PHILOSOPHERS OF THE WARRING STATES

A Sourcebook in Chinese Philosophy

TRANSLATED WITH
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Preface

In recent years the academic discipline of philosophy has begun expanding its boundaries at an accelerating pace, and the number of courses in philosophical traditions outside the 'West' continues to increase. This anthology of early Chinese philosophy is an attempt to help meet some of the needs of this expansion, as philosophy professors seek texts that will enable them to make the rich traditions of Chinese philosophical thought accessible to Western students.

Ivanhoe and Van Norden's *Readings in Classical Chinese Philosophy* has provided an excellent sourcebook of contemporary translations of essential texts. But the editors explicitly disavow the role of providing a "philosophical primer" with introductions and interpretations. The purpose of our anthology, however, is precisely to provide such a primer with introductions and extensive explanatory *philosophical* commentaries throughout the text. We do not think that ancient texts are monoliths with fixed meanings that can simply and straightforwardly be 'translated' into modern English. Indeed, our goal is to provide a structured guide to *actively interpreting* ancient Chinese philosophical texts, not only for the student, but also for the professor of philosophy (who may or may not have expertise in Chinese language or philosophy).

In this, we are deeply influenced by the hermeneutics of Hans-Georg Gadamer. Readers familiar with the work of Roger Ames will recognize that we are also influenced by his advice and his methodology, though we are not dogmatic adherents, and do not always draw the same conclusions. Reading Chinese philosophy from a Western perspective is a comparative 'hermeneutic' project: that is, a living interaction between cultural traditions that involves interpreting one culture from the perspective of another: merging disparate cultural and linguistic threads, strands, currents, and streams, placing them side by side, interweaving them, kneading them together where they blend, and teasing them gently apart where they resist. The goal of this ongoing and ever-unfinished interpretive practice is to *learn how* to better interpret these ancient texts, to allow their more hidden significances to continue to emerge and unfold. We invite students to participate in this interpretive project, using as guidance the introductions, commentaries, and explanations of key philosophical terms that we provide.

The introductory chapter provides a small amount of historical background; this will also help make sense of the early texts as they sometimes make reference to these historical figures and events in developing their arguments. Further detail is presented where necessary in

the comments in each chapter. The philosophical overview attempts to show that there is an organic coherence to the development of the various philosophical views that arose in response to these historical conditions.

Chapter 2 provides a detailed glossary of the essential philosophical concepts of early Chinese philosophy. Chinese philosophical concepts do not match neatly with Western philosophical concepts, and so the possibility for misunderstanding and inappropriate imposition of concepts is great. To read ancient Chinese texts responsibly, the reader must be vigilant not to *presuppose* the universality of concepts they find most intuitive. The reader should therefore spend some time with this chapter, noting important concepts and how they interrelate. Those who are familiar with Western philosophy should be on the lookout for where there may be differences in significance between terms that might appear superficially similar. There is, of course, a huge amount of material in the glossary that cannot be fully understood on first reading. But the student will be better placed to understand the texts and concepts that arise in the texts if they make some attempt to familiarize themselves with some basic concepts first. We have identified these fundamental concepts with an asterisk. The reader should continue to refer to explanations in the "Key Philosophical Terms" chapter when encountering them in the texts until the concepts become familiar.

We've selected essential chapters and passages from the nine most influential texts of early Chinese philosophy, beginning just before the 'official' start of the Warring States period, and ending just after. The evocative title of this anthology should not mislead readers into assuming that the texts were written as complete documents within the official dates of this period. Confucius, for example, was born much earlier, and the syncretistic imperialists recorded in the *Zhuang Zi* wrote much later. But all their writing was influenced, directly or indirectly, by this historical and cultural context. We have made generous selections of the most important chapters, and other relevant passages. The seasoned reader will notice that we have not followed traditional chapter structure. The original texts were written and compiled in a non-thematic, holistic style that tends to make them less accessible to students from cultural contexts outside of China. First-time readers often complain this creates an obstacle to understanding and appreciation of the philosophical content of the texts. This also tends to be a problem for professors who need to introduce the material in an orderly way, within the course of a single semester. We have therefore taken the liberty of arranging the texts thematically. Traditionalists might at first find this a little jarring, but we intend it as a 'skilful means' to enable the professor to introduce the novice to the complexities of early Chinese philosophy as efficiently as possible. We believe that even the most experienced of traditional teachers will warm to this arrangement as it quickly yields its pedagogical benefits.

Each chapter begins with an overall introduction to the text and its philosophy. Some chapters also have introductions to thematic subsections,

where the complexity of content makes this necessary. The texts are interspersed liberally with comments that highlight concepts of particular philosophical significance. We draw out their implications, offer philosophical interpretations—our own and those of other scholars—and, where relevant, note how the discussions relate to the philosophical claims of other texts in the anthology. Since the purpose of this text is to provide modern interpretations to bring Chinese and Western philosophies into closer dialogue, we do not translate traditional commentaries, though we do make reference to traditional interpretations that contribute to this contemporary discourse.

ORDER OF STUDY

While Chinese philosophical texts are usually studied chronologically, we do not believe that this is the best way to make the ideas accessible to a novice audience. We suggest beginning the class with the "Fundamentals of Legalism" section of the *Han Fei Zi*. This presents the basic ideas behind ruling by laws and punishments. Although the text was written late, it encodes ideas that predate other thinkers, perhaps even by millennia. The reader can then begin studying the *Da Xue* ("Expansive Learning"), which provides an excellent introduction to the politics of ruling by virtue, the Confucian alternative to the legalist realpolitik of rule by law. Since a fuller appreciation of the *Analects* presupposes an already existing familiarity with Confucian concepts, we suggest returning to the *Analects* after reading the *Meng Zi* and the *Xun Zi*. Finally, we recommend revisiting the Mystical Imperialism strand of the *Zhuang Zi* after studying the rest of the *Han Fei Zi*, at the end of the course.

QUOTATION-MARK CONVENTIONS

We use double quotation marks ("*x*") to name texts, to refer to words, and to mention translations into English. For example: "*yi*" has been translated as "rightness." We use single quotation marks ('*x*') for more subtle purposes: to refer to concepts, to give meanings of terms (when not intended as straightforward translation equivalents), and to highlight unusual senses of words while using them. For example: "*yi*" has a sense of 'being right and fitting,' and can express the sense of one's highest 'ideals.' The terms in single quotation marks are not being used as translation equivalents, but are explicating the sense of the Chinese term, while being used in their English senses (and not just mentioned as words).

ELLIPSES

Missing text is indicated with ellipses in brackets: "[…]." Literary ellipses to indicate pauses or lists implied in the text, but where no text is actually missing, are indicated without brackets: "…."

GENDER-NEUTRAL LANGUAGE

While early Chinese texts were written in a patriarchal culture, the concepts need not be interpreted in a patriarchal way for contemporary philosophical purposes. However, where the original texts clearly make historical reference to gendered roles, we preserve these meanings. But where the ideas concern ideals that need not be gendered, we have attempted to make the language gender-neutral as much as possible. We have therefore, sometimes made use of the 'singular "they"' to facilitate this.

BINOMES

We believe that the current convention of using binomes (disyllabic single words: Laozi, Zhuangzi, Kongzi, etc.) for the names of philosophers is misleading and unfortunate. In modern Mandarin, *"kongzi"* means "space," *"laozi"* means "father" (and can be a colloquial way of referring to yourself), *"zhuangzi"* can mean "village" or "stump." This strikes us as quite inappropriate. In fact, these names are honorifics with the word "Zi" functioning as a title. "Kong Zi" means "Master Kong," and "Zhuang Zi" means "Master Zhuang." We therefore present their names as full titles with honorifics: the "Zi" should be pronounced as a separate syllable with its own emphasis.

  The modern convention is also to present many early Chinese concepts as binomes: *"tianming,"* and *"wuwei,"* for example. Though these terms eventually became single words, as they are in modern Mandarin, they were not single words in Zhou dynasty Chinese, but were two-word phrases. We therefore write them as phrases: *"tian ming,"* and *"wu wei."* We make exceptions for reflexives (which have the prefix *"zi"*), and simple negations (with the prefix *"bu"*).

ANCIENT CHINESE MEASURES

Ancient Chinese measures were neither exact nor standardized (until the Qin dynasty), and do not correspond closely with modern Western measures. A *li*, for example, is a flexible measure, perhaps the distance you could cover in 5 or 10 minutes walking: one *li* uphill would be much shorter than one *li* downhill. In philosophical texts their purpose is to evoke approximate and relative size or distance; and context is usually sufficient to follow the philosophical argument. We have usually chosen to render these terms using 'imperial' measures ("foot," "mile," "inch," "stone," "fathom," and "league," for example), though these should be understood in their ancient and less precise senses. In some cases, we have left the Chinese measure untranslated as the context seems clear enough to give a general impression of the size intended.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Bibliography aims to be as useful as possible. It lists not only works cited, but also extensive materials for students who would like to further their study of ancient Chinese philosophy.

AUTHORSHIP

Kurtis Hagen translated the *Da Xue, Analects, Meng Zi, Xun Zi, Zhong Yong*, and most of the *Han Fei Zi*. Steve Coutinho translated the *Mo Zi, Lao Zi, Zhuang Zi,* and Chapter 6 of the *Han Fei Zi*. Although we each remain responsible for our translations of these texts, we had editorial input into each other's translations. We co-wrote the Introduction and "Key Philosophical Terms" chapters. Where we share opinions and recommendations we refer to ourselves in the plural. In other places, we make individual comments in the first person with our initials in parentheses for clarification (KH) or (SC).

Acknowledgments

1

Introduction

To understand China (*Zhongguo* 中國) we must understand not only its present, but its past; and not only its history, but its philosophy. China has always understood itself in terms of its philosophical history, tracing its self-understanding back to the philosophical reflections recorded in the ancient texts of the Zhou dynasty.

Philosophical thinking began to flourish in China about 2,500 years ago, during a period of high culture and civil unrest known as the Warring States period of the Eastern Zhou dynasty. But at that time, there was no single country of 'China.' The central plains surrounding the Yellow River basin consisted of many 'states' (*guo* 國), the size of small European countries. Zhou, Zheng, and Song were in the center, Jin in the north, Qin in the west, Lu and Qi in the east, and Chu in the south, and many other smaller states throughout the region. Like their counterparts in Europe, while they shared much in common there were also regional differences that manifested in cuisine, style of dress, customs, and linguistic dialect. Differences in culture were looked down on: those furthest away from the central states (*zhong guo* 中國) were considered most 'barbaric' by those living in the 'center.' The states, however, coexisted under dynastic rule. The earliest named dynasty is the Xia, which lasted from approximately 2100 BCE to 1600 BCE. The Shang is the earliest for which we have reliable historical records. It was founded in 1600 BCE and lasted till 1046 BCE, when it was defeated by the state of Zhou.

The Zhou dynasty was founded by King Wen, his brother, the Duke of Zhou, and his son, King Wu. It was King Wu who led the decisive battle that had defeated the Shang dynasty, which was said to have become corrupt after ruling for 550 years. They took their victory as indicating that they had received the command (*ming* 命) to rule from *Tian* (天 the Heavens, the Cosmos). But they had also adopted and developed much of the culture of the previous Shang rulers. In 771 BCE western tribes attacked the Zhou, and forced the rulers to move their capital to the east. Thus, 771 BCE marks the division between the 'Western Zhou' and the 'Eastern Zhou.'

The first part of the Eastern Zhou is known as the "Spring and Autumn" period (771–476 BCE). During this time the culture of the ruling house of Zhou flourished. The ruling aristocracy devoted themselves to the practice of archery, charioteering, mathematics, and calligraphy. Scribes devoted

themselves to the preservation and transmission of ancient classical texts including the *Shu Jing* (The Book of History), and the *Shi Jing* (a collection of ancient poetry). Classes of teachers and scholars, known as the "Ru," studied the carefully preserved accounts of the origins of dynasties, their values, and the exploits of their heroes and villains. Over the centuries, the authority of the house of Zhou began to dwindle as battles began to increase between states, and the entire region became increasingly volatile. Although political instability began much earlier, the traditional starting date of the Warring States is given as the year 475 BCE.[1] The house of Zhou fell in 256 BCE, and the Warring States came to a brutal end after the defeat of the great southern state of Chu in 223 BCE, with the fall of the state of Qi and the founding of the Qin dynasty by the first emperor, Qin Shi Huang Di, in 221 BCE.

It was in this historical context of warring states, which began well before the period known officially as the "Warring States," that the scholars and teachers studying the histories and observing the behavior of those around them began to reflect philosophically. This has traditionally been referred to as the period of the "Hundred Schools" of philosophical thought. The Grand Historian of the Han dynasty, Sima Tan, classified the various thinkers under six broad categories, which he referred to as "jia" ('schools,' or 'families' of thought). These were the *Ru Jia,* or school of Ru; the *Mo Jia,* or school of Mo Zi; the *Fa Jia,* or school of 'Law'; the *Ming Jia,* or Linguistic school; *Yin Yang Jia,* or school of *Yin* and *Yang*; and his own preferred school, the *Dao (De) Jia,* the school of the Way (and Virtuous Potency). He characterized their concern as articulating ways to bring about social order, or good government (*zhi* 治). Their goal was to understand nature, life, and society, so that we could live together harmoniously (*he* 和). Their political theories were grounded in reflections on what it means to be human, our psychologies, emotions, the nature of ethical ideals, the nature of understanding, the limits of knowledge, the nature of language, how to live a healthy and flourishing life, how natural processes function, where things come from, and the place of humans in the Cosmos. They articulated competing proposals, each offering their own guidance (*dao* 道): accounts of the "way" things should be, the way to return to a flourishing life and social harmony. The most influential of the early texts came from the schools of *Ru, Mo, Fa,* and *Dao.*

The first thinker and teacher, *"Ru,"* to attain prominence was Confucius, with his extraordinarily idealistic philosophy, based on the cultivation of our human capacity to be virtuous (*ren* 仁) and devotion to doing what is appropriate (*yi* 義). He rejected the prevalent tendency to rely on laws and administer punishments in order to control people. Confucius argued that we must cultivate our highest ethical character in our social and familial relationships. Our strongest obligations begin with the family and reverberate outwards into the social world. Subsequent thinkers either

developed his way or reacted against it, and formulated their own alternatives. The Mohists (*Mo Jia*) were equally idealistic, but formulated a more egalitarian and impartial *dao,* based on a utilitarian understanding of the virtues. The Mohists also argued that without uniformity of values and clarity of conceptual and evaluative distinctions (*shi fei* 是非, 'right and wrong'), social harmony was unattainable. After them, Mencius followed the thought of Confucius along one course, seeing humans as naturally virtuous, and after him, Xun Zi steered it along another, seeing virtue as needing to be artificially inculcated. By the end of the Warring States period, Han Fei Zi responded to the Ruism of Confucius by articulating a philosophy of Legalism (*Fa Jia*) that presupposed a very cynical view of human nature as selfish and untrustworthy. The Ruists, Mohists, and Legalists were all concerned with how to cultivate human order and social flourishing. They focused on culture, ethical behavior, political hierarchies, laws and punishments, and language. The Daoists (*Dao Jia*), however, criticized all of these 'humanistic' proposals as short-sighted and counterproductive obsessions with the artificial constructs of the human realm. They attempted to redirect our attention towards a more expansive *dao* rooted in *tian* (天), nature or the Cosmos.

RUISM

The Confucians belonged to a social group called "Ru" preserving a tradition that predates Confucius himself. The word *"ru"* (儒) originally meant 'scholar,' and the Ruists who preceded Confucius were scholars of the ritual traditions. Confucius saw himself as a follower and preserver of this tradition, but at the same time he was an innovator[2] who transformed what had previously been a ritual scholasticism into a profound social and ethical philosophy. And despite the fact that later Ruists saw themselves as followers of Confucius, they also developed new and competing interpretations of his *dao*. Soon after the death of Confucius, the term *"Ru"* came to denote not just any Ru scholar, but specifically thinkers who sought to follow and broaden his *dao.* By the Han dynasty, the Grand Historian, Sima Tan, referred to this school of ethico-political thought as the *"Ru Jia,"* the 'family of Ru.' Indeed, the modern Mandarin term for "Confucianism" to this day is still *"Ru Jia."* In English, scholars increasingly refer to Confucians and Confucianism as "Ruists" and "Ruism."

In broadest terms, what is distinctive about the Confucians is that they sought to create social harmony (*he* 和) by means of traditional norms of ritualized, appropriate conduct (*li* 禮, ritual propriety). They maintained that the influential character (*de* 德) of exemplary persons (*junzi* 君子), who model ritual propriety and appropriate conduct, would have a transformative influence on society. They stressed working hard for the benefit of others, and maintained that when rulers exhibited *ren* 仁 (humanity, or empathetic effort), others would do so as well. They viewed

the family as an analogy for society, with the ruler filling the role of a father to the people. They promoted a social hierarchy in which each member had his or her roles and responsibilities, and in which upward social mobility was based on merit.

The most influential early Ruist philosophical texts are the *Analects* of Confucius, *Meng Zi, Xun Zi, Da Xue,* and *Zhong Yong.* The Neo-Confucian philosopher Zhu Xi extracted the *Da Xue* and *Zhong Yong* from the *Li Ji* (*Book of Rites*), grouped them with the *Analects* and *Meng Zi,* and dubbed them the "Four Books." Although scholars believe the *Da Xue* and the *Zhong Yong* date from the Han dynasty, we have included them in this anthology because they have become highly influential texts that throw light on early Confucian philosophy.

TENSIONS WITHIN RUISM

The *Analects,* which is regarded as the most reliable repository of Confucius' words and ideas, contains many pithy sayings and some short stories. It is terse, Confucius' positions are rarely elaborated, and its principles of organization are less than obvious. One must read a fair number of passages together to develop a sense of Confucius' project, to understand the key concepts, and only then begin to see how these fit together into a philosophical vision. And even then, fundamental questions may be left unanswered.

Ambiguities in Confucius' teachings led to the development of different lines of interpretation. The most prominent interpreters of the classical period were Meng Zi (c. 372–c. 289 BCE) and Xun Zi (c. 325–c. 235 BCE). In the *Meng Zi* and *Xun Zi,* Confucian concepts are discussed explicitly, richly fleshed out, and developed in depth. Only through studying later Confucian texts does the student gain sufficient experience with Confucian philosophy to effectively approach the *Analects.* For this reason, although we ordered these three texts chronologically, we strongly suggest that the *Analects* be studied *after* the *Meng Zi* and the *Xun Zi,* or at least some thereof. The following subsections consider the root tensions that led to contrasts between the Ruist interpretations of Meng Zi and Xun Zi.

Human Dispositions (*xìng* 性)

The most discussed difference between Xun Zi and Meng Zi involves their evaluation of *xing* 性 (natural dispositions).[3] Confucius had said that people are similar in their dispositions (*xing*), but he did not specify whether these dispositions were good or bad.[4] Meng Zi attempted to ground Confucian values in natural salutary human dispositions, which are conceived of as the 'sprouts' from which full-grown virtues naturally develop, given the fertile soil of a healthy family context. Thus, Meng Zi declared human dispositions

to be good. Perhaps he perceived a need for a solid grounding for Confucianism in order to defend it against rival philosophies that, by his time, had begun to flourish.

Xun Zi agrees that people have the capacity to become good. However, he believes that Meng Zi's characterization of *xing* is not only mistaken, it is potentially disastrous. Prior to enculturation, Xun Zi argued, people's desires are without limit. Further, since there is no natural restriction on the pursuit of these desires, people would compete for scarce goods without restraint, and chaos would ensue. What was needed, he surmised, was some means of shaping personal character in a productive way. Fortunately, the sages had developed just such a way, and embodied that way in ritualized norms and practices. If people assume that they would develop virtues without the need of any special artifice, then even those who aspired to moral improvement would not appreciate the importance of the creations of the sage kings. If Meng Zi's view held sway, Xun Zi reasoned, the role of ritual propriety, and even the importance of sustained and determined learning, would be disregarded. The result would be chaos and societal implosion.

Feeling versus Thinking

While Meng Zi views human goodness as growing out of natural *feelings,* Xun Zi locates our capacity to become good in our *understanding and intelligence* (*zhi* 智/知) (*Xun Zi* 21.1b and 22.5b). Indeed, Xun Zi's distrust of our unrestrained emotions is the basis for declaring our initial dispositions to be detestable. Xun Zi maintains that what sets us apart from mere animals is a sense of appropriateness (*yi* 義), which allows us to make distinctions and thereby form societies (*Xun Zi* 9.16a). Meng Zi and Xun Zi both emphasized the role of *xin* 心 (the heart–mind),[5] but for Xun Zi *xin* is closer to 'mind' than to 'heart.' Goodness, Xun Zi emphasizes, is a product of artifice (*wei* 偽) rather than natural feelings and dispositions.

This difference is a matter of degree of emphasis. After all, Meng Zi does seem to suggest that one ought to *reflect* on one's feelings in a particular situation so as to appropriately influence one's feelings in another (see *Meng Zi* 1A7). And yet failure to exhibit the appropriate moral feeling is described as "losing one's root feelings (*ben xin* 本心)" (*Meng Zi* 6A10). Further, while Meng Zi does include the sprout of wisdom (*zhi* 智) as one of his 'four sprouts,' and it is not entirely clear to what degree wisdom is to be thought of as intellectual as opposed to emotional, one clue is that wisdom starts as a natural "sense (literally 'heart,' *xin* 心) of right and wrong" (*Meng Zi* 2A6).

Emphasizing *ren* 仁 (humanity) versus Emphasizing *li* 禮 (ritual propriety)

DAOIST PHILOSOPHIES

The majority of thinkers during the Warring States period were concerned with how to cultivate human order and flourishing in a social context. This was to be achieved through *humanistic* means: language, technology, society, laws, culture, and ethics. Confucians emphasized social hierarchies and ethical cultivation; the Mohists advocated clear laws, regulations, and standards; the Legalists emphasized laws and punishments. According to the *Lao Zi* and the *Zhuang Zi,* these philosophies had too narrow and short-sighted a focus. The Daoist texts recommended that we shift our awareness from the restricted perspective of the human (*ren* 人) point of view to the all-encompassing overview of the whole Cosmos (*tian* 天).

Daoist philosophy begins from such an all-embracing cosmology and derives an existential and political philosophy from it. The cosmological philosophy attempts to understand the nature and existence of the Cosmos as a whole and thus plays at the border between cosmology and metaphysics. That is, it comes *close* to suggesting the necessity of a realm beyond the empirical world of experience on which that world depends for its existence. Readers *expecting* to find a metaphysics that presupposes a 'transcendent' realm will indeed find such a metaphysics. But a more cautious reading will enable us to construct an alternative discourse for discussing such ultimate questions.

Building on this cosmology, the Daoists developed a philosophy of life. There were even strands of Daoist thought that attempted to incorporate their meditative and cosmological insights into their political theories. Two distinctive and contrasting political tendencies can be found in the Daoist texts. A quasi-anarchistic small-scale society is described in some passages of the *Lao Zi,* and also in the Utopian strands of the *Zhuang Zi.* At the other end of the spectrum, there are passages that advocate a holistic (or 'Syncretistic') political philosophy in which a single ruler is able to take control of a vast state system through esoteric forms of inner cultivation, and delegation of practical duties.

The majority of the *Zhuang Zi* text presents its own distinctive strand of Daoist thought. It can be found in the *Inner Chapters,* and in passages throughout the rest of the anthology. This 'Zhuangzian' *dao* is existential in spirit, dwelling on the significance of life and the inevitability of death. It is rooted in a deep and perhaps paradoxical understanding of our place in the world: both that we are an integral part of the processes of nature, and at the same time only a minuscule constituent of a vast and disinterested Cosmos; fully at home, and yet temporary visitors. From our everyday perspective, we take the dramas of our social lives very seriously. We judge the value of our existence according to the standards of success that have been ingrained in us since childhood. But when we adopt a more cosmic perspective, our concerns and worries diminish in significance.

Two interpretations of the *Zhuang Zi* have been influential. From a

religious point of view, they have often been treated as mystical doctrines that posit an absolute, metaphysical *Dao* that lies beyond the reach of language. From a philosophical point of view (not only modern, but extending as far back as Guo Xiang in the Jin dynasty), scholars have tended to treat the text as an exercise in relativism, epistemological, ontological, and ethical. Our evaluative judgments of right and wrong (*shi fei* 是非) can only be made from some perspective: there can be no such thing as an overarching perspective from which to make a final judgment between them. More recently, some scholars have constructed an interpretation that is comparable with the way of life recommended by the ancient Skeptics: because no final judgment can be made, we should simply avoid making any judgments at all. My own preference (SC) is to steer clear of all three, to avoid absolutism, relativism, and Skepticism. Instead, I see the Zhuangzian worldview and way of life as a nature-oriented form of pragmatism involving mind–body discipline and cultivation of tranquility; it is existential in spirit and comparable, but not identifiable, with the way of life recommended by the ancient Stoics. The linguistic and epistemological claims must be situated within this overall existential stoic context for their full significance to emerge. As I see it, the abstruse discussion of *shi fei* judgment is deployed in service of a more practical philosophy that enables us to find our home in an unfathomably vast and infinitely varied world whose endless changes seem indifferent to human fortune.

LEGALIST PHILOSOPHY

When considering how to create a social structure that promotes social harmony, the first thought is often that we need to control people with laws, which in turn have to be enforced with punishments. This kind of view gets a fuller formal treatment in the writings of Han Fei Zi, towards the end of the Warring States period. But the ideology it represents was certainly practiced long before this. Although Confucius lived 250 years before Han Fei Zi, the practice of using punishments to enforce social rules predates Confucius by centuries, if not millennia. Indeed, it is instructive to view Confucianism as, in part, providing a radical alternative to legalistic approaches to governing. For this reason, we strongly recommend studying "The Fundamentals of Legalism," in Chapter 12 (*Han Fei* Zi), before studying Confucianism.

The most famous of the early Chinese Legalist philosophers was Han Fei Zi, who emphasized the role of rewards and punishments that are like two reins held by the ruler to maintain control of a state. According to Legalist philosophy, people are naturally selfish and unruly, and they are motivated primarily by desire and fear. On this view, they need to be strictly guided and constrained by laws and punishments for their own benefit. Han Fei Zi maintained that social order and compliance with laws are assured when the ruler has awe-inspiring power and authority, backed up by the

motivating factors of rewards and punishments. Explicitly rejecting Confucian and Mohist emphasis on virtue and care, as well as the strategy of winning over the hearts and minds of the people, Han Fei Zi argues that a well-functioning society can only be maintained by means of strict application of inviolable laws and administrative methods.

Prominent among Han Fei Zi's Legalist methods was entertaining proposals from ministers. When a proposal is accepted, the minister must achieve the promised results. If the results are achieved the minister is praised and rewarded. If they are not achieved the minister is punished severely.

Han Fei Zi had admirable ideals: individuals and factions should not be able to benefit at the expense of the general public. Not even the emperor should rule for personal benefit. But his psychology of self-interested individuals leaves him unable to place any trust in people. He thus attempts to create a system of universal inviolable law and absolute control. But these two ideals stand in uneasy relationship to the ruler. If the law is inviolable, then is the emperor really ultimately in control?

It is worth noting that the end of the classical period comes when the Legalist state of Qin finally succeeds in conquering all of its rivals and unifying China under the Qin dynasty. In this short-lived dynasty, Legalism was the official guiding philosophy. Although Confucianism officially regains favor in the ensuing Han dynasty, in practice governments mixed Confucian strategies with Legalist ones throughout most of subsequent Chinese history.

HAN DYNASTY SYNCRETISM

By the beginning of the Han dynasty, thinkers had already begun examining the proposed theories of the various schools of thought. Xun Zi had already warned against being too one-sided in one's understanding, and proposed that the best way would be one that was broad and inclusive. Perhaps under the influence of Xun Zi, a tendency towards syncretism developed, that is, an attitude of analyzing a variety of competing philosophies, and seeking to identify what was best in each, while eliminating their faults. These could then be combined into a holistic philosophical system. The Syncretists are represented in this anthology by the 'Mystical Imperialist' strand of the *Zhuang Zi*. They adopted various policies from each of the competing schools, including the Ruists, Mohists, and Legalists, and sought to unify them under an overarching meditative practice deriving directly from the Daoists.

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1   The Warring States period is sometimes regarded as starting as late as 403 BCE, giving a large gap between it and the end of the preceding Spring and Autumn period. The date 475 BCE derives from Sima Qian. In any case, the point is that, regardless of where one marks the beginning of this period, in actuality the whole

classical period, from Confucius to the unification of China in 221 BCE, can be fairly characterized as a period marked by warring between states.

2   Some scholars appeal to *Analects* 7.1 to suggest that Confucius did not view himself as an innovator. See comment to 7.1 and the introductory section to the chapter, "The *Analects* of Confucius."

3   This is often discussed in the secondary literature under the rubric of "human nature," but that phrase presupposes an essentialism that is open to dispute.

4   The character *xing* 性 occurs only twice in the *Analects,* one time just to say that Confucius rarely spoke about it (*Analects* 5.13). In the other passage, Confucius says the people are similar in *xing,* but differ in their practices (*Analects* 17.2).

5   Though it is convenient to refer to *xin* as the 'heart–mind,' it is often better thought of as 'thinking and feeling.'

2

Key Philosophical Terms

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we provide a glossary of fundamental concepts of early Chinese philosophy. Chinese philosophy arose in a different cultural context from Western philosophy, and the fundamental issues that motivate the two traditions do not precisely match. Indeed, a careful examination of usages shows that the meanings, significances, and conceptual associations of the fundamental concepts of Zhou dynasty Chinese philosophy tend to differ quite significantly from those of Western philosophy.

This means that there are no easy sets of equivalent terms that we can appeal to from Western philosophy. For each Chinese term there will generally be a number of English words that overlap with its range of meaning, but none that fully match the ranges of associations of the Chinese term. For example, the word *"yi"* is an ethical term that has no exact match in English. It has a sense of 'rightness,' 'honor,' 'duty,' 'appropriateness,' and 'conscientiousness.' But none of these is an exact equivalent of the Chinese term. Moreover, different significances will also come into play to different degrees in different contexts: in some contexts the sense of 'honor' might be most relevant; in other contexts, 'appropriateness.'

This creates problems not only for the translator, but also for the reader, as translation choices can lead us to draw inappropriate inferences, especially when we rely on the meanings and implications of the words in our own language. This is problematic when important terms are translated with fixed equivalents, as tends to be done with most existing translations. (For example, *"Tian"* = "Heaven"; *"yi"* = "righteousness"; *"e"* = "evil"; *"ren"* = "benevolence," etc. These were the translation choices favored by the missionaries who first introduced Chinese philosophy to English-speaking audiences, and who compiled the earliest Chinese–English dictionaries from the perspective of their own Christian conceptual framework.) The problem is that the modern reader inevitably *identifies* the meanings of these translation equivalents with the ancient Chinese terms, and will be tempted to draw inferences that make sense in English, or in a Christian theological context, but not necessarily in the original Chinese. This is especially problematic for the practice of philosophy, which proceeds in part by drawing inferences based upon the terms in which philosophical

"Dao" has the verbal sense, 'to guide,' or 'to show the way.' This guidance may take place non-verbally, as in the functioning of the natural world, or it might be put into words as a guiding discourse. For example, the first line of the *Lao Zi* can be read as, "*Dao* can guide (*dao*), but not as any ordinary (*chang* 常) *dao*" (*Lao Zi* 1); while Meng Zi defines *"dao"* as "conjoining *ren* 仁 (humanity) with *ren* 人道 (humans, people), and putting it into words" (*Meng Zi* 7B16).

According to Xun Zi, the way of people (*ren dao* 偽) requires artifice (*wei* 偽) for its construction. As Chen Daqi, a twentieth-century Chinese scholar, explains:

> The standards of ritual and propriety for ordering a country and cultivating oneself originate from exemplary people and are produced by sages. It is people themselves who invent and establish them, they do not exist naturally. Because *tian* cannot be patterned after, people must establish [ritual and propriety] themselves. Xun Zi does not establish the way of people (*ren dao*) based on the way of *tian* (*tian dao*). This is the great distinguishing character of Xun Zi's theory. The way of people is what people create. This view can be called artificialism.
>
> (D. Chen 1954, 5)

Thus, *ren dao,* at least for Xun Zi, is both the way for people to follow, and a way created, articulated, and extended by exemplary people. It is the latter that Confucius stresses in *Analects* 15.29: "People are able to broaden *dao,* it is not *dao* that broadens people." And Xun Zi puts it this way, *"Dao* is not the way (*dao*) of *tian* 天, neither is it the way (*dao*) of the earth. It is that by which the people are led (*dao*); it is the path (*dao*) of the exemplary person" (*Xun Zi* 8.3).

In Daoist thought, by contrast, *"dao"* is that which goes beyond the confines of the human; it is that which is most expansive, and all-encompassing: the way of the Cosmos, the natural world, as a whole. It is also that which in the final analysis must be appealed to in order to account for the existence and nature of all things. Because of the cosmological concerns of the Daoists, and the fundamental role played by *dao,* it becomes a 'limiting' concept: as such, it verges on the borderline between a cosmological explanation and a transcendent one. While some passages in Daoist texts suggest an origin that transcends the world of experience, others suggest a holistic interdependence between them. How these two sets of passages should sit together is problematic. Do they represent the views of different strands of Daoist thought? Or do they represent a tension that could get resolved either way? Or do they represent an ineliminable tension that is not to be resolved at all?

dé 德: *virtue; potency of character; compelling/influential character*

For Confucians, *de* is a compelling moral influence, stemming from excellence of character, which can have a transformative effect on others. For example, Xun Zi writes, "The resonance of the virtuous charisma (*de* 德) [of persons of *ren* (humanity)] is sufficient to transform [the common people]" (*Xun Zi* 10.5). Confucius makes the same point, saying, "An exemplary person's (*junzi* 君子) influential character (*de* 德) is the wind; a petty person's influential character is the grass. When the wind flows over grass, it is sure to bend" (*Analects* 12.19). In the following passage, Xun Zi clarifies how this works: "Exemplary persons (*junzi*) achieve the epitome of compelling character (*de* 德). Though silent, they serve as an analogy. Though not bestowing gifts, they are held dear. Though showing no anger, they are held in awe" (*Xun Zi* 3.9b). And Confucius explains, "Lead [the common people] with virtue (*de* 德), keep them in line with ritual propriety (*li* 禮), they will develop a sense of shame and furthermore will reform themselves" (*Analects* 2.3).

"*De*" (德) is explicitly contrasted with physical coercion (*li* 力). Xun Zi writes, "The exemplary person (*junzi*) uses virtuous character (*de*); the petty person uses coercive force (*li* 力)" (*Xun Zi* 10.6; cf. *Xun Zi* 15.6a). The non-coercive nature of potency of character makes it more effective than physical power, and also allows it to play a role in providing political legitimacy. Meng Zi says, "Those who use their influential virtue (*de* 德) and put *ren* (humanity) into practice are kingly" (*Meng Zi* 2A3; cf. *Xun Zi* 15.6a).

In Daoist philosophy, *de* has a more naturalistic sense. It is an inner potency through which anything, or anyone, has its character and especially through which it influences what is going on around it. In people, it manifests as a charismatic potency that has a mesmerizing power over others. But its influence has nothing to do with the Confucian virtues, and may be ethically neutral, or even ambiguous. It is often associated with people who have been rendered outcast by Confucian standards: those who have been 'deformed' by punishment, or who have been born with 'strange' or 'extraordinary' (*ji* 畸) bodies.

fǎ 法: *standards; models; measures; laws*

Standards or models are objective means of determining correctness. In Mohist philosophy, "fa" refers to concrete models that serve to guide our actions, a straight-edge rule, or compasses, for example. When applied politically, it means clear statements determining the correct evaluation of an action and how to respond to it: what is acceptable behavior to be rewarded and unacceptable behavior that is to be punished. The Legalists agree that such standards must be clear, and that rewards and punishments must be unequivocal, if they are to serve as incentives. Han Fei Zi argues that the resulting laws must be independent even of the desires of the ruler, and must apply universally without exception.

fǎn 反: *returning*

The idea of 'returning,' as embodied in the image of revolving or rotating around a central axis, plays a fundamental role in Daoist philosophy. It is appealed to throughout Daoist texts as the modus operandi of the natural world. While the central axis may be still, it is continuous with the movement around it. *Dao* is thus processive, and the stillness of its axis does not need to be interpreted as something altogether other-worldly or transcendent. It is, rather, like the stillness and emptiness at the center of a vortex. Thus, in contrast with Parmenides' Being, even when still, the way is not motionless. The circular and cyclical movements of nature lie at the heart of the recycling and replenishing functions that enable living processes to continue flourishing. In the *Zhuang Zi,* this process cosmology of returning is expressed with the close synonym, *"fu"* (復).

hé 和: *harmony*

Harmony is a fundamental goal of the pre-Qin philosophers. The Daoists strive to cultivate a harmonious spirit that is in accord with the functioning of the natural world, while the Confucians aspire after social harmony. For the Confucians, ritual propriety (*li* 禮) is the key to its achievement. A follower of Confucius, Master You, says "Of the uses of *li* 禮 (ritual propriety), producing harmony (*he* 和) is the most valuable." He goes on to imply that harmony cannot be achieved without the guidance of ritual propriety (*Analects* 1.12). Similarly, according to Xun Zi, rituals are devised such that, by following them, "people can most reasonably live together in a harmonious (*he* 和) and unified community" (*Xun Zi* 19.9c). For Confucians, harmony doesn't just happen. According to the *Zhong Yong,* "Harmony (*he* 和) is the spreading of the way (*da dao* 達道) throughout the world (*tian xia* 天下)" (*Zhong Yong* 1).

Confucius said, "Exemplary persons harmonize (*he* 和), rather than homogenize (*tong* 同)" (Analects 13.23). Harmonizing involves blending different ingredients such that they complement each other and produce a satisfying overall result. The following excerpt from the *Zuo Zhuan,* about two people who are always in agreement, emphasizes the point:

> Master Yan said, "You and Ju are the same (*tong* 同), how can you be in harmony (*he* 和)?"
>
> The Marquis asked, "Are harmony and sameness different?"
>
> [Master Yan] replied, "They are different. Harmony is like making soup. Taking water, fire, vinegar, sauce, salt, and plums, one cooks fish and meat by heating it with firewood and blending (*he* 和) it to coordinate the flavors, adding ingredients or diluting with water to achieve just the right effect. When exemplary persons partake of this, it stabilizes their thoughts and feelings (*xin* 心). […] If one adds water to water, who will want to eat it? If one plays nothing but the same note on a lute, who will want to listen to it? This shows the inadequacy of

sameness."[2]

Although Confucians tend to focus on harmony among human beings, they also recognize a more inclusive sense of harmony, such as when Xun Zi writes, "Each of the myriad creatures obtains conditions in harmony (*he* 和) with what it needs to live; each obtains the nourishment by which it achieves maturity" (*Xun Zi* 17.2b). The Daoist ideal is more inclusive still, attempting to embrace the variety of things and multiplicity of differences in a grand and effortless concord. The Cosmic perspective simultaneously contains all differences in their uniqueness, and yet blends them in a boundariless whole.

In contrast, while the Mohists shared the goal of social harmony within a state, and harmony throughout the world, their understanding in practice was very different. For the Mohists harmony requires uniformity or sameness (*tong*同). The Mohists, like the Legalists, were afraid that difference contains the potential for social disruption and so should not be tolerated. Uniformity is to be imposed from above and deviation is to be punished severely.

huà 化: transformation

In ancient Chinese cosmology, the world is not conceived of simply as an entity, or as a collection of entities. Rather, its processive, seasonal, temporal aspects are brought to prominence. To understand the world is, first and foremost, to understand how it changes and transforms over time. Indeed, the myriad things *"wan wu"* (萬物) are on occasion referred to as the myriad transformations *"wan hua"* (萬化). Transformations are conceived of as cyclical, movements of revolution or rotation, oscillating in a *yin yang* pattern between two poles, heating and cooling, lightening and darkening, and so on, thereby generating seasonal changes and stages in the development of living processes.

jūnzǐ 君子: exemplary person; person of noble character

Before Confucius, the term *junzi* 君子—literally, the son (*zi* 子) of a lord (*jun* 君)—had meant 'a noble' (a member of the nobility) or 'gentleman' (a member of the gentry). Confucius, however, used it to refer to someone who had the 'noble' and exemplary qualities of character that someone carrying those honorific titles ought to possess. To be a *junzi*, in the Confucian sense, is to be an 'exemplary person,' a model of conduct worthy of emulation. As the term is used in the *Analects, junzi* are focused on what is appropriate (*yi* 義; see *Analects* 4.10, 4.16, 15.18, 16.10, pp. 90, 92, 88, 89), on ritual propriety (*li* 禮; see *Analects* 6.27, 12.5, 15.18, pp. 94, 108, 88), and on exhibiting *ren* 仁 (humanity). Confucius asks rhetorically, "If 'exemplary persons' (*junzi* 君子) abandon *ren* 仁, how can they fulfill their title?" (*Analects* 4.5). As the virtues of ritual propriety, appropriateness, and *ren* (humanity) develop, they provide *junzi* with the potency of character (*de* 德)

necessary to effectively serve as models (*fa* 法) to others. (Notice how these terms form a 'concept cluster' such that they are best understood together, in reference to each other.)

Xun Zi emphasizes the role of *junzi* as models of proper conduct in the following passages:

> *Junzi* speak seldom but serve as exemplary models (*fa* 法).
>
> (*Xun Zi* 6.9)

> The learning of *junzi* enters through their ears, adheres to their heart (*xin* 心), spreads to their four limbs, and is embodied in their actions. Every word, every subtle movement, may be taken as a model and pattern.
>
> (*Xun Zi* 1.9)

> *Junzi* measure themselves with a stretched cord [i.e., strictly] […] Thus, they may be taken as models worthy of emulation everywhere.
>
> (*Xun Zi* 5.7)[3]

And the *Da Xue* ("Expansive Learning") states:

> It is only after seeing the example of a *junzi* that they begin to cover up their degeneracy (*bu shan* 不善) with disgust, and make appearances of excellence (*shan* 善).
>
> (*Da Xue* 6)

Through their compelling conduct, exemplary persons continually reaffirm, and potentially subtly revise, norms of appropriate conduct. (*Analects* 9.3 provides a good example.) This is the sense in which, "The exemplary person (*junzi* 君子) is the beginning of ritual and propriety (*li-yi* 禮義)" (*Xun Zi* 9.15), and, "'The way' (*dao* 道) […] is the path (*dao* 道) of exemplary persons" (*Xun Zi* 8.3).

lǐ 禮: *ritual propriety*

Etymologically combining the image of a sacrificial vessel with that of an altar, this character originally indicated sacrificial rites. However, as with the idea of the *junzi,* its significance was extended to include proper conduct generally, involving judicious observance of social norms, or fulfilling an ethical role by faithfully discharging the responsibilities associated with that role. *Li* can be thought of as 'ritualized roles and responsibilities' and 'ritualized appropriate conduct.' A genuine performance of ritual propriety involves a deep sense of reverence that turns every act, in its minutest detail, into something of profound, even spiritual, significance. A.C. Graham describes *li* as follows:

linguistic function that imposes not only distinctions and divisions, but also hierarchical evaluations. We distinguish not only cows from horses, but also strong and weak, high and low, noble and base. Names, or linguistic terms, are not just neutral labels, but evaluative terms that must be earned: they either bestow honor or imply critique. A noble must live up to the title and manifest nobility of character; a father must live up to the title of 'father' and manifest parental virtue. Even a drinking vessel must live up to the evaluative implications of its name (consider the implications of calling a cup a 'chalice,' for example). If they do not, we cannot rightly honor them with those designations.

The *Lao Zi* notes a close connection between naming and desiring: we distinguish things evaluatively, and desire the specific aspects and qualities of the world that we evaluate as more beautiful or excellent. Linguistic conventions thus stimulate our desires.

ming 明: *clarity; insight*

In its most basic sense, *"ming"* means 'bright' or 'clear'; as a noun it means 'clarity.' In the *Mo Zi,* it refers to the clarity of linguistic distinctions. The Mohists insist there must be no confusion about when our linguistic terms apply, no vagueness, no ambiguity. We must not only be able to clearly distinguish cows from horses, but more importantly we must be clear about the distinction between noble and base, and especially right (*shi* 是) and wrong (*fei* 非). Only then can we have a hope for a flourishing society.

In the *Zhuang Zi, "ming"* refers to a deep understanding or 'insight' that arises as we clear our mind, or 'spirit' (*shen* 神) through the meditative practices of attenuating (*xu* 虚) (thinning out of distractions) and stilling (*jing* 静) (becoming more calm and tranquil). In contrast to the Mohists, the Zhuangzian Daoists maintain that cultivating clarity of insight entails becoming aware that the distinctions between things are not as sharp as we might believe.

qì 氣: *energy; breath*

In Chinese cosmology, *qi* is understood as a fundamental, and even primordial, stuff. Conceived of as a kind of vapor, it can refer to atmospheric energies, the wind and the clouds for example, that propel atmospheric conditions. More generally, it is understood as the energy that makes up and invigorates all existing things; it has physical extension, and yet also has a tenuous spirit-like fluidity, capable of rarefying into gaseous form, or condensing into a solid. In living things it is associated with the breath, and with blood, and is thought of as a form of life energy. *Qi* and *shen* (spirit) are closely related, though not necessarily in any strictly defined ontological relationship. The *Zhuang Zi* refers to *shen qi* ('spirit-like energy') in describing the attentive concentration involved in superlative levels of dexterity. And Meng Zi claims to excel at nurturing his expansive *qi,* which he describes as a product of *yi* (appropriateness) and *dao* (*Meng Zi*

2A2).

qíng 情: *conditions; emotions*

"Qing" is a fundamental term in Chinese ontology and cosmology. It has a more general sense of 'conditions,' and a more specific sense referring to the inner conditions of specified types of things (especially *"ren qing"* (人情),'human conditions' or 'the distinctive conditions of being human'). It is closely related to *"xing"* (性) 'dispositional tendencies,' and can be thought of as referring to the specific conditions that ground those dispositional tendencies. The two concepts are so closely related that in some contexts the distinction between them may be blurred.

In another sense, it also refers to the natural conditional responses of humans to their circumstances: our likes (*hao* 好) and dislikes (*wù* 惡), not as a matter of personal taste, but as a matter of basic human motivation. It thus also refers to human emotional responses to our experiences, and in those contexts can be translated as 'emotions.' We have a natural tendency to take pleasure in what is beneficial and to be repelled by what is harmful. We then approve (*shi* 是) what we like and reject (*fei* 非) what we dislike, and impose these distinctions on our experience of the world. *Ren qing,* human inner conditions, thus ground our tendency to divide, categorize, and evaluate phenomena, and ultimately are the source of our logical distinctions and judgments (regarding what is so and what is not).

*rén 人: *human; person; humans; people; others*

One of the fundamental issues that motivates early Chinese philosophy is the relation between the human, *ren* 人, and the natural world or Cosmos, *tian* 天. The word *"ren"* means 'human,' or 'person'; it is gender neutral and indeterminate with regard to number. So, it is misleading to translate it as "man," or "a man." Rather, it means human and humans, person and people.

Early Confucianism is a kind of humanism; it traces the source of value to our humanity, and its goal is to cultivate what invests human life with deep significance: virtue and culture. Certainly, we are born as human beings, but fulfilling our humanity is both a duty and an achievement. To be fully human, we must be actively involved in constructing and shaping our own humanity. This sort of cultivation is a never-ending process: humanity is always a work in progress. There is no perfected end point that is the finalized ideal, but something more beautiful that precedes and exceeds us is always ahead of us and out of our reach.

The Daoists consider human-oriented endeavors of such magnitude to be counterproductive and disastrous, artificial fabrications that set us in conflict with the natural way. Transforming our natural behaviors and following artificially constructed orders and patterns involves a loss of genuineness that leads to a kind of hypocrisy.

***rén* 仁**: *humanity; human-heartedness*

To be *ren* 仁 is to be human in the fullest sense (*Meng Zi* 7B16). It is the consummate Confucian virtue. At one point, Confucius captures the essence of *ren* as "caring for other people" (*ai ren* 爱人). At another point Confucius characterizes ren in terms of five virtues: "respect, magnanimity, trustworthiness (*xin* 信), diligence, and kindness" (*Analects* 17.6). *Ren* is thus a term of deep, complex, and fundamental significance, encompassing a broad range of virtues. Randall Peerenboom characterizes *ren* as "a duty to act appropriately in relation to others," or in other words "excellence in interpersonal relations" (Peerenboom 1993b, 44, 42).

Meng Zi affirms the close connection between *ren* and *shu,* 恕 (empathetic consideration), saying: "There is nothing closer to *ren* 仁 than striving to put empathetic consideration (*shu* 恕) into practice" (*Meng Zi* 7A4). He also views "a sense of compassion" as "the sprout of *ren*" (*Meng Zi* 2A6). Indeed, Confucius says, "The ability to take what is close as an analogy can be called *ren*'s compass" (*Analects* 6.30), which is a good description of *shu* (empathetic understanding). Furthermore, when asked about *ren,* Confucius answers: "Dwell in reverence. Carry out affairs with respect. Support others with your whole heart (*zhong* 忠)" (*Analects* 13.19; cf. 4.5, 6.22, 15.9, and 15.10, pp. 88, 84, 85, 80). Thus, when Confucius says that his *dao* is unified with a single thread, and his follower Master Zeng explains, "The *dao* of the Master is to do his utmost (*zhong* 忠) with sympathetic understanding (*shu* 恕), and that is all" (*Analects* 4.15), we might interpret these as two aspects of the virtue *ren* 仁.

Master Zeng, a follower of Confucius, says: "Aspirants (*shi* 士) must be strong and determined, for their burden (*ren* 任) is heavy and their way (*dao* 道) is long. They take *ren* 仁 as their own responsibility (*ren* 任). Is this not heavy? And they carry it until their dying day. Is this not long?" (*Analects* 8.7). It should be noted, that while *ren* involves taking on a burden, it also results in benefits that are all the more rewarding for being truly earned. Confucius said, "Undergoing difficulties, and only then reaping the rewards can be called *ren*" (*Analects* 6.22).

Chen Jingpan has characterized *ren* as "an earnest desire and beneficent action, both active and passive, for the well-being of the one loved" (J. Chen 1990, 252). Indeed, *ren* is often associated with the concept of love (*ai* 愛) (see *Analects* 12.22, p. 95), and so it has been often translated as "benevolence." Though we should be careful not to conceive of it as a merely psychological state. Meng Zi does indeed define "*ren* 仁" as 'human feelings' or 'the heart of being human' (*ren xin* 人心), but this goes beyond mere kindly feelings and is embodied in virtuous conduct.

The real problem with "benevolence," or with "empathetic effort," as translations of *ren* is that they sound supererogatory, admirable yet somehow optional. These terms do not convey the intimate and inseparable

connection between being *ren* 仁 and being truly human (*ren* 人). Meng Zi says, "To be *ren* 仁 is to be a person (*ren* 人)" (*Meng Zi* 7B16). For this reason, we translate *"ren"* here as "humanity." The character *ren* 仁 is composed of two radicals (*ren* 人, meaning person, and *er* 二, meaning two). Thus, *ren* is being a consummate human being in relation with others, expressing one's humanity by striving to help others out of genuine care.

The Mohists also promote the virtue of *ren,* but they understand it in more utilitarian terms. A person with humanity works to bring about the greatest benefit to the greatest number of people. The Daoists, on the other hand, are deeply critical of the cultivation of such a virtue. They see such cultivation as artificial, and therefore hypocritical, and more importantly they believe that by imposing it on ourselves we are thereby damaging our natural tendencies. The culmination of this line of critique can be found in the Utopian Daoist chapters of the *Zhuang Zi.*

shàn 善: *excellent; good*

"Shan" is an evaluative term that describes quality of character or ability. It has a basic sense of 'good,' but also has a sense of 'being good at,' or 'excellence.' Etymologically, the graph is related to *mei* (美,'beautiful') and *yi* (義,'highly appropriate/honorable conduct'), and so has strong ethical and aesthetic connotations. Although translatable as "good," it is notable that it does not play as central a role in Chinese philosophy as the concept of 'the Good' does in Western philosophy.

shén 神: *spirit*

"Shen" has a range of meanings similar to "spirit" in English. And yet, in philosophical contexts, this word fails to do it justice. It may be used to refer to our more rarefied capacities for sensation and reflection: intelligence, or perhaps even 'genius.' It may also be used adjectivally to refer to the rarefied qualities of these capacities. This usage is much harder to find an equivalent for in English. In these contexts, it has a sense that may be conveyed by words such as "marvelous," "divine," or "wondrous." In Daoist texts, *"shen ming"* (神明) is an epistemological term naming a particular kind of awareness that is rooted in our natural intuitive abilities. It is thought of as a wondrous clarity of insight into the holistic interconnectedness of the natural transformations of the Cosmos, one that sees through the artificiality of distinctions.

Traditional Chinese 'folk psychology' (i.e., culturally transmitted beliefs about the nature and origins of our minds, souls, or mental functions) does not presuppose a single 'soul,' but several spirits (*"hun po"* 魂魄) in addition to *shen.* In sleep, they scatter and disperse: their adventures become our dreams. When we awaken they come together; to concentrate attentively is to hold them together and keep them integrated.

shēng 生: *life; living; birth; producing; growing; existing*

In its primary sense, *"sheng"* is a biological term; as a verb it means 'to live,' 'to be born,' and 'to give birth'; as a noun, it refers to the process of living, or to the process of producing life. In philosophical contexts, its significance extends beyond the biological, and refers to producing and existing in general. Even in its extended sense, however, the biological metaphor continues to function vividly in its meaning. Etymologically, the character represents an image of a plant emerging from the soil. Conceptually, it has close resonances with *"chu"* (出),'to emerge,' which coincidentally, also shares a similar etymology.

When used to refer to the life of living things (in contrast to its more general sense of 'existence'), it is closely related to *"xing"* (性), 'natural dispositions,' the tendencies that impel the living processes.

"Sheng" is contrasted with *"si"* (死), which refers to the process of dying. While it is often translated as "death," the sense of an extended process of dying is much more emphatic than in English. Metaphorically, the process of dying is associated with entering, *"ru"* (入) (re-entering the soil), and returning, *"gui"* (歸).

*shèng rén 聖人: *wise person; sage; wise ruler; virtuous ruler*

A *"sheng ren"* is an extraordinarily wise person, one who has a profound understanding of the world, of people, and of life and death. A sage would therefore understand the best ways to deal with the circumstances of life, to manage affairs, to deal with other people, and even to govern a state. This sort of understanding goes beyond ordinary knowledge and skills, and usually arises only after sustained self-cultivation and spiritual discipline, though it is possible for someone to be born with an extraordinary degree of wisdom. The Ruist sage, in particular, must cultivate an ethical attitude and virtuous behavior. These sorts of qualities are important for anyone who should be entrusted with rulership of any kind. But since these qualities are hard, if not impossible, to attain, it tends to represent an ideal ruler, rather than a real person.

The Utopian Daoists, however, are suspicious of cleverness, artifice, and hegemony, and so tend to regard sagely 'wisdom' suspiciously as a kind of shrewdness; they also regard the virtues that are artificially cultivated as hypocritical.

In pre-Qin philosophical texts, the context of usage of *"sheng"* (聖) is primarily political, and the term refers to a pre-eminently wise and virtuous ruler, worthy of the deepest reverence. (It gets extended to incorporate the senses of 'holy' or 'saintly' when adopted into explicitly religious contexts, but it does not strictly have these senses in the philosophical texts of the Warring States.)

shì 士: *aspirant; scholar-official; officer-aspirant; moral apprentice*

things exist. It becomes a way of understanding the whole cosmic context of all existing things, and thereby also includes the earth below. It thus develops the sense of 'Nature,' or the natural world as a whole, and is thought of as that which produces all things, calls them into being as they are (see *ming* 命). It thereby gives 'life' to them, or brings them into 'existence': *sheng* 生. In this sense, *tian* is what is responsible for all things, and therefore what is beyond human control. It thereby also has connotations that distinguish it from what humans (*ren* 人) do.

Although *tian* is the natural world, it is still regarded by most philosophical schools with a sense of awe and reverence as something deeply 'spiritual.' As ultimate context, it extends deep into the past and is the repository of all things ancestral (*zong* 宗): its powers are 'ancestral' powers.

While Confucius's thought acknowledges the status of *tian,* it remains a thoroughly 'humanistic' philosophy. Confucius often uses exclamations involving the word *tian* (such as in *Analects* 11.9 and 14.35), but does not describe "*tian*" (see *Analects* 5.13, p. 105). He even discourages questions about *tian* and about the spirits, insisting that the focus of our concern should be our life in the world and in our current social context. Xun Zi's "Discourse on *Tian*" (*Xun Zi,* Chapter 17) emphasizes that "Nature's course (*tian xing* 天行) has regularities" (*Xun Zi* 17.1), but is mostly about clarifying the role of people in bringing to completion what *tian* has made possible.

Ogyū Sorai, a Tokugawa-period Japanese Confucian thinker, provides a useful description of *tian*:

> *Tian* 天 needs no explanation. Everybody knows what it is. Gazing at its vast and hazy blueness, it seems dusky dim, far and high. We cannot fully fathom it. The heavenly bodies are fastened to it. Wind and rain, cold and heat, travel through it. It is where the myriad phenomena receive their conditions (*ming* 命), and is the ancestor of the hundred spirits. The most revered, it is unparalleled. Nothing could be higher than it. Thus, the ancient sage-kings and enlightened rulers all ordered the world modeling *tian.* Venerating *tian,* the way was thereby put into practice in their government and teachings. Thus is the way of the sages.[5]

But this gives rise to a conceptual tension. If *tian* is all-encompassing, doesn't it also include the human: can we really distinguish the human from the natural? Doesn't everything human already follow *tian*? This problem becomes especially pressing for Daoist philosophy, whose critique of humanist philosophies seems to presuppose some kind of distinction.

The binomial expression "*tian ming* 天命" may be taken to mean both what is dictated (*ming*) by *tian* and also natural (*tian*) conditions (*ming*). In a

political context it indicates a ruler's mandate to rule.

wéi 為: *do; make; become; function as*

"Wei" is a fundamental grammatical term whose ranges of meaning reveal a deep-rooted pragmatist ontology. It means 'to do,' 'to act,' 'to make,' 'to become,' and 'as,' and can also function nominally to refer to doing, acting, and making. It also means 'to function as,' and can often be translated with the copula, 'to be,' suggesting that the equivalent of 'being' in ancient Chinese was conceived with pragmatic significance as a kind of acting or *functioning*: things *are* what they *do,* what they act *as.*

It is also sometimes used in the same sense as the word *"wei"* 謂 meaning 'to call' or 'to deem as.' This suggests a close conceptual connection between how something functions (what something is) and how it is understood to be (what it is called). Humans act in accordance with an understanding of how things function; and what things are is in part a function of how we understand and interact with them. When we deem (*wei* 為) things to be useful, beautiful, or valuable, we interact with them as such, manipulate them as such, and they thereby become (*wei* 為) useful, beautiful, or valuable things.

wěi 偽: *artifice; intentional activity*

A term of philosophical importance closely related to *"wei"* 為 (do, make) is *"wei"* 偽, in which "為" is combined with the 'human' radical "亻" to form a character that means 'artificial activity' or 'artifice.' Artifice is what humans add to the natural world through their acting, doing, and making. They transform the natural world according to their intentions to create artificial objects. The Confucian philosopher, Xun Zi, considers this to be the origin of order, structure, and beauty in the world. Without deliberate transformation according to the planning of the wisest humans, natural tendencies simply result in unruly and messy behavior, which can eventually devolve into ugliness and conflict.

The Daoist philosophical attitude is quite the reverse: human intentional ordering is no match for the spontaneous harmony of the natural world. Natural processes arise from their own inmost tendencies, and as such are considered to be 'genuine' (*zhen* 真; see below). For the Daoists, then, *wei* 偽 is not a solution but a problem: it is forced or contrived behavior that draws us away from our own most natural and spontaneous tendencies, and so is a manifestation of insincerity or even disingenuousness. It is criticized as a manipulation of the world by the crafty for their own purposes.

*wén 文: *culture*

Human transformative activity is not random, but accords with artificial structures, patterns and values, and these function to transform not only our environments, but also ourselves. Everything we do is imbued with a sense

of proper form—a right way to be performed—which is transmitted from generation to generation. The right way to eat, to sleep, to communicate, are all clothed in a particular style of a particular community, passed down from its predecessors. The forms we imitate and embody from the very first moments of our lives eventually become transparent, seem effortless and natural. It is not usually until we come face to face with cultural difference, with people whose behaviors we find odd, surprising, and even unnatural, that we realize the contingency of culture: that it is artificial, its particularities and peculiarities highly variable, and that far from being natural it must be inculcated and cultivated over many years. All these transforming activities—linguistic and performative—combine to construct the human world in all of its multiple manifestations. The social patterns, the physical constructs and machines we use, the abstract constructs through which our lives are given significance, and the values by which they are judged, these are all constitutive of culture, *wen*.

wú 無: *absence; nothing; lacking*

The most literal meaning of *"wu"* as a verb is 'to not have,' 'to lack,' and more generally it can function as a negative quantifier, 'there is no …' to describe the absence of something. In philosophical texts, when used as an abstract noun, it can refer to absence in the most general sense, or non-existence. It can be translated as "nothing," but we must be careful not to simply assume that it has the same significance as Western philosophical concepts of 'non-being.' Ordinarily, we think of absence in negative terms, but in Daoist philosophy this devaluation is overturned.

'Absence' has both cosmological and pragmatic significance. The capacity of a tool to function requires space for movement. We tend to pay attention to what is present, *you* 有 (see below), to value it as a possession, but without absence there would be no room for it to grow. In a way, this is the mirror image of Parmenides' metaphysical argument that Being must be full (altogether without absence) and therefore can manifest no movement at all. On the contrary, if presence is to allow for transformation and growth, then it must be surrounded by, and filled with, absence.

"Wu" is often used in conjunction with another word to form a special kind of 'negation.' But just as absence is not the absolute negation of presence, so its 'negating' function is not a straightforward negation. It functions, rather, as a reversal of significance: recommending that we minimize our predilection for some activity. For example, *"wei"* 為 (actively constructing) is modified to form the notion of *"wu wei"* 無為, minimizing active control over our circumstances, so that phenomena may develop according to their own natural tendencies. *"Ming"* 名, naming, is modified to form *"wu ming"* 無名, refraining from dividing up and evaluating phenomena by applying artificially constructed categories. In a similar way, *"yu"* 欲, the desires that are stimulated by cultivating dissatisfaction, is

modified to become *"wu yu"* 無欲, the process of diminishing the stimulation of those artificial desires to an optimal minimum.

*xīn 心**: *heart; mind; heart–mind; thoughts and feelings; intention; awareness***
"*Xin*" is the heart, and is traditionally thought of as located in the solar plexus area at the center of the torso. It is taken to be the locus of all our mental and spiritual life: emotions, moods, thoughts, plans, intentions, perceptions, understanding, conscious awareness, and wisdom. In Western thinking, the heart is thought of as the seat of the emotions, while the mind is thought of as the seat of cognition and rational thinking. The two are often in conflict. But while these are not always harmonious, there is no presupposed conflict between the head and the heart in Chinese thinking. For Xun Zi, however, the sense of thinking and objective planning takes precedence, while the emotions are more closely associated with our natural tendencies (*xing* 性).

xìng 性**: *natural dispositions; natural tendencies***
The character "性" is composed of two radicals: "忄" (an alternative radical for 'heart') and "生" ('life'). It suggests that *xing* may be thought of as that which lies at the heart of natural life processes. *Xing* are the natural tendencies that propel the growth and development of each kind of thing, each kind having its own distinctive tendencies. It is often translated as "nature," though it appears to have greater fluidity than a strictly essentialist concept of nature.

Xun Zi gives a clear characterization: "The means by which life is as it is —this is called '*xing* 性'(natural disposition). […] That which requires no work, but is naturally so of itself—this is called '*xing* 性*.*' The likes and dislikes, delights and aggravations, and the sorrows and joys that are part of *xing* are called 'emotions' (*qing* 情)" (*Xun Zi* 22.1b). Elsewhere he writes, "Natural dispositions (*xing* 性) are given by *tian* (nature). They cannot be learned nor acquired through work" (*Xun Zi* 23.1c). Similarly, according to the *Zhong Yong,* "What *tian* endows (*tian ming* 天命) [in people] is called *xing* 性 (natural disposition)" (*Zhong Yong* 1).

yì 義**: *appropriateness; honorable; consummate conduct; integrity; rightness; conscientiousness***
"*Yi*" is a fundamental ethical concept. For the Ruists, it is used to express the admirable quality of one's highest ideals, or the ethical quality of actions that one strives for, that exemplify the most honorable conduct. The written character evokes close etymological associations with 美 (*mei,* beauty) and 善(*shan,* excellent, good). Confucius contrasts it with *li* 利, the personal gain that tempts us away from living up to our highest ideals. We might think of it as 'doing what is right,' not necessarily in the singular sense of '*the* right thing,' but whatever will enable us to manifest the nobler

aspects of our character. As Huang Chun-chieh put it, "In China, *yi* has never been a universal rule of conduct eternally fixed in the cognitive heavens, but instead has always been a matter of flexible judgment rendered to make ourselves fit for ever-changing situations" (C.-C. Huang 1993, 60). As the *Zhong Yong* states, "Appropriateness (*yi* 義) is what is fitting (*yi* 宜)" (*Zhong Yong* 20).

For Confucians, *yi* is integral to their core ethical concept cluster— *ren, yi, li, zhong, shu,* etc.—and is closely paired with *li*. Ritual propriety (*li* 禮) provides a normative context in which one acts. Acting with *yi* 義 (appropriateness) involves the exercise of a kind of moral intelligence within that context which both reaffirms the context and interprets it relative to each situation as it arises. Concrete exemplifications of *yi* are both informed by *li,* and, in turn, influence what will count as ritually proper—even if this 'influence' is largely in the form of reaffirmation. Thus, *yi* provides a subtle check on *li,* and provides a mechanism for conservative change and adjustment to circumstances, as well as a degree of personal assessment. The *Book of Rites* states: *"Li is the fruit of appropriateness (yi). If it harmonizes with what is appropriate and is concordant, then although it was not among the rites of the ancient kings, it may be instituted by virtue of its appropriateness" (Li Ji,* "Li Yun").

Kwong-loi Shun has described the relation between *li* and *yi* as follows:

A person with *li* is not only skilled in and disposed to follow the rules of *li* but is also prepared to depart from such rules when appropriate. This preparedness involves the operation of *yi,* and commitment to propriety. Even when a rule of *li* should be followed, *yi* still has a role to play in that one should ideally follow the rule with an awareness of its appropriateness to the situation and, in that sense, *make the observance of the rule not a mechanical action but a display of one's own assessment of the situation.*

(Shun 1997, 65, emphasis added)

In this light it is understandable that in the *Xun Zi, li* and *yi* often occur in the phrase *li-yi* 禮義 (ritual and propriety). *Li-yi* is both ritualized conduct regarded as appropriate, and a sense of appropriateness informed by traditional norms. As I (KH) wrote in *The Philosophy of Xunzi,* "A performance of *li* without *yi* is no performance of *li* at all. […] On the other hand, one cannot put *yi* into practice in a social vacuum. *Yi* requires *li* as a medium in which to operate" (Hagen 2007, 156).

Nevertheless, as fitting as the word "appropriate" is in some contexts, it doesn't seem to capture the high degree of excellence implied by the term "*yi,*" nor its normative weight. After all, Meng Zi tells us that he would choose *yi* over life itself (*Meng Zi* 6A10). And so, when *yi* seems to indicate a type of conduct, phrases such as 'impeccable conduct,' or 'consummate

artificial) is correlated with the contrast between *tian* (the natural) and *ren* (the human). This, of course, should not be understood as a direct opposition between mutually exclusive qualities: humans can also be genuine. There is nevertheless a tension between the two, and this tension underlies a key difference between Ruist and Daoist ideals.

The Ruists believe we can cultivate human authenticity and sincerity, *cheng* 誠, which can be thought of as the Confucian counterpart of *zhen*. The Daoists, however, contend that this is insufficient, and even hypocritical: artificial authenticity cannot be genuine. While *zhen* and *ren* are not mutually contradictory, sincere genuineness involves undoing artifice and returning to a more deep-rooted core of naturalness.

Though *"zhen"* can be translated as "true" in modern Chinese, we should be careful not to assume that the pre-Qin usage is equivalent to concepts of 'Truth' that arise in Western ontology and philosophy of language.

zhēn rén 真人: *the genuine(ly) human*

The Daoists see quite a dramatic contrast between the natural, *tian,* and the human, *ren*; and they are alarmed at the extent to which we value and cultivate the latter while remaining relatively oblivious to the former. We even disapprove of the apparent messiness of nature and prefer instead to construct artificial environments, and artificial dispositions in ourselves. But in doing so, we remove ourselves from what is most natural and most genuinely human. One central problem raised in the *Inner Chapters* of the *Zhuang Zi* is: how do we now recover what is most genuinely human?

A person who has done that would be a *zhen ren,* genuinely human person. Such a person rises above the petty obsessions of the workaday human world, and instead seeks out the Cosmic context in which that world is embedded, and from which the worries and anxieties of that world seem distant and less pressing. Those who are genuinely human develop a kind of tranquility that results from cultivating a Cosmic perspective on the trials and tribulations of everyday life. The attitude of the genuine human may be compared with that of the Western Stoic ideal. This ideal human is also sometimes referred to as a *zhi ren* (至人), a person who has reached the pinnacle of humanity.

zhōng 忠: *wholehearted commitment; loyal resolve; doing one's utmost*

"Zhong" is a central Confucian virtue; the term expresses a wholehearted resolve and commitment in the service of *dao*. It is the virtue cultivated by the subordinates in relation to those who are worthy of admiration and devotion, and as such is the counterpart of *shu* 恕. In family relations, *zhong* manifests as *xiao* (孝) the virtue of being a good child or descendent.

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1   The Indian concept of *"nicca"* or 'permanence' enters the Chinese language as *"chang"* and is co-opted to translate it, and *"buchang"* to translate *"anicca."* But this

sense is not present in pre-Qin usage. The word *"heng"* 恒, incidentally, has the sense of "lasting" or "enduring"; but *"chang"* has the sense of "constantly recurring." Some commentators confuse these two terms, incorrectly transposing these senses.

2 *Chun Qiu Zuo Zhuan* ("The Zuo Commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals"), Book 10 ("Duke Zhao"), Year 20; cf. Ames and Rosemont 1998, 254–58n216.

3 See also *Xun Zi* 3.9b and *Analects* 12.19, both quoted above in the section on *de* 德 (potency of character), p. 33; cf. also *Analects* 8.2, and *Xun Zi* 22.4a, pp. 79 and 217.

4 Notice that the character *zhi* 志 (aspiration) has the character *shi* 士 (aspirant) as a component.

5 Inoue and Kanie 1970, 79; cf. Najita 1998, 114.

Ru Jia: The School of Ru (Confucianism)

3

Da Xue 大學: "Expansive Learning"

INTRODUCTION

The *Da Xue* is included in the Warring States text, the *Li Ji* (*The Book of Rites*). Though traditionally attributed to Confucius and his student Zeng Zi, its true authorship is disputed. The Neo-Confucian philosopher, Zhu Xi (1130–1200), extracted the *Da Xue* from the *Li Ji,* along with the *Zhong Yong,* and grouped them with the *Analects* of Confucius and the *Meng Zi* (*Mencius*), to form "The Four Books." He maintained that the study of Confucianism ought to begin with the *Da Xue.* We agree that it does indeed provide an excellent introduction for the novice to Confucian philosophy.

The core of the text contains a 'Canon,' which succinctly articulates the central Confucian notion that self-cultivation, training oneself to realize one's full human potential, is key to transforming society. The underlying idea is that self-cultivation leads to the development of an influential virtuous character (*de* 德) that resonates with others in such a way as to inspire in them the desire to act appropriately and develop their own character. Confucians believe that this process is critical to achieving a harmonious social order.

The title of this work, *Da Xue* 大學, has been famously translated "Great Learning." But its contents may be most succinctly summarized: *learning to be great,* as Wing-tsit Chan has translated the phase (W.-T. Chan 1963, 86). The word "*xue* 學" means "learning" in a broad sense that includes cultivating personal excellence of character. The idea is this: Concentrating on the root—one's own inner character—is the most important ("great") learning, for this is the means of attaining personal excellence. And, further, great achievements in the world are rooted in the achievement of excellence in personal character.

While the word *da* 大 does mean "great," it also has the sense of expanding out and reaching everywhere. Indeed, the *Da Xue* is about precisely this: virtue at the individual level expands outwardly to influence increasingly larger circles until the whole world is ordered. For this reason, we render *"da xue"* as "expansive learning."

Now, to cultivate one's character, one must consider the actual circumstances of the world itself—both through introspection and empirical

observation—with calm, rigorous honesty. In other words, one begins the process of expansive learning, and in turn the process of ordering the world, by engaging in philosophical inquiry.

THE CANONIC CORE OF THE *DA XUE*

Note: Bracketed numbers here serve as reference markers corresponding to some of the elucidations provided in the commentarial portion of the *Da Xue,* which follows the Canonical Core.

The *dao* of expansive learning (*da xue* 大學) resides in illuminating (*ming* 明) illustrious potency of character (*ming de* 明德) [1], treating the common people as close relatives (*qin* 親),ᵃ and stopping only when one has achieved the utmost excellence (*shan* 善). When one understands that this is the stopping point, one may be resolved. Being resolved, one can achieve tranquility. Being tranquil, one can achieve peace of mind. With peace of mind, one is able to be reflective. Being reflective, one is able to obtain [excellence]. All phenomena have roots (*ben* 本) and extremities (*mo* 末, "branches"); affairs have ends and beginnings. If one understands what comes first and what comes later, then one is approaching the *dao* [of expansive learning].

> *Comment*: The metaphor of root and branches, *"ben mo,"* can be found in other Ruist texts, as well as Mohist, Legalist, and Daoist texts. The concern is what we should tend to the root in order to achieve success in affairs (the branches). The text here seems to suggest that there is a hierarchy between what comes before and what comes after, and to Western-trained ears this in turn suggests a strict foundationalism. But the relation between root and branches is a thoroughly organic one, and so the reader would be wise to investigate the fuller argument to see if the metaphor might not better be interpreted more holistically.

In antiquity, those who wanted their distinct influential virtue (*de*) to shine forth in the world first put their states in order. Wishing to put their states in order, they first proceeded to regulate their families. Wishing to regulate their families, they first proceeded to cultivate their personal character (*shen* 身). Wishing to cultivate their personal character, they first proceeded to properly align (*zheng* 正) their feelings (*xin* 心). Wishing to properly align their feelings, they first proceeded to make their thoughts and intentions (*yi* 意) authentic (*cheng* 誠) [6].

> *Comment: Cheng* 誠 is often translated "sincerity." But the commentary suggests that here the passage means, "One ought not deceive oneself."

Comment: What one does in private, and even what one merely thinks about, affects one's character. And one's character shows through when one acts publicly. Thus, one's character cannot be hidden, it "takes shape on the outside." (Cf. *Analects* 2.10, p. 92.) And thus, one must be "cautious in one's solitude" because private thoughts and actions have real effects in the world, mediated through the character that they reinforce.

Zeng Zi said, "What all see and condemn is grave indeed." Wealth enriches the home, virtue (*de* 德) enriches the person, and expansive feelings (*xin* 心) make the body content. Thus, *junzi* are sure to be authentic in their thoughts and intentions (*yi* 意).

7 "Cultivating personal character" resides in the proper alignment of one's feelings (*xin* 心). If one has anger and resentment as part of one's character, one will not be able to achieve this alignment. If one is fearful, one will not be able to achieve it. If one's feelings are not in alignment, then although one looks, one will not see; although one listens, one will not hear; although one eats, one will not know the flavor. This is why it is said that self-cultivation resides in the proper alignment of one's feelings.

8 [...] To say that regulating one's family resides in cultivating one's person means: people are partial regarding those they are close to and love, regarding those they disdain and despise, regarding those they are in awe of and respect, regarding those who are modest and engender pity, and regarding lazy pleasure-seekers. Thus, there are few people in the world who, though fond of something, apprehend its flaws, and though repulsed by something, appreciate its merits. Thus, as the saying goes: "No one knows one's own child's defects. No one knows a seedling's great [potential]." Because of this, if one does not cultivate one's person, one will not be able to regulate one's family.

9 To say that ordering the state surely involves first unifying one's family means that there are no people who, though unable to instruct their own families, are capable of instructing others. *Junzi* do not abandon their families to become instructors of the state. Being filial is how one serves one's lord. Brotherly respect is how one serves elders. Loving kindness is how one serves the masses. [...]

Comment: Confucians posit an analogy between the political and the familial: a ruler should be as a good parent, a loyal minister as a good son. And, as they see it, it is in the context of a family that the virtues necessary for proper governance, such as caring for others and loyalty, naturally arise and are cultivated.

The *Odes* say: "Befitting an elder brother, befitting a younger brother."

After one has been a true elder brother and a true younger brother, only then is one able thereby to educate the people of the state. […]

10 To say that pacifying the world resides in ordering one's state means: When those above are like good parents, the people will gladly be filial. And when those above behave with brotherly guidance (like an elder brother should) the people will gladly respond with brotherly respect (as a younger brother would). For when those above ensure that orphans are provided for, the people will not forsake [those in need]. It is on this basis that *junzi* have a way (*dao* 道) of assessing and of setting standards (*xie ju* 絜矩).

> *Comment:* The reference to elder and younger brothers is clearly a male-oriented way of making the point. Today we would make it with reference to older and younger "siblings." Such male orientation is not uncommon in the Confucian classics; for example, *Xun Zi* 14.7 refers to fathers as being "the most exalted in the family" (see comment to *Xun Zi* 21.1). Historically, this is undeniable. However, although the idea of different roles for different people, and the value of harmony over sameness, are central to Confucianism, for contemporary *philosophical* purposes we can interpret more inclusively without causing much distortion in the system as a whole.

What those above detest, do not impose on those below. With what those below detest, do not serve to those above. What is detested in the past, do not repeat over and over. What will be detested in the future, refrain from doing from the beginning. What is detested on the right, do not give to the left. What is detested on the left, do not give to the right. This is what is meant by the *dao* of assessing and of setting standards (*xie ju* 絜矩). […]

> *Comment:* The expression 絜矩 (*xie ju*) means: to assess (something) and then set appropriate standards. What the text is conveying is that the way this assessment is done, and the basis for the standards set, is something very much like empathetic consideration (*shu* 恕). See *Analects* 6.30 and 15.24, both on p. 83.

The Proclamation of Kang says: "A mandate (*ming* 命) [to rule] is not necessarily long enduring (*chang* 常)." With the *dao* of excellence (*shan* 善), one will gain it. If one is not excellent, one will lose it.

The book of Chu says: "In the state of Chu, nothing except excellence was regarded as precious." […]

ENDNOTES

a   This line may involve a corruption of the text. Cheng Yi emended the text by changing *qin* 親 (parents, relatives; to be emotionally close to) to *xin* 新 (new; renew). The meaning of the phrase then becomes, "renewing the common people." This is plausible. On the other hand, the idea of "treating the common people as

close relatives" is expressed in Commentary §§9 and 10, and is consistent with the Confucian analogy between the country as a whole and a family. However, *Meng Zi* 1A7 (p. 140) may seem to suggest the opposite.

[b] This statement also constitutes the entirety of *Analects* 12.13.

4

The *Analects* of Confucius

INTRODUCTION

Confucius

Confucius, or Kong Zi[1] (Master Kong), traveled among the various warring states in an effort to persuade rulers to implement his ideas, but met with little success. Believing himself to be a failure, Confucius settled into teaching a number devoted students. These include Yan Hui, his most admired student, as well as Zilu, Zigong, Zixia, Zizhang, Ranyou, Master Zeng, and Master You, all of whom play a role in the *Analects*.

Confucius was an exceptionally demanding teacher, expecting both effort and insight from his students. His purpose was not to instruct fixed doctrines, but to instill values, and provide subtle clues to guide students to their own insightful self-cultivation. Of his methodology, he said that if he held up a corner and the student couldn't come back with the other *three,* he would not go on with the lesson. His style of discourse, unlike that of Socrates, was not designed to define and delineate meanings by being as precise as possible, but to be open and suggestive, and inspire profound interpretation.

The *Analects* reveals Confucius to be a deeply concerned humanitarian determined to realize his vision of a harmonious social order by encouraging his students and the leaders he advises to take personal responsibility in doing their utmost for others, guided by ritual propriety (*li* 禮) and a high standard of appropriateness (*yi* 義). But the text also reveals Confucius as a complete human being—sometimes encouraging, sometimes playful, often critical, and sometimes even scornful. We see him confident in the face of danger, and distraught at the loss of a protégé. When speaking of himself, Confucius' words are modest. But the message of the *Analects* is to be found as much in the way Confucius conducts himself as it is in the literal content of what he says. And so, for example, when he seems to claim not to be an innovator (as he is made out to do in most translations of *Analects* 7.1), and yet uses terms like *ren* 仁 (humanity) and *junzi* 君子 (exemplary person) in new ways, his practice speaks louder than his modest self-descriptions.

Indeed, one of Confucius' methods was to teach by example. For this reason, passages that describe details of Confucius' own conduct are significant, because they are not just about chance quirks of personality without philosophical relevance. Rather, they ought to be regarded as conscious choices in behavior that reflect Confucius' view of exemplary conduct.

Confucius' Philosophy

Confucius' mission was to foster conditions conducive to social harmony (*he* 和). He was also intent on enabling people to cultivate their human potential to the fullest, that is, to realize *ren* (humanity). These projects are intertwined since, he believed, self-cultivation is critical to achieving social harmony. Self-cultivation, or "learning," broadly understood, was not primarily about acquiring book knowledge, though it does involve in various ways becoming cultured, and thus requires coming to understand one's tradition. But what was central was developing character, rather than the ability to pass a test (although in later times exams on Confucianism did become the basis for qualification for government service). As we saw in the *Da Xue*, if those in positions of authority cultivated themselves, their developed virtuous charisma (*de* 德) would motivate others to follow suit (see also *Analects* 12.17, 12.19, and 13.13, all on p. 93). At the same time, rulers who cultivate the ultimate virtue of *ren* (humanity) would institute appropriate policies that would contribute concretely to social harmony—though Confucius was less explicit than the *Da Xue* about this latter dynamic.

As philosophers, when we study the *Analects,* we are interested in understanding (and also analyzing and critiquing) Confucius' worldview, which requires understanding his conceptual framework. And thus we must, to whatever degree possible, become comfortable with the interrelated cluster of concepts most central to his thinking. For example, in Confucius' usage, the term *junzi* 君子 signifies exemplary persons who, being committed to impeccable conduct (*yi* 義), follow and exemplify norms of ritual propriety (*li* 禮) in order to develop what he regards as the consummate virtue, *ren* 仁. *Ren* involves loyal devotion (*zhong* 忠) to the service of others, guided by empathetic consideration (*shu* 恕). This all-too-brief description illustrates the interconnectedness of several of the key concepts that are stressed in the *Analects.* These 'humanistic' concepts form the core of Confucius' concerns. Although Confucius had a sense of reverence for cosmic matters, he thought that it was not a good use of our time to be concerned about such distant things. Confucius' project has multiple dimensions: ethical, social, political, cultural, aesthetic, etc. But they should not be conceived as separate projects: rather they are interrelated aspects of a single *dao.* The distinction between the ethical and

7.8 The Master said, "I will not instruct those who are not fervently striving to learn. I will not provide pronouncements to those who are not struggling to articulate their thoughts. I will not further instruct those who, having been provided with one corner, do not respond with three others based upon it."

5.28 The Master said, "In any ten-family town, there will surely be some as good as I in loyal resolve (*zhong* 忠) and honoring commitments (*xin* 信). But there will be none as fond of learning."

7.1 The Master said, "Conveying, but not initiating (*zuo* 作), I am faithful to, and fond of, antiquity. I liken myself to Old Peng."

> *Comment:* The character "*zuo* 作" generally has the sense of "to start, to make or create, or cause to arise." Although it is here usually understood to mean "innovate," it could equally be understood as "initiate" or "institute," that is, to cause his *dao* to be put into practice on a large scale. As far as innovation goes, while Confucius does not see himself as the originator of the *dao* that he has adopted, this passage need not be read as suggesting that he makes no contribution to it. Indeed, that would be clearly false. Confucius *has* innovated. It is possible, as some scholars suggest, that Confucius is just being modest. But the passage may reflect Confucius' coming to terms with his inability to attain the kind of position that would allow him to put his *dao* into practice in government. So, he has accepted the realities of his circumstance; he "understood *tian ming*" (see *Analects* 2.4, below, p. 86) and embraced his role as teacher and model. By this means he hopes to take his stand by establishing others (*Analects* 6.30, p. 83), his students. As for "Old Peng," his identity is uncertain. But one plausible account is that he was an exemplar who lived during the preceding dynasty "who was fond of transmitting ancient tales" (Slingerland 2003, 64).

2.11 The Master said, "[Those who] rekindle the old with an understanding of the new can be taken as teachers."

> *Comment:* Confucius' emphasis on tradition is well known. But Confucius also seems to acknowledge that, to be applicable, tradition has to accommodate contemporary realities. His philosophy is not about returning to the past, it is about making traditional wisdom relevant to the present. This is a point Xun Zi makes as well: "Those who are good at articulating the ancient must show its applicability to the present" (*Xun Zi* 23.3b). Xun Zi also characterizes Confucius as follows: "Confucius exhibited *ren* 仁 (humanity) and wisdom (*zhi* 知), and moreover was not beguiled. […] He promoted [his *dao*], and put it to use, without being obsessed by old customs" (*Xun Zi* 21.4).

7.28 The Master said, "There may be others who accomplish things despite their ignorance, but I lack this ability. I just hear of many things, select

what has been effective, and follow that. And I observe many things, and come to understand them. Having knowledge is second best."

> *Comment:* Confucius seems to be being sarcastic. Being able to accomplish things despite ignorance would indeed be impressive, but it is not plausible. In that sense, truly, the knowledgeable are "second to none." (There are, however, some passages in the Daoist anthologies that extol the virtues of unlearning, and unknowing, which they believe will bring us back to a more genuine core of human life, purified of artifice. If any of these predate Confucius, then it is possible that he is referring to their mysterious doctrines.) The second sentence expresses what can be called "selective traditionalism," which is augmented by continuous observation and reasoning, and adaptation to contemporary conditions, as suggested in *Analects* 2.11 (directly above). Confucius' selective traditionalism is exemplified in 15.11, directly below.

15.11 Yan Hui asked about statecraft. The Master said, "Follow the calendar of the Xia dynasty; ride in carriages of the Yin; wear the ceremonial cap of the Zhou. And for music, let it be the *shao* and *wu*. Put aside the music of the Zheng, and keep away from crafty people. The music of the Zheng is depraved, and crafty people are dangerous."

2.15 The Master said, "If one learns without thinking, one may be deceived. If one thinks without learning, one takes a dangerous chance."

15.31 The Master said, "I once went through a whole day without eating, and a whole night without sleeping, to just think. But it was of no benefit. I would have been better off learning."[3]

5.9 The Master asked Zigong, "Between yourself and Yan Hui, who will do better?"
  Zigong answered, "How could I dare hope to match Hui? Having heard one thing he thereby understands ten. When I learn one thing I thereby understand only two."
  The Master said, "You are not as good. You and I are not as good."

> *Comment:* Notice how Confucius appears to playfully criticize his student, tempering his criticism in a surprising way. Compare *Analects* 5.4, quoted in the introduction above (p. 70).

15.16 The Master said, "For those who do not constantly ask themselves, 'What to do? What to do?'—I simply don't know what to do with them."

> *Comment:* As the preceding passages suggest, Confucius' ideal students would not at all be mindless followers of clear and easily applied rules and norms, but rather thoughtful persons constantly striving to understand for themselves and adapt their behavior in appropriate ways to the complex nuances of real situations. Here

again Confucius seems somewhat playful in the way he makes his point.

7.22 The Master said, "Walking with a couple of people, there is sure to be a teacher for me among them. I identify their good points, and follow them; and what is not good I reform [in myself]."

4.17 The Master said, "When I encounter someone of merit, I worry whether I measure up to them. When I encounter someone flawed, I inwardly examine myself."

1.4 Zeng Zi said, "Every day I examine myself on three things. When planning for others have I not exhibited loyal devotion (*zhong* 忠)? In my interactions with my friends have I not been true to my word? And in what I pass on, have I not practiced it myself?"

5.27 The Master said, "I've had enough! I have not yet met anyone who, having become aware of their own faults, then takes themselves to task."

16.11 Confucius said, "[Regarding the boast,] 'Upon seeing moral aptitude (*shan* 善), I feel inadequate; seeing moral ineptitude, I recoil as if touching boiling water'—I have met such people, and have heard such claims. [Regarding the boast,] 'Dwelling in seclusion to pursue my aspirations, I put appropriateness (*yi* 義) into practice to realize my *dao*.' I have heard such claims, but have not yet met such a person."

> *Comment:* Even if people meeting this latter description exist, neither Confucius nor anyone else is likely to be influenced by them—after all, Confucius has never even met such a person. So, what difference could they make? And so, how could they realize their *dao* in the world? On one level, Confucius hasn't met such people because, even if they exist, they are reclusive. On another level, Confucius seems to be implying— perhaps half-jokingly—that the notion of a recluse realizing their *dao* doesn't even make sense: one cannot have *yi* as an ideal and live in seclusion, because *yi* is a social ideal.

2.23 Zizhang asked, "Can one know of events ten generations removed?" The Master answered, "The Yin dynasty was based on the ritual patterns (*li* 禮) of the Xia, what was added and subtracted can be known. The Zhou dynasty is based on the ritual patterns of the Yin, what was added and subtracted can be known. If there is a dynasty which inherits Zhou culture, although a hundred ages may pass, [Zhou culture] can be known [by them]."

> *Comment:* Zizhang's question is ambiguous. He is often interpreted as meaning: "Can the distant *future* be known?" If that is correct, Confucius seems to recognize the ambiguity in the way the question is put and answers as if it is about the past. In this way Confucius gently suggests to Zizhang that fortune-telling is not a topic

of interest to him. In any case, the passage conveys the message that apt adaptation of tradition is the way to produce cultural accomplishments worthy of being remembered.

15.29 The Master said, "People are able to broaden *dao* 道, it is not *dao* which broadens people."

Comment: The first part is relatively clear: *Dao* may be influenced by human efforts. But why does Confucius say that *dao* does not broaden people? Isn't *dao* supposed to facilitate social harmony by helping people become better? Perhaps a clue can be taken from *Analects* 12.1, in which Confucius says, "Becoming *ren* stems from oneself, how could it stem from others?" Just as one cannot become *ren* through the efforts of others, so too one cannot be improved simply because the *dao* prevails. Rather, one must choose to improve oneself and make the necessary efforts. Of course, this is not to say that *dao* does not play an important supporting role. Of course it does, as do other people in one's life. Confucius is just making a point: people need to take responsibility for their own self-cultivation, and for contributing to *dao*. They cannot expect *dao* to do it for them.

Ritual Propriety (*li* 禮)

For Confucius, a key aspect of tradition was ritual and the ritualized norms of impeccable conduct associated with one's roles, both expressed under the rubric of *li* 禮 (ritual propriety). Although Confucius advocated following these traditional norms, he emphasized that it was the underlying attitude that was of central importance, rather than the form of the ritual itself.[4] This is an attitude of deep reverence that invests the action and event with profound significance. And, as for the form, he was willing to endorse justified modifications. Still, such modifications would not be adopted lightly. As Xun Zi expresses in *Xun Zi* 17.11, traditional norms of ritual propriety act as reliable markers; it is risky to ford a river ignoring the tried and marked path.

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3.4 Lin Fang asked about the root of ritual propriety (*li* 禮). The Master answered, "What a great question! In the observance of ritual propriety, it is better to be frugal than extravagant. In mourning, it is better to grieve than to be meticulous."

Comment: Note that Confucius does not give rules about what must be done or not done. Instead, he provides more fundamental criteria by which to judge how to act. And the judgments are not absolute but

comparative. He would *rather* be frugal than extravagant. The above translation follows the current trend, interpreting the final sentence along the same lines as Legge, Lau, Slingerland, as well as Ames and Rosemont— all apparently following Zhu Xi. An alternative reading would be: "In mourning, it is better to grieve than to take it too lightly." According to James Legge, this was how the early commentators took it.[b] This early interpretation seems like a plausible alternative.

19.14 Ziyou said, "One should mourn as long as one truly grieves and then stop."

9.3 The Master said, "A hemp cap is called for by *li* (norms of ritual propriety), but nowadays a silk one is worn as a matter of frugality. On this matter I follow the common practice. To bow before ascending is called for by *li,* but nowadays people bow after ascending. This is arrogant. Although diverging from the common practice, I bow before ascending."

> *Comment:* In this case, *li* seems to refer to traditional ritual norms. However, Confucius indicates that he does not always follow these norms, but rather makes judgments regarding their fittingness to the context. One may assume that traditional norms are given the benefit of the doubt. But when there is a compelling justification for their modification, Confucius endorses change with his own behavior.

11.1 The Master said, "Country folk are the first to make advancements in ritual propriety and music. *Junzi* (nobility)[5] make advancements later. If I apply these, I follow the first advancements."

17.11 The Master said, "In singing the praises of *li* 禮 (ritual propriety), how could I be referring merely to jade and silk offerings? In singing the praises of music, how could I be referring merely to bells and drums?"

> *Comment:* Xun Zi comments on this passage saying, "If it is not timely and fitting, if it is not respectfully sociable, if it is not cheerfully enjoyed, although it may be beautiful, it is not ritual propriety (*li* 禮)" (*Xun Zi* 27.11).

3.12 "Sacrifice as if present" [means] sacrifice to the spirits as if the spirits were present. The Master said, "If I do not participate in the sacrifice, it is as though no sacrifice were made."

> *Comment:* The sense of "participating" intended here, presumably, involves being psychologically, not just physically, present. That is, the ritualistic gesture of an offering has no value unless one has also adopted the proper attitude of attentiveness and sincere reverence, as if one was actually in the presence of one's