

Introduction to Field- Being Philosophy

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*An Anthology of Lik Kuen Tong's
Thought*

Compiled and introduced by
Therese Dykeman, Laura Weed
and David White

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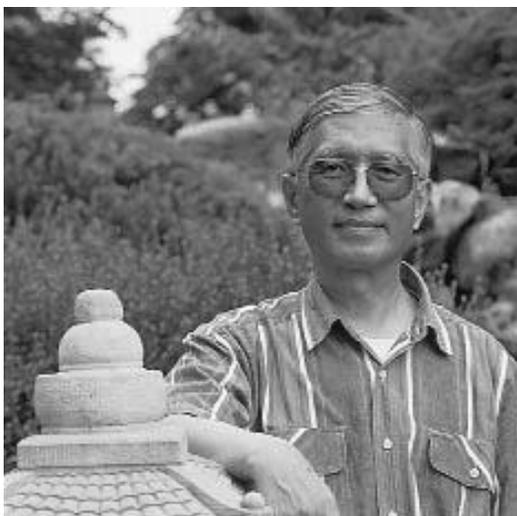
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**Dedicated to those who sustained
Lik Kuen Tong
wife Yuhou Hsia
children Celia, Thalia, and Arnold**



Lik Kuen Tong at Fairfield University



Lik Kuen Tong center at Symposia

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PREFACE

This text presents Field-Being philosophy as it was written and formulated by Professor Lik Kuen Tong and distributed to his June 6 to July 22, 2005 on-line course, entitled, Ph291 Field-Being: A Conceptuality for the Global Age and the Truth of Betweenness (In Search of the Trans-differential New Thinking at the Crossroads Between North & South, East & West). The course was established to introduce Field-Being philosophy to international students and professionals and to present them with a comprehensive but concise overview.

Professor Tong introduced the course by assuring his students that although this was a new philosophy, it was not entirely unfamiliar:

The emergence of the field concept of being and its closely allied “non-substantialistic turn” is the one common thread running through the whole spectrum of twentieth century thought. This course is an attempt to explore the multi-dimensional character of this exciting intellectual phenomenon from a global philosophical perspective, through an in-depth articulation of the basic concepts of Field-Being thinking and its application in contemporary science and philosophy.

He then defined Field-Being philosophy as it relates to both Western and Eastern ways of thinking:

In the Field-Being worldview, the universe is not a collection of substantial-monic entities, intrinsically separate and independent from one another, but a Great Flow or dynamic continuum of empowered activity and a unified field of power concrescence—a cosmic web of interconnectivity. All beings and things are power elements in the unified field or universal matrix topologically intertwined and interdependent. This dynamic and holo-eco-cosmic conception of reality is not only a basic agreement with the presuppositions of modern physics, but has received wide support from the perennial traditions of

East Asia as well as, in the West from the majority of the other strands and movements of twentieth century thought in philosophy, art, and the social sciences.

Finally, he set the important notion of Field-Being philosophy, the non-substantialistic turn, within a wider framework:

The non-substantialistic turn, which implies in essence a turning away from—and a critique of—rigid, dichotomous and bifurcational thinking inimical to the vital fluency and undivided integrity of the Free Flow, is, in various disguises...the most pervasive feature of contemporary thought as notably instantiated by such intellectual movements as Phenomenology, Existentialism, Hermeneutics, Deconstruction, Critical Philosophy, Post-modernism, Feminism, Deep Ecology, and—in particular—System and Process Philosophy.

This text, being a response to the need for accessibility to Lik Kuen Tong's Field-Being philosophy in a concise form, is long overdue. Tong had introduced his philosophy not only to his classes at Fairfield University but also to an international community through annual symposia over many years. Once Tong retired and returned to Hong Kong, he continued to meet with new and seasoned scholars to teach his philosophy, all the while preparing his works for publication. Unfortunately, a publication was accomplished only after his death. Of the seven volumes published, four are in Chinese and three in English. But, as these volumes have been published in China, it is difficult for most scholars to have ready access to them.

Field-Being is a philosophy that confronts the Western and Eastern philosophical world-views that divide the world metaphysically (ontologically and cosmically) broadly speaking as either substantial or non-substantial. Until, Field-Being philosophy was founded, there were no methods to bridge the divide. Lik Kuen Tong, however, with his notions of Field and the Non-Substantialistic Turn offered not only a new philosophical worldview but a way to bring the two concepts together.

Lik Kuen Tong discovered roots for Field-Being in singular Western philosophers and philosophies, but as well acknowledged roots in Eastern Daoist, Confucian, and Buddhist philosophy. Tong explored the concept of field that advanced through the quantum revolution in

contemporary physics. With the Newtonian concept of reality being particle based and compositional, the contemporary physics concept of reality is composed rather of gravitational fields and vibrating strings. Perhaps, field-theory will be *the* intellectual movement of the 21st century.¹

Field-Being with its concept of field is at once a philosophy that is flexible and open, for field means a field of activity rather than of things. Its conception of things and selves is as power elements—and so not as Being but as Becoming. Power elements become or are shaped relatively and from mutual influences. Field is itself activity. The activity is of appropriation, creation, and pro-creation. This activity contributes to field's dynamic nature, its togetherness and oneness. With no absolutes, activity is conceived of as activity of leveling directed toward bettering or worsening as opposed to activity of dominance, and activity of ambiguity rather than of certainty.

Field-Being philosophy provides the possibility of a different political worldview from which to understand human equality and global unity, and, too, an aesthetic conception of the world as creativity and procreative activity. It provides also an ethics derived from the forces of ego and empathy, shaped as motivations in moral action, and focused on desire and care, care for the world and others as opposed to selfishness, greed, empowerment of inflated egoistic desire.² Field-Being philosophy does not concern a religious notion of a personal God nor an indigenous cosmic God but rather a philosophical notion of a transcendental force or energy, Power of the Whole, creative and procreative, and a way to Truth and Goodness.

¹ Also engaged in field-thinking are other disciplines, such as rhetoric, elaborated in such texts as R. Scott Graham, *Where's the Rhetoric? Imagining a Unified Field*. The Ohio State UP, 2020 and in others that approach the field more indirectly, e.g. ambiance or ecological systems.

² For Lik Tong's Field-Being philosophy as it is for other philosophy such as by St. Augustine, "ontology is inseparable from psychology and ethics," 133. Field-Being ethics, also like Augustine's, focuses on Joy and Love: "Jubilation is a shout of joy; it indicates that the heart is bringing forth what defies speech....its understanding," 138-9. For Tong, love is not only what is within care and joy but what is within wonder and hope.

Carol Harrison, *Reading Augustine: On Music Sense, Affect, and Voice*, NY: Bloomsbury, 2019.

The flexible and relational nature of Field-Being offers a contrast to inflexible global worldviews of diversity and equality. Advocates of diversity point out that rigid, categorical thinking plays a role in all manner of bigotries. Rigid gender or race identities often come from false categorizations.³ Attributes of ethnic groups of people or national temperaments are often presumed erroneously as essential when the attributes are in fact circumstantial. Scholars such as Anthony Appiah have pointed out that Africa has more genetic human biological diversity than the rest of the world. The relations among and differences between the colonially determined 'races' are statistical variants, at best, and inadequate to establish the groupings determined by the grossly misrepresentative European Colonial categories. Thus, stereotypes of all kinds result from over-substantializing the fluid conditions of life. Feminist scholars have been pointing out for 50 years how damaging essentialist notions of "male" and "female" have been to all genders.

Also in biology, the presumption that there are only two genders with rigidly attached gender-roles has been shown to be a gross oversimplification by researchers from animal biologist Jaak Panksepp⁴ through the American Medical Association.⁵

In physicalist science, as well, essentialist and substantialist notions of matter, derived ultimately from Aristotle and Democritus have become problematic in the conceptualizations of quantum physics, in which matter is ambiguously a particle or a wave. Substantialist conceptions of causation, such as those of Fred Dretske⁶ or John Mackie⁷

³ For example, see *Caste*, Isabel Wilkerson, NY: Random House, 2020, *Identity and Violence*, Amartya Sen, W.W. Norton and Co., 2006, *The Lies that Bind: Rethinking Identity*, Kwame Anthony Appiah, NY: Liveright Publishing W.W. Norton, 2018, *Feminist Epistemologies*, Linda Alcoff, Elizabeth Potter, eds. Routledge, Taylor and Francis, 1993.

⁴ Jack Panksepp, *Affective Neuroscience, the Foundations of Animal and Human Emotions*, Oxford UP, 1998.

⁵ American Medical Association, *Policies on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender & Queer (LGBTQ)* issues at <https://www.ama-assn.org/delivering-care/population-care/policies-lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer-lgbtq-issues> accessed 12/28/2021

⁶ Fred Dretske "If you Can't Make One you Don't Know How it Works," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* XIX, Philosophical Naturalism, 1994, French, Ueling, and Wettstein, eds. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994: 468-482.

⁷ John L. Mackie, *The Cement of the Universe*, Clarendon: Oxford UP, 1980.

do not do an adequate job of accounting for such quantum conceptions as entanglement, both von Neumann processes, the evolution of space/time wave collapse, particle/wave duality, and the indeterminacy of location and velocity in the Heisenberg measurements.⁸ Also, the role of mind in the world is a complete mystery in materialist and substantialist notions of reality, in which all that exists is compositionally constructed from the bottom up, of agency-less atoms. The role of the observer in the Bell Experiment requires a more sophisticated view of the nature of basic reality, according to several contemporary physicists.⁹

Hence, Field-Being, with its *field* and relational notions of reality, appears to be the most intellectually sound and useful philosophy for the global world in its political and spiritual emerging. As a philosophy, Field-Being provides new foundational ways to approach global politics, diversity of religious beliefs, and the knowledge being developed in contemporary science in view of the global challenges of climate change and global challenges to medicine and other sciences. Broadly, Field-Being addresses the challenges of change itself.

⁸ See, for example, Tim Maudlin, *The Metaphysics Within Physics*, Oxford UP, 2007, and Henry P. Stapp, "Why Classical Mechanics Cannot Naturally Accommodate Consciousness, but Quantum Mechanics Can," *Psyche* 2:5:1-17 <http://psyche.csse.monash.edu.au/v2/psyche2-05stao0.html>. 1995, Henry P. Stapp, *Mind, Matter and Quantum Mechanics* 2nd ed. Berlin: Springer-Verlag, 2004.

⁹ See for example, Henry Stapp, *ibid.*, and Sunny Auyang, *Mind in Everyday Life and Cognitive Science*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2000, and *Foundations of Complex-system Theories in Economics, Evolutionary Biology, and Statistical Physics*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge UP, 1998.

BIOGRAPHY OF LIK KUEN TONG (1925-2012) FOUNDER OF FIELD-BEING PHILOSOPHY

Lik Kuen Tong “contributed immensely to contemporary Chinese philosophy” and was “an inspiration to us all,” were the words of Professor of philosophy at National Chengchi University in Taipei and the University of Toronto, Vincent Shen.¹ Having met Professor Tong at a Field-Being Symposium at Fairfield University, Rick Lewis, editor of *Philosophy Now*, characterized him as “endowed with persuasiveness, charm and considerable organizational ability.”²

Born in Hong Kong, Lik Kuen Tong took a circuitous educational route to philosophy. He attended the National Taiwan University in Taipei 1954-55 majoring in electrical engineering and the Hwa Kiu University 1955-56 majoring in economics. His BS in economics was earned at New York University in 1958. He completed his work for a Ph.D. in economics at New York University and was awarded a Research Fellow in economics at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1962-63. But having discovered that his real passion was in philosophy, Tong did not complete his dissertation in economics, and instead on a full scholarship, studied at the New School of Social Research under the Husserl phenomenologists Dorian Cairns and Aron Gurwitsch. Thus it was that Tong received his Ph.D. in philosophy in 1969. His dissertation entitled: “Context and Reality: A Critical Interpretation of Whitehead’s Philosophy of Organism” was granted the Kurt Riezler Memorial Award. Other awards ensued.³

¹ Vincent Shen “‘Interculturality’ in Lao Sze-Kwang’s and Tong Lik-Kuen’s Philosophies,” *Dao: A Journal of Comparative Philosophy* 13 (a) (June 2014): 267-272.

² Rick Lewis, “Third Symposium on Field-Being and the Non-Substantial Turn, August 12-17, 1999” *Philosophy Now*, Iss.25 (Winter 1999/2000).

³ *Notable American* 1967-77, *Community Leaders of America*, 1971, *Dictionary of International Biography* and *Directory of American Scholars*, 1974, *Outstanding Educator of America*, 1975, *Who’s Who in the East*, 1977-78.

In 1967 Professor Tong began teaching at Fairfield University in Fairfield, Connecticut where he remained for his entire teaching career in the United States of over 30 years. During this career he became a member of the American Philosophical Association (APA), American Association of Religion (AAR), International Society for Chinese Philosophy (president), Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, founder and president of International Institute of Field-Being (IIFB)1997 forward. Tong was often on the editorial board of or an advisor to *Fayan Bi-Monthly*, International Research Center of Wang Yangming Studies, *The Theory of Holographic Unity in Cosmos*, and the International Society for the I Ching. Tong was a Special Research Scholar Shanghai Sino-Western Philosophical-Cultural Research and member of the International Society for Chinese Philosophy from its inception, becoming its Executive Director. Most important to Lik Kuen Tong from 1994 forward was acting as Honorary Chief Editor of *Field-Being: The Comparison and Fusion of Chinese and Non-Chinese Philosophy*.

After Tong had turned from the study of Western philosophy to the study of Chinese philosophy, he wrote articles on Whitehead and the *Yijing* (Book of Changes) published in *The Journal of Chinese Philosophy* and in the *Proceedings of the American Catholic Philosophical Association*. Many books and contributions followed. (See Bibliography).⁴

Although completing his Ph.D. in the United States and establishing his teaching career in the United States, Tong always kept his scholarly connection with Asia at first as External Examiner for Chinese University of Hong Kong (1988-89, 1996-99), then in 1994 as lecturer, embarking on a four month lecture tour in China, and in that year forming the International Institute of Field-Being network of coordination and research centers that involved the participation of many scholars from China and across the Pacific in affiliated colleges, universities, and institutes (China, Thailand, Taiwan, Hong Kong to include California and Illinois). In that same year, he began the series aimed at being published semi-annually: *The Comparison and Fusion of Chinese and Non-Chinese Philosophy*. The

⁴ Examples: Lik KuenTong. “Act, Sign and Consciousness: Thinking along with Ricoeur” in *The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur*. Lewis Hahn, ed. Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1995.

Lik Kuen Tong. “The Art of Appropriation: Toward a Field-Being Conception of Philosophy. *Two Roads to Wisdom? Chinese and Analytic Philosophical Tradition*. Bo Mou, ed. Chicago: Open Court, 2005:57-83.

International Institute of Field-Being (IIFB) was initiated at Fairfield University in 1997, the year he introduced the first Symposium of Field-Being Philosophy. Tong also initiated Sessions on Field-Being Philosophy beginning in 1997 at the American Philosophical Association (APA) Meetings, which are intended to continue.

At the time of his death, Tong had been engaged in writing the definitive book on Field-Being philosophy. Seven of his books were published posthumously in 2016 by China's Social Science Publishing House in Beijing as a collection.

Married in July of 1969 to Yuhou Hsia, Lik Kuen Tong eventually became the father of three children, Celia, Thalia, and Arnold, and had he lived longer would have enjoyed the years with two granddaughters and a grandson. In an interview with Celia in the summer of 2021, we learned that Tong, although often preoccupied with writing, never missed having dinner with his family. Chinese was spoken in the home and English outside the home. Celia smiled as she remembered him as being an optimist in a "knowing way," believing that "things would work their way out." She greatly admired her father for being "self-taught," meaning that when he wanted to know something, like Chinese medicine for the common people, he would study it, or learn German so he could read Nietzsche. She noted that in his writing, her father was extremely concerned with using the right word. If he determined he hadn't gotten the words exactly right, he would tear up his writings, much to Celia's chagrin, especially when her mother had worked hard on getting his dictation on paper. That was before computers came to the rescue! Celia thought her father had been wise when he acknowledged his limited energy, and as much as possible outsourced setting up meetings and work attached to his travels.

After retiring from Fairfield University, Lik Kuen Tong was asked to teach at the Daoist Yuen-Yuen Institute in Hong Kong.⁵ He agreed on the condition that he would teach only Field-Being philosophy. Finding his students to be especially respectful and helpful, he enjoyed teaching there. The two years for which he had contracted extended to seven. His children were now making their own way in the world, and he was not only progressing with his writing on Field-Being philosophy but

⁵ Note: Cheng Chung-Ying, "Obituary of Lik-Kuen Tong," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* vol. 39 (3) (1 September 2012): 466-467.

was training future scholars in the subject. And so his last seven years there were happy ones. At the time of his death in 2012, weakened by illness, he was hoping to recover to finish his book on Field-Being and to send his students out into the world fully knowledgeable in Field-Being philosophy, but his heart gave out before he could fulfill those desires.

As Tong said in *Context and Reality* of Whitehead's achievements, "their author has surely done enough for one man" (155) could as well be said of Tong's achievements.

HISTORY OF FIELD-BEING PHILOSOPHY

“Field-Being could be a vital nexus point toward the integration of the sciences and humanities, the advancement of interreligious dialogue, and the resolution of global conflicts toward creativity and peace.”¹

Lik Kuen Tong’s founding of Field-Being Philosophy, led him to be characterized as an “important Chinese scholar-philosopher.”² The inspiration for Field-Being philosophy came primarily from Tong’s study of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) at the New School for Social Research in New York City. But Field-Being philosophy came into being as a result of Professor Tong’s interests in both Eastern and Western philosophy, his fascination with works of modern physics that were based on the notion of “field,” and philosophy that upheld the ontological concept of Becoming rather than Being. For twenty years, Tong worked out the notion of a philosophy of field and being that would link Eastern and Western philosophy with a concept of field that meant non-substantial becoming. Articulating the new theory of Field-Being necessitated the inventing of a new vocabulary. As all cultures are envisioned through language, each philosophy must as well be envisioned with particular linguistic articulation.

Tong had the foresight to found a philosophy fit for a changing world, a global world, and a world that would bring Eastern and Western thinking necessarily in communication as never before. While formulating his philosophy in the 1970’s and 80’s, Tong was ready to send it into the world in the 1990’s. In 1995 a special issue of *The Journal of Philosophy* published in Taiwan was devoted to Field-Being. In 1996, after a lecture tour in China in the mid 1990’s, Professor Tong founded the International Institute of Field-Being, eventually, a non-profit, research-oriented educational association with headquarters at Fairfield University. The institute was

¹ Marybeth Christie, “Home of an Intellectual Movement?” *Fairfield Now* (Spring 2001): 25. An interview with Lik Kuen Tong and his colleagues.

² Cheng Chung-Ying, “Obituary of Lik-Kuen Tong,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* vol. 39 (3) (1 September 2012): 466-467.

established at Fairfield University in 1997 to promote studies and research in Field-Being philosophy and non-substantialist thought in the English speaking world. Beginning in that year, the “prestigious think-tank” hosted four symposia at the University.³ In subsequent years, the annual symposium was then hosted at universities in the United States and in various countries throughout the world.

Attending the 1999 Third Symposium editor Rick Lewis and his wife Anja Steinbauer, remarked in *Philosophy Now*, that not many events bring together Buddhists, Daoists, Jesuits and Whitehead. Tong’s view, Rick said in his article, was that Field-Being would become an “international philosophical movement.” He concluded that it was a “remarkably friendly conference all round.” But he was left with the impression that the philosophy of Field-Being needs “a lot more clarification” a task, Tong was engaged in for the rest of his life. Among the sixty or so attendees were also the eminent editor of *Library of Living Philosophy*, 90 year old Professor Lewis Hahn, and Professor Kenneth Inada who delivered a memorable paper on “Field-Being and the Possibility of a Universal Ethics.”

At the 2000 Fourth Symposium of Field-Being at Fairfield University there were 73 professors, some from as far distant as China, India, Taiwan, and Slovenia. The Field-Being Symposia over the years also brought professors from cross disciplinary fields, e.g. philosophy, economics, business, education, physics, religion, and art. In an interview, Silja Graupe, author of *The Basho of Economics: An Intercultural Dialogue on the Process of Economics* (De Gruyter, 2007), explained why Field-Being philosophy is important to the discipline of economics.⁴ Years later, Therese Dykeman explained rhetoric as Field-Being in her *Rhetoric at the Non-Substantialistic Turn: The East-West Coin*. (Lexington, 2018)

Professors arrived from the US, Canada, England, Germany, Finland, South Korea, and so forth. The Symposia were also held at St. John Fisher University in Rochester NY, in Canada, Hong-Kong, Istanbul, Turkey, Jiao Tong University in Xian. The eleventh symposium was held at the Yuen-Yuen Institute in Hong Kong in 2009.

³ Christie, 24.

⁴ “Reshaping Economics,” Journal edited by Tong Wai Hop and published by The Society for Daoist Field-Being: Hong Kong, 2008: 20-22. In this interview Silja Graupe explains that she shared an interest in economics with Lik Kuen Tong and an interest in Japanese as well as Chinese philosophy.

The discussions during these days of Field-Being meetings were vigorous. Not only did the attendees comment on the papers presented, but they questioned presenters and esteemed scholars who attended as well. Discussions at sessions roamed over how to re-interpret a certain text, how to open the minds of students in a different way, how Field-Being philosophy could be incorporated into various disciplines, how learning a different way to think affected personal growth as a scholar. Always the presentation by Professor Tong would be listened to with great interest. Afterwards he would be thronged by attendees with arguments and questions.

In addition to introducing global symposia, Tong founded the online journal of Field-Being: *Uroboros, the International Journal for Field-Being*. Since his death, APA Field-Being Sessions have continued.

Field-Being philosophy is not only of its time but of future. Many of its ideas remain for present and future scholars to reflect and comment upon as they study Tong's theory in itself and as it meets with other new theory. Field-Being philosophy by its nature contributes to future by ameliorating global preoccupation with isolation and short term planning and to offer instead long term, interconnected, future oriented planning, and as well, education for "life as a whole," an interest of German Amalia Holst 1758-1829, if not before her, a goal that continues to elude. Certainly the history of philosophy would be amiss if Field-Being philosophy were not included.

INTRODUCTION: NATURE AND SCOPE OF FIELD-BEING PHILOSOPHY

1. A New Philosophy for a Changed World

That the twenty-first century world is engaged in monumental shifting is apparent. Consequently, this means that it has need for a philosophy that embraces a new conception of the world. Change is taking place at such a pace, that certain philosophical issues are left behind. Ethics involved in space travel, technological advances in communication, and climate change remedies and results, such as starvation, has not caught up. Destabilization has forced citizens of the world to re-evaluate who we are and what our relationship is to earth, space, and to each other. The primal urge for many is to resist, to deny these changes are happening, and so to cling to the familiar past. Others are searching for a better conceptual foundation to know where to take the next step and to know what these changes mean in themselves and for individual persons.

Fortunately a new philosophical foundation is offered by what has been termed Field-Being philosophy. Just as Aristotle's is not the only Western philosophy, this philosophy will not be the only new philosophy, but at this moment in time, it is an important one. With great prescience, Lik Kuen Tong, recognized the need as it was coming, and as it would be ongoing. Having the benefit of seeing the world through both Eastern and Western philosophy, Tong met this 21st century global need by founding a philosophy that would open the world to difference and sameness in a new way.

Western philosophy focuses ontologically on Being, i.e. on a universe of individual things and persons. Such a way of looking at the world will never not be necessary and important. However, it is not the only way of looking at the universe. Eastern philosophy focuses ontologically on a universe of relationship and non-Being rather than on things. Both fall short for understanding and coping with the current rapid

tide of change. While the world has been formed into nations on every continent, making treaties and wars, one nation with another, and sometimes within nations, such a way of existing has been disrupted. The business of nations has become overlaid with global exigencies and priorities. Issues of communication, economics, infrastructure, climate, and pandemics have global implication.

The notion of a universe of wholes and parts does not tell the whole story, nor does a universe of illusion, or non-Being from Western and Eastern philosophical positions. Nor does either one confront a world engaged in global activity. As quantum physics has pointed out physical field as a concept made scientific sense in view of new information, Field-Being has pointed out philosophical field as a concept which makes global sense in view of global change. Seen as field, the universe is all one, all activity, all relationship, but also seen as field, a composition of *what* of field and in field that is in flux, changing, and Becoming, what Tong calls power elements ever in flux. In that a moment is at once past and future, so a thing is at once no-thing in its activity or evolution. This Being/Becoming activity occurs at what Tong has coined the Non-Substantialistic Turn.

To understand Non-Substantialistic Turn, one must understand Western “thing” and Eastern “non-thing” as well as the notion of philosophical field. In order to fully understand what these concepts mean one is required to acquire a new vocabulary. Language and rhetoric, which express Western ways of thinking and being in the world, contrast with language and rhetoric which express Eastern ways of thinking and being in the world. As another way to express thinking and being in the world, Field-Being philosophy requires its own language. Because Field-Being’s philosophical principles are created, it is humanist rhetoric; insofar as Field-Being’s principles are logically constructed, it is philosophy, i.e. an Eastern/Western, substantial/non-substantial ontology and metaphysics.

Being more than the primordality of yin/yang way of thinking, and more than the primordality of isolation, hierarchy, and inflexibility kind of thinking, Field-Being promotes a theory of *us*, an *us* in global non-hierarchical and flexible relationship in terms of geography and humanity, human politics, economics, and intellectual and artistic achievement. For being of and in Field, all in the universe is activity and for all that exists and for all who live on this planet in this particular space in the fullness of the universe, all is yet Oneness.

2. Field-Being Philosophy: Nature and Scope

Often with what may seem like contradictory statements, Lik Kuen Tong, explains the nature of Field-Being philosophy as deeply ontological and metaphysical. He clarifies its scope as being wide enough for a global world. Not a reiteration of Daoism nor a *total* repudiation of Western philosophy. Rather Field-Being is a philosophy which incorporates both in its terminology and in its distinctions. Tong explained, that “‘Things’ are merely the individual power centers of activity.”¹

“Activity is always activity under conditions. This conditional matrix is the Field of its Field-Being. Thus Being and Field are two sides of the same underlying reality. Since there is nothing-outside the movement of Activity, the Field of Being is not external to Being. Indeed, in the final analysis, Field is Being, and Being is Field.”²

Field-Being philosophy demands that one experiences the world, not as individual thing but as of and in field, and thus as relational. A tree is not an individual thing—it is a relational field- endowed power with a root system that communicates to other trees; it is related to people and a lawn or roadside with its shade. A person is born related to other persons, to a political and geographical place, to a particular time, to things and institutions; a coin comes into existence in relationship to persons and machines, to economy and nationalism, and becomes more and more related to pockets, hands, drawers, banks, etc. Each entity is always in relation to and ever meaning more or less, existing as growing or diminishing or worsening or aging. Such a view of the universe has consequences in human thinking and acting. Thus it is the nature of Field-Being philosophy to influence humankind and its experience of relation to the world, the universe.

Field-Being philosophy approaches with field-thinking, the width of philosophical issues be they ethical, political, social, aesthetic, or metaphysical. Thus its scope is intellectually wide in regard to the liberal arts and as well to science by reinforcing current ideas or nudging new

¹ “Reshaping Economics,” Silja Graupe Interview.

² Rick Lewis, “Third Symposium on Field-Being and the Non-Substantial Turn,” August 12-17, 1999 *Philosophy Now*, iss.25 (Winter 1999/2000).

ideas into form. In fact, Field-Being philosophy is capable of reforming every discipline.

The texts included here are not the whole of Lik Kuen Tong's philosophy, but they encompass a concise nucleus of his philosophy and provide a foundation for further reading of Tong's theory, which includes published articles, e.g. on the concept of "appropriation" and chapters in his volumes published in China on ethics and aesthetics, etc.³

3. Overview of Individual Texts that Introduce Field-Being Philosophy

1) *Field-Being and the Non-Substantialistic Turn*: Tong explains that deeper in reality than the linguistic turn is the Non-Substantialistic Turn which defines the theoretical perspective of Field-Being philosophy. In this philosophy the universe is a process of becoming which means its substrate is ever changing, nothing exists without reference, and all emergence is of and in field. "Field-thinking" sees "things" as mental constructs for the purpose of "simplification or expedience" necessitated for human "survival and control." The field-becoming concept, Tong points out, was held by precursors in science and in particular by philosophers.

2) *The Third Eye of Field-Being: A Poem*: The precursor to this poem was Tong's long 1969 poem, "The Word," in which he celebrated the word, "Speech within Silence," and "Speech...Between Life and Song," feeling the pain and joy, eternal oneness, "I think therefore I am...I am not." Tong more fully developed his ideas of Field-Being philosophy in "The Third Eye." Here he articulates the spirit and main tenets of Field-Being philosophy by demonstrating its openness and its characteristics through poetic devices. Using the iconic notions of the uroboros, taiji, and dance, Tong clarifies Oneness, square-rounded Truth, and trans-differentality. The notions of abiding mystery and of the oxymoronic nature of freedom and bonding, togetherness and severing, love and logic are playfully reiterated in relation to feelings, in addition to

³ Note: Bo Mou, "The Art of Appropriation: Toward a Field-Being Conception of Philosophy. *Two Roads to Wisdom? Chinese and Analytic Philosophical Tradition*, Chicago: Open Court, 2005:57-83.

the making of self, soul as force, and the meaning of Let-Be. The Third Eye in the Field-Being taiji represents the Middle Way, optimum creativity, and openness: “There can be no field without Being yet field is Becoming.”

3) *Field-Being Philosophy: A Thematic Outline*

1. Introduction: Philosophy and the Unfolding Metaphysics and Meta-aesthetics explain the Field-Being standpoint: that all philosophies presuppose Unfolding through which it is both revealed and concealed. Metaphysics attempts to fathom the depth of reality in the Unfolding and so offers a perspective of the Unfolding. Philosophy is a worldly unfoldment of the Let-Be; it is a form of life, a vital strand of empowered activity, and secondarily a conceptual system. The supreme principle of life is appropriation—the making of assimilations, adaptations, and adjustments to their environment in the interest of survival and growth and in search of the pivotal satisfaction of inner love. Love is a vital impetus toward appropriation. The art of appropriation begins at the moment when life transinitely begins. Genuine philosophical wisdom manifests itself at the limits of appropriation.

2. The Dynamic Plenum: The Unfolding of Empowered Activity In the Openness of Truth explains that the world is not a collection of substantial entities as in traditional Western metaphysics. Rather the world is a plenum, a dynamic continuum. To exist is to be a “being in the field.” Through self-presenting and self-revelation, and through reality and mode of experience in the dynamic field, Truth is unfolded. Truth implies perspectivity. The openness of Truth is in the inner space between power elements.

3. The Analytics of Empowered Activity (I): By “analytics” Tong means principles. Power and Power Elements: What is a Thing? –Every “thing” in the world is clarified as existing as a power element. The root of experience is power and its effects. Power produces its effects by activity. All is empowered activity, and the flowing movement of power, activity and effect, is engaged in a process of becoming. Life forms begin with emergence of vital strands of appropriation and karmic matter, discipline and art, in a transfinite union.

4. The Analytics of Empowered Activity (II): The Life-drama: Metaphor of the Awesome Fabric, a fine, supple fabric, that is “capable of generating out of itself” its energy, quality, form, structure, etc. is a metaphor for the Field of Field-Being. Everything which can be

imagined is an “articulated expression” or manifestation of its awesome creativity. Another name for the Awesome Fabric is “dynamic plenum” and another definition is “Reality of Real and quintessential basis of everything.” This makes Field-Being a quintessential discipline, defined as a relation between the Real, the Truth, and the Good, and constituted in three realms: the transcendental of Pure Vitality or Actual Indifference, the Primordial out of which arises laws of nature, and the Phenomenal, physical energy, the dissipation of which arises from accumulated effects of energy.

5. The Analytics of Empowered Activity (III): Vibratory Essence and Topological Situation: The Self-appropriation of Power is explicated: The inner dynamics of internal reflexivity in appropriation is what determines the vibratory power of procreation. A concrete example might be a string or rubber band in its reflexivity to flex, fold, or enfold. The pattern or form it articulates is the outward form of reflexion. The Field-Being concept of vibratory essence is thus the internal relation between reflexion and articulation. This is in other words the dynamics of appropriation. Life is appropriation and so configures the vibratory essence of power. Topology is the branch of mathematics that deals with the transformation of flexible things like rubber bands. A vital strand depends on both vibratory essence and “topos” or topological situation, meaning the way power is distributed. And so as power elements we experience the world through our “topological occupation in the universe.” Our functioning is intertwined with others and that interconnectedness is termed “trans-differentiation.” The apparent stability of matter is in reality the inner dynamism of power concrescence, affluence of procreativity of the procuracy of vibratory essence.

6. The Analytics of Empowered Activity (IV): Diremptions or Procreative Events: The Self-definition of Power Concrescence—The process of becoming procreative events is called power concrescence. In these events or processes of becoming, a power concrescence comes to define itself. A diremption is power activity in which separation occurs, the effects of which are completed by means of procreated power embedded in various vital strands. Power elements come together in power concrescences according to each dynamic constitution. So in every diremptive process is also a cocoonization of power concrescence through interaction of the power elements.

Each power element is a field and so has a field of influence, and so interactions are interactions of fields. By way of the interaction the powers become “concentrated into a unified quantum of procreative vitality required for joint achievement.” The real potentiality resides in the inner space of power elements or the betweenness of things or the openness of dynamic plenum. In the procreative process, the dissipation and appropriation involved derive from the Let-Be, the universal matrix of procreative power from the field. And so in process vibrant subjectivity passes into objective immortality.

7. The Analytics of Empowered Activity (V): Articulate Togetherness: The Logic of Interface—All things and elements are in togetherness and the *way* things are together is called interface, the logic of interface being the logic of Field-Being. In Field-Being as each thing in the universe is a power element in the dynamic plenum, the Logic of Interface is broadly the logic of power concrescence, the articulate togetherness being brought about by the Power of the Whole. Every articulate togetherness, having its own “interfacial wholes” and being multi-layered, dimensional, and perspectival, is “multi facially interfaced.” Thus, a thing as Field-Being individual is as the “profile-complexity” that binds all things in their “multi-facial articulate togetherness or interfaciality.” The underlying principle is the procreative power, and is derived from the Power of the Whole, holistic and trans-differentially ultimate and universal.

8. The Analytics of Empowered Activity (VI): The Power of the Whole: The Radical Nothing, The Let-Be, and the Trans-differential—Designating the Power of the Whole or underlying reality are three names that present differing emphasis and connotation [e.g., the body exhibits the power of a limited whole]. The three names: The Radical Nothing, The Let-Be, and Trans-differential articulate the Power of the Whole as absolute suppleness [reflexive flexibility]. The Let-Be is named as source, being one with potentialities [many], and trans-differential is named as awesome interface or principle of ultimate unity [one] from dynamic plenum through the unreason of betweenness.

9. The Analytics of Empowered Activity (VII): Self-perpetuation and Self-transcendence: The Ego Principle and the Field Principle—The Ego Principle is the Principle of Individuality. Incarnated in a life from vital strands, it becomes the impetus of self-perpetuation underlying the ego center of the transfinite subject. Opposed to the Ego

Principle, the Field Principle operates cosmologically as the Principle of Transcendence in the dynamic plenum. When incocoonated in life form (vital strand), it constitutes a Self, a center of openness defined by a will towards self-transcendent procreativity. The ego center is formed from a vital strand and aims to cohere and be free. An incocoonate of Field Principle, it is motivated by care and desire.

Like the Field Principle, the Ego Principle pertains to the holistic power in relation to self-definition of transfinite subjects. The Field Principle is the Force that extends the power of the Whole, the holistic Power. It is conceived as both transcendent and immanent in the transfinite subjectivity of all worldly existents. And it reorients the movement along the “Ladder of the Soul” defined in Field-Being as the ascendance of transfinite subjectivity from the lower to the higher forms of Care and Desire, which become one with One and with each other at the highest point. The elliptic ego, collapses into the central integrity of the pivotal self and into transcendental fulfillment of undivided wholeness.

4) *In Search of the Quintessential: Towards a Field-Being Hermeneutics/Part I The Power Thesis: Quintessentiality and Transfinite Subjectivity* defines the relationship between the Good, the real, and knowing. First, Quintessential means in the Greek sense, what is above and beyond the four elements: in Field-Being it means the highest, the most Real. As the basis of the Good, it resides in all things and in the betweenness and mutuality of the real and the good. The good is the excellence of the Real. So the questions become, what is real? what is good? and how does the real constitute the basis of the good? The answers are found through Quintessential Hermeneutics, a form of dao-learning, which involves interpretation of experience and reflection. While the ontic self is concerned with the integral reality of a thing, the empirical ego is concerned with its abiding ownness, both, being emergent and dynamic power centers and activities, power meaning what it does and what it can do.

Non-living and living “things” exist as field, field meaning a dynamic plenum originating power elements and in which the relation between pure vitality and karmic matter relate as “transfinite.” The Good, or excellence of the Real, means being of empowered activity and of transfinite subjectivity, that is, of living and non-living field emergences.

5) *Field-Being and the Non-Substantialist Turn—Towards a Conceptuality for the Global Age—* is a global philosophy because its

concepts of field and becoming engage in oneness. In Field-Being philosophy the World is not a collection of substantial entities, nor is it a totality of facts, beings, or things because definite, divisible wholes and isolated, mutually external individuals refuse to be objectified. Rather all the World is field-being and its emergences exist in reference to each other. Such a Field conception of a global universe is not new to a number of twentieth century philosophers, nor is the notion of the Non-Substantialistic Turn which has threaded through various theories of physics. This notion of the Non-Substantialistic Turn in particular bears upon the future of philosophy and East–West dialogue.

6) *Substantialism*: Being the way of entivity, Substantialism is differentiated as both dogmatic and pragmatic. It is explained in contrast to Non-Substantialism and in terms of entivity, the extremes that lead to domination and solidarity, nihilistic emptiness that leads to negation of entivity, that contrast to the Middle Way of trans-differentiation and hermeneutic interplay of Substantialism and Non-Substantialism.

7) *The Field-Being Vision and the Field Principle: What is Distinctive About Field-Being Philosophy?* In opposition to a rigidized culture in which things tend toward “objectification and externalization,” Field-Being’s vision is one of fluency. Tong uses the metaphor of *awesome fabric* to describe the concept of Field-Being quintessential activity, a continuum and unified field of power concrescence. As language is derived from the principle of Field-Being, it is differentiated from the language of substantialist theory. The vocabulary of language as empowered activity pertains to “any mode of thought and practice.” The Field-Being principle is the Truth, meaning an “inner-truth perspective.” The “forces of inner love” concern the ego principle in care and desire. The concerns of self involve limitation and transcendence. The term Zen refers to existence in touch with absolute fluency, and Management refers to appropriation and transformation, and to the defining of the meaning of spirituality that Field-Being manifests.

8) *Management: The Field-Being Approach*: The goal of Management, defined as both discipline, or conformal repetition, and art, or creative intervention, is the Good or rounded perfection. To achieve this goal requires apperceptive intelligence in a vital effort of the spirit.

9) *Field-Being Meditations*: The purpose of Meditation, being an exercise in attempting to “acquire an apperceptive grasp of an intellectual problem,” is to enlist apperceptive power to make greater