timeline of cause and effect moments. Rather, for Pannenberg, God acts in the future to affect our present. As humans are limited by our position in spacetime, we must therefore have an interaction with God’s immanent presence in our current time while we are affected through God’s actions in the future. There is a separation between God’s eschatological direction as a performance by the future and God’s immanent active and creative presence in our moment-to-moment existence.

Therefore, our continual being, the activity of our existence, and our destiny as directed from the future are both supported by God’s creative actions. Pannenberg argues this may be thought of as a field that operates in spacetime, as a ubiquitous field would exist in all time and space, and therefore is not limited to a momentary existence or single perspective. Further, God’s actions in the field may be considered the realization of God’s attributes, and therefore the action, which is made manifest in the spirit field, may be contingent, while the source of the field, God’s essence, lies beyond contingency. There is then, in God’s essence, a potential manifestation of the field in that God’s essence is creative; however, the potential manifestation is not tied to physical reality until the potential is manifested through God’s free will. God may

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then be both involved immanently in our physical universe in all times and places while still being both non-contingent and transcendent.

Pannenberg writes that:

the theory of relativity demonstrated that…spatial and temporal relations are dependent on the existence of masses and bodies[which] makes it possible to conceive of the space required for divine omnipresence as distinct from and prior to the spatial relations of bodies and masses. Similarly, in the case of time…the eternity of God can be distinguished from, but also related to, the time of creatures and also to the time of physicists.⁴³¹

Pannenberg offers that God and creation are separate, and yet, as his eschatology presents, we are affected by God’s actions. There is then a logical separation between God’s actions and God’s essence, even though they are related through the function of the spirit field.

This view, for Pannenberg, allows us to better understand the creative actions of God in relation to the universe as a whole, and to each person individually. Pannenberg writes that:

The interaction of God with creation is certainly concerned with creation as a whole, since the eternal God looks upon creation from the point of its completion, and therefore there is an influence of the whole on the parts…but God also relates creatively to every single creature.⁴³²

There is a clear indication of interaction between an eternal God who looks at creation from outside time, or rather from a full view of time which is outside of our current location in spacetime, and our present selves.

For Pannenberg:

⁴³² Wolfhart Pannenberg, "Problems between science and theology in the course of their modern history."(2006) Zygon 41, no. 1, 111.
All these works – God’s action in preserving and ruling his creatures, and also of bringing forth new things and God’s reconciling and consummating of the world that he has created – participate in the quality of his action at the creation of the world. As an eternal act, God’s creative action embraces the whole cosmic process and permeates all phases of the divine action in history.\textsuperscript{433}

God’s actions are eternal and all-encompassing; however, this is not a God of pantheism. The actions we may participate in, as Pannenberg mentions actions here repeatedly; however, God’s identity is not fully shared. The spirit field then allows us to see how God’s actions are present in creation, relating the function of God’s attributes to finite reality, without a full participation of God’s essence.

In TCM, the actions of \textit{Qi} are ubiquitous and reflect the logical flow of the \textit{Dao}. As such, some have misconstrued that they are the same thing. However, \textit{Qi} is not the \textit{Dao}; rather, as I have indicated in the previous section, the actions of \textit{Qi} demonstrate the form of the \textit{Dao’s} function in the universe. There is therefore a separation between what \textit{Qi} does, and the overall flow that \textit{Qi} displays. More simply, the action of \textit{Qi} is not the ultimate source of the pattern of existence, but rather an attribute of it. This characteristic of action in TCM identifies the function of \textit{Qi} in relation to its ontological source, a trait that, when fitted into an overall archetype of action, may find consonance with Pannenberg’s understanding of divine action.

\textbf{5.4 The spirit field theory as an analogy}

A practical understanding of metaphysical action is of great concern for Pannenberg. For Pannenberg, revelation of God depends on the intelligible actions of God in creation. Pannenberg therefore works to interpret the actions of God in a way that may be practically understood, and

\textsuperscript{433} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 2, 41.
yet does not succumb to mathematical division. According to Pannenberg, the spirit field theory is an appropriate vehicle for this investigation as “field theories of science...[are]...approximations to the metaphysical reality of the all-pervading spiritual field of God’s creative presence in the universe.” Scientific fields of operations are, for Pannenberg, indications of the spirit field. Per Pannenberg, the fields known in the sciences exist as the result of the actions of God in the spirit field, and may therefore offer a framework from which to understand the greater field of operations which is divine action in the universe. For even though Pannenberg does not think that assertions about God’s presence and action may be directly verified against their objects, he does argue that they may be in some manner verified, if the actions of God are understood as a field of operations.

This has led some, such as Jeffery S. Wicken a noted bio-chemist who has been published extensively in the fields of thermodynamics and evolution, to avow that Pannenberg employs field theory as an analogy. However, for Pannenberg, field theory in relation to the workings of the Holy Spirit is not simply an analogy; he speaks of it in a literal sense. Pannenberg writes:

[T]he interpretation of the pneumatic essence of God’s divinity as a field can be applied to the undivided unity of space and time that precedes all geometric description...the field of divine omnipotence thus does not compete with the field entities of physics but works through and beyond the forces of nature without being exhaustively expressed by them. As divine omnipresence is not tied to the speed of light, so the field effects of divine omnipotence require no mediation through waves.

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434 Pannenberg, “The Doctrine of Creation and Modern Science,” 47
435 Pannenberg, Theology and the Philosophy of Science, 332.
God’s actions manifest as a field, according to Pannenberg, and would therefore exist prior to, and as a basis for, all other forms of field known in physics.

The field of God’s actions would thus be considered both the precursor and the grounding of all other fields. Scalar, vector, spinor, or tensor fields offer a glimpse of the divine reality from which they are produced and held in place. This point bears particular significance in Pannenberg’s theory because, as Pannenberg writes, “if we can conceive of the concept of field without a reproduction of field effects through waves, we can also conceive of a nonlocal, instantaneous communication between phenomena as a field effect.” For Pannenberg, God’s actions may indeed be considered as a field of operations; however, not in the manner of a field that may be fully disclosed through physics. Rather, for Pannenberg, the spirit field would be a new type of field, hinted at by research in physics but not defined by scientific naturalism. This manner of field may exist as an underlying connective field that could allow for instantaneous communication between phenomena. It is this field of divine operations that Pannenberg argues may be glimpsed through the study of other fields.

Pannenberg does “not contend that the divine Spirit is sending forth waves that can be counted and measured. But neither is the word field applied to God as spirit just a vague analogy or a poetic expression.” The primary point Pannenberg makes here is that the fields of modern physics are not simple bodies in the way the Stoics considered *pneuma*, but rather they are complex

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437 A full discussion of the form and function of these various fields is not within the scope of this work. For more on this subject refer to: Maia, M. “Vector, Tensor, and Spinor Fields” in *Geometry of the Fundamental Interactions: On Riemann’s Legacy to High Energy Physics and Cosmology* (New York: Springer, 2011), 89-106.
forces that may affect, or indeed participate, in non-local physical reality. In the same manner, the concept of field used in a theological sense should not be thought of as a mere analogy.

Pannenberg argues that field theory possesses a clear meaning in its connection with space and time. He writes:

If that were not the case, the use of the field concept would indeed become vague. It is because of its connection with the concepts of space and time that a sufficiently precise theological use of the field concept is possible that is clearly distinct from its use in physics and yet related to it. The reason is that space is the minimal requirement for any notion of field, while it may dispense with the idea of force as in general relativity. Since in physics the notion of field is connected with that of energy, in addition to space the dimension of time is needed, or space-time in the case of general relativity. In theological use, talk of God the Spirit in terms of field also implies a connection with the concepts of space and time, though different from their use in physics. 440

There is then provision for God’s relationship to spacetime, but not in a reducible manner. As stated earlier, the actions of God create a dependency of creation in a single direction, thereby assuring relationship between God and God’s creation without full participation of God’s essence. For Pannenberg, this does not make use of the term field in theology analogous, if anything it demonstrates that the theological field is the ultimate reality, and use of the term field in physics is analogous to its theological precedent.

In order to more clearly relate his point, Pannenberg offers that:

in the general theory of relativity… the universe is described as a single field, while, in principle, the states of bodily matter (or particles) are considered as singularities of the cosmic field. If all geometrical descriptions of time and space; however, are dependent on the prior conception of space and time as an infinite and undivided whole, the immensity and eternity of God, then this

440 Ibid., 68.
infinite and undivided whole may also be described as infinite field, the field of God’s Spirit.\textsuperscript{441}

Essentially, the dependent and interconnected nature of a field in physics may be applied to creation in the same manner, if we understand the continuing active presence of God as spirit in the universe through the doctrines of \textit{creatio ex nihlio} and general revelation. Spirit field theory is then not an analogy; rather, to borrow from John Polkinghorne, our epistemological understanding of fields models their ontological source.

TCM will, in some instances, employ symbolic terms that are used in relation to the human body. As an example, the body is often referred to as having “depots” which are repositories of $Qi$. These are not literally thought of as storehouses of course, rather the term is a convenient label.\textsuperscript{442} However, the actions of $Qi$ in TCM are not described as an analogy. Nor is the flow of $Qi$ a metaphor for the movements of a divine or metaphysical other. Rather, $Qi$ in TCM is a very real and present phenomenon that exists in a particular fashion and may be dealt with clinically. The form and the function of $Qi$ in TCM is not a metaphor, analogy, or philosophic construct designed to explain another phenomenon. As Pannenberg labored to offer an explanation of metaphysical action that was not analogy, the worldview of TCM may then, I suggest, be fruitfully applied to Pannenberg’s spirit field.

\section*{5.5 Spirit field theory as \textit{wissenschaft}}

The worldview of TCM is, as I have written, holistically monist. There is no separation between physical and metaphysical phenomenon; however, this does not mean that TCM is some manner of a religion or philosophy alone. TCM also employs, and is in truth based upon, systematic

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{441} Pannenberg, \textit{The Historicity of Nature: Essays on Science and Theology}, 108. \\
\textsuperscript{442} Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing}, further discourse on the five zhang viscera, 47.
\end{flushright}
research and an empirical view of the universe. While there may be some aspects of TCM that could be considered religious or philosophical, the operation of Qi in TCM is understood in a far more clinical fashion. This view of Qi, which in Western terms may be called scientific, is key to TCM treatments and diagnosis. This is important to consider when reviewing the following section concerning Pannenberg’s view of the spirit field as wissenschaft.\textsuperscript{443}

According to Pannenberg, “theological assertions concerning the world are not formulated on the same level as scientific hypotheses of natural law; however, they have to be related to scientific reasoning.”\textsuperscript{444} He is speaking here specifically of field theory and how it may be related to the actions of the Holy Spirit in the physical world. It was Pannenberg’s view that “theologians should consider it obvious to relate the field concept of modern physics to the Christian doctrine of the dynamic presence of the divine Spirit in all of creation.”\textsuperscript{445} For Pannenberg, the systematic worldview from which science views the universe is not only applicable to theological research, indeed it may bolster theological study of divine action by offering the basis for an integrated physical and metaphysical wissenschaft.

Wissenschaft is not simply natural science, or even a new form of scientific inquiry, rather it is a systematic form of research. For Pannenberg, the spirit field theory was tied to physical reality. Further, for Pannenberg, the concept of field more generally was simply a reflection of the greater field of God’s operations. Pannenberg argues then that identifying a new system of research that may incorporate the theological and physical description of fields may allow for a perspective of the primary field of God’s creative spirit.

\textsuperscript{443} For a definition of wissenschaft refer to appendix 1.
\textsuperscript{444} Pannenberg, "The doctrine of creation and modern science", 7.
\textsuperscript{445} Ibid., 14.
Pannenberg writes:

In physics, the need for an explanation does not arise until a proposition or a theoretical system which has previously been adequate begins to reveal limitations. When this happens however, not only the unexpected event, but also the weakness in the theory which was until this point been regarded as universally valid, require explanation.\textsuperscript{446}

These two requirements can only be met by the construction of a new theory on a higher level. The new theory must explain how the previous theory fits into the new comprehensive theory, and why the new theory may account for the phenomenon in question while the previous does not.

It is this supposition, borrowed from the methodology of physics, that Pannenberg employs to substantiate his work on the spirit field. For Pannenberg, current models of the actions of the Holy Spirit are not sufficient. He writes that, “criticism of this traditional way of speaking about God as though the references were to subjectivity (\emph{nous}) led us to the insight.”\textsuperscript{447} For Pannenberg, there may be a better explanation of God’s immanent and ongoing action, and the Trinitarian presence of the Holy Spirit in creation.

Pannenberg avows this constant involvement with the actions of the Holy Spirit is explicable if we progress beyond the Stoic concept of \emph{pneuma} and instead conceive of God’s action as a field. Pannenberg writes:

\begin{quote}
the concept of field, as a substitute for the ancient doctrine of \emph{pneuma}, is helpful for theology because it permits us to separate the sense of the word \emph{pneuma} from the idea of a material substratum or medium. If the divine being is understood as a field that manifests itself in the three “persons” of the Father, the Son, and the Holy
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{446} Wolfhart Pannenberg, \textit{Theology and the Philosophy of Science} (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 151.
\textsuperscript{447} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 2, 83.
Spirit, we can do justice to Origen’s objections to an idea of God as body and still hold fast to the sense of the word *pneuma*.\(^{448}\)

Pannenberg’s spirit field is not purely physical, nor is it meant to be a solely spiritual reality. Pannenberg works to understand the constant action of God in the world as a metaphysically monistic phenomenon in the form of a field which may be part of both the divine and mundane. He incorporates the ancient view, and expands upon it with the aid of perspectives brought from contemporary science.

Pannenberg writes that spirit field theory not only advances current thought on the actions of the Spirit in creation, it could also be the basis for an entirely new paradigm that he refers to as “scientific theology.” For Pannenberg, this;

> is not only theoretically possible, but could also be a practical possibility in the future through an intensification of exchange and competition between the different human cultures and religions and could have corresponding effects on the scientific organization of theology even in the west.\(^{449}\)

Pannenberg is of the view that, while he sees spirit field theory as practical, it is yet in need of further perspective to prove it as a scientific theology. Pannenberg argues that the claims of Christianity, including his own, should be thought of as hypotheses which then need to be tested by the “full range of currently accessible experience.”\(^{450}\) Pannenberg allows that such a methodical examination of the spirit field is possible, if a *wissenschaft* were devised or discovered that included metaphysical reality in formulas or models of physical reality.\(^{451}\)

\(^{448}\) Pannenberg, *Historicity of Nature*, 36.

\(^{449}\) Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, 325.

\(^{450}\) Pannenberg, *Theology and the Philosophy of Science*, 315.

\(^{451}\) Ibid., 298.
It is for this reason that I argue that \( Qi \) within TCM may be an appropriate perspective from which to expand Pannenberg’s thought. The spirit field is pervasive in creation and in constant motion as the process of progressive change from the future. This is similar to the manner in which TCM records \( Qi \) as the realization of the flow of the \textit{Dao}. While the concepts are not fully congruous, as Pannenberg’s view of the future as eschatology means that there is direction from a personal God to a specific end, the process is similar. The function of change that is the \textit{Dao} is pervasive and directive.\footnote{For a definition of the \textit{Dao} see appendix 1.} Further, the TCM model of \( Qi \) is metaphysically holistic and logical as it includes \textit{Li}. TCM \( Qi \) may therefore be the \textit{wissenschaft} that Pannenberg sought.

The action of change in \( Qi \) is not simply change as kinetic activity, rather the action of \( Qi \) is the desire for change which could more specifically be understood as motive or intention. TCM does not posit that this motivation is born of a personal entity, rather it is the way of the \textit{Dao}, the natural flow of the universe to which all is drawn. The action of \( Qi \) drives the change of the cycles in the flow, it is action that does not originate with a personal deity. However, it also does not issue from a fully explicable natural occurrence. TCM views \( Qi \) as the actions of intent of the universe, and works to understand this intent in a detailed manner. However, TCM does not view the intent as the action of a personal being, and so does nothing towards seeking such a divine person or ultimate metaphysical source. It is as if one were solely concerned with human will, the human drive, and not the human. Pannenberg, on the other hand, looks to the source of divine action, and is bereft of the language to describe the activity adequately, his \textit{wissenschaft} is
incomplete. Employing TCM as a hermeneutic device to interpret Pannenberg’s thought, may enhance his wissenshaft and allow for divine action to be better understood.

5.6 Critique of the spirit field

The spirit field theory of Wolfhart Pannenberg intersects with several areas of both theology and science. While this situates the spirit field advantageously for an interdisciplinary discussion, it has also placed Pannenberg’s theory in a position to be critiqued in both the scientific and theological communities. Jeffery Wicken is one researcher who has taken issue with Pannenberg’s theory. Specifically, Wicken has written that, “the dematerialization of the field gives God (being immaterial) a kind of physical justification in nature’s wholeness…taken literally it binds God needlessly to physics.”

Wicken points out that, as an analogy, it may be appropriate prima facie to speak of God as a field, but taken literally there are too many limitations placed on God’s essence. For Wicken, if we are to think of God as a field in physics, then we would have no need for a personal God, as all actions would be reducible to field operations. He further notes that if we conceive of God’s presence in the manner Pannenberg allows, then “the relativistic reification of the space field seems important to theology only in the sense of showing that nature has its own grounds for wholeness that might provide boundary conditions for God’s presence in nature.”

Essentially, the only point of a spirit field would be to show natural limitations to God’s essence.

Current definitions of field, by Wicken’s account, do not allow for a full engagement of divine action, or, more importantly for Wicken, God’s presence. Wicken’s primary objections

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are that consideration of God as a field either removes the need for God and reduces the divine presence to a definable force in physics, or it demonstrates a construct which limits God artificially to fit within our understanding of the natural world. However, if the actions and identity of the Spirit are considered separately, then we may indeed investigate the spirit field as the work of God without so narrowly constricting the divine identity. Further, if we assume the TCM perspective considering the effective actions of Qi in pulse diagnosis, then the presence of God’s actions in the world would not be so constrained. I will further explore these points in chapter seven.

Another criticism which has been leveled against the spirit field is the problem of contingency. Fields, as understood in scientific terms, cannot exist apart from a physical representation. According to physicist and philosopher of science Max Jammer, if we are to think of God’s actions as a field, this must necessarily mean that creation would need to eternally exist for the spirit field to act on. Jammer writes that fields are regulated by matter, or mass-energy, ergo God and created matter must have always co-existed.455 This view would not only negate creatio ex nihilo, an important theological premise in Christian theology, it would also place the created universe on equal footing with God as eternal and uncreated. However, the manner in which Jammer, Wicken, and others discuss field theory is more limited than Pannenberg’s presentation of it. Pannenberg did not wish to use the field as an analogy, nor did he wish to use the scientific term literally by the definitions employed in physics. Pannenberg sought something more, a theological field theory; however, he was bereft of the holistically monist language

needed to fully explicate his view. This issue may be addressed by the language and worldview of TCM, a point I will more fully discuss in chapter seven.

A further issue which has been raised regarding the spirit field is Pannenberg’s position that matter is a philosophical concept, unlike mass which is a physical one. John Polkinghorne in particular has taken issue with this position. Polkinghorne writes, “since all the physical entities of the universe are excitations in fields, it would be quixotic, to say the least, to leave the physical universe empty of matter because the metaphysicists had decreed that fields do not participate in the material.”⁴⁵⁶ Polkinghorne further points out that fields carry energy and momentum, and are not immaterial, much less spiritual. For Polkinghorne, fields must participate in the physical, and therefore, if one is to use field theory to describe God’s actions, then matter must have eternally existed for the field of God’s actions to act upon. Polkinghorne argues that Pannenberg sidesteps the issue of created matter being eternal by simply removing the term \textit{matter} from the physicist’s vocabulary and adding to a philosophical category.

This does not convince Polkinghorne, who points out that Pannenberg admits that the idea of “classical fields” does not answer the problem of God’s actions in the spirit field being contingent upon physical matter.⁴⁵⁷ However, for Pannenberg, the actions of God may exist as an independent spiritual field that is not contingent upon matter, as there are indications in quantum theory that all appearances of contingency are not actual.⁴⁵⁸ Further, if one assumes the worldview of TCM, then potential manifestation may be included in the discussion, whereby

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⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., 797
physical matter is thought of in an entirely different manner. This will also be more fully addressed in chapter seven.

Hans Deiter Mütschler, the chair of natural philosophy at Ignatianum University in Krakow, also offers a critique of Pannenberg’s Spirit field theory. It would seem in Mütschler’s initial analysis that he offers some support to Pannenberg. Mütschler allows that a special kind of field of the sort Pannenberg describes may indeed exist, and further that humans may perhaps have a sense of it, although in an undefined manner. However, according to Mütschler, this is not necessarily a spiritual phenomenon. Rather, he argues, our awareness of this special field may be an aspect of our evolution. He writes that our physical bodies may be engaging with a natural phenomenon that the sciences have not yet determined the nature of. Mütschler writes that, “we may be sensitive to certain fields and we may have even developed organs to perceive them and thus we interpret them as mist clouds or wind.” Mütschler essentially removes any metaphysical aspect from the discussion. In his view, if Pannenberg’s field exists, it would be a natural occurrence, creating the perceived impressions of wind or breath that are normally attributed to pnuema. However, if the field is understood through the perception of TCM Qi, then both Mütschler and Pannenberg may be satisfied, as the field could be considered a metaphysical phenomenon that humans would be sensitive to through their physical bodies. The summation of this view will be disclosed in chapter seven as well.

Summary

460 Jammer, Einstein and Religion, 211.
For Pannenberg, spirit field theory is an appropriate way to understand the actions of God in the universe. The spirit field theory intersects with a great deal of Pannenberg’s theology, and is therefore extensively engaged with on many levels in his writings. Pannenberg understands the actions of God through the spirit field as pervasively active and immanent. These actions are not simply a generator for active movement, or some manner of creative control. Rather, for Pannenberg, the actions of the Holy Spirit in the spirit field allow for the active being of all things in the universe. The spirit field provides the space and opportunity for all reality to exist, through the action, movement, or flow of the Spirit in creation. This is similar to the way in which TCM *Qi* cosmology view the actions of *Qi*, allowing for all things to take part in the resonant flow of the *Dao*.

Further, the actions of the Spirit in the spirit field are not God’s essence, rather they demonstrate the creative attributes of God, and give a glimpse of God through God’s actions. The actions in the field may therefore be considered apart from the divine identity, even while they issue from God’s essence. This is most clearly offered in Pannenberg’s view of the Trinity and how the Trinity may be said to act in the universe. Similarly, *Qi* in TCM is not the *Dao*, nor even the logic of *il* in the *Dao*. Rather, the movements and action of *Qi* demonstrate a partial view of the logical flow of the *Dao*.

The actions of the Spirit in Pannenberg’s field theory are also logical, purposeful, and non-deterministic. The direction from God points to reconciliation of all creation in an intelligible manner. However, for Pannenberg, the particular manifestations of smaller fields within the prime field of God’s actions allows for free will. The spirit field is revelation of God and God’s will in a manner that humans may in part understand, and freely take part in. The field is therefore not an analogy, but rather the basis for life and action in the universe. *Qi* in TCM is
also considered directive but non-deterministic as it offers information in the body to maintain balance with the flow of the Dao. Qi then encourages the person in a more complex manner than hard determinism. Further, Qi in TCM is a literal phenomenon, not an analogical presentation of an undefined metaphysical phenomenon. These points will be more comprehensively defined in the following chapter.

Finally, Pannenberg allows that the concept of a spirit field may allow theologians to incorporate systematic research into the study of divine action. By bringing together science and religion in the spirit field, Pannenberg hopes to demonstrate that the theological concept of a field of operations is in truth the ultimate field from which all other fields derive their identity. The various fields in physics are not then indications of God’s essence per se, rather they are indications of the divine spirit field of operation from which all reality is given life and movement. It is this prime field that offers revelation of God’s actions in the universe. The wissenschaft that Pannenberg envisions is essentially a systematic investigation of physical and metaphysical phenomenon, such as those incorporated in the holistic monism of TCM.461

The second stage in the morphological method builds the pattern of comparison by identifying how the various elements of the concepts in the analysis may be placed into a pattern. Archetypes of action is the pattern of comparison in which I have situated my overall comparative analysis between the two metaphysical paragons; Qi and the Holy Spirit.462 In this chapter I have offered a definition of the first of these phenomena, by disclosing the actions of the Holy Spirit in Pannenberg’s spirit field theory. This has been done in a comprehensive manner spanning Pannenberg’s various writings. I have offered that the spirit field follows a

461 For a definition of wissenschaft refer to appendix 1.
462 For a definition of archetypes see appendix 1.
certain pattern with regard to divine action in the physical world, a pattern which may be beneficially interpreted through the worldview of TCM. I will now move to define the second of my metaphysical exemplars, $Qi$ in TCM. This presentation will also follow the pattern of action with regard to metaphysical action in the physical world.
Chapter 6  

Qi

The first qualification for judging any piece of workmanship from a corkscrew to a cathedral is to know what it is what it was intended to do and how it is meant to be used. After that has been discovered the temperance reformer may decide that the corkscrew was made for a bad purpose, and the communist may think the same about the cathedral. But such questions come later. The first thing is to understand the object before you: as long as you think the corkscrew was meant for opening tins or the cathedral for entertaining tourists you can say nothing to the purpose about them.


This chapter will serve two functions; to offer a more comprehensive definition of Qi as it is understood in TCM, and to offer that this definition may be considered comparable to the largely accepted view of divine action in the field of science and religion. Within the field of science and religion, divine action is a topic which has received much attention. Scholars of various backgrounds have offered a wide array of necessary qualities related to the nature of God’s actions in the world. In this prolific discussion, there are two camps that are commonly referred to; compatibilists and incompatibilists. I shall concern myself with the work of the latter, as it is the incompatibilists who have been the most vocal critics of spirit field theory. Further, it is my intent to offer that spirit field theory, helpfully interpreted through the lens of TCM, may positively impact the incompatibilist view of divine action and the causal joint.463

The form of this chapter will be determined by the second stage of the morphological method. This stage of the method offers that the pattern of comparison, which in this thesis is the

463 For a definition of Incompatibilism and the causal joint see appendix 1..
archetypes of action for $Qi$ and the Holy Spirit, be grounded in processes that ignore historical and geographic context. As such, I will offer that divine action, as it is written of from the incompatibilist perspective in science and religion, is generally understood through five criteria that will form the system of comparison for this chapter. I will therefore present the TCM understanding of $Qi$, which also views the actions of $Qi$ in line with certain original forms, within this system. These five traits of both science and religion and TCM will be based upon the content of the previous chapters which have outlined other particular elements that comprise the archetypes of action, in addition to current and historic source materials. This will be done in order to demonstrate that the trend of knowledge in both systems of thought leans toward describing these phenomena within these five constructs that combine to form an archetype of action.

Within the writings of incompatibilists, notably those published in the Divine Action Project (DAP), there exist some commonly accepted criteria of divine action that are, generally, agreed upon.\textsuperscript{464} Specifically, God’s actions are commonly regarded as; omnipresent, eternal, non-interventionist, metaphysical (as defined on page four in chapter one) and directive but non-deterministic. The TCM view of $Qi$ follows a rather similar format. $Qi$, as it is understood in TCM, is considered ubiquitous, eternal, non-interventionist (as it does not intervene upon the logical form of the universe), metaphysical, and directive, but non-deterministic.

It may be noted here that the term “non-interventionist,” as applied to a system which views the universe holistically, is a contradiction in terms. However, in this instance, the non-

\textsuperscript{464} For an appropriate and wide-ranging view of this discussion, refer to the comprehensive three volume collection of the Divine Action Project. — Robert Russell, Nancey Murphy, and Arthur Peacocke, \textit{Chaos and Complexity} (Berkeley: Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 1997); Robert Russell, William R. Stoeger, and Francisco José Ayala. \textit{Evolutionary and Molecular Biology}. (Berkeley: Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 1998); and Robert Russell, \textit{Neuroscience and the Person}. (Berkeley: Center for Theology and the Natural Sciences, 1999).
interventionist nature of the actions of \( Qi \) in TCM is meant to more clearly explain holistic monism, and offer that the theological views of incompatibilist science and religion scholars are not too far removed from the worldview of TCM. While the terminology of TCM \( Qi \) cosmology may not be fully commensurate with that of theistic cosmologies, I will offer that these five criteria of \( Qi \) may be considered comparable to those employed in the incompatibilist discussion of divine action.\(^{465}\) I will begin by situating \( Qi \) within its own worldview by explaining the holistic monism of TCM \( Qi \) cosmology through the four foundational principles that comprise it; the \( Dao, Li, \) the “theory of correspondence,” and the concept of \( ti yong.\)^{466}

### 6.1 \( Qi \) in TCM

The TCM view of the universe is largely based upon two premises, the Daoist conception of \( Dao \) (the way), and the Neo-Confucian model of \( Li \) (the eternal orderly cosmic principle).\(^{467}\) In TCM, these religio-philosophic constructs are seen as unifying cosmological laws that reveal the universe as orderly and interconnected.\(^{468}\) The \( Dao \) presents \( Qi \) as a fully connective phenomenon which relates all things in the universe; while \( Li \) affords a systematic and orderly view of \( Qi \) that allows for predictability in these universal relationships. This complex religio-philosophical amalgamation produces a worldview wherein there is no absolute separation between physical and metaphysical, a view where the “supernatural” does not exist.\(^{469}\) As there is no supernatural beyond, but rather a fully inclusive universe, the monism of TCM \( Qi \) cosmology may be considered holistic.

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\(^{465}\) Regarding language of theistic cosmologies, omnipresence, as an example, when used in theology connotes personhood, and should therefore not be applied to \( Qi.\)

\(^{466}\) For definitions of the theory of correspondence and \( ti yong \) see appendix 1.

\(^{467}\) For a definition of \( Li \) and the \( Dao \) see appendix 1.

\(^{468}\) Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 57.

As an example, TCM historian Paul Unschuld refers to \( Qi \) as an aspect of the invisible world which stands in “mutual dependence” with the visible world.\(^{470}\) Unschuld employs the terms “visible and invisible” to clarify that while some phenomena in TCM may not be fully empirical in the sense of the Western physical sciences, they are no less part of the known universe, and therefore not supernatural. Unschuld writes of mutual dependence between these worlds to demonstrate that, in TCM, there is no clear separation between what many in the West would call natural and supernatural. Unschuld writes that, in TCM, these worlds are inextricably enmeshed, linked together by \( Qi \).

However, the image of a physical world (visible) and a world beyond (invisible) linked by \( Qi \) may not be the most accurate manner in which to describe the worldview of TCM \( Qi \) cosmology, nor \( Qi \) more broadly. \( Qi \) is not some manner of connective mechanism or material between two worlds; in point of fact, there is no concept of two worlds in TCM. Unschuld, writing primarily to a Western audience, uses this imagery to bring the worldview of his audience, which is largely dualistic, closer to that of his subject, which is monist.

By mentioning the concept of two worlds that are mutually dependent, Unschuld attempts to display the TCM view of holistic monism; and yet, labeling \( Qi \) as “an aspect of the invisible world” alone is not an entirely correct way to characterize \( Qi \).\(^{471}\) Firstly because, in TCM, \( Qi \) is not an aspect of anything, it is not fully measurable, nor does it exist as a single entity, as the term aspect may indicate, rather it is a ubiquitous presence. And secondly, writing that \( Qi \) is invisible, in an effort to discuss the immeasurable or metaphysical traits of \( Qi \), is likewise not appropriate, as there are measurable particles in the universe that are in fact not visible. \( Qi \) is more than an

\(^{470}\) Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 52.
\(^{471}\) Ibid.
aspect of physical reality, and there is more to the nature of $Qi$ than its ability to be seen or measured. However, this is Unschuld’s attempt to gradually bring his readers into the mindset of TCM practitioners.

Unschuld later expands and clarifies his description of $Qi$ to more accurately depict $Qi$ in the context of TCM. He writes that $Qi$ is “that which means life,” and “finest matter influence.”

Life, in this instance, is the continual active being of the person, not simply animated movement. Unschuld points out that $Qi$ means life, which indicates that $Qi$ is a continually active phenomenon, as it means continual existence for all life. He also employs the terms matter and influence in the same description, offering that $Qi$ is both substance and action, an ongoing combination of activity and matter, not one or the other. Unschuld employs the terms “life” and “influence” to describe the metaphysical and active presence of $Qi$ in all things, animate and inanimate. For Unschuld, $Qi$ is not simply a phenomenon of the invisible world that humans may occasionally come into contact with, rather $Qi$ is the motion and essence of being, it is the substance of the universe even as it is the activity of all things.

Unschuld bases this understanding on a foundational TCM text, the *Huangdi Neijing* (475-221 BCE). The *Huangdi Neijing* records that $Qi$ is the “energetic order” of all. In the dialogue between minster Qi Bo and the Yellow Emperor, the pervasive energetic existence of $Qi$ is mentioned over twenty times in various themes, from a building block of the universe to the

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472 Unschuld, *Medicine in China*, 72
473 The *Huangdi Neijing* (the Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor or Esoteric Scripture of the Yellow Emperor) is an ancient TCM text that is often referred to as the doctrinal source for TCM. The work is composed of two texts—each of eighty-one treatises arranged in the form of a dialogue between the mythical Yellow Emperor and his minister Qi Bo. The first text, the *Suwen* (Basic Questions) discusses TCM theory and diagnostic methods. The second text is the *Lingshu* (Spiritual Pivot), which focusses on acupuncture. Additionally, two other texts feature the prefix *Huangdi Neijing* in their titles—the *Mingtang* (Hall of Light) and the *Taisu* (Grand Basis), both of which have survived only partially. Complete originals for any of these texts do not exist.
474 Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, the *yin* and *yang* channels in the human body, 295.
movement of vital force in the body. According to the *Huangdi Neijing*, *Qi* is the intrinsic orderly foundation of a holistically monistic universe.

TCM expert Ted Kaptchuk further describes this view when he writes that *Qi* is the “underlying elastic structure of the universe.”

For Kaptchuk, *Qi* should be thought of as that which draws the universe together. *Qi* is the essential connective phenomenon that is described by physical laws, and makes the continuity of those laws possible. However, *Qi* is not simply some manner of particle or other substance on which the universe is built. Kaptchuk writes that *Qi* represents “potential manifestation” in the world. *Qi*, then, according to Kaptchuk, represents all that is, and all that will ever be as the universe is continually coming into being.

In these various descriptions it may be seen that the definition of *Qi* begins and ends with a unified vision of the universe, fully monistic and inclusive of all phenomena. TCM scholars, physicians, and historians have employed terms and phrases such as these for millennia in order to explain the nature of *Qi* as it relates to health and well-being. These doctors and researchers have, largely, worked within the Daoist/Neo-Confucian paradigm, employing the theory of correspondence. I will more clearly delineate the theory of correspondence in due course; however, as this theory is most beneficially displayed in the context of the Chinese philosophical concept known as *ti yong*, I will begin with a description of *ti yong*.

*Ti yong* describes something that is both substance and function. Substance, in this instance, does not refer to material nature alone, but also an object’s essence—that which defines

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475 Kaptchuk, *The Web that has no Weaver*, 47.
476 Ibid.
477 For a definition of *Qi* refer to appendix 1.
478 For a definition of the theory of correspondence see appendix 1.
479 For a definition of *ti yong* refer to appendix 1.
it. The *ti yong* concept of substance is somewhat similar to the Aristotelean idea of forms, but more individually varied and anchored in the physical world. The substance/essence of a thing (*ti*), is specific to it alone. There is, as an example, no “perfect chair form” to which all chairs are measured to determine their “chairness.” Rather, every phenomenon has its own identity, its own pure form to which it is related. The substance of a thing is therefore both what it is, and what it would ultimately be if it were to reach its full potential. Function, or the *yong* in *ti yong*, is not simply an object in use, rather it is the realization of the object’s essence in the world.\textsuperscript{480} It is the action involved in a thing becoming a thing.

*Ti yong* describes how the physical and metaphysical co-existence of all things in the universe may be thought of. The metaphysical (*yong*) needs the physical (*ti*) in order to be physically realized. Otherwise there would be no indication of the *yong*’s existence. Similarly, the *ti* needs the *yong* to describe the *ti*’s ontological purpose. To continue the analogy, a chair is a chair only as it continues to be a chair. The continual action of being, the chair’s metaphysical being and purpose, is inextricably tied to its material existence. *Qi*, in this system is both the underlying material of the physical universe, and the constant phenomenon of change that is active being.\textsuperscript{481} *Qi* provides the means for things to be as they are, as the existence of all things is only realized in the constant motion and change that is the pattern of the cosmos. It is helpful then, to view *Qi* as both substance, and the phenomenon of change, operating as physical and metaphysical in the theory of correspondence.


\textsuperscript{481} Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, the manifestation of *yin* and *yang*, 22.
The TCM theory of correspondence operates on the idea that Qi, as a ti yong phenomenon, connects all things in the universe, through their physical and metaphysical natures.\textsuperscript{482} Per TCM, the universe is interrelated on all levels; it is a common reality that all participate in together. While this view may be seen more broadly in Buddhism or Daoism, with adherents believing that all are one together in a common existence, TCM doctors look to inductively understand how “all are one.” Therefore, a model is assumed wherein the relationship between people, plants, the air, the spirit world etc., is empirically understood through correspondence. There are two systems in the theory of correspondence, magical and systematic. Both methods operate on the principal that every phenomenon in the cosmos is comprised of physical and metaphysical traits and all stand in relationship to one another. Qi forms the basis of this correspondence in the cosmological pattern as a ubiquitous ti yong phenomenon.\textsuperscript{483}

The TCM system of magical correspondence argues that two objects with similar physical appearance will also demonstrate a likeness of their metaphysical selves.\textsuperscript{484} This mode argues that, as the material is intimately related to the metaphysical, the more obvious traits of physical characteristics inform us to the unseen state of being that ultimately relates various phenomena. Items are therefore linked by an underlying and unifying principal to others of the same likeness, and in relationship to other phenomenon. As an example, we may know a boat to be a boat in that it looks like a boat and we can recognize it in contrast to, say, a bicycle. There is more than just the realization of the ti which affords this recognition. It is the activity of Qi manifested in the yong of the boat that offers revelation in the ti and affords connection in a pattern of recognition. Further,

\textsuperscript{482} Unschuld, Medicine in China, 52. For more on this refer to: Sarah Queen, From Chronicle to Canon: The Hermeneutics of the Spring and Autumn, According to Dong Zhongshu. Cambridge Studies in Chinese History, Literature, and Institutions, (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1996).
\textsuperscript{483} Unschuld, Medicine in China, 52.
\textsuperscript{484} Ibid., 7.
if the boat is made of wood, then we may expect this boat to float in water and burn in fire, not because of chemical reactions or the concept of buoyancy, but because the $Qi$ of the boat, the $ti$ $yong$ of its being, allows that it will react in relation to the $Qi$ of fire and water in a prescribed manner. There is a chain of connections, a metaphysical link that we may recognize based on resemblance of physical characteristics, but not based on physical traits alone. According to magical correspondence, the physical traits are indicators of the metaphysical active being of a thing, and so we may see physical manifestations of the metaphysical.

Systematic correspondence is also based on the idea of resemblance; however, in this system, it is resemblance of function rather than physical appearance. As an example, in TCM, gastrointestinal distress is described as having “lice” in the stomach. The rationale is that the feeling of lice on the outside of the body is comparable to the feeling of nausea. The treatment for this condition is to burn a comb that is normally used to clean lice from the hair. The ashes are then mixed with water and given to the afflicted person to drink. The reasoning is that, as the comb’s function is to rid the hair of lice, then even when its physical form is changed, its $yong$ will continue to function. This in turn will act against the lice of the stomach. Even though the lice and the comb are in different physical forms, their metaphysical selves remain unchanged, and so may affect each other. This is possible as the action of $Qi$ will still enable the elements to act in a predictable way in relationship.

$Ti$ $yong$ and the theory of correspondence are models in which the operation of $Qi$ in TCM may be more clearly and appropriately displayed. Rather than attempt to present a monist system in dualistic terms, allowing that there is a connection between two worlds; or to search for terms

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486 For a definition of the theory of correspondence and $ti$ $yong$ see appendix 1.
that describe Eastern philosophical views in a Western vocabulary, it is helpful to rather situate oneself in a monistic worldview. These two constructs may be helpful in this. As an example, in Kaptchuk’s definition, \( Qi \) is potential manifestation in that it allows for things to both exist as they are, and continue to exist as they become. This can be more easily understood as the \( ti \) and \( yong \) of the person or object being both substance and action. Further, Unschuld’s two-fold definition, that \( Qi \) is “that which means life” and “finest matter influence,” may be understood through the theory of correspondence and \( ti yong \). Life may be understood as the corresponding action of being, providing the movement needed for both active relationships. Finest matter influence may then be seen as the activity of life and relationships, while at the same time existing as the underlying substance of all things, the \( ti \) and the \( yong \) manifested in the world through correspondence.

Succinctly, in TCM, there is a connection through, by, and of \( Qi \), which facilitates relationships and affords the opportunity of influence among all of the universe, even while \( Qi \) is the substance and action of the universe seen in universal monism.\(^{487}\) The understanding of the \( Dao \), the concept of \( Li \), the philosophical construct of \( ti yong \) and the theories of correspondence come together to form the worldview of holistic monism to which I have referred. It is helpful to be aware of these four philosophical and practical principles of TCM holistic monism when considering the definition of \( Qi \) that follows.\(^{488}\)

6.1.1 \( Qi \)-Ubiquitous and eternal

\(^{487}\) Read, “Treatment of Worm Diseases with Chinese Drugs”, 644-645

\(^{488}\) In TCM there are three original types of \( Qi \); \( yuan Qi \) or original \( Qi \) which proceeds from the \( Tian \) (heaven), \( gu Qi \) or grain \( Qi \) which is ingested with food, and \( kong Qi \) or \( Qi \) derived from the air. Once in the body these may be further divided into as many as 32 different categories with separate functions. All types of \( Qi \) in TCM fall within the defined parameters that follow.
These sub section headings have been chosen both because they are appropriate descriptions of \( Qi \) within its own context, and because they are compatible with the system comprised of incompatibilist science and religion descriptions concerning divine action. This allows for the process of comparison to afford a clear understanding of \( Qi \) that is approachable to a Western audience without the use of terms that are not appropriate to \( Qi \). As an example, in this sub section, I will describe the ubiquitous and eternal nature of \( Qi \). In this I will offer that, in TCM \( Qi \) cosmology, \( Qi \) is thought to exist everywhere in the universe in an ongoing manner without beginning or end. This view will be mirrored in the accompanying parallel sub section in the second half of the chapter, allowing that divine action in science and religion is also considered to exist everywhere eternally.

In Chinese \( Qi \) cosmology, the universe is thought of as a pattern in which all of reality is connected.\(^{489}\) This pattern is referred to in some Chinese religio-philosophical traditions as the way of the cosmos, or the \textit{Dao}. The \textit{Dao} exists through the resonant connections between all that is within it, both physical matter and metaphysical phenomena. Resonance in this instance refers to a general energetic existence wherein all things have a type of vibration. This vibration is both the motion of active being, and the constant change of the cosmos, which together form the flow of the \textit{Dao}.\(^{490}\) If this flow of motion and change did not exist, if there was no \textit{Dao}, then there would be no universe as we know it, only a lifeless and completely empty void. However, there is no provision for this state of complete nothingness as the \textit{Dao} is considered eternal.\(^{491}\)

\(^{489}\) 宋,道贵. ”程颐的气学思想与其理学宇宙论的构建.” Trans. Song, Daogui “Cheng Yi's Theory of \( Qi \) and the Construction of his Cosmology of Neo-Neo-Confucianism” 電子科技大學學報 (社會科學) Journal of University of Electronic Science and Technology of China (Social Sciences division) 13, no. 2 (2011):63-66.
\(^{491}\) Cao, Daoism in Early China,3.
As the eternal, and ultimate, reality, the *Dao* reflects order and reason, although reason can never fully explain it, as the *Dao* is neither reducible, nor completely comprehensible. However, TCM scholars argue that the form of the *Dao*’s function in the world, the action of the *Dao*, may be discerned through the movements of *Qi*. The distinctive feature of TCM *Qi* cosmology that allows for this interpretation is the inclusion of *Li*, the eternal and orderly cosmic principle. The Neo-Confucian perception is that *Li* is logical, and further that it is thought to exist pervasively within the *Dao*, therefore, *per* Neo-Confucianism, there must be a partially discernable logical form to the *Dao*. Interpreting this form is the paramount concern of TCM. Chapter one of the *Huangdi Neijing* states that the *Dao* is “the way of life and balance,” and the key to health and well-being is understanding the movements of the *Dao*. TCM scholar physicians, such as Shen Kuo (1131-1195), maintain that TCM doctors must be intimately familiar with *Qi*, as it demonstrates the universal balance of the *Dao*.

It is due to *Qi*’s ubiquitous existence that the motion of the pattern, the logical flow of *Li* in the *Dao*, may be, in part, understood. The *Huangdi Neijing* records that *Qi* flows throughout “heaven, earth, and humankind” fostering relationships between all things in the universe. This is disclosed in a more modern context through Liu Yanchi’s text on TCM clinical practice. Liu writes that the patient’s geographical location, as well as the season, must be considered in treatments as, “*Qi* exists everywhere,” linking all of reality. There are individual people, spirits,
and forces; however, there are no fully independent things. The flow of the Dao dictates that all
must stand in relation to each other. These relationships in the Dao are understood to be logically
ordered through Li and therefore, at least partially, discernable through the pervasive phenomenon

Qi is not, however, a created force employed to maintain continuity in the cosmos, nor is
Qi a static network of connections. Rather Qi’s universal nature may be understood as the ongoing
process of change and motion in the Dao. TCM Qi cosmology maintains that the Dao is
interconnected, in constant motion, and eternal. Therefore, per TCM, Qi must not only be
pervasive, but also an eternally active phenomenon in order to explain the eternal motion of the
Dao.\footnote{Scheid, Currents of Tradition in Chinese Medicine, 43.} As historian Volker Scheid points out, TCM scholar physicians developed this model by
joining the universal reality of Daoism with a cosmological model derived from the Song Dynasty
Neo-Confucianism of Zhang Zai, Zhou Dunyi, and Zhu Xi.\footnote{Ibid., 45.} This view depicts Qi as a universal
presence, and negates the idea of the universe beginning in a state of primordial nothingness.
According to Zhang Zai (1020–1077), because Qi has always existed, there was never a time, or
any cosmic state, in which there was absolute nothingness.\footnote{Chan, Wing-Cheuk, “Mou Zongsan and Tang Junyi on Zhang Zai's and Wang Fuzhi's Philosophies of Qi: A Critical Reflection”, 87.} Further, the Neo-Confucian view
offers that the orderly cosmic principle, Li, is inherent in Qi as well as the Dao.\footnote{Zhang, Zai, The Complete Work of Zhang Zai trans. Jung-Yeup Kim (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2006),395.} More simply, there is universal and logical form to Qi as well. TCM Qi cosmology adopts these views to argue
that there was never a state of pre-cosmos empty chaos, known in Chinese as *hundun*; rather, Qi has always existed and is universally present and active in an orderly fashion.\textsuperscript{504}

TCM teaches that Qi is present in all, pervasive in the world-as-a-whole and a phenomenon that has always existed in a constant and systematic manner.\textsuperscript{505} According to TCM Qi cosmology, Qi must be universal, everlasting, consistent, and relatable for the form of the Dao it is associated with to be in some measure understood.\textsuperscript{506} The function of Qi in this capacity is the cornerstone of TCM medical practice.\textsuperscript{507} Were Qi to be a temporally limited created phenomenon, with a known point of origin; or if Qi were sporadically localized in the pattern of existence, being one place or another at various times, Qi would not have a full and complete relation to the Dao. If this were the case, Qi would not be an acceptable way in which to understand the flow of the Dao in the universe, and, more specific to TCM, Qi could not be diagnostically applied to the function of the human body to determine if there were a balanced relationship to the Dao. Qi must therefore be ubiquitous and eternal. Further, Qi may not be a ubiquitous and static phenomenon in the manner of an eternal and pervasive artifact, as Qi is the function of orderly change in the Dao which is in constant motion. Qi must therefore be action as well as substance. It is to the method of this action in Qi that I will now turn.

### 6.1.2 Qi-Non-Interventionist


\textsuperscript{505} Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, energy almanac, 239

\textsuperscript{506} The entire breadth of the link, or integration, between the Dao and Qi as understood in Chinese religio-philosophic traditions is beyond the purview of this work, for more on this refer to: Liu Chan, and Yuet-Keung Lo, *Philosophy and Religion in Early Medieval China*. (Albany: NYU Press, 2010).

\textsuperscript{507} Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, the union of heaven and human beings, 8
As I have written earlier, a phenomenon that is depicted in a holistically monist worldview could not logically intervene in the workings of the universe, as the universe in which it exists is unified. However, in this sub section, I will offer further support to the understanding of holistic monism by offering that there is indeed one logical and monist form to the universe in TCM that $Qi$ depicts in its actions. Further, in the description of $Qi$ as non-interventionist, I may offer the parallel comparison in this system of analysis to the non-interventionist view of divine action in science and religion, presenting the worldview of TCM as an appropriate paradigm though which theological theories may be interpreted.

TCM theory holds that $Qi$ is a pervasive, eternal, and active phenomenon. The nature of $Qi$, thus described, may indicate an omnipresent, and possibly omnipotent, entity that is able to act without constraint. However, $Qi$ is not an unrestrained or disorderly phenomenon. Rather, $Qi$ displays the logic of $Li$ in the Dao which remains constant. $Qi$ cannot intervene upon the function of the Dao, as this would disrupt the eternal logic of $Li$. The actions of $Qi$ display the logical flow of the universe; therefore, those actions necessarily adhere to certain criterion. These orderly guidelines are described through the empirical sciences of wuxing and yin yang.\textsuperscript{508}

Wuxing and yin yang are comparable to the concept of natural laws in Western sciences such as physics; however, wuxing and yin yang are not fully consistent with Western natural laws. While both the Chinese systems and the natural laws of physics aim to understand the universe, the primary difference is that wuxing and yin yang are holistically monistic systems that include metaphysical phenomena. However, the means and ends of both Western and Chinese doctrines are similar. As an example, natural laws such as Archimedes' Principle, or Bernoulli's Equation,

\textsuperscript{508} For a definition of wuxing and yin yang refer to appendix 1.
do not control the universe, rather they describe how phenomena interact, and, to a degree, allow for a prediction of future behavior. The “Chinese natural laws” of wuxing and yin yang are built upon a comparable framework. They do not direct the Dao, rather they are systematic methods, based upon millennia of experiments and observations, that are used to explain everything from the way bodies move in space, to the progression of the seasons.

Wuxing is “a way of describing the internal structure of a system [and] the process of change within a system and between the system and its environment.” Wuxing is not the Dao, or Li, nor is it a function or aspect of either. Wuxing is a manner in which to describe the physical and metaphysical laws governing the universe. It would not be wholly accurate to say these laws “constrain” Qi, rather Qi operates in a prescribed manner and wuxing describes the functions. As an example, TCM prescriptions are classed based on their Qi as it is understood through wuxing. The Bencao Gangmu (Compendium of Materia Medica), written by Li Shizen in 1578, compiles 1,892 elements classified into over 10,000 prescriptions. This exhaustive work meticulously examines the Qi of various specimens through wuxing to determine how they may restore balance in the human body. If Qi could interfere with these laws, rather than be described by them, then TCM prescriptions would be based on a reality that is in no way predicable, and therefore illogical.

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509 I allow that the view of natural laws I discuss here is the descriptive, rather that prescriptive. However, the form and function of my argument is unaffected by either position. It is simply more appropriate when discussing TCM Qi cosmology to adopt a descriptive view as wuxing and yin yang are descriptive.

510 Unschuld, Medicine in China, 34.


512 Gong, Qingxuan, Liu Juan-zi Gui-yi Fang, ca 495 CE


514 Leung and Furth, Health and Hygiene in Chinese East Asia, 39.
Wuxing offers that all things in the universe are in a constant state of motion and that they behave in predictable ways. The interaction of various elements is due to the Qi of one phase restricting or supporting another in a balanced system. A metal axe, as an example, does not cut a tree because of its shape or density, it is because Qi in the metal phase restricts Qi in the wood phase. Likewise, water will not rust the axe because of the chemical reaction between the molecules, rather it is because Qi in the water phase restricts the Qi of the metal phase. In the body, the organs are described by this lawlike operation of Qi and the manner in which it interacts with the other phases. As an example, fire will promote earth and so the fire organ (the heart) will support the earth organ (the spleen). Qi always acts in this manner, Qi is therefore partially predicable in the pattern of the universe as applied on the macro and micro level. These laws apply to the tiniest fragment of rock, as well as the global change of the seasons.

The relationships identified through wuxing are a systematic representation of the balance in the Dao. Wuxing demonstrates that the various phases affect each other through Qi, and that the effects are ordered, metal will always act against wood in that an axe will always cut a tree and not the other way around. Qi is not a rogue force hemmed in by laws which are superior to it, rather Qi acts in accordance with the flow of the universe, as the active movement of the Dao, wuxing simply explains the actions. As such, if one understands the order, one may have knowledge of, and somewhat predict, the behavior of Qi, as it relates to human health and wellbeing, even though Qi is not a wholly measurable phenomenon. Wuxing, as both a physical

515 Ni, Huangdi Neijing on the five phase circuits, 38.
516 Ni, Huangdi Neijing effects of the five elemental phases and the six atmospheric influences, 236.
517 Ni, Huangdi Neijing seasonal organ pathology, 90.
518 Ni, Huangdi Neijing truth from the golden chamber, 20.
519 Leung and Furth, Health and Hygiene in Chinese East Asia, 245.
520 Unschuld, Medicine in China, 170.
521 Ni, Huangdi Neijing, the paradigm of the five elemental phases, 41.
and metaphysical system of laws, is embedded in the Chinese cosmological framework, and demonstrates the orderly action of Qi.\textsuperscript{522}

The holistically monistic relationship between the two sides of Qi, physical and metaphysical, is helpfully explained in the second of these two systems, yin yang. Yin and yang are models that describe the presence and differentiation of Qi in the universe. They are not forces, nor are they material substances, or even mythological concepts. “Rather, they are convenient labels used to describe how things function in relation to each other and to the universe.”\textsuperscript{523} Yin yang is often described as the dichotomous and yet dependent relationship in all things, simply depicted in the popular black and white yin yang image.\textsuperscript{524} However, the relationship identified by yin yang is more helpfully described as cooperative and concordant.\textsuperscript{524} In TCM, the model of yin yang is often referred to as the singular “body” of the universe wherein physical and metaphysical are harmoniously engaged on all levels.\textsuperscript{525} As an example, in TCM, Qi in the human body is represented by the metaphysical yang Qi and physical yin Qi. Yang Qi is the force responsible for warming and nourishing the body while yin Qi is the material counterpart found in blood and other body fluids.\textsuperscript{526}

These are not separate stages or materializations, rather they are the two conditions of a single phenomenon. Therefore, the metaphysical yang Qi may be discerned through the material manifestations of yin Qi in the universe. This is how aspects of wuxing that affect the senses are

\textsuperscript{522} Nappi, The Monkey and the Inkpot, 72.
\textsuperscript{523} Kaptchuk, The Web That Has No Weaver, 8.
\textsuperscript{525} Ni, Huangdi Neijing, the great treatise on the interaction of yin yang, 30.
\textsuperscript{526} Ni, Huangdi Neijing, truth from the golden chamber, 15.
discerned, they are indications of the metaphysical yang Qi they describe.\textsuperscript{527} There is inherent balance in this system between physical and metaphysical as Qi may not be one or the other, it must be both. In this, the presence and actions of Qi are constrained to be a part of the physical world while also being a part of the Tian.\textsuperscript{528} And as Qi is a ubiquitous presence, it is fully present in both. This is why Qi must follow the pattern in which it exists, both physical and metaphysical, and why Qi cannot intervene in either.\textsuperscript{529} Qi does not “follow the rules,” of wuxing; rather, as yin yang indicates, it is the rules. Qi is the depiction of the Dao which is the physical and metaphysical pattern of reality that adheres to logical constructs. The universe must be structured, and so there must be orders of organization in the metaphysical and physical, and yin yang explains how Qi can be involved in both. Yin yang also reveals a rule of law that Qi must be both, and as such cannot interfere with itself.\textsuperscript{530}

The primary function of Wuxing and yin yang is to demonstrate the rules that the universe follows. They are holistically monistic in that all phenomena, physical and metaphysical, are considered to be part of the same reality, and so these laws include no provision for “outside forces” directing nature. Qi is described within wuxing and yin yang, and therefore cannot be considered a phenomenon that acts from outside. Rather, per TCM theory, Qi operates in a feedback loop as influences or emanations that originate from within the universe.\textsuperscript{531} Since the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century BCE, Qi in TCM has been considered a metaphysical phenomenon that does not act “on” reality, but rather acts within reality.\textsuperscript{532} Therefore, Qi may not intervene in the pattern of the Dao

\textsuperscript{528} Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing}, the paradigm of the five elemental phases, 41.
\textsuperscript{529} Liu, \textit{The Essential Book of Traditional Chinese Medicine} 1, 32.
\textsuperscript{530} Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing} truth from the golden chamber, 14.
\textsuperscript{531} Unschuld, \textit{Medicine in China}, 68.
\textsuperscript{532} Scheid, \textit{Currents of Tradition in Chinese Medicine}, 84, 112.
as it would in effect be acting against itself, adding force, motion, information, and energy into the universe from a transcendent reality that TCM has no provision for. Further, if \( Qi \) was capable of interventionist action that changed the order of the universe, then \( wuxing \) and \( yin yang \) would be permeable, and the \( Dao \) would reflect no order.

### 6.1.3 Qi-Metaphysical

As I have written in chapter one, in TCM nothing is \textit{fully} transcendent, as all manner of spirits, ghosts, and gods are considered to be related to the world-as-a-whole. This makes the use of appropriate language difficult in the comparison to divine action, as it is common in the West to place a separation between the spiritual and the physical, and to account for divine action in the world by labeling it as transcendent \textit{and} immanent. While labeling something as fully beyond the world and yet also fully within physical reality may be appropriate to dualism, this is not an accurate presentation of \( Qi \). Therefore, in order to employ a term that may be understandable from a dualist perspective, while still not excluding the holistic monism of TCM, I have referred to the actions of \( Qi \) and the actions of the Holy Spirit in the world as \textit{metaphysical}. Specifically, I have offered that metaphysical indicates that there is an active phenomenon that proceeds from a reality not altogether within the physical world and yet immanently related to it. I will now more fully explicate why \( Qi \) may be considered metaphysical and how it may, in the second half of this chapter, be presented as comparable to metaphysical divine action.

\( Qi \) is neither a fully natural element of the world, nor is it entirely a “spiritual other.” The \textit{yin} and \textit{yang} of \( Qi \) dictates that it embodies both the natural and, what may be called in Western theology, supernatural realms. As a source of physical reality, the \textit{yang} of \( Qi \) is manifested in TCM though the blood and other body fluids, while the \textit{yin} of \( Qi \), which is not a wholly measurable
phenomenon, proceeds from a source not altogether within the boundaries of the natural world, the *Tian* (heavenly realms).\(^{533}\) *Qi* flows from the *Tian* in a comparable manner to the way science and religion scholars view the issuance of divine action. Largely, researchers in the science and religion field begin with the premise that divine action originates from a creator who is wholly other, and yet immanent in the world.\(^{534}\) Similarly, *Qi*, in its various forms, ultimately begins with *yuan Qi* (original *Qi*) which descends from the *Tian* and fully engages the world-as-a-whole.\(^{535}\)

As I have written earlier, defining *Qi* as metaphysical and physical is a deliberate action on my part. This has been done to offer a manner in which *Qi*, a holistically monistic phenomenon that is both substance and action, may be described to Western readers. One way in which to make this more clear is to demonstrate the TCM view of *Qi* in relation to what Western scholars may refer to as “heaven and earth” or “spiritual and mundane.” For while these separations do not exist in TCM, it can be difficult for those with a dualistic background to understand how a phenomenon may be both. I therefore offer the view in this chapter section that *Qi* in TCM proceeds from what Westerners may call the spiritual realms, while yet being an integral part of physical reality. It is in this that *Qi* may be called metaphysical.

Chapter eleven of the *Heguanzi*, a pre-Qin Daoist text written during the warring states period (475-221 BCE), marks the first recording of *yuan Qi*. According to this text, *yuan Qi* was the change that formed the physical universe.\(^{536}\) This is not a point of creation, but rather, it is the phase in the cycle of change which resulted in physical matter. In the cycle of change, the cosmos enters a phase where *Qi* alone is existent, in an unformed and unified original state. In this phase,

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\(^{533}\) Liu, *The Essential Book of Traditional Chinese Medicine 1*, 69.

\(^{534}\) Polkinghorne, *Science and Creation*, 51.

\(^{535}\) Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, energetic cycles of the universe, 37. For a definition of *yuan Qi* refer to appendix 1.

Qi, as the phenomenon of change, drives the cycle towards created things, which are material manifestations of Qi’s metaphysical nature. The motion of change is not a simple matter of kinetic movement, cellular decay, growth, or mutation. Rather, it is the perpetual resonant flow that allows for universal communication. This influence from the Tian, the action of change that is yuan Qi, flows through both animate life and inanimate substance as a metaphysical phenomenon that may affect physical matter.

As an example, yuan Qi flows into the body through the liver and then travels along the meridian network. When the flow of yuan Qi along meridians is impeded, the metaphysical nature is manifested in physical symptoms, such as pain, lethargy, or nausea. In such cases the metaphysical energy of yuan Qi from the Tian has a demonstrable effect on anatomically verifiable organs and nerve endings, traceable through, among other things, pain or discomfort.

In addition to its metaphysical nature, Qi is recognized as the basis of all physical structures in the universe. However, just as its active nature is not described as simple movement, or as an energy fully removed from physical manifestations, the physical nature of Qi it is not considered to be an element or building block of matter that one may reduce to observable components. There is no specific atomic number for Qi, nor is there a purely physical location from which Qi originates. Qi, is not, as Ted Kaptchuk writes, limited to “some primordial, immutable material ... [rather]... it is the pulsation of the cosmos itself.” Were Qi to simply be a universal particle of

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538 Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, the energetic cycles of the universe and their effect on human beings, 36-37.
542 Kaptchuk, *The Web That Has No Weaver*, 43.
which the universe was constructed, whose origin were entirely discernable, then the nature of reality would be reducible, and therefore explicable within the laws of physics. However, this would place the universe in the realm of Western scientific monism, with no metaphysical reality. This is not how TCM Qi cosmology is understood. Rather, according to TCM Qi cosmology, the unification of physical and metaphysical through the phenomenon of change is demonstrated in the cyclical formation of the universe driven by yuan Qi from the Tian.  

Although Qi proceeds from the Tian, applying a term such as transcendent to Qi in TCM is not wholly applicable, as there is no fully transcendent reality in TCM canon. However, this does not negate the possibility of a comparative analysis to divine action, as the action of Qi may be considered in relationship to all physical reality. This manner of pervasive metaphysical action is a mainstay of science and religion divine action arguments based on an omnipresent God, and is reflected in the TCM understanding of yuan Qi.

Further, the pervasive involvement of Qi in the universe does not intimate that physical matter must exist in order for Qi to exist. More simply the metaphysical aspects of Qi are not dependent upon the physical. Rather they exist together, and, as there is no beginning or end, they do not rely on each other for creation or destruction, they simply are. If the metaphysical were dependent on the physical, or vice versa, then removing one would cause the other to cease to exist. This possibility is not allowed for in TCM Qi cosmology as Qi is understood to be physical, metaphysical, and eternal. Even though there may be a phase in the cycle in which no

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543 Ni, Huangdi Neijing, the art of life through the four seasons, 5-7.
physical matter exists, there is the potential for it which is manifested in the energetic actions of yuan Qi. Therefore, according to the TCM Qi cosmology, the physical and metaphysical exist together. While we may allow that Qi proceeds from the heaven, and is therefore metaphysical in nature, there is no clear separation in a holistically monist worldview. It would be more accurate to say that Qi proceeds from the Tian and, as a ubiquitous phenomenon, is both physical and metaphysical.

6.1.4 Qi-Non-determinist

As a fifth qualification of Qi in the universe, according to TCM Qi cosmology, I will now offer that Qi is non-deterministic. In this, I will demonstrate that Qi encourages humans to act in accordance with the flow of the Dao, but does not absolutely direct them. In the TCM understanding of Qi, there is space for human will and free movement in the pattern of action. While the ultimate direction of the Dao is something to which all are eventually drawn, there are instances whereby the person may choose not to act in accordance with the communicative directives of Qi.  

I have written that the Dao is an eternal pattern, and that the logic of the Li inherent in the pattern is an ongoing constant. Further, I have allowed that Qi is an eternal and pervasive phenomenon that acts in a lawlike fashion, incapable of interfering with the Dao. This may indicate that the pattern of the Dao is firmly set and unalterable, with Qi as the deterministic arm of that inexorable force. Qi cannot, however, be a deterministic phenomenon, as the Dao it reflects is not deterministic.

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546 For a definition of the Dao see appendix 1.
There is apparent continuity and logic to the *Dao*, which may be known in part through *Qi* in *wuxing* and *yin yang*, but no one may comprehensively know the *Dao*. This is a mainstay of Daoism and the *Qi* cosmology of TCM. While the flow of the *Dao* is understood to be a pattern, there is no “direction” that can be interpreted eschatologically. It may be argued that there is an overall plan to the flow of the *Dao*, but no one can know the whole of what it is, or where it ultimately points to. Therefore, it may not be reasonably argued that the *Dao* manipulates reality to a specific end. That manner of top down influence is not provided for in any Chinese *Qi* cosmology. As Alexander Chow writes, “A Chinese understanding of causality can perhaps be best understood with the aphorism *Tiansheng, rencheng* (Heaven engenders, humanity completes)—there is cooperation between Heaven and humanity, which is initiated by Heaven.”\(^{547}\)

There is no absolute causality, and so no ultimate causal agent situated in a hierarchal arrangement. Although the *Dao* may be the pattern of reality, it is not a conclusively determinative entity. Therefore, as *Qi* demonstrates the logic of the *Dao*, *Qi* cannot be a deterministic phenomenon.

What may be said however, is that *Qi* engages in direction, but not hard determinism.\(^{548}\) This direction is not necessarily based in authoritarian commands, but rather may be likened to a continually actualized desire. *Qi* desires to be balanced within flow of the *Dao*, as that is the nature of *Qi*. *Qi*, in its various forms in the human body, functions properly only in balance with the *Dao*; this is the cornerstone of TCM. When *Qi* is in proper balance it is said to have *tong*, a type of resonance similar to the frequencies of a properly tuned string instrument.\(^{549}\) According to TCM, without this balanced flow, there would be no development, absorption, storage or transformation.

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\(^{548}\) Chow, *Theosis*, 142.

in the body, in short, the body could not function.\footnote{Chow, \textit{Theosis}, 142.} Therefore, it is the desire of \textit{Qi} to flow with the \textit{Dao}, to this end, the various forms of \textit{Qi} in the body work towards directing the body to be within the flow.\footnote{Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing}, dysfunction of the five \textit{zhang} viscera, 43.} And while desire may not be an absolutely \textit{apropos} term, considering \textit{Qi} is a non-personal phenomenon, it is helpful to consider the directive actions of \textit{Qi} in this manner.

Although \textit{Qi} offers direction to the body in order to maintain balance, \textit{Qi} is not limited to upholding equilibrium, \textit{Qi} is also the action of all change in the \textit{Dao}.\footnote{Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing}, the paradigm of the five elemental phases, 98} This change is not random, or arbitrary; rather the cycle of change that is the \textit{Dao} is prescriptive. There are specific actions and reactions, caused by the resonance of \textit{Qi}, and seen in \textit{wuxing}, that occur consistently and universally. Therefore, the actions of \textit{Qi} in TCM may be considered directive.

As an example, according to TCM medical theory, \textit{Qi} enters the body in three forms from three primary sources, \textit{gu Qi}, \textit{kong Qi}, and \textit{yuan Qi}.\footnote{These forms are defined in footnote forty.} Once \textit{Qi} enters the body from food, air, or the \textit{Tian}, it directs the essential operations of movement, protection, harmonious transformation, stability, and warmth.\footnote{Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing} seasonal organ pathology, 90} These operations are carried out through the \textit{zhang} organs; the liver, spleen, heart, lungs, and kidneys.\footnote{Liu, \textit{The Essential Book of Traditional Chinese Medicine 1}, 72.} The spleen, to continue the example, receives \textit{gu Qi} from food which then transforms into the spleen \textit{Qi}. Spleen \textit{Qi} provides instruction to the body needed for upward movement. If the flow of the spleen \textit{Qi} is blocked or limited, the upward movement in the body will be inhibited, which then congeals the blood and causes illness.\footnote{Ibid., 78.} Spleen \textit{Qi} does not
determine that the body should move, rather the natural direction of \(Qi\) provides the opportunity and encouragement for upward movement.

The directives of \(Qi\) are subtle, and subject to influence through cooperative relationships. This is the purpose of TCM, to influence \(Qi\) in the body in order to restore proper flow. However, just as \(Qi\) is not deterministic, \(Qi\) may not be absolutely controlled in these relationships. TCM doctors do not manipulate \(Qi\) in the manner of command and comply, it would be more accurate to say that the physician encourages \(Qi\) to return to its natural direction.\textsuperscript{557} As an example, if the heart \(Qi\) (fire) falls out of balance and becomes excessive, due to diet or environmental influences, it may overtake the lung \(Qi\) (metal), which in turn may become too weak to control the liver \(Qi\) (wood). In this instance, the TCM physician would not encourage the flow of the lung \(Qi\) in direct confrontation to the heart, as that would countermand the natural flow of \(Qi\) in the body. Rather, the liver \(Qi\) would be encouraged in order to increase its restriction of the spleen \(Qi\) (earth) which would limit the spleen \(Qi\)’s control over the kidney \(Qi\) (water) to finally brings the heart \(Qi\) back to normal levels.\textsuperscript{558} Balance is restored, but only by encouraging \(Qi\) to return to its original flow, where it desired to be.

\(Qi\), when operating without hindrance, offers direction for proper operation of the body. \(Qi\) does not mandate organ function, nor does the TCM physician dictate \(Qi\) flow through acupuncture or other means. There exists no method in TCM by which a physician may direct \(Qi\) to work continually in a manner opposed to the flow of the \textit{Dao}, or in direct conflict to the laws of \textit{wuxing}. We may not, as an example, cause the heart \(Qi\) to flow from the kidney, or cause \(Qi\) in the water phase to produce a sour taste. The physician must rather work with \(Qi\), to accomplish balance. The

\textsuperscript{557} Liu, \textit{The Essential Book of Traditional Chinese Medicine} 2, 6.

\textsuperscript{558} Ni, \textit{Huangdi Neijing}, meridian pathology and corresponding pulse signs, 87
nature of the relationship is cooperative, ultimately returning the patient to be within the flow of the Dao.

Qi may be said to offer direction to keep the body within the flow of the Dao; however, in TCM, there is no “Qi prime mover” which dictates all action in the manner of determinism.\textsuperscript{559} Rather, the mechanism of the human body is understood as a feedback system with a cyclical interplay of the yin and yang nature of Qi, continually establishing balance in the system with no definable source of absolute control.\textsuperscript{560} Direction is initiated from the Dao through Qi; however, the action is accomplished as a synergetic venture without deterministic influences.

\textbf{6.2 Divine action}

My position on divine action in the science and religion field is bound by certain guidelines. First, I am dealing specifically with the views of incompatibilist scholars. I have chosen this view because, I suggest, Pannenberg’s spirit field theory may have a positive impact on the incompatibilist discussion of divine action, if viewed through the hermeneutic lens of TCM. Second, I am focusing my analysis on divine action, not divine identity. I am operating within this horizon as one may not aptly place the divine person of the Holy Spirit in a comparative analysis with the non-personal phenomenon of Qi in a methodological comparison such as this. Further, the separation of action and identity is supported by Pannenberg’s work in spirit field theory, and will not present the argument that Qi is God. I will now display the five criteria of divine action, situated in the aforementioned guidelines, to offer that the TCM criteria of action concerning Qi are comparable.


\textsuperscript{560} Liu, \textit{The essential book of Traditional Chinese Medicine} 2, 54
6.2.1 Divine action-omnipresent and eternal

Qi in TCM is not a connective mechanism that allows metaphysical and physical to relate to each other. Rather, Qi is depicted as a universal phenomenon in a holistically monistic worldview wherein metaphysical reality does not stand in a dualistic relationship to a separate physical world, but rather there exists only one universe in which the metaphysical and physical co-exist. The world of ghosts, gods, demons, and spirits is not set apart from the pattern, existing on another plane, but rather is related to the physical aspects of reality. These relationships are understood through the actions of Qi.\textsuperscript{561} Therefore, as the pattern of the cosmos is all encompassing, Qi is understood as a universal phenomenon that may facilitate relationships by reaching all in the pattern. Further, Qi has always existed in this manner, without a demonstrable “beginning.” This is the cosmological view of Qi that TCM employs to understand the relational nature of the universe.

The immanent nature of God’s actions in the universe, according to science and religion scholars such as Ian Barbour, is understood to exist in a similar fashion. As an example, Barbour writes that: “continuing creation expresses the theme of God’s immanence and participation in the ongoing world.”\textsuperscript{562} For Barbour, creation is an ongoing process that identifies God’s immanence in a particular way, through divine action. He writes of “continuing creation,” and “participation,” to specifically mark that God’s actions are immanent in the universe. Barbour further makes the point that the ongoing nature of God’s actions offers insight into the theme of God’s immanence. The presence of God is not a static fact, rather the immanent presence of God’s actions are dynamic in that they continually recur and pervade all of the universe.

\textsuperscript{561} Ni, Huangdi Neijing, energy almanac, 237.
\textsuperscript{562} Ian Barbour, Religion in an Age of Science. Gifford Lectures University of Aberdeen, (London: SCM, 1990),143.
Similarly, George Ellis writes that the natural order is “created and sustained” through God’s immanent action which humans encounter as love.\(^{563}\) For Ellis, the entirety of the created order exists as a result of God’s actions. The universe was not created at a single point and then left to develop as it may, rather it is held together through the function of divine action. The fact that all of the natural order is sustained through God’s actions intimates that God’s actions must be both continual and universal. Further, Ellis argues that humans may encounter and know this action as love. For Ellis, the actions of God are everywhere, the single connective phenomenon that touches all things in the cosmos, and further it is a discernable action that humans have a personal encounter with.

Divine action, as discussed by other science and religion scholars such as John Haught, is not only universal, but also an eternal reality. As Haught writes, “God can be thought of as continually creating the universe, not by compelling it from the past, but by persuading it to actualize itself in conformity with a range of relevant possibilities proposed to it by the future.”\(^{564}\) Similar to Pannenberg’s particular eschatological view of the future, Haught writes that God’s creative actions are present in all time, affecting the “present” through God’s influence in the “future.”\(^{565}\) Therefore, God is not outside of time, nor are God’s actions, rather God is immanently and perpetually active in all time. Further, for Haught, God exists in relation to time through God’s continual creative actions that he refers to as persuasion. This divine action, which may occur in


any instance, is eternally and pervasively present in creation, drawing the universe toward future possibilities.

This model of God’s active, immersive, and eternal presence is, for Arthur Peacocke, a theological revelation that finds consonance with scientific cosmology. As Peacocke writes:

The scientific perspective of a cosmos, and in particular that of a biological world, as in development all the time must re-introduce into our understanding of God’s creative relation to the world a dynamic element which was, even if obscured by the assigning of ‘creation’ to an event in the past, always implicit in the Hebrew conception of a ‘living God,’ dynamic in action.\(^{566}\)

For Peacocke, God should be thought of as a dynamic presence, eternally and immanently active in the world-as-a-whole. He argues that this view of God is not only relevant to comparisons with scientific cosmology, but also finds support in the descriptions of God in the Hebrew Bible. Peacocke further argues that the universe is in constant development, and while he hints at a purpose to creation by choosing the term “development” rather than simply change, the action is described in a manner comparable to the action of Qi in relation to the pattern of the Dao.

While it may not be fully appropriate to apply theological terms such as immanence to Qi, and the lack of a personal identity in Qi may beg questions of purpose in the direction of the Dao, I offer that it is helpful to assume a position where the omnipresent and ongoing phenomenon of Qi is considered reasonably consistent with immanent and eternal divine action in the development of the universe.

6.2.2 Divine action-non-interventionist

\(^{566}\) Arthur Peacocke, in *Evolutionary and Molecular Biology*, 358.
The *Qi* cosmology of TCM is based upon the premise that *Qi* cannot intervene to change the *Dao* or in any way disrupt the *Li*. There is a specific pattern in the universe, and *Qi* may not change or impede the laws that reflect it, as *Qi* would be acting in opposition to its own existence.\(^{567}\) Further, as I have written, in a holistically monist view of the universe interventionism would defy logic.

The idea of non-interventionist action is similar to the manner in which many science and religion scholars, such as John Polkinghorne, discuss the actions of God in the physical processes of the universe. Polkinghorne writes that God, “will not be an arbitrary intervener in [the Earth’s] processes but they will have about them a consistency which reflects His character.”\(^{568}\) According to Polkinghorne, God’s actions will not contradict the laws that seem to exist in the universe, as they too are a creation of God. Polkinghorne writes that natural processes are orderly because they are a reflection of an orderly God, and any intervention in these natural laws would be inconsistent with both nature and God. Simply, for Polkinghorne, God may not act against God’s self.

Further, as Paul Davies points out, the laws of nature may be considered “a reflection of God’s ubiquitous and orderly action moment by moment in sustaining the world in all its physical regularity.”\(^{569}\) Davies writes that there is “regularity” in the physical world that is a result of God’s orderly actions. Davies further states that the laws of nature are not God, but rather that they reflect God’s continual action of maintaining the universe. In every moment, God’s actions are constant, as seen in the laws of nature. According to Davies, if this were not the case, then all theological positions would be questionable. We would have no way of knowing God, even in part, as the very manner of our knowing would be based on a mutable reality.

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\(^{567}\) Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, determining life and death, 82.
\(^{568}\) Polkinghorne, *Science and Creation*, 51.
\(^{569}\) Paul Davies, in *Evolutionary and Molecular Biology*, 152.
The idea that the orderly actions of God are reflected in natural law is also at the foundation of Robert Russell’s view concerning God’s actions in the world. As I have written in chapter two, Russell bases his NIODA (non-interventionist objective divine action) model of divine action on the premise that God will not intervene in creation.\(^{570}\) According to Russell, God may only affect material reality, without creating theological contradictions concerning God’s character, by working within the cosmological constructs that God has created. For Russell, God chooses not to intervene in the natural processes that God has established in the created order.

These views may be seen as somewhat similar to the manner in which TCM understands the non-interventionist actions of Qi in reflecting the Dao. Qi does not interfere with the laws of wuxing and yin yang, but rather reflects their orderly nature.\(^{571}\) Also, the actions of Qi are not the Dao, but rather, that which Qi partially discloses is the lawlike nature of the Dao. For although we may not fully know the Dao, as we may not fully know God, there must be logical consistency in both for either to be in any way intelligible.

### 6.2.3 Divine action-metaphysical

TCM does not separate physical and metaphysical, *ergo*, the spiritual, heavenly, or divine are not beyond the world as-a-whole, they exist with it. *Per* TCM, the pattern of the cosmos, the whole of reality, is held together relationally. Therefore, even though the Tian is a place of the spirit, largely beyond the physical, it is intimately related to the world, and this is seen in the function of Qi.\(^{572}\)

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\(^{571}\) For a definition of wuxing and yin yang refer to appendix 1.

\(^{572}\) Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, the manifestation of yin and yang, 23. For a definition of Tian refer to appendix 1.
Science and religion scholars, such as Arthur Peacocke, Christopher Knight and Phillip Clayton, work from a similar stance when attempting to explain the nature of God’s actions in the world through panentheism. From this perspective the divine transcendence of God exists with humanity, intimately related to the world-as-a-whole through God’s actions. As an example, Arthur Peacocke argues that God’s actions stem from a source beyond measurable phenomenon; however, he further states that God’s actions are none-the-less fully present in the physical world. According to Peacocke, as all of the universe is within God, creation may not separate itself from God’s actions. There is a pervasive presence of divine action throughout all of the universe which originates from a transcendent source. Even though, in this view, God is not dependent on creation, God’s actions are intimately related to it.

Other science and religion scholars, such as Robert Russell, view God’s transcendent nature in relation to the world through God’s connection to spacetime. Russell writes that, “God is the absolute transcendent source of the universe,” however, he later clarifies that God may not be fully transcendent, as God is seen to act in history. Russell believes in the “wholly other” God of Barth and others; however, as a science and religion researcher, Russell also works to understand the actions of God in human history through scientific processes. For Russell, God must in some way interact with our time and space in order to have an effect. The effective actions of God are therefore present in our reality, even while originating from a transcendent source.

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574 Nancey Murphy, in Evolutionary and Molecular Biology, 476.
576 Robert Russell, in Evolutionary and Molecular Biology, 476.
Willem Drees argues that we may understand God’s transcendence in immanent relation to spacetime as “timelessness.” From this perspective, he writes, we may see how a transcendent God is able to act within the world. Drees argues that there is “order and perhaps even a flow to the timeless nature of God.” According to Drees, this orderly flow of God’s timeless action allows for God to be in relation to spacetime while not being constrained by it. Essentially, he posits that there is an eternal source he labels as “God Time,” which creates a relationship to the spacetime of our physical universe. In Drees’ argument, we may see a more directive function to God’s transcendence. God Time is a wholly other source for the reality that is our spacetime, that offers direction in a type of causal link between God’s transcendent person and physical reality. Further, from Drees’ view, this relationship is relationally directed in the manner of an orderly flow in the universe as the flow of God Time offers direction to spacetime which is within it.

Ted Peters further investigates how a transcendent God may involve God’s self in temporal reality. Peters writes that, “the work of the Trinitarian God in history is by no means a mystical cancellation of time. It is rather a divine participation within the limits and possibilities of temporal passage.” Peters writes of God’s “participation” in temporal reality through a connective mechanism that issues from God. For Peters, this divine internal flow of time may allow God to exist as transcendent while still being active in our spacetime.

Panentheism, God Time, and the divine internal flow, are various ways in which these science and religion scholars argue that we may conceive of how a transcendent God may act in the world. Importantly, they display that many in the science and religion field think of God’s

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actions in a similar manner. While these various theories may argue for different understandings of God’s actions, and how the relationship between God and the world should be characterized, they all share a similar worldview. Simply, God’s creative actions stem from a transcendent source and are eternally and pervasively present in the world. Even as these theories may not be fully apropos when investigating *Qi*, namely because they focus upon a personal God, they none-the-less offer a helpful framework. It is therefore beneficial, when discussing the metaphysical nature of *Qi* and its effectiveness in the physical world, to consider how the worldview of TCM may be compatible to that of incompatibilist science and religion scholars who write on the subject of divine action.

### 6.2.4 Divine action-non-Deterministic

*Qi* provides direction and instruction to the body; however, these directions are not deterministic. Rather, *Qi* encourages the body to balance with the natural flow of the *Dao*.\(^{580}\) Within TCM, the energy and information distribution from *Qi* links together “all fundamental textures and organs” into an informational network which organizes the details of the therapeutic system.\(^{581}\) There are specific functions of *Qi* in its various forms that are responsible for proper operation; however, as the *Dao* itself may not be considered deterministic, *Qi* as a reflection of the *Dao* may also not be a deterministic phenomenon.\(^{582}\)

In a similar fashion, science and religion researchers often characterize divine action in the world-as-a-whole as non-deterministic. As Christopher Isham writes, “the manner in which God employs providential agency must be expected to respect those self-limitations he has imposed as

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580 Ni, *Huangdi Neijing*, meridian pathology and corresponding pulse signs, 82.
582 For a definition of the *Dao* see appendix 1.
expressions of his will.” Isham explains that God has put certain limitations upon God’s own will. These limitations provide space for free will and human choice, limitations which would not exist if God determined all outcomes.

William Alston further posits that God’s self-limited position of knowledge in relation to time, or foreknowledge, does not allow for determinism either. Alston points out that God may act ad hoc in reaction to human action and free will; however, God may not determine outcomes, as the knowledge needful for such action is beyond the self-limiting of God’s omniscience, or kenosis, that God has chosen.

This does not mean, however, that God exists in a deist fashion, offering no guidance to God’s creation. Rather, as William Stoeger argues, God’s action in the world offers a “perceptibly complementary directionality—which is not rigidly deterministic, and somewhat but not completely open.” For Stoeger, there may be an eschatological purpose to creation, as there is seeming purpose in evolution; however, it is not a hard determinism, as that would contradict the premise of free will. God is active in the world, offering direction, but in a self-limiting fashion allowing for independence in creation. As George Coyne writes, “God lets the world be what it will be in its continuous evolution.” For Coyne, God “allows” and “participates” but does not

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act in a manner directly determining all events. In a similar manner to $Qi$ and the form and function of the $Dao$, there is action, and direction, but not autocratic control over all outcomes.

**Summary**

In this chapter I have employed stage two of the morphological comparison, focusing upon five criteria of action in both science and religion and TCM in order to construct archetypes of action that are appropriate to a morphological comparative analysis. These archetypes have been displayed in parallel sections, offering that they are applicable to describe metaphysical action in both science and religion, and TCM. I have allowed that divine action as it is explicated in the science and religion dialogue is considered immanent and eternal, while in TCM, $Qi$ is thought of as a ubiquitous and continually existent phenomenon. I have further suggested that divine action may be considered metaphysical in that it proceeds from a transcendent source, much in the manner that $yuan Qi$ originates in the $Tian$. Additionally, I have offered that divine action does not contradict the natural laws that exist in the universe, just as $Qi$ does not act in conflict to the logical form of the $Dao$ seen in $wuxing$ and $yin yang$. Finally, I have presented that neither divine action nor the actions of $Qi$ are deterministic, but rather directive in the universe. These criteria are not independently employed, but rather used as a comparative structure in the manner of archetypes so that the analysis may be understood at all levels.

Understanding divine action in a science and religion context is helpful in this work as I suggest that my comparative analysis may impact such areas of science and religion as causal joint theory. While my specific aim is to compare the actions of $Qi$ in TCM pulse diagnosis to the

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587 For definitions of $yuan Qi$ and $Tian$ refer to appendix 1.
588 For a definition of the causal joint see appendix 1.
actions of the Holy Spirit in the spirit field theory of Wolfhart Pannenberg, the wider aim is to have an effect on the incompatibilist view of divine action in science and religion.

Further, much of the critical reception of Pannenberg’s spirit field theory was offered by incompatibilist science and religion scholars, such as Phillip Hefner and John Polkinghorne. Therefore, understanding how divine action is characterized in this field is helpful, as I will work to offer a helpful hermeneutic lens through which to more fully understand the spirit field, in order to supplement the incompatibilist science and religion dialogue on divine action. This is of particular concern as I work to advance Pannenberg’s theory in order to more clearly present the concept to incompatibilist critics in science and religion. Accordingly, in the more pointed comparative analysis that will follow in chapter seven, it is beneficial to operate from a position that is consistent with those held by science and religion researchers in the field of divine action.

Finally, I have offered the definition of Qi in this manner to afford my audience an acquaintance with the holistically monistic worldview of TCM through the comparative structure which is the format of this thesis. I have presented that this worldview of holistic monism is comprised of four pillars; the Dao, Li, the theory of correspondence, and ti yong. Through this process, the presentation of Qi has been offered in its own context, without a distortion of TCM texts or terminology.

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590 For definitions of monism, the Dao, Li, the theory of correspondence, and ti yong refer to appendix 1.
Chapter 7 Pulse diagnosis and the spirit field

In the previous chapters, I have worked to display the TCM view of Qi through the morphological comparative method in order to present the lens of TCM as an appropriate hermeneutic to interpret spirit field theory. This has been done that I may positively re-introduce spirit field theory into the incompatibilist discussion of divine action. In this, I have defined the TCM view of Qi in conjunction with popular incompatibilist conceptions of divine action in the science and religion field, to demonstrate that the TCM worldview from which the actions of Qi are understood may be appropriately applied to the discussions of divine action in the universe. Further, I have placed the TCM conception of the actions of Qi in conversation with Pannenberg’s view of divine action in relation to the human person through the spirit field. This has been done through both Pannenberg’s view of God’s actions and presence in the world, and through Pannenberg’s theological anthropology. I have also presented the spirit field theory of Pannenberg, and offered how spirit field may be helpfully viewed through the holistic monism of TCM.

I will now complete this analysis by comparing Pannenberg’s view concerning the function of the spirit field in relation to the human person, and the manner in which TCM physicians interpret the actions of Qi in pulse diagnosis. In this chapter, I will begin with the third stage in the morphological comparative model. This stage allows that one should develop a complex mechanism for the comparison’s transmission. As such, I will offer that the specificity of TCM Qi pulse diagnosis may be advantageous for a more comprehensive interpretation of the spirit field in relation to the human person.
According to Wolfhart Pannenberg, “the Spirit of God is the creative principle of movement as well as life.” Pannenberg’s declaration concerning the Spirit offers some key insight into his views of how the spirit field may be said to exist. First, he states that the Spirit is the creative principle, meaning it does not simply maintain the status quo but rather takes an active role in the universe. As I have shown in chapter five, Pannenberg asserts that the Spirit is a pervasive presence whose actions may be best understood as a field of operations. Pannenberg views this active and pervasive presence to be creative in the sense that in every moment, every phenomenon in the universe is touched by the activity of the Spirit.

Further, Pannenberg states that the Spirit is the fundamental truth that serves as the foundation for both movement and life. Movement is more than simply kinetic action for Pannenberg; it is the activity of being. Movement is the constant action of existence that represents participation in the universe, simply by being present in the universe. Per Pannenberg, the ability to exist in the active movement of the universe is due to the presence of the Holy Spirit, as the Holy Spirit is the fundamental truth that allows for this movement.

Pannenberg ends his statement by writing that the Spirit is the creative principal of movement and life, not just movement. This assertion offers that there is a distinction in what the Spirit interacts with, but not how the Spirit acts. Pannenberg separates life and movement to indicate that the Spirit is the principle of both animate and inanimate matter. He does not, as an example, argue that the Spirit’s manner of active involvement is limited to human consciousness,

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591 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 2, 79.
592 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 1, 415.
593 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 30.
or that the Spirit is the grounds of human uniqueness.\textsuperscript{594} Indeed he writes elsewhere that animals too possess the breath of life, just as humans do, both being נשמה חיה.\textsuperscript{595} Rather, Pannenberg argues that the Holy Spirit exists continually in all things, providing the basis for the active being of inanimate matter as well as sentient life. Pannenberg does not argue from the point of shamanistic understandings such as Shintoism, that there is an individual spirit in the rocks, trees, and so on.\textsuperscript{596} Nor does he adopt a pantheistic approach, that God, and therefore the Spirit, is the actual substance of all things. Instead, Pannenberg maintains that the presence of the Spirit is the principle of all things, as even seemingly motionless elements have an active being. The rocks may not possess the breath of life, but they exist, and are therefore actively present in the universe, due to the creative presence of the Spirit.

Pannenberg argues that we may consider the actions of this foundational creative truth through the spirit field. For Pannenberg, this is not an analogical discourse, but rather that these actions may be practically available to our understanding. Pannenberg writes that, “the soul is not another component part of a human being over and above the body, as in Cartesian or Platonic dualism; it is simply the bodily being as living.”\textsuperscript{597} The soul, which according to Pannenberg is nourished by the Spirit, is the action of being as a body; it is the continual existence of the human self.\textsuperscript{598} This is how humanity, according to Pannenberg, participates in the creative actions of the Spirit. Simply by being physical objects in the universe we are nourished by the principle of movement that is the Spirit; however, we have the advantage of a

\textsuperscript{594} Consciousness, as used here, should not be thought of only as an awareness of reality. Pannenberg refers to human consciousness as the soul, or the movement of life; it is the wholeness of being human and as such is not limited to thought, perception, or cerebral activity.
\textsuperscript{595} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 2, 189.
\textsuperscript{596} For more on the principle beliefs in Shinto, specifically related to spiritual entities, refer to: Helen Hardacre, \textit{Shinto}. (Oxford University Press, 2016), 56-70.
\textsuperscript{597} Pannenberg, \textit{Anthropology in Theological Perspective}, 523.
\textsuperscript{598} Pannenberg, \textit{Systematic Theology} 2, 34.
developed consciousness that allows us to realize the Spirit’s actions as the principle of life.\textsuperscript{599} We may not only encounter the foundation of our being as the rocks do, but we may also comprehend the relationship.

Pannenberg argues that we may, in a limited fashion, understand our relationship to God through the action of the spirit field. For Pannenberg, we may identify the activity, or form, of the spirit field’s function through a process which begins with the religious thematic.\textsuperscript{600} One may view this process as an operation in four successive steps. First, the religious thematic associates with humanity as a field.\textsuperscript{601} Second, this association provides the grounds for consciousness. Third, the action of the spirit field then offers revelation of God through our conscious awareness which is manifested in religious feelings.\textsuperscript{602} And finally fourth, these revelatory religious feelings inspire humans to cultivate language that gives form and shape to the source of the feelings. This final stage allows for the description of the religious thematic in action as the spirit field.

Succinctly, per Pannenberg, our relationship to God is revealed to us through feelings that originate in the religious thematic and are manifested in our consciousness through the actions of the spirit field. For Pannenberg, more fully understanding this process should be the primary aim of theology, as it more fully reveals God’s self.

\textsuperscript{600} Pannenberg, \textit{Anthropology in theological perspective}, 285-293. According to Pannenberg, the religious thematic, as the wholeness of reality, manifest in human consciousness through the operation of the spirit field. The religious thematic, in action as the field Pannenberg envisages, is then not only manifest in human consciousness in the manner of thought, emotion, or awareness, it is also, as the creative principle of life and movement, the basis of consciousness. A more full treatment of the religious thematic may be found in chapter four.
\textsuperscript{601} For a definition of the religious thematic and field refer to appendix 1.
\textsuperscript{602} Pannenberg, \textit{Anthropology in theological perspective}, 251-252. For Pannenberg, religious feelings are set apart from other forms of feeling in that they proceed from the religious thematic, and they convey the wholeness of being human. He does not intimate that they are “felt” in a separate or special manner apart from emotional feelings or feelings of sensation, simply that the impetus and aim of religious feelings outreach other modes of feeling. The significance of religious feelings, and their relationship to human awareness, will be more fully disclosed in the following paragraphs.
In his theology more broadly, Pannenberg goes to great lengths to comprehensively describe the four steps of this process. In the first step, as I have shown in chapter three, Pannenberg offers a manner in which God may be said to relate to humanity, through the spirit field. In the second step, seen most readily in his theological anthropology, Pannenberg works to describe a manner in which human consciousness may be affected by the spirit field; this was presented in chapter four. The third step is accomplished through divine action in the spirit field of operations, a process I described in chapter five. However, it is in the final step that there is an opportunity for further investigations. The language employed by Pannenberg to describe these religious feelings is limited, perhaps due to the Western worldview from which he operates. This worldview, common to many in the science and religion field, is largely dualistic, often separating material and spiritual. Thus, finding the words that may translate spiritual or religious feelings, notions, ideas, and inspirations, into physical terms is difficult. It is for this reason that I suggest the perspective of Qi in TCM may be helpful.

I have thus far defined Qi as it is understood in TCM from a cosmological perspective, offering the underpinnings of the TCM worldview. As I have written in chapter six, this worldview of TCM presents Qi as both substance, and as eternal and uncreated metaphysical action. If the goal is to understand how the actions of the eternal and uncreated spirit field may be interpreted through feelings, and then given form in language, this holistically monistic TCM worldview may provide the means. While the worldview of TCM Qi cosmology may be considered helpful in a general sense for science and religion, the specific language employed to describe metaphysical action in TCM Qi pulse diagnosis may have an even more focused impact on the interpretation of spirit field theory in particular. Pulse diagnosis displays metaphysical
action communicated through feelings which are in turn articulated by specific language in a systematic format.

Pulse diagnosis, or *zhen mai* (the examination of *Qi* in the vessels, pulses, and channels), in TCM is discussed in multiple texts over several centuries. It is a method of diagnosis wherein the actions of *Qi* in the body are discerned through tactile interaction and described by language indicative of feeling. While it is difficult to absolutely prove what a TCM physician actually feels in pulse diagnosis, there are demonstrable consistencies regarding the interpretation of *Qi* in the *mai* (the vessels, pulses, and channels through which *Qi* flow may be engaged with). Recent experiments to quantify these feelings by researchers in bioinformatics point to this consistent engagement, and will be highlighted in due course. However, I do not intend to prove or disprove individual experiences, nor do I wish to argue for the efficacy of pulse diagnosis in the medical field. I will instead offer that pulse diagnosis employs language that consistently and systematically describes feelings which depict an eternal, uncreated, and active metaphysical phenomenon, allowing for space in the discussion to introduce a more convincing interpretation of divine action through the spirit field.

### 7.1 Pulse diagnosis

I have chosen to base my presentation of *zhen mai* on the memoirs of Yi Chunyu. The complete translation and linguistic analysis of this personal journal was recently completed by TCM expert Elisabeth Hsu. Yi’s record of *zhen mai* in treatment dates to ca 86 BCE, and is a foundational text for modern pulse diagnosis. Yi’s memoir is also an important text for describing the centrality of *Qi* in relation to personhood and emotions. Further, as Yi’s work is based on twenty-five detailed and formulaic case histories, it affords a systematic view of *Qi* which is helpful in comparative analysis. Finally, Yi’s method of *zhen mai* involved palpitation, or
pressing into mai, in order to diagnose the function and flow of Qi in the body through physical touch. As such, his is one of the first works in which the metaphysical aspects of Qi are primarily discerned through physical interaction. This provides a framework that allows for a more in depth look at spiritual action in the physical world, which is of course a central ambition of spirit field theory.

While a full discourse on the function of pulse diagnosis would be lengthy, and in the end not beneficial to my analysis, a brief introduction is helpful to place the case studies which follow in context. Pulse diagnosis is primarily concerned with the present condition of the patient. The aim is to discern what is transpiring at the moment of diagnosis with regard to Qi flow and function. The present condition may indicate what occurred previously to produce current symptoms; however, pulse diagnosis specifically reveals neither the past, nor the future. This bears importance for later comparisons, for while Qi is timeless, the interaction the doctor may have with Qi is limited by the doctor’s mortal and temporal existence.

The pulse is taken, primarily, at three positions on the wrist, Cun, Guan, and Chi. From these positions the physician will read at the superficial, middle, and deep levels of depth to determine Qi flow. The various depths are taken according to the pressure one places with the fingers on the pulse points. The Mai Jing, an ancient primary text on pulse diagnosis, measures these in the weight of soy beans. As an example, the superficial level is diagnosed by placing pressure equal to the weight of three soy beans on the pulse point.

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604 Li, Shizhen, Pulse Diagnosis, 3.
There are twenty-four standard pulses in the Mai Jing and twenty-eight employed in modern TCM. These are identified by particular labels. For example, a strung pulse, or xian (a description used in both the Mai Jing and modern TCM), means that the Qi is straight as the quality of a string, as well as being slippery, tender, and soft, which are the qualities of the wood season of Spring.\(^6\) The descriptive terms are, it may be noticed, all tactile. They are based on the “feel” of the pulse. It is in this manner that the flow of Qi is understood and categorized for the purpose of diagnosis, in this example the feel of Qi determines that the pulse is xian. These categories are then practically employed to understand the health and wellness of the human body in relation to the world-as-a-whole. If the physician feels a xian pulse at the middle level in Spring time, coming from the liver, a wood organ, the Qi is considered even and healthy, as it is balanced in both season and phase of organ. However, if at the same time of year, the Qi is xian and comes from the stomach, an earth organ, it indicates a disorder of the liver.\(^7\) Again, the intricacy of diagnosis is not the prime concern for this work, rather it is the descriptive language that is employed, and how it offers a categorical understanding of metaphysical and physical interaction.

7.1.1 Classical case studies

Yi’s case studies are based on the function, direction, and action of Qi in the body. However, I have focused my attention on those cases in which he most specifically indicates interaction with Qi in his diagnosis, and where his descriptive language is most clear. Further, as Yi’s memoir is a foundational text which may pre-date, or at the very least coincide, with other pivotal texts on Pulse diagnosis, such as the Mai Jing, I have limited my use of his studies to those which may

\(^6\) Wang, Shuhe. Mai Jing, 28.
\(^7\) Li, Shizhen, Pulse Diagnosis, 19-20.
find agreement with the descriptive language in the *Mai Jing* and other works such as Li Shizen’s compendium on pulse diagnosis.

In Yi’s first case study, he indicates that he is able to understand the direction of Qi flow in the body. He writes that: “I got Qi coming from the liver.” Yi’s clear indication that he “got” gan Qi, or Qi coming from the liver, demonstrates not only location of origination, but the direction of flow. He involves the function of the zhang organs in a particular level of interpretation, without the benefit of, or need for, internal anatomical knowledge gleaned from vivisection. There is little in the way of impression regarding the feel of Qi in this diagnosis, and as such this may seem like a rather unimportant detail. However, Yi is able to detect the direction that Qi is flowing through his touch. Somewhat akin to the feel of a river current, the flow of Qi in his patient was discernable to him through feeling. It should be noted that this is not a matter of detecting the flow or direction of blood in the circulatory system. Qi flow in the body may follow the flow of blood and other body fluids; however, this is not always the case. In some instances, the flow of Qi runs counter to the direction of the circulatory system. Qi flows in certain directions and can be deduced through feeling the movement of Qi, even when the flow is rebellious or blocked. Yi’s interpretation of direction begins the process of Qi classification and serves as the basis for the remainder of his diagnosis. As Yi was able to detect the direction of Qi and the organ from which it flowed, he was able to classify a particular type of Qi, and further what its function was.

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610 Ni, *Huangdi Neijing* the methods of pulse examination, 62-64.
In case study number two, Yi offers further explanation as to the feeling of $Qi$. He begins by noting the direction of $Qi$, writing that it was flowing from the heart. However, in this patient’s diagnosis, Yi also writes that the $Qi$ was “murky” and “hurried.” Hurried may also be described as a variation of the rapid pulse labeled “hasty.” This pulse condition is identified at the cun position with a deep well rising to triple peaks of irregular intervals at the middle level. Hurried is not necessarily just a fast pulse; rather, the term connotes movement without purpose, or rushed movement that is unhelpful. Murky, in this instance, is a yang quality of $Qi$, often contrasted with clear and cool. A murky pulse, or in other texts moving pulse, is described as dark, and as the process of clogging. It is also indicative of chaotic tian $Qi$.

Yi therefore is able to describe the direction, condition, and action of $Qi$ in his patients through palpitation. In this instance, there is hurried, unhelpful, chaotic and dark movement that has resulted in clogging. Rather like a traffic jam on a narrow road, the proper flow of $Qi$ is momentarily inhibited, causing illness. Yi’s language describes very specific conditions of the mai that offer an image of metaphysical action. The manner in which this metaphysical action of $Qi$ is classified has several layers of definition, combined to produce an image of the action. Further, these various aspects are presented through language associated with touch. More simply, Yi feels the action of $Qi$, and though his tactile interpretation, is able to offer a systematic definition of action that in turn produces mental images of the action. There is an understanding of metaphysical action here, codified in particular language; however, it is more than simply noticing and labeling a phenomenon. The diagnosis in this case study, as well as those which will follow, represents understanding with purpose. The revelation offered by the

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612 Li, Shizhen, *Pulse Diagnosis*, 18.
613 Wang, Shuhe. *Mai Jing*, 83
movements of Qi presents an image of imbalance that is the cause of illness, there is purpose to the actions of Qi as well as purpose to Yi’s interpretation of it.

In case number three, Yi writes that, “at the time I pressed into his mai, at the right opening, Qi was intense.”[^614] Intense Qi, or in full Mandarin ji Qi, is described tactically as taut; however, it also may indicate a span of time that is brief and intense, as well as a tense state of mind.[^615] Therefore, the perception of ji Qi by Yi indicates a feeling of Qi that offers an understanding of the illness’s rate of progression, as well as the mental state of the patient. In this study, it can be seen that the diagnosis through the mai also includes mental health. Further, the words employed offer a comprehensive description of the patient’s current status, mental and physical. The action of Qi in this person’s body reflects the state of wellness as a whole. This is not an improvised deduction with random word choice applied to how Yi feels in an abstract way. Rather, these terms describe specific metaphysical action through real feelings that Yi is then able to describe. Further, this diagnosis indicates that the actions of Qi not only affect the entire human person, they are also discernable in this function. The actions of Qi, in effect, have a direct and palpable influence on the conscious state of the patient, Yi is then able to interpret and describe the revelation of this action.

In the seventh case study, Yi reports that, “when I, your servant, Yi, pressed into his mai, they were deep, small, and soft.”[^616] Hsu notes in her analysis of this passage that there is some ambiguity in the adjectives in this diagnosis, and that these words may also be translated as “very small and soft,” or possibly “extremely tight and small.”[^617] The soft pulse offers a very particular

[^617]: Ibid., 280.
technique of interpretation, as the soft pulse is indiscernible when pressure is applied but potent as pressure is released. There is a subtle point to reading the soft pulse that is helpful in classifying how the physical and metaphysical interact. Essentially, the relationship is driven by the metaphysical actions, not the material side. This can be seen in that, when more pressure is applied in the physical interaction, the pulse becomes impossible to discern. The soft pulse is described as “fine cloth in water that is only reachable to a gentle hand.”\textsuperscript{618} The feel is similar to that of the taut pulse, although the length of the soft pulse is longer, more shallow, and is only felt at the superficial level.\textsuperscript{619} We may therefore say that the revelation of action is not due to the work of the physician. While it is needful that the physician and the patient participate in the actions of $Qi$ to be a part of the universe, the revelation in the diagnosis of that action is dependent on the actions of $Qi$ more so the actions of the physician.

There is also in this study a multilayered definition. Whether one interprets this passage as deep small and soft, very small and soft, or extremely tight and small, it is evident that in all possible translations the descriptive terms Yi employs are presented in combinations. Much in the way he describes the pulse as murky \textit{and} hurried in case number two, Yi furthers his interpretation in case number seven to include at least two active verbs. This not only presents a complex description, as the terms are verb forms, it also demonstrates an engagement of the “moment in progress” that TCM $Qi$ offers—the actions described are a part of the continual action of $Qi$, not a static phenomenon. Both verbs also indicate a texture of sorts as known through tactile impression. There is therefore time, place, and sensation, illustrated through the language that allows for interpretation of the metaphysical presence of $Qi$. Further, in this case,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{618} Wang, Shuhe. \textit{Mai Jing}, 4.
\item \textsuperscript{619} Li, Shizhen, \textit{Pulse Diagnosis}, 13.
\end{itemize}
it is action that exist in the present moment whose revelation is governed by the metaphysical aspects of the relationship.

In his ninth case study, Yi writes that, “when I pressed into his mai, Qi was yin.”\(^{620}\) The analysis offered by Yi here demonstrates that personal interaction with Qi may not only display the movement or tactile impression of Qi, but that also a physician may interpret the condition of Qi in yin yang.\(^{621}\) This bears importance for the discussion of metaphysical interpretation of physical data in that, in this case study, there are no descriptive terms of Qi employed other than its metaphysical position in the universe. Yi does not say that the Qi was cold, dark, or otherwise associated with yin terms, rather he is able to determine that the Qi was yin through touch. Yi writes of a metaphysical category that is discerned through physical interaction. He is made aware of the condition of Qi, the key aspects of Qi’s position in the universe through the revelation of feelings, and further, he is able to label it comprehensively by including the larger sphere to which yin Qi is associated.

While it is clear that Yi, in many case studies, engages Qi in diagnosis, there are limits to his understanding. As I have written, Qi is a timeless and pervasive metaphysical phenomenon that we may not fully know. Rather, we may in part engage with Qi in our limited mortal and temporal capacity, discerning certain characteristics of Qi. As Hsu writes, “in those cases where Yi’s wording can be translated ‘to have perceived Qi,’ it is not entirely certain whether he actually speaks of his tactile experience or comments on the meaning of the tactile perception.”\(^{622}\) In other words, we may not with absolute confidence state whether Yi perceived Qi or simply a quality of Qi, just as coolness is a quality of ice that is not ice itself. Further, we

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\(^{621}\) Wang, Shuhe. *Mai Jing*, 15.

\(^{622}\) Hsu, *Pulse Diagnosis in Early Chinese Medicine*, 347.
may not say with unshakable confidence that all aspects, qualities, or attributes of \( Qi \) that Yi describes were tactile in nature, as the manner of “feeling” may indicate physical touch, emotional response or other metaphysical revelation. However, what may be said is that Yi’s diagnoses included a personal interaction with \( Qi \) in which he could discern the action of \( Qi \) in the body that was then interpreted through language as a tactile experience. Further, Yi’s use of the systematic language employed to describe the actions of \( Qi \) allowed him to present an image of action that was purposeful and understandable. The case studies of Yi provide helpful grounds for discussion concerning the feelings that metaphysical action may produce, and the language that interprets those feelings. Yi’s work, along with others who have developed pulse diagnosis, has allowed researchers in a more modern context to build upon this interpretation of the actions of \( Qi \) in a more definitive fashion, even more specifically displaying pulse qualities through quantified language.

### 7.1.2 Modern engagement

The language of \( Qi \) in pulse diagnosis has been studied by linguists, physicians, scientists, and historians of Chinese medicine for centuries. Women and men in these various fields of scholarship have examined TCM classics, such as the Mai Jing and the Huangdi Neijing, for the value of their descriptive nature, offering insight into \( Qi \). Furthering these studies, there have recently been efforts to more specifically determine the nature of the metaphysical criterion that generates the descriptive language of \( Qi \)’s actions in pulse diagnosis, through the use of bioinformatics in medical research.

In 2012 a study was launched in Hong Kong that involved 229 subjects and a team of five researchers. The aim of this project was to better understand what physicians felt in pulse diagnosis, in order to measure pulse conditions so that doctors may assess the \( Qi \) flow of patients
through telehealth consultations. In order to collect, organize, and analyze the data concerning pulse conditions, a system was developed with an artificial neural network (ANN). An ANN is an interconnected group of nodes, similar to the network of neurons in a brain. Each node represents an artificial neuron with connections from the output of one artificial neuron to the input of another. This network was deemed to be the most helpful for evaluating the various possible conditions concerning the actions of Qi in pulse diagnosis, as the presence of hidden layers in the network greatly increases its capacity to deal with complicated and multi-faceted relationships.

In this study, the input neurons were the physical parameters of arterial pressure waveform (pulse conditions as described in TCM). The pulse acquisition system used by the research team to determine arterial pressure waveform was comprised of three components: a tonometer (a device used to measure pressure in mmHg), a forearm holder, and a tonometer holder. As the pressure signal of a tonometer is often not accurately recognized by computers, a pressure control unit and an analog-to-digital converter were used to convert the natural data to a digital signal. The output neurons were designated by the TCM pulse qualities expressed through eight factors; depth, rate, regularity, width, length, smoothness, stiffness, and strength.

The pulse for each participant was taken at six locations, the left and right pulse points of cun, guan, and chi. The various TCM pulse features were then rated by a TCM physician on a

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624 Tang, et al, "Digitalizing Traditional Chinese Medicine Pulse Diagnosis with Artificial Neural Network," 448. The ANN is a statistical modeling technique employed to display complex nonlinear relationships among independent and dependent variables.
625 A hidden layer in an artificial neural network is a layer in between input layers and output layers, where artificial neurons take in a set of weighted inputs and produce an output through an activation function.
628 Ibid., 450.
zero to ten visual analog scale. Four-layer ANN models trained with forty-five hidden neurons and the Levenberg–Marquardt algorithm were then applied to interpret data from the model. Essentially, the researchers replaced the TCM physician’s fingers with a delicate instrument that measures pressure. They then compared how the doctor labeled the pulse conditions and applied those descriptions to the condition of waveform produced by the readings of the tonometer as described through the ANN.

These researchers were able to establish and measure depth, rate, width, length, smoothness, stiffness, and strength, using a visual analog scale. In the end, sixteen physical parameters were extracted from the pulses of the subjects. According to the research team, “the validity of the proposed system generated by ANN is established and can assist TCM doctors in collecting relevant health data during telehealth consultation.” Essentially, the systematic language employed by the TCM physician in this study was quantified. Using modern equipment and the mathematical models of an ANN, these women and men were successful in translating the language of pulse diagnosis into a digital format.

While their conclusions did not comprehensively cover all aspects of pulse condition, (several pulse conditions were not accounted for and compound conditions were complex beyond the scope of the apparatus and formulas) the work itself points to positive efforts in interpreting the language of TCM in a Western scientific context. The various pulse conditions that were identified by the ANN allows that there are indeed consistent phases of Qi that may be identified through systematic analysis. Further, by establishing a method for pulse diagnosis via telehealth conferences, these researchers were able to empirically demonstrate what TCM

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629 Ibid., 451.
physicians report to feel, at least in part. Specifically, these researchers were able to display metaphysical action in physical matter interpreted through feelings and described by language. The limitation of course, is that the equipment employed only was able to measure pressure. This allows that metaphysical action on physical matter may be said to take place; however, it also indicates that the feeling of Qi is perhaps more than physical sensation alone, as the results of the diagnoses in the ANN were not comprehensive.

One year later, in 2013, another group of researchers in Taiwan also sought a means by which to systematically determine the action of Qi in pulse diagnosis. Evolutionary biologist Chung Yu-Feng, TCM professor Chung Shing Hu, Professor of internal medicine Cheng Chang Yeh, and electrical engineer Ching-Hsing Luo, set out to discover a system which would allow them to observe empirical evidence of the actions of Qi in the human body. This group of researchers began with the techniques currently employed in pulse diagnosis which have been practiced for centuries. After establishing the particular parameters for pulse conditions in the ancient and contemporary texts of TCM, and the systematic language employed to describe them, they then sought a manner by which they may evaluate the methods and results. They found that, for the purposes of study, TCM pulse diagnosis may be divided into two methods, Simultaneous Palpation (SP) and Pressing with One Finger (PWOF).

Simultaneous palpation is a method of pulse taking in which the physician employs more than one finger to determine the pulse, while the PWOF method uses a single finger on a single pulse point. These researchers concluded that, within TCM, “the entire trend of body state is verified by SP, and unique characteristics of viscera and bowels are verified by PWOF.”

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Furthermore, the group deduced that SP may be used to analyze the dynamic characteristics of pulse signal while PWOF may be used to “analyze the static characteristics of pulse signal at specific pulse taking depth or pulse taking position.”\textsuperscript{631} The conclusion reached by these experts was that pulse diagnosis methods may indeed “be practically implemented and also that they provide adequate results.”\textsuperscript{632} For this team, the data indicated the feasibility of pulse diagnosis in medical treatments, and further, that the feelings produced by $Qi$ in the body may be accurately interpreted and systematically described through language.

Those involved in these projects are experts in their fields, the work they conducted was extensive, and their results have been peer reviewed and published. However, these experiments may not afford absolutely conclusive evidence of $Qi$ acting in the human body, nor may they fully describe what TCM physicians are actually “feeling” in diagnosis. What these studies do demonstrate, is that $Qi$ in TCM may be thought of as a metaphysical reality that generates feelings which may be interpreted. Whether these are tactile feelings in a literal sense, or rather inclinations of emotion or some other manner of revelation is unsure. However, whether the actions of $Qi$ are literally felt or not, it may be seen that the language employed by TCM doctors to describe this metaphysical reality is consistent across both ancient texts and contemporary experiments. While the findings of these experiments produce exciting results for the field of bioinformatics, the impetus for the experiments and the methods employed in the work may have even greater implications for the science and religion community.

These recent experiments offer that the contemporary engagement of pulse diagnosis entails pragmatic experiments pointed to obtaining empirical evidence of a metaphysical reality

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\textsuperscript{631} Chung, et al, "How to Standardize the Pulse Taking Method of Traditional Chinese Medicine Pulse Diagnosis," 343
\textsuperscript{632} Ibid., 347
\end{footnotesize}
(admittedly a difficult concept that may sound wrong to a Western ear). As such, these researchers have created models in order to understand how a metaphysical phenomenon may create feelings that are then described through particular language. This language, and the metaphysically based feelings, have been found to be consistent across hundreds of tests. Further, this research was carried out in the context of interdisciplinary studies, bringing together the holistic monism of TCM, and the largely dualistic discipline of Western bioinformatics and medical research.

Experiments, such as those discussed here, are helpful examples of how the language of Qi in TCM may be fruitfully applied as a basis for investigations in other disciplines that deal with metaphysical matters; however, it is especially beneficial for Pannenberg’s understanding of pneumatology and the natural world. The impetus of spirit field theory is to more fully understand Spiritual action in the physical world through a particular model employing descriptive language. In a similar manner, these recent experiments involving pulse diagnosis investigate how physicians are able to feel the changes of Qi, and further how feelings were systematically categorized in specific language. Essentially, pulse diagnosis offers a more complete manner in which to comprehend the actions of Qi in the world. As I have, in previous chapters, argued that the actions of Qi in TCM may be an appropriate hermeneutical lens through which to better understand divine action in the universe, I further posit that TCM Qi pulse diagnosis may offer an appropriate framework to helpfully interpret Pannenberg’s spirit field in particular.

7.2 Pannenberg and the spirit field
The fourth stage in the morphological model is meant to balance generalities and particularities in a structure that integrates both. This stage will be the structure for the second half of this chapter. I will therefore offer Pannenberg’s view of the spirit field in relation to the human body and how both the general notions considering archetypes of divine action seen in the comparative structure thus far, and the particular ideas of consciousness, feeling, and language may be more explicitly described through the worldview of TCM.

In Pannenberg’s view, the classical understanding of the physical universe which dominates scientific naturalism is wanting. He argues that, for a more complete view of the world, metaphysical reality should also be included in the study of the natural world. This was the aim of spirit field theory. Pannenberg writes that, “in contrast to the mechanical model of movement by push and pressure, the field concept could be celebrated as inauguration of a spiritual interpretation of nature.”633 Per Pannenberg, fields may be considered pervasive phenomena, and as such are an appropriate model from which to build an understanding of a spiritually and physically unified universe.

When writing of Pannenberg’s field theory, Charles Gutenson, a man Pannenberg himself said provided “an accurate presentation of my views with much detail and precision,” notes that humanity is not far off in accepting spirit field theory and applying metaphysical thought to a naturalistic understanding of the universe.634 Gutenson writes that, “the problem is not conceptual intelligibility (we understand what it means to say a spirit moved an object) …but rather that our absence of experience with nonembodied, intentional causality and our consequent inability to understand how such a form of causality might work lead some to

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conclude that it is exceedingly implausible that such a form of causality actually exists.\textsuperscript{635} It is not the concept that is the problem, but rather the appropriate worldview and language to express how we think of spirit and matter interacting. The reason we are able to conceive of such a physical/metaphysical universe, even if we are yet to fully describe it, is, according to Pannenberg, because of the influence of the religious thematic as the basis of our consciousness.\textsuperscript{636}

The religious thematic, which for Pannenberg is active in the universe through the spirit field, presents the needful information to see the universe as a combination of physical and metaphysical. Feelings, whether tactile, emotional, or religious, disclosed by language are, for Pannenberg, the manner in which this is expressed. However, the worldview from which he operates, while endeavoring to see the universe as spirit and matter \textit{in toto}, is, as yet, problematically divided. It is, according to Pannenberg, rather simple to say that we may feel the spirit field, however a system of words that clearly discloses these feelings is still yet to be fully developed.

\textbf{7.2.1 Feeling and consciousness}

Religious feelings are, for Pannenberg, the key to interpreting the actions of the spirit field on the human body. These feelings are the signals we receive from the religious thematic which is active in our consciousness. While religious feelings are not entirely congruous to feelings based on emotional responses or physical sensations, they are also not “felt” in a completely different manner, as our openness and relationship to the religious thematic is based in our physical

\textsuperscript{635} Gutenson, Charles, \textit{God as an Infinite Field of Power: Reconsidering the Doctrine of God}. (London: Bloomsbury T and T Clark, 2005), 171
\textsuperscript{636} Pannenberg, \textit{Historicity of Nature: Essays on Science and Theology}, 117.
selves. More simply, for Pannenberg, religious feelings are still understood through our finite persons. However, the link between feelings, both tactile and emotional, and the physical brain have been thoroughly explored by researchers in fields such as neuroscience, psychology, and bioinformatics. May we then look to physiological changes in the brain that are associated with feelings and so put a name to the spiritually generated feelings encountered when the human body meets the spirit field?

Current research in neuroscience indicates that emotional responses, or feelings, are driven by, and interpreted through, brain activity. Brain imaging has shown that emotional states, such as love, have physical correlates in the brain. Further, as cognitive neuroscience researcher Martha Farah has written that, “pharmacologic influences on these traits, as well as the effects of localized stimulation or damage, demonstrate that the brain processes in question are not mere correlates but are the physical bases of these central aspects of our personhood.” Feelings, emotions, thought, and the self, all have physical correlates. Further, there are numerous studies that have demonstrated neural activity in relation to sense perception and nerve function in response to tactile experience. Therefore, it may be argued, there are likely physical indicators in the brain that would display the feelings that Pannenberg argues disclose the religious thematic through the spirit field.

However, the current link that neuroscience places between brain states, emotions, and sense perception may run too close to a purely physicalist interpretation of personhood and feelings. This would, in Pannenberg’s theology, mean that the language derived from

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639 For more on this subject refer to: Mark Bear, Barry Connors, and Michael Paradiso, *Neuroscience: Exploring the Brain*. (London: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 2007).
neuroscientific work on feelings would not be wholly suitable to a description of religious feelings in the spirit field. According to Pannenberg, “the divine creative spirit causes human beings to have life within them, and to that extent the spirit is internally present to them, although it does not on that account become a ‘part’ of them.”640 The brain, feelings, and the spirit field may be linked, but not in a fully reducible manner. Just as in the contemporary experiments of pulse diagnosis, the tonometer may allow for certain physical indicators of the actions of Qi; however, there are several other indicators that the researchers were not able to establish physical parameters for empirically. There is metaphysical action in pulse diagnosis that is felt by the physician, and is yet beyond even the most accurate of analytical tools. Similarly, for Pannenberg, indications of the feelings produced by the spirit field may be given form through language; however, the spirit field may not be thought of as a group of neurons, it cannot, currently, be considered a fully measurable “part” of the brain.

Further, defining feelings as supervenient or emergent qualities of the brain would also not be appropriate to the religious feelings Pannenberg presents. Religious feelings understood as the emergent qualities of brain states would either preclude the interaction of a divine other, negating the possibility of religious feelings altogether, or else fully include God’s essence in the material composition of the brain which would lead the discussion into pantheism. Neither of these options are helpful for interpreting Pannenberg’s theory. The first option removes the spiritual from the discussion, and in so doing removes any connection to the spirit field. The second option is, for Pannenberg, not an appropriate theological worldview and in no way finds support in his writings.641

640 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 523.
Rather, for Pannenberg, the divine reality makes itself known, “in such human words as express the truth about the totality of the world and human existence.”\textsuperscript{642} Language that may express religious feelings is of a different kind than that normally employed in scientific naturalism. Simply, for Pannenberg, the revelation of the religious thematic in the spirit field is not disclosed through models associated with molecular biology, neuroscience, or the psychology of emergence; but rather through language that may be said to express universal concepts, applicable to all.\textsuperscript{643} For Pannenberg, finding which synaptic connection correlates to love would not present a universal truth about the wholeness of being human.

As scientific terminology related to feelings is, for Pannenberg, insufficient to the task of describing religious feelings, a vocabulary that deals with phenomenon beyond \textit{and} within the corporeal, that encompasses a larger universal truth is needful. Pannenberg writes that, “the movement of life or the ‘soul’ that is in every living thing consists in a movement beyond the limited corporeal life of the individual into the environment in which that life is lived.”\textsuperscript{644} The “movement of life” is again thematized by Pannenberg to represent that which the spirit field interacts with. This is revealed to us through religious feelings and is expressed through language. The religious feelings from the spirit field are the key to understanding this revelation, if they may be described by words that are appropriate to them.\textsuperscript{645} However, this movement of life goes beyond the physical, or more accurately beyond physical reductionism; therefore, the revelation is not wholly physical and yet relates to physical matter. There is then a need for language, as a product of worldview, that encompasses physical and metaphysical.

\textsuperscript{642} Pannenberg, \textit{Anthropology in Theological Perspective}, 395.
\textsuperscript{643} A more complete view of Pannenberg’s thought regarding the link between religious feelings and language will be offered in the following section.
\textsuperscript{644} Pannenberg, \textit{Anthropology in Theological Perspective}, 524.
\textsuperscript{645} For a definition of how Pannenberg understands feeling refer to appendix 1.
Pannenberg allows that our conscious awareness of the religious thematic depends on a worldview wherein the physical and metaphysical are unified. He writes that, "our human awareness is essentially a transcendent awareness that rises above the finitude of objects. In grasping finite objects in their distinction, we are also aware of the Infinite as the condition of their knowledge and existence." Essentially, our consciousness may be aware of the physical universe, even though that same consciousness is metaphysical, because the root of our thought is in the religious thematic which is the basis for, and horizon of, all physical and metaphysical reality. According to Pannenberg, physical and metaphysical reality are necessarily related through the phenomenon that generates them, the religious thematic. Therefore, a view wherein we may be aware of both physical and metaphysical would display physical reality and its ultimate cause. The religious feelings we are made aware of then, if word is given to them in sufficient measure, would reveal true reality in toto.

This revelation, the universal truth to which Pannenberg argues the feelings of the religious thematic points, is in effect the structure of the universe. Pannenberg writes:

Many peoples in their ideas of religion undoubtedly developed concepts of revelation, but in general the contents were not communications which had deity as the immediate theme. In the foreground was the disclosure of worldly matters that are normally concealed from us…Deity was not so much the content of experiences of revelation as the source of information concerning what was hidden in everyday life.

The actions of the spirit field, creating religious feelings in our consciousness, reveals the hidden information behind the material world: the metaphysical underpinnings that hold the systems of

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646 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 2, 292.
647 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 1, 141.
648 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 1, 199.
the physical world together. In effect, the religious thematic allows us to feel that which is the ultimate structure of reality.

### 7.2.2 Feeling and language

For Pannenberg, there has always been a divine basis for the experience of reality which offers revelation through religious feelings. It is through these feelings that we are able to comprehend all things. He writes that, “feeling provides the horizon not only for relating experiences to the whole of the individual’s existence, but also for grasping impressions as parts of an objective whole which in turn has its place in the context of the world in its entirety.” 649 Feelings, or to be more specific, emotive and physical responses to the engagement of the divine reality, are therefore bound together with perception and reason in the interpretation of the religious thematic. Revelation of God in the spirit field is actualized through actions that are felt, and language is then the interpretation of that spiritual action.

Feeling may be an emotive response; however, it may also be the result of divine revelation or physical interaction. 650 In any case, feeling produces, in the rational individual, a conscious effort to assign word labels to describe the sensation, emotion, or thought, even though the process may be elusive. As Pannenberg writes that, “the relation of feeling and mood to each other and to sensation, emotion, and affect cannot be regarded even today as explained.” 651 He states that the relationship between feeling, whether based on physical sensation or emotive stimuli, and the effects of feeling, which for Pannenberg is language, is difficult to discern. This is because, for Pannenberg, “every word that names the nature of a thing by assigning it meaning

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649 Ibid., 518.
650 Pannenberg, *Anthropology in Theological Perspective*, 244-246.
651 Ibid., 245.
gives expression to something ‘hidden.' Essentially, the hidden meaning behind feelings, in this instance the interaction with the spirit field, does not easily find expression in language. Again, within a Western worldview, mixing the spiritual and physical is, at best, a difficult thing to conceptualize. To further place the burden of assigning a descriptive body of words to spiritual action on physical matter is, for many, even more problematic.

For Pannenberg, this is possible if we look to the spiritual impetus for language, which is for him the religious thematic expressed through religious feelings in the spirit field. Pannenberg writes:

The temporal structure of the presentation of hidden things in language by moving beyond what is there to the meaning which words indicate, is to be understood, in the light of the temporality of reality and experience of reality, as an anticipation of the totality of truth which will be complete only in the future. However, we are still left with the task of supplying an appropriate vocabulary to describe these meanings. There is yet a system needed to express spiritual realities in the mundane universe, a system of language that accounts for both spirit and matter existing together in holistic monism.

In such a system we may more fully understand the spirit field, and thus the religious thematic that is its basis. Pannenberg writes that, “the Spirit's work is always in some measure linked to an imparting of his dynamic even though he is not in the full sense always imparted and received as gift.” The actions of the Spirit may be found everywhere, comprehended as the hidden meaning behind reality. Even for those who do not concern themselves with the divine

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652 Ibid., 395.
653 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 1, 487
654 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 3, 9.
nature of the Spirit, the actions of the spirit as a field may be felt, seen, or otherwise understood. The key, for Pannenberg, to interpreting this action is language.

According to Pannenberg, all phenomena, physical and metaphysical are “made available by the identificatory work of language.” This is where feeling, language, and the religious thematic are bound together in his thought. Pannenberg writes that, “from the life of feeling in which it is rooted, there develops in the conscience a nonthematic relation to the totality of life in which subject and object — world, God, and self— are as yet undifferentiated.” Pannenberg argues that it is through these feelings that the foundation of our existence, our relation to the world, indeed all of reality is displayed for us.

For Pannenberg, it is the religious feelings from the spirit field that offer universal truths, and are the impetus for our attempt to describe God. He writes:

The fact that this trinitarian God is the one true God finds expression in statements about the attributes of his being. The prior concept of God to which the ascribing of attributes relates is not itself the God who acts in the economy of his saving revelation. We grasp his concrete essence only by the ascribing of attributes.

However, when Pannenberg brings together science and religion in the production of spirit field theory, the exacting language to define the physical and metaphysical action is lacking. As I discuss in chapter five, Pannenberg argues that spirit field is not an analogy, nor is it confined to the definition of physics; however, he is not able to offer a more clear definition of what spirit field actually is: the interpretation of religious feelings from the spirit field is not fully explained. The reason for this may be that the worldview from which he operates has limited language in

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655 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 383.
656 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 1, 112.
657 For a definition of how Pannenberg understands feeling refer to appendix 1.
658 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 1, 393.
relation to physical and metaphysical interaction. The final step in the process moving from Spirit, to feelings, to language, is still a hurdle to be traversed in spirit field theory, as the language that expresses religious feelings from the Spirit is often equivocal.

The use of analogy and metaphor, the most common way to elucidate religious feelings or other spiritual matters, is, according to Pannenberg, flawed, in that the lack of consistency may always be questioned. Pannenberg writes that, “the reasons for statements made in metaphorical form, the deliberations that lead to this or that formulation, may always be argued and also be contested in principle, as may the presentation of the relations between them.”659 However, he further states that, “the matter itself is not metaphor, only the way of stating it. We must not infer the unreality of the matter from the metaphorical form of statement.”660 Essentially, while our language is necessarily symbolic of the divine reality to which it refers, this does not invalidate the reality of the subject. There are real feelings imparted by the religious thematic revealing God’s self in the spirit field.661 The aim is to find language with an appropriate worldview from which to express it in an unambiguous and systematic manner.

There is a process, according to Pannenberg, wherein the religious thematic produces religious feelings that allow for revelation of the world. Further, Pannenberg argues that, “only by way of language and myth does the process lead to a scientific consciousness of the world.”662 For Pannenberg, both conceptual and exact knowledge is dependent on these.663 We need language to define the feelings that present revelation. For Pannenberg, the religious thematic

661 For a definitions of the religious thematic, feeling, and the spirit field refer to appendix 1.
663 Ibid., 341.
exists in an orderly fashion, offering revelation through religious feelings. However, in order to interpret these feelings, that we may more fully understand revelation, a descriptive language based in a holistically monistic worldview is needful.

7.2.3 Feeling and the religious thematic

According to Pannenberg, our interaction with the spirit field is manifested in our ability to be connected with the wholeness of life and selfhood. This interaction is conveyed through religious feelings. He writes:

Religious feelings are not simply specific feelings that are distinguished from others by their special object or by their reference to such an object. Their peculiar character consists; rather, in the fact that in them the wholeness of human life which is always present in feeling as such becomes thematic. Feelings derived from the religious thematic demonstrate the wholeness of human life to all persons; and feelings become thematic in that they are directed, and therefore understandable.

Essentially, for Pannenberg, humanity is destined to reconciliation with God. This is the wholeness of human life, it is the bodily being as soul encountering and being reconciled with God. Religious feelings are not fickle emotive responses to stimuli, but rather they are a consistent character of our consciousness which offers direction from the religious thematic through the spirit field.

For Pannenberg, there is more to the interpretation of these feelings than simply having conscious awareness. Pannenberg argues that it is only through a systematic encounter with the world as a whole that we may come to a more complete knowledge of reality.

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664 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology 2, 198.
665 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 251.
religious feelings in order to interpret this encounter is therefore of paramount concern. He writes that, “only through the particular experience of reality as a whole is the answer to the question about God, to the question about the origin of my own and of all reality, received.” Without a systematic encounter of reality as a whole, we may only approach a limited knowledge of ourselves, the universe, and God. This encounter, for Pannenberg, relies on an engagement with the religious thematic through the feelings demonstrated through the actions of the spirit field. We must, per Pannenberg, have relationship to the world-as-a-whole in this manner in order to understand it. A vague notion of feeling God’s presence, or sporadic charismatic encounters with God’s Spirit is, for Pannenberg, not sufficient to the task. Rather, our encounter with reality, with the system designed by God that makes us consciously aware of the world as a whole, should be unambiguous. All revelation, both in science and theology depends on this particular engagement. As there must be order to this arrangement, Pannenberg argues that it may be understood as a field of operations. Religious feelings, therefore, are not unfocused or enigmatic. Rather, they are systemically organized with a purpose, specifically to reveal God’s intent toward reconciliation.

We must have a particular experience of reality, it must be pointed and specific; further, it must incorporate all of reality. Pannenberg argues that if revelation of God is tied to one specific instance, or a singular phenomenon, then God is tied to that instant in a limited manner. Rather, the phenomena through which God reveals God’s self must be specifically engaged in a particular manner, and further, this revelatory phenomenon must incorporate all of reality. More simply, it must be pervasive in the universe and exist in an orderly fashion so that

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667 Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, 131.
668 Pannenberg, Systematic Theology: Volume 3, 2.
particular engagement is possible. Disclosing this system, as far as we may, is, according to Pannenberg, “the fundamental question in modern theology; [it is to give] a precise account” of this process.669

We have revelation of this process, according to Pannenberg, through the actions of the Spirit in which we take part. He writes that, “the Spirit belongs essentially to the event of God’s revelation and thus to the divinity of God himself. For what belongs to God’s revelation also belongs to the essence of God.”670 Simply, our particular experience of reality, the process of revelation from God, is administered by the Spirit through religious feelings. Again, the actions of God are related to the essence of God in that, prior to the eschaton, they reveal a glimpse of God’s essence but are not ultimately God’s fully revealed divine person. Therefore, we should endeavor to give an account of these feelings, which are the actions of the Spirit, in order to more fully explain the revelation of God’s actions. Pannenberg allows that the actions of the Spirit may be understood through the spirit field, which engages us and reveals the religious thematic through feelings.

According to Pannenberg, language is the key to interpreting this manner of revelation that is manifested in the spirit field. The revelation of the religious thematic, communicated through feelings, is the basis of reality, and the basis for our ability to understand reality. Pannenberg writes that, “as the most primordial product of reason, language does not precede reason absolutely, but it does precede all further acts of thought.”671 According to Pannenberg, our initial encounter with the religious thematic produces reason, which then gives rise to language. The spirit field is then understood, before all other acts of consciousness, through

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669 Pannenberg, Jesus--God and Man, 132.
670 Ibid., 175.
671 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 343.
language. This is not a matter of our human awareness manifesting in language, thinking cold when we touch ice as an example. Nor is this a matter of language giving rise to a notion of the self or the other. Rather, for Pannenberg, language gives expression to the most key feature of our existence, our feeling of divine action through the spirit field.

Pannenberg writes that language and reason, “transcend the naturally given inasmuch as they grasp and name its essence.” The religious thematic is the horizon of human reason, which allows us to grasp the essence of creation through religious feelings, and language allows us to name it. There is a process that allows for this, even in the spiritual sense, as, according to Pannenberg, language is the medium of the Spirit. Pannenberg argues that the particular development of language in humans is the result of our interpretation of the religious thematic, the field of God’s actions, in the course of our development. Succinctly, we develop language in a more complex manner so that we may give form and shape to the religious thematic from which reality in its wholeness issues.

Summary

Pannenberg argues that God reveals God’s self through the Spirit which manifests in a dynamic fashion as the religious thematic. For Pannenberg, the religious thematic is the root of all reality, and the basis of human consciousness. Our consciousness, which Pannenberg also refers to as the soul or the movement of life, enables us to experience the Spirit through the feelings produced by the religious thematic and revealed through the action of the spirit field. These feelings then give rise to language that creates models to understand the religious thematic, at least in part.

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672 Ibid., 339.
673 Pannenberg, Anthropology in Theological Perspective, 339.
674 Ibid., 348-353.
More simply, one may view the line of communication from God as a series of steps that begins with (1) the religious thematic, which then (2) produces consciousness, this gives rise to (3) religious feelings which are then (4) given form in language that offers models of the religious thematic.

However, because religious feelings (the third step) are metaphysical in nature, and the worldview of Western theology is often dualistic, the description of religious feelings in the fourth step is often left to metaphor and analogy. Metaphor and analogy hint at the religious thematic, but are not able to systematically describe it, as there are always ambiguities in the description. Therefore, per Pannenberg, the most fitting model that may be created in this process is a spirit field of operations. Pannenberg attempts to move beyond analogical representation to discuss the reality of the religious thematic in the formation of the spirit field. However, his argument that the spirit field should not be thought of as an analogy has found critique in both the scientific and theological communities, as I have shown in chapter five, largely because it is not specific enough to suit either sphere of scholarship.

The difficulty in the chain of communications is not the model with which Pannenberg ends. Indeed, many scholars, such as T.F. Torrance, find the spirit field to be a convincing theory. Rather, the problem lies in the systematic description of the religious feelings conveyed through the spirit field. Without a manner in which to more clearly disclose these feelings through language, the model is itself insufficient to the task of displaying the root of the feelings, which is the religious thematic. While a comprehensive description of the religious thematic may, in the end, be beyond the scope of any human endeavor, including the spirit field

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theory, a more concise definition of religious feelings may offer a better indication of the religious thematic by offering a more clear presentation of metaphysical action.

TCM, as I have described in chapter six, is situated within a universal and systematic metaphysical reality that is most easily seen in the description of Qi. However, a key difference in the presentation of Qi in TCM, in contrast to the language applied to models of the religious thematic, is the holistically monist worldview from which TCM operates. Further, the function of pulse diagnosis in TCM offers a manner in which to understand the metaphysical structure of the universe and codify it through particular language. While it may be said that neither the clinical case studies of Yi, nor the contemporary investigations I have offered, unequivocally prove the efficacy of Qi in pulse diagnosis, and neither do they present absolute empirical evidence of what TCM doctors report to feel in pulse diagnosis, yet this is not the focus of this work. What these examples both ancient and modern display, are indicators of the characteristics of Qi, and further, the possibility of a systematic understanding and description of metaphysical action on physical matter. This body of work provides terminology that offers a more succinct impression of the metaphysical reality from which (TCM theory argues) the human body derives direction. Therefore, I offer that TCM pulse diagnosis may present a helpful manner in which to understand the Holy Spirit’s action on the human body through the spirit field.

Pannenberg argues that the spirit field provides an awareness of the divine reality from which our consciousness finds its source, the universal truth and underlying orderly structure of the universe that is the religious thematic. For Pannenberg, the religious thematic is communicated through feelings. The interpretation of these feelings is therefore of paramount concern as they are the key to more fully understanding the religious thematic, which is the foundation and formation of reality. The worldview of TCM, and the system of language
employed in pulse diagnosis, may offer an appropriate manner in which to more fully disclose the religious feelings from the spirit field, and in the end move closer to Pannenberg’s goal, a theological spirit field that does not exist as a mere analogy.
Chapter 8 Conclusion

The overall purpose of this work has been to offer that the worldview of TCM may be an appropriate and beneficial hermeneutic lens through which to interpret Wolfhart Pannenberg’s spirit field theory. To this end, I have offered a comparative analysis in the morphological method between archetypes of action for Qi as it is understood in TCM, and the actions of the Holy Spirit as depicted in spirit field theory. This five-stage comparative analysis has been displayed over the course of several chapters in order to demonstrate the consonance that may be said to exist between TCM theory and the spirit field, allowing that the worldview of the former may beneficially interpret the later.

I began this argument by displaying three of the more popular theories in the casual joint debate that have been widely written on and responded to, in order to present what I view is a problem that my thesis may address. I have suggested that the incompatibilist view of divine action, seen most starkly in the causal joint debate, is largely dualistic in nature, and therefore lacking in tools of interpretation for immanent divine action.676 I have argued that the incompatibilist understanding of divine action may benefit from a new reading of Pannenberg’s spirit field theory, if it is interpreted through the hermeneutic lens of TCM. I have written that the holistically monist worldview of TCM may offer a way for incompatibilists to interpret spirit field theory in a positive manner, moving their theories away from dualism and into a more helpful holistic monism that may allow them to finally embrace non-interventionism.677

I have further written that, while the comparative analysis I suggest between Qi and the Holy Spirit may be of use in the interpretation of spirit field theory, the manner in which the Qi

676 For a definition of the causal joint see appendix 1.
677 For a definition of Incompatibilism see appendix 1.
and Holy Spirit comparison has been formatted in recent years is not adequate to answer the
questions I have asked. I have written that there are two common disparities in the contemporary
Qi and Holy Spirit comparative analysis that make a comprehensive comparative analysis in
science and religion difficult. While there are helpful aspects to these various arguments, with
regard to structure and language, I have found that closer examination of these works has more
fully revealed the need for a new perspective in the field. I have therefore offered, in the review
of these texts, that the structure of my argument and method of comparative analysis deals with
these two issues in a positive way.

The first issue I have raised is that many of the scholars engaging in the comparison do
not give adequate attention to the fact that in traditional Protestant Christian theism the Holy
Spirit is a divine person, while Qi, in the religio-philosophic traditions of China in addition to
TCM, is depicted as a non-personal phenomenon. I have avoided the question of identity by
considering the actions of the Holy Spirit apart from the Holy Spirit’s identity. In the
morphological method I employ, the comparison must be based on archetypes as they are seen in
processes or systems. For this I chose the archetypes of action for Qi and the Holy Spirit. Rather
than compiling a list of similar traits of the two phenomena, I have displayed the systems of
understanding in Pannenberg’s theology and applied them as a structure of analysis to the
tradition of TCM, specifically through archetypes of action. This has been done, not through an
independent or personally created theological framework, but rather through Pannenberg’s view
of Trinitarian action in the spirit field, and the separation he places between the action and
identity of the Holy Spirit.

The second issue that is a complication in other Qi and Holy Spirit comparisons is that a
straightforward and orderly theological engagement of Qi has been lacking. Assumptions are
often made in these comparisons, without sufficient support. As an example, authors will often write of the Holy Spirit’s action in the world without discussing the importance of the Trinity in Christian theology and what that means for any assumption of the Holy Spirit’s presence. Also, *pneuma*, *logos*, and *ruach* are frequently conflated without regard to their independent definitions, or identification of how they are seen to engage in different functions in the biblical text.

I have addressed this issue in my analysis by working within a clear and discernible theological framework. Rather than using a theology comprised of views from various authors, who themselves may not agree on all aspects of Christian doctrine, I have worked within the views of one particular theologian. To narrow the discussion further, I have focused my attention on one aspect of a single theory he devised, specifically the actions of the Holy Spirit in the spirit field, as those actions relate to the human body. This has allowed for a specific comparison with clear theological boundaries.

After situating the problem that I choose to address, suggesting my resolution, and describing the method by which I would explicate my solution, I initiated the comparative analysis. In the morphological structure I employed, I began with stage one in the presentation of Pannenberg’s thought in chapter three of this thesis. This stage of the comparative analysis focused primarily upon the cosmology of *Qi* in TCM, and the views of Pannenberg concerning God’s creative actions in relation to the universe. In particular, I presented Pannenberg’s view concerning the line of communication from God-to-humans.

In chapter three I offered that Pannenberg understands God’s actions in the world to be immanent, continual, and intelligible. According to TCM theory, the actions of *Qi* may also be considered ubiquitous, as *Qi* represents the flow of the *Dao* in all the universe, and perpetually
active, as $Qi$ is considered to be the phenomenon of change which is the form and function of the $Dao$. Further, the actions of $Qi$ are intelligible, as the actions of $Qi$ demonstrate the logical order of $li$ in the flow of the $Dao$ through the particular cosmological views of $wuxing$, and $yin yang$.\footnote{For definitions of $Li$, $Qi$, the $Dao$, $wuxing$, and $yin yang$ see appendix 1.}

Therefore, it may reasonably be argued, that the $Qi$ cosmology of TCM presents a credible level of consonance with the cosmology of Pannenberg, specifically as he understands the origin and evolution of the universe through God’s creative actions. Further, as stage one asserts, these similarities are displayed through systems of understanding. This allows that TCM, as it relates to the interpretation of metaphysical actions, may be helpfully applied to Pannenberg’s thought.

Succinctly, one may note the similar aim and methodological processes in both Pannenberg’s work and TCM; TCM simply understands the archetypes of metaphysical actions in a more specifically empirical manner.

I again used stage one in chapter four by displaying Pannenberg’s view of divine action on the human body, specifically through his understanding of the line of communication from humans to God. For this, I looked to Pannenberg’s seminal work on the subject, $Anthropology in Theological Perspective$. In conjunction with various other publications of Pannenberg, I displayed that Pannenberg’s $Anthropology in Theological Perspective$ presents a three-part understanding of human nature; the person in nature, the person as a social being, and the person in the shared world. These subdivisions display functionality, relationality, and practicality respectively. The first section, the person in nature, is functional in that it discusses the $imago Dei$ and how humans maybe understood as designed with a purpose. Secondly, the person as a social being, relates the reciprocal nature of human relations, with each other, with the environment, and with God. The third and final section, the person in the shared world, details
how the human person practically engages the world around them and works out the manner of existence pointed towards reconciliation with God.

This presentation of human and divine relationship was the system into which the TCM view of \( Qi \) in relation to the human body was placed. In this, I offered that the actions of \( Qi \) in TCM should first be functional, or more simply, a designed activity with purpose. The actions and functions of \( Qi \) in TCM are expressly defined, in point of fact this is the basis for diagnosis and treatment. The actions of \( Qi \), as I have written, demonstrate the flow of the Dao; and TCM theory understands that the function of this action in the body is to order the operation of the zhang and fu organs to be in harmony with the flow. Therefore, the actions of \( Qi \) in TCM must have a \textit{modus operandi} which may be defined as action with purpose. Further, this view should demonstrate a relational existence, in other words, it must flow both ways; as \( Qi \) is not a deterministic force, but rather incorporates relationship through all things.

Therefore, the direction offered by \( Qi \) that encourages the body and mind to be within the flow of the Dao, must also exist in relation to the human person; there is a reciprocal relationship as the human person exists in, and has an effect on, the resonant flow of the universe. Finally, it is advantageous to display the practical nature of the encounter, as practicality places the focus on action not theory. A manner in which to conceive of practical application in the actions of \( Qi \), or at the very least a mode by which action may be said to take place with intelligibility, is a more accurate presentation of the TCM view. There is then, I have argued, a manner of correlation between the TCM view of \( Qi \) acting in the human mind and body, and Pannenberg’s view of divine action in relation to the human person. As such, if one is to interpret divine action on the human body, Pannenberg’s theory may be more helpfully applied through the lens of
TCM, as TCM presents a more exacting view of how this may take place without fundamental contradictions in worldview.

In chapter five I presented the spirit field theory of Wolfhart Pannenberg by engaging with his various writings that describe the spirit field’s form and function, specifically as it relates to the human person. I offered that the spirit field was an attempt by Pannenberg to move beyond analogy into a practical amalgamation of physics and theology, making the actions of God intelligible through natural laws. In this, I offered Pannenberg’s particular theological framework that supports his theory. As the spirit field impacted much of his theology, it can be seen reflected in many of his writings. I offered this theological position in order to pave the way for the final comparison, and to indicate that there is continuity between his theological views more broadly in connection to the spirit field and the manner in which I have compared Qi to divine action in the first three stages of the analysis.

In this chapter I endeavored to present a succinct definition of what Pannenberg considers the spirit field to be, as described by his many publications. Simply, for Pannenberg, the actions of God must in some manner be intelligible. It then logically followed for him that there must be a means of interpretation. This culminated in the spirit field, a theory that brought his theology and philosophy together with the sciences to describe divine action in the world. The spirit field represents the combination of his views about the line of communication from God to the world, and the world to God, as the spirit field provides the space for both. Importantly, this also demonstrates that Pannenberg rather elegantly separates the actions of God through the spirit field and the person of God, a key element in this comparison.

Summarily, Pannenberg argues that the spirit field is a pervasive field of divine action that moves with order and intelligibility, reflecting the will of God in the world even as it allows
humans to participate in the actions of God—apart from God’s essence. This also, I have argued, offers another way in which the spirit field may be seen as comparable to the manner in which TCM views the action of *Qi* in the world, in that *Qi* reflects the logical order of the *Dao*, while not being the fullness of the *Dao* itself. This was done through stage one in the morphological method by elucidating the elements of the actions of *Qi* in TCM in relation to Pannenberg’s system of understanding in spirit field theory to support the formation of the pattern of comparison to be displayed in the following chapter.

Additionally, in this chapter I have offered the critical reception of spirit field theory, which has largely been from the perspective of incompatibilist science and religion scholars. In these various analytical engagements, many have noted that there is a problem of language in the discussion of the spirit field. I have offered that one possible reason for this is that Pannenberg operated from a dualistic perspective, and was therefore unable to employ the holistically monist language that may have been beneficial. As it is, the language Pannenberg employed in his interpretation, largely based in physics, German behaviorism, and psychology, was not sufficient to convince many incompatibilist science and religion scholars of his theory. I therefore have allowed that the language of TCM may be of help in this regard. As it may be said that there is a continuity of concept between the actions inherent in the spirit field that are manifested in the universe, and the TCM view of the actions of *Qi* in the world: it may, I have offered, benefit the presentation of spirit field theory to be informed by the TCM worldview and form of language.

Chapter six offered the definition of *Qi* presented in a comparative manner employing stage two of the morphological method. In this, I grounded the pattern of comparison in a process that ignored historical and geographic context, placing the TCM understanding of the actions of *Qi* in conversation with the prevalent incompatibilist views concerning divine action.
as they are described in the field of science and religion. Specifically, I offered that divine action from the incompatibilist view is considered omnipresent, eternal, non-interventionist, metaphysical, and non-deterministic. This was done in order to situate the archetypes of divine action in a parallel structure with the archetypes of the actions of $Qi$ in a contextual definition that was true to the tradition of TCM, while still being approachable to those who may have no background in the medical traditions of China. This definition was determined by five characteristics that $Qi$ may be said to have when discussed in TCM, namely that $Qi$ is considered to be: ubiquitous, eternal, non-interventionist, metaphysical, and directive, but non-deterministic.

The traits I have used to describe $Qi$ in conjunction with divine action were supported by ancient documents as well as current clinical usage, again looking to archetypes and processes unlimited by historic or geographic context. This presentation of $Qi$ offers, a more systematic understanding, in contrast to the popular, and occasionally rather more obtuse, religio-philosophic interpretations. I presented a comparison of these categories with incompatibilist divine action scholarship in the science and religion field. In this, I have worked to make the definition of $Qi$ more friendly to systematic theological discourse, while not distorting the truth claims regarding $Qi$, and further, to situate this argument in the larger discussion of divine action in the field of science and religion, as it has been the incompatibilist scholars of science and religion who have offered the most direct criticisms to spirit field theory.

Through the process of definition, I have argued that the worldview of TCM $Qi$ is appropriate to the science and religion view of divine action more broadly. Through this complex system, metaphysical $Qi$ from the tian is transmitted in a directive fashion to the interior of the
body affecting health through the operation of the zhang organs.\textsuperscript{679} This is both directive and non-deterministic. Further, the actions of Qi permeate the universe, affecting all things within it, physical and metaphysical. Qi has acted in this manner for all time, having neither a beginning, nor an end. Finally, the actions of Qi thus described are not an independent and randomly active force, but rather are the subtle indications of the flow of the universe: the orderly principle of li as seen in the Dao. The actions of Qi do not disrupt or intervene in the Dao, but rather the actions of Qi may be said to display indications of a directive force that works in, and through, all things, unknowable in total, but not beyond reason.

Therefore, I have specifically argued that God’s actions, as written of in the science and religion field, are regarded as omnipresent, eternal, non-interventionist, metaphysical and non-deterministic. Similarly, I have offered that Qi in TCM, is considered ubiquitous, eternal, non-interventionist, metaphysical, and directive, but non-deterministic. This definition has been limited to action, rather than person, as I do not make the claim that the similarities offered indicate that Qi is God. Rather, what I have presented describes the actions of Qi in a manner accurate to TCM and approachable to those in the theological community. Further, I posit that this comparative definition intimates that the worldview of TCM provides grounds for a discussion of similar phenomenon, namely the actions of God in the world.

In chapter seven I expanded into stages three and four of the morphological method, (developing a complex mechanism for the comparisons transmission, and balancing generalities and particularities in this mechanism) to place spirit field theory in conversation with TCM pulse diagnosis. I began this chapter by developing the complex mechanism for the transmission of the

\textsuperscript{679} For a definition of Tian refer to appendix 1.
analysis; which is the comparison of the archetypes of action for both $Qi$ in TCM and the Holy Spirit in spirit field. I further situated this complex mechanism by balancing generalities and particularities in a structure that integrated both, as suggested by stage four of the method. Specifically, in the presentation of the particular nature of $Qi$ in pulse diagnosis and the specific nature of divine action in the spirit field, I remained within the larger constructs that I had previously offered, that of the archetypes of action for $Qi$ and divine action as directed by stage five of the method.

In this chapter I have allowed that Pannenberg argues that we encounter God through the spirit field. He identifies this process as the religious thematic, being the wholeness of reality, manifesting in our consciousness producing language that in turn allows us to identify the source and content of revelation. Pannenberg argues that it is through feelings that we come to understand this process. Language, as a product of the revelation of the religious thematic, then gives form and shape to these feelings. However, the particular language to describe these feelings, the physical and metaphysical interaction that is the religious thematic acting through the spirit field to produce feelings, has not been developed to a level that convinces many. It is for this reason that I have argued pulse diagnosis is useful for the interpretation of the spirit field, as pulse diagnosis uses language to describe the feelings that are indications of the metaphysical actions in $Qi$. This language is possible because of the holistically monistic worldview of TCM.

In TCM there are specific pulse readings related to the informational flow of $Qi$, the interpretation of those readings offers a physical interaction with the metaphysical through the yang manifestation of $Qi$ in the meridians. This mode of diagnosis is practical, and offers an

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680 For a definitions of the religious thematic, feelings, and the spirit field refer to appendix 1.
orderly view of metaphysical action. Further, there is systematic language that is categorized as tactile feelings and emotional responses in the human being. Because of the holistically monist worldview, there is a system of analysis in place that includes metaphysical action, and language that describes this metaphysical action. While it may not be possible to conclusively and comprehensively determine what a TCM physician feels in pulse diagnosis, it is possible to demonstrate that the feeling produced by the actions of $Qi$ in the body manifest consistently across ancient methods and modern engagement.

To conclude the summary, I have worked to methodologically compare the actions of the Holy Spirit to the actions of $Qi$ with the specific goal of aiding Christian theology. I have defined the TCM view of $Qi$ in its own context, and in relation to divine action more broadly. I have presented the actions of $Qi$ in the universe in comparison to Pannenberg’s theistic cosmology. I have also displayed the actions of $Qi$ in the human body in relation to Pannenberg’s theological anthropology. Finally, I have offered a comparison of the actions of the Holy Spirit in relation to the human body through the spirit field in relation to the actions of $Qi$ in the human body. I have allowed that we may indeed view divine action in a specific manner through Pannenberg’s spirit field theory, and further, that the worldview and language of TCM pulse diagnosis may afford an appropriate, and indeed beneficial, manner in which to interpret the actions of the spirit field in the human person. As one faith tradition may inform another in perspective, I argue that the tradition of TCM may inform the current perspective of divine action in the spirit field.

Adopting a holistically monist cosmology may have dramatic consequences for the model of God seen in most classical theism. The lack of clear separation in holistic monism allows for more conversations regarding God’s immanent actions; however, it also presents significant challenges to the idea of God’s transcendent presence. This need not direct all theists
to a pantheistic worldview; however, if holistic monism gains popularity, then panentheism may indeed become the new normal in theological discourse.

### 8.1 Significance

The limits of language formed a significant barrier to discussions of divine action for Pannenberg. Pannenberg was reluctant to admit that his theory of a spirit field was simply an analogy, as he worked to create a new substantive model for understanding divine action. However, the pushback on his position was fierce. Eventually, Pannenberg wrote that the spirit field could be thought of as an analogy, but only in-so-far as field is also known as an analogy in physics. For Pannenberg, field theory in theology should be taken just as seriously as field theory in physics, the difficulty was the lack of holistically monist terminology that could adequately deal with such intricate concepts as the actions of an immanent and transcendent God.

Pannenberg sought an original mode by which to employ his discussion of physical and metaphysical interaction, just as Faraday sought to explain unseen physical action in the universe. However, Pannenberg lacked a sufficient framework for his theory, as such a theory had not existed in theology in a comprehensive manner before, and employing the structure of action at a distance from the physical sciences proved to be troublesome. Even Pannenberg’s argument that the concept of unseen action in fields was originally based in concept of *pneuma* was not sufficient to convince many incompatibilist scholars in sciences and religion. Put simply, the idea of a theological field theory that may explain metaphysical action on physical matter in an intelligible manner was not persuasive for many scholars of science or religion. This is one reason that my work may be thought of as significant. TCM provides the holistically monist worldview that may be of use in this manner of investigation, as well as the particular language
that is beneficial in explaining how the metaphysical actions of the Holy Spirit may affect physical matter in the world.

From at least the 2nd century BCE, TCM has integrated the metaphysical and physical. Metaphysical forces moved not in an unearthly way alone, but also in a mundane fashion which could be discerned and dealt with clinically. Whether it is $Qi$ associated with plants, the air, or the heavenly original $Qi$, TCM pulse diagnosis presents a manner to understand the why and how of $Qi$ interaction. There are specific categories of $Qi$ in the world which are brought into contact with the human body in a prescribed way resulting in predicable and reproducible results. Put plainly, TCM offers spirit field theory a new understanding of metaphysical phenomena that could benefit the interpretation of divine action on the human body.

8.2 Limitations

This thesis represents something new, and while that makes space for original thought it also means that there is no body of work with which this may find agreement. While there have been many comparative works dealing with $Qi$ and the Holy Spirit, often written from the position of pluralism, and some few works concerned with explaining TCM in a Christian context, there has been, to my knowledge, no other theological treatment of TCM. As such, it is incumbent upon me to put forth some possible limitations to this study. For while new approaches are exciting, and may be promising, there are also applications that may not be appropriate to the subject.

To begin, TCM is clinically systematized, and offers a worldview from which theological problems may benefit. However, TCM doctors do not concern themselves overmuch with cosmology or matters of faith. Much in the way that Western physicians focus upon biological science in order to treat disease, TCM doctors largely look to the medical science of TCM
without thought given to the formation of the cosmos. Therefore, Neo-Confucian and Daoists scholars have both claimed authority over the spiritual significance of TCM. Many Daoists indeed claim that there is no separation between TCM and Daoism. This adds a level of complexity to any use of TCM in a comparative analysis. I have been privileged to study this subject in the context of Christian theology for eight years, and so have learned how to avoid these subtle traps. However, any work that may be further done in this field would need to be researched with the most careful attention to detail.

Additionally, TCM has been an integral part of the Chinese cultural landscape for thousands of years. Therefore, there are many scholars, and lay persons, who have an opinion on how Qi may be said to exist. Further, translations of ancient texts are difficult, as the language of China has changed over the millennia, and the original manuscripts for many of the seminal texts are lost. Therefore, the normally arduous process of research is expanded by the need to check translation against translation and expert against expert to find common ground and ensure the veracity of truth claims. This again adds further complexity to any comparative analysis.

If these hurdles are managed, then TCM as a means of interpretation can be a most exciting option. However, there are theories that TCM cannot prove. I have worked in this thesis to offer that the worldview and language of TCM may be a helpful tool of interpretation. I have argued that this perspective may be beneficial to many areas of investigation in the science and religion field, and therefore in theology more broadly as well. However, there are some aspects of theological discourse for which TCM may not be helpful. As an example, TCM pulse diagnosis may not offer a perspective on the nature of God’s essence, nor indeed any fruitful perspective on the divine identity of God. As TCM is based upon a non-theistic worldview, we may only speak to the essence of God in and through God’s actions.
An additional limitation may be seen in the collection of the empirical data. While TCM is a logically organized medical science that includes metaphysical action, not all areas of action are fully provable through the observation of empirical evidence. Pulse diagnosis, as I have written, is a consistent diagnostic tool, and in many ways verifiable through bioinformatic research. However, it may not be absolutely proven what TCM physicians feel in the pulse. There are indicators that scientific apparatuses and algorithms are not able to track or interpret. These qualities may only be disclosed via human interaction. Simply, the actions of \( Qi \) in pulse diagnosis, as seen in the experiments I outlined in chapter six, may not be fully explained through the use of scientific equipment. Therefore, while we may expand certain theological theories through the worldview of TCM by offering a comparative analysis between the actions of the Holy Spirit and the actions of \( Qi \), we may not isolate the touch of the Holy Spirit by the taking of a pulse. We may come to know, or even feel, indications of the Holy Spirit’s actions on the human body; however, we cannot reduce them to a fully knowable phenomenon.

Further, I have offered that the TCM view of \( Qi \) may be appropriate and beneficial to the interpretation of spirit field theory; however, this thesis does not, of itself, offer a definitive account of God’s actions in the world. While I have worked diligently to present the TCM view of \( Qi \) in relation to the theology of Wolfhart Pannenberg, and to situate it in the science and religion discussion of divine action, there are some questions that are not addressed; specifically, those related to Christology and soteriology. More simply I do not ask the why, or for whom, question of divine action, I only address the how. This may perhaps be an option for other researchers or later projects; however, due to the impersonal nature of the \( Qi \), any investigation of this sort would be difficult.
Finally, I have offered that TCM may afford a new view of the spirit field, and that this may ultimately lead to a new understanding of divine action in science and religion. As TCM views the universe through holistic monism, it presents an attractive option for those investigating metaphysical actions in the world, although, in terms of resolving other science and religion questions, such as the causal joint problem, the holistic monism of TCM may not be the most appropriate vehicle. As TCM does not operate in a dualistic universe, there is no “meeting place” of divine and mundane because all are one. However, if one wished to offer an answer to the causal joint question in a new way, then the holistic monism of TCM in a theological work may afford the opportunity to demonstrate that there may be no need of a meeting place, as there are not two separate realities. This would however raise many questions related to the immanence and transcendence of God that would need specific treatment.

8.3 Potentiality

One arena that may benefit from further work in the theological treatment of TCM is Christian-bio-ethics. Deep ecology and other “green religions,” while combining spiritual matters to ecological concerns, do not afford a Christian, or in many cases even a theistic, point of view. Further, deep ecology offers little in the way of systematic frameworks to understand a spiritual connection to nature. A new Christian bio-ethic, incorporating Christian pneumatology through the worldview of TCM, may present a manner for humanity to apprehend their relationship to nature from a religious and scientific perspective. This is because TCM interprets metaphysical action inclusively and relationally, incorporating the whole person and the whole environment. If the TCM view of Qi is then applied as a hermeneutic lens to Christian thought on the presence of God in the world, we may the see the revelation of God’s relationship to the universe in more balanced terms, benefiting an ecological paradigm in concert with Christian theology.
This thesis may also present options for more inclusive work between science and religion and the mental health field. The various conditions of pulse, such as hurried, murky etc., describe a wealth of conditions related to the mental and physical health of the patient. These are understood in terms of relationship to time, the environment, and other people. Further, if the comparative analysis is then moved into a theological discussion, then there are opportunities for discussion of mental health and wellbeing in relation to the actions of God. This may be expanded into the sciences as well. The current work in neuroscience dealing with the feelings of transcendence may be augmented by the TCM understanding of $Qi$ in the body. Issues surrounding the “gut brain axis” and brain imaging during prayer and meditation may be more fully disclosed from a Christian perspective if the actions of $Qi$ in these scenarios is fruitfully compared to the actions of the Holy Spirit. This may offer the opportunity for religion to programmatically affect science, in that divine action in the brain may be investigated through $Qi$ and spirit field operations in relation to consciousness and feelings.

Finally, the doctrine of revelation may be impacted by further work in the comparative analysis between TCM $Qi$ and the Holy Spirit, aiding the expectations of revelation in the spirit field. Christian views of divine action, in the manner of direction through revelation or prophesying, are not always clear, although there are examples in the biblical text of just such a manner of specific revelation, such as in Genesis 12:1 “The LORD had said to Abram, “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you” (NRSV). The spirit field may not afford a way to interpret direct divine communication in this manner. However, if the movements of the Spirit are felt through the field, and these are then interpreted through the function of $Qi$ in the body, revelation of divine intent may be investigated in a new way.
Pulse conditions in TCM may indicate that a profession, relationship, or geographic location are the cause of an imbalance of Qi. More simply, Qi desires to maintain the flow of the Dao and as such offers the body directions to do so based on an individual’s personality, position, personal relationships etc. As an example, a person who is experiencing an imbalance of heart Qi may be encouraged to reconcile with someone they have had a falling out with. This is a relationship of sorts between the direction of Qi and the desires of human will, and so a person may choose not to change in this desired direction. However, if the work of Qi in the body indicates direction in life choices, there is room for discussion related to the actions of the Spirit in revelation. This may not necessarily be pointed to specific directions such as those given by God to Abraham, as TCM would not allow for a personal deity in conversation. However, if the actions of God encouraging the universe to reconcile, or the flow of the divine will, were placed in a comparative analysis with the logical direction of TCM Qi demonstrating the flow of the Dao, revelation of divine direction may be more understandable. As pulse diagnosis is particular to the individual, and can also be described by several active verbs, allowing for a many layered interpretation, there is the possibility for interpreting divine action individually for any circumstance, without a hard determinism.

Historically, TCM scholarship has been inclusive of various views. This has allowed researchers and doctors to reconcile opposing views allowing them the space to employ all available concepts. If further work is done in a comparative manner with Christian theology, then the doctrines of soteriology, Christology, and revelation may also be included, informing Christian theology, Western sciences, and perhaps perspectives in TCM as well.

8.4 Summary Comments
To speak of a manner in which the Holy Spirit’s actions may be interpreted in science and religion requires careful theology, and a nuanced approach to empirical science. It requires clear definitions and firmly supported arguments of both faith and science. \( Qi \), as defined by TCM, may afford this opportunity. \( Qi \) is defined clearly and specifically in the environment, in plants and animals, and in the human body. The way in which \( Qi \) is interpreted and understood empirically is carefully codified and scientifically tested through pulse diagnosis. There are rules and set parameters which have been developed over thousands of years. Ancient texts, clinical trials, research, and continuing practice has presented a \( Qi \) which is not an eternal mystery, but rather a present reality in which humans may participate in a measurable fashion.

The worldview employed by TCM physicians dictates that \( Qi \) is a pervasive metaphysical phenomenon that can be seen to act in the material world: the holistic monism of TCM sees the universe as one existence. This holistically monistic paradigm may be useful for science and religion in that it is not a philosophical model alone. Rather, the relationship between what are called in the Western world the immanent and the transcendent is applied in a practical manner to understand health and wellbeing. In addition to providing a beneficial worldview, TCM also provides language that is helpful in explaining phenomena that are physical, metaphysical, immanent, transcendent, active, and non-deterministically directive. More simply, the language of TCM allows for a clearer discussion of phenomena through a holistically monistic worldview that naturally includes metaphysical realities. This language may, with further engagement, be a key benefit for science and religion, as well as theology more broadly, as it provides new space for specific conversations regarding divine action.

The actions of \( Qi \) in the natural world are codified and categorized in such a way that their influence may be specifically understood. This brings a level of tangibility to \( Qi \) which is of
special benefit to the science and religion dialogue. TCM records the metaphysical actions of Qi in an empirical manner which is seen to produce observable results in the physical world. The record of this interaction displays consistency across centuries of recorded data from treatments in ancient manuscripts to the more recent remedies devised for the SARS epidemic. TCM records the material results of Qi affecting the human body in documents going back for millennia. The information gleaned from wuxing and yin yang displays the activity of the holistically monist physical and metaphysical phenomenon Qi as verifiable phenomena.

If this comprehensive data is examined theologically, the paradigm shift that may occur across many fields of inquiry could be significant. I have worked here to apply this system of ancient Chinese healing to the thought of Wolfhart Pannenberg. I have allowed that his spirit field theory may prove to be a great step in the understanding of divine action, if indeed the language and worldview applied to it is descriptive, and appropriate. Bringing together the actions of Qi in pulse diagnosis and the actions of the Spirit in spirit field theory may be the key.

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682 For a definition of wuxing and yin yang refer to appendix 1.
Appendix 1-Glossary

Archetypes. Archetypes are patterns formed of component parts. In this thesis the pattern for divine action is a composition of the various ways divine action is presented in Panneneberg’s theology. The pattern for the action of Qi is comprised from the various ways TCM presents the actions of Qi.

Bencao Gangmu (1578 CE). Chinese term for the Compendium of Materia Medica. It is a Chinese herbology volume that lists 1,892 medical prescriptions comprised of various plants, animals, minerals, and other items that may be employed in prescription medicine.

Causal Joint. In a theistic view of the God-world relationship, this is the membrane between natural and supernatural realities, the joint across which divine action may have an effect on physical reality.

Dao. The Chinese word Dao means a way or a path. In the religio-philosophic traditions of China, and TCM in particular, the Dao is the way of universe as a whole—both physical and metaphysical action in an overall pattern of active existence.

Feeling (in terms of Pannenberg’s theology). Feelings are the way in which humans participate with, and relate to, the self, the other, and to God. Feelings, both emotional and physical, characterize human life and enable us to experience the Divine Thou from which all life issues.

Field. In physics, a field is a region in space-time in which each particle experiences a force. The term ‘field’ is a metaphor for the presence and action of this force, as there is no literal field in the manner of an area of open land. Therefore, the term field lends itself to use in Pannenberg’s theology.

Gan Qi. Pulse indication of the mai that demonstrates Qi flowing from the liver.

Huangdi Neijing (ca 475-221 BCE). Chinese term for the inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor. It is a foundational Chinese medical text that is composed of 162 chapters or treatises in a question-and-answer format between the Yellow Emperor and his ministers.

Incompatibilism (with special reference to divine action theory). Incompatibilism is the school of thought which claims that deterministic laws of nature are incompatible with human free will and with divine action. This intimates that God must intervene into the fixed natural order in order to perform an action.

Ji Qi. A pulse condition wherein the Qi flow is described tactically as taut; however, it also may indicate a span of time that is brief and intense, as well as a tense state of mind.

Li. The eternal and orderly cosmic principle; it is the logical order found in the Dao.

Mai Jing (ca 1270 CE). The classic of the pulse. This is a seminal text in TCM and a foundational text for pulse diagnosis in particular.

Mai. These are the vessels, pulses, and channels through which Qi flow may be engaged with.
Monism (as it relates to this thesis). The universe wherein all phenomena are considered natural.

Pulse Diagnosis. A diagnostic technique used in Traditional Chinese Medicine to determine Qi flow in the body and to assess illness based on imbalances of said flow.

Qi. A ubiquitous, and active, eternal phenomenon that encounters and is present in all reality as a physical reality and as the function of change in the cosmos.

Religious Thematic. The theme of God which is the dynamic presence and action of God in the universe.

Spirit Field Theory. A way to describe the activity of the Spirit in creation, as the universes’ animating and unitive property, through a ubiquitous and immersive field of divine action.

Theory of correspondence. The principal that every phenomenon in the cosmos is both physical and metaphysical, and that these two aspects have a reciprocal relationship in all things.

Ti yong. Ti and yong. These are separately the Chinese terms for substance and function, respectively. Ti is used to denote the fundamental nature of a thing, while yong is the action of that thing. When employed together they depict the physical and metaphysical unity involved in the realization of a phenomenon’s essence in the world.

Tian. The Chinese term for the celestial aspect of the cosmos, often translated as "heaven." It is a key concept in Chinese mythology, philosophy, and religion and is naturalistic in nature.

Wissenschaft. The German language term for any study that involves the systematic pursuit of knowledge. The term is commonly translated as science; however, wissenschaft is a more broad term that includes all systematic areas of study, including the arts and humanities, often combining different views and methods in the scholarly pursuit of knowledge.

Wuxing. An empirical science that Traditional Chinese Medicine uses to explain cosmic cycles and the interaction between internal organs. The five phases are wood, fire, earth(soil), metal, and water. The system of five phases is used for describing interactions and relationships between phenomena.

Xian Qi. A pulse condition indicating that the Qi is straight as the quality of a string, as well as being slippery, tender, and soft, which are the qualities of the wood season of Spring.

Yin Yang. An empirical science that displays the interconnected and interdependent relationship between all things physical and metaphysical. Yin yang offers that the physical and metaphysical are interconnected, and interdependent in all things and that they give rise to each other as they interrelate to one another.

Yuan Qi. Original Qi which proceeds from the Tian and fully engages the universe providing life, warmth, thought, emotions, and mobility.

Zhen mai. The Chinese term for Pulse diagnosis. It is a method of diagnosis wherein the actions of Qi in the body are discerned through examination of the vessels, pulses, and channels.
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