

BOOK III: Chinese and Japanese Thought

I. Classical Chinese Thought

1. BEGINNINGS

The people of Yin [the Shang] honor spiritual beings, serve them, and put them ahead of ceremonies . . . The People of Zhou honor ceremonies and value highly the conferral of favors. They serve the spiritual beings and respect them, but keep them at a distance. They remain near to man and are loyal to him.

Book of Rites, “Record of Example,” part 2.

Heaven produces the teeming multitude:
As there are things, there are their specific principles (*tse*).
When the people keep to their normal nature,
They will love excellent virtue.
Heaven, looking down upon the house of Zhou
Sees that its light reaches the people below . . .

Book of Odes, no. 260.

Don't you mind your ancestor!
Cultivate your virtue.
Always strive to be in harmony with Heaven's Mandate.
Seek for yourselves the many blessings.
Before Yin [the Shang] lost its army,
Its kings were able to be counterparts to the Lord on High.
In Yin you should see as in a mirror
that the great mandate is not easy to keep.

Book of Odes, no. 235.¹

At the beginning of the tradition of Chinese philosophical thought, around 500-550 BCE, stands the figure of Kong Qiu, known in the West as Confucius, and a political problem—how could the perpetual warfare between the states contending for the rule of China be brought to an end? The Chinese never imagined, as did the Greek Heraclitus, that warfare might be a natural state within which one must contrive one's life,

¹Translations from Chan (1963) 7. Throughout this chapter I draw heavily on JeeLoo Liu (2006), Hansen (1992), Graham (1989), Schwarz (1985), and Yu-Lan (1937).

nor did they ever imagine that peace might come through mutual agreement among equal powers. There had to be a single ruler for all of China, just as Heaven was one for all the Earth, and no one could maintain such a rule without the “Mandate of Heaven.” The aristocracy, as in all Ancient cultures, were completely unable to feel secure in the presence of rival states, so the only alternative to Empire, or at least hegemony, was continuous warfare. The problem then, was conceived in these terms—what must a state and its ruler do to gain the Mandate of Heaven and the solitary rule of China, establishing lasting tranquility and prosperity?

There were a number of distinct professional schools within the literate bureaucratic class, each with its own theory how it ought to be done, and the story of Chinese thought begins with the debate among these schools and their critics. The Confucians of Ru, the school of Kong Qiu, which eventually prevailed over the others, developed its views from the political ideology of the Zhou dynasty. The Zhou had overthrown the Shang in 1045 BCE. They inherited a dry-field agriculture in the fertile plains along the Yellow River, depending on crops related to wheat and barley, and for neighbors, fishing and hunting cultures to the East and South, and pastoral cultures North and West. On The Yellow River culture a strongly stratified, clan-based aristocratic government had developed, with chariot armies, bronze weapons and walled cities, and, from perhaps as early as 1500 BCE, an early version of the ideographic writing current in China today. In 770 the Zhou withdrew from their westward capital to Loyang in the east, under the pressure of the pastoralists. Their fiefs grew into *de facto* independent states, and they ceased to dominate Qu and Yue in the South. China remained divided into small states, with occasional hegemonies, until 476. After that, with the consolidation of a smaller number of large states, hope arose for the reestablishment of the Empire. Several centuries of increasingly destructive warfare, the “Period of Contending States,” finally ended in 256 BCE with the Qin annexation of the Zhou state, and, in 221, China was united again on a permanent basis under the First Emperor, Shihuangdi.²

The early, Western Zhou were a bronze age people with a hereditary, feudal military aristocracy in control of all branches of the government. By the end of Zhou dominance the Aristocratic armies had been replaced by peasant levies armed with iron weapons, the population had increased dramatically due to an increased food supply from deep plowing with iron implements, the fortresses and administrative centers had become commercial cities, and the rule of the great families had given way to bureaucratic administrative structures under the thumb of the very greatest families, within which the *qi*, an erstwhile knightly class, sought employment. With the brief Qin dynasty, and then under the Han, the knightly class completed its evolution

²This was the title taken by the ruler of Qin once he controlled all of China, and “Shihuangdi” simply means “First Emperor.”

into civil servants. It received its education from and gave its loyalty to various ideologies developed by Confucians, Daoists, and other scholars we think of as forming the Classical Chinese schools of philosophy. During the Han a synthesis of these views established itself, and persisted as the foundation of later Chinese thought. In China, philosophy was always done in connection with the schools of administration training civil servants, usually by the teachers within such schools, exceptionally by intellectuals criticizing the doctrines of these schools.

China was isolated from the Indo-Europeans by the Himalaya Mountains, the central Asian deserts, and the long and difficult coastal passage around Indochina. Moreover, the center of Chinese civilization, along the Yellow River, later expanding south to the Yangzi River basin, was relatively compact, with each part accessible to the others, more or less like Mesopotamia. So the Chinese were aware of only one high, literate culture in the world, and, even given the limits set by primitive transport and communication, that culture could, though just barely, be united under a single government. Outlying districts with non-literate cultures provided some contrast, but these were reasonably viewed as barbarian, and carried no cultural authority. Thus the natural solipsism of an early civilized culture persisted in China right into the 19th century. Due to these conditions, the Chinese tended to think that their customs were simply correct, that there was only one natural way in which a sophisticated culture could develop among human beings, the Chinese way. The Emperor was the natural ruler of the entire world, and those outside the empire were not fully a part of the world order. If they failed to send tribute to the Emperor, such barbarians were in rebellion against Heaven itself. (Face was generally preserved by regarding diplomatic gifts as tribute.) Mesopotamia and Egypt, though each had to face the reality of other cultures with their own high civilizations, still tended to the Chinese view of things in their state cults, but philosophy in the West arose in Greece, which, as a borderland culture that developed its own identity partly in opposition to older civilizations, never took such a view. To them it was a given that there were many ways to structure society, and the problem of justifying their own way as preferable to others was recognized right from the beginning. The blinkered view of the Chinese eventually took its place in the West as well, though, for it characterized Judaism, the God of which was seen as the King of the World, even though most of the world did not worship him, and was injected into Western thought by Christianity.

The religious and political ideology of the Zhou was very different in a number of ways from anything found in the Mediterranean or in India. China never developed the Mediterranean vision of the gods as rulers of the world and owners of the lands, the king serving as the god's viceroy, and they never took the interest in creation myths and cosmology we find in the West. Chinese religion centered on ancestor and nature

worship, and various practices of divination associated with it. China, moreover, like India, and unlike Greece, had a fundamentally agriculturalist, land bound view of the world, but, unlike India, it has a four season climate with a marked winter. Thus China, unlike India, took an intense interest in the annual cycle and harmony with nature, and unlike Greece, with its mountainous, infertile land and dependence on navigation in a storm-ridden sea, assumed that the natural world was favorable to human beings. The Shang vaguely conceived a creator God, Ti, whom the Zhou replaced with Tian, "Heaven," a god with even less personality, scarcely distinguishable from the sky itself.³ The details of explanation of the great natural forces and the structure of the world was relatively unimportant to them. It was assumed that the natural world could become disordered if human relations and political society became sufficiently disordered, and natural catastrophes were blamed on such disorder. Hence divination was practiced to determine if major policy decisions were in accord with the natural balance of things or might upset it. (In divination the Chinese always put a question "what should we do?" rather than focusing, as in the West, on "What will happen?" Chinese thought is intensely practical.) As for myths of beginnings, in China they take the form of stories about culture heroes who discovered agricultural techniques, or, above all, instituted irrigation and flood control, which, as in Egypt and Mesopotamia, underlay civilized life.

In the account developed by the Zhou in justification of their rule, before the Shang there was the Xia dynasty (which, if it really existed, must have had no writing), and before that the Sage Kings, Yao, Shun, and Yu. Yao discovered astronomy, fashioning human society after the pattern of the Heavens, which means, if we rationalize it, that he provided the farmers with an astronomic clock so they would know when to plant, and he invented government to spread the information abroad and supervise communal activities so that they would accord with the Heavens. At the end of his reign, Yao decided his son was insufficiently virtuous to rule, and selected Shun as his successor, who was the most filial of men. Shun was an unmarried man of low position whose son was blind, father stupid, mother deceitful, and half-brother arrogant, and who yet was filial and lived in peace with them all. The Emperor agreed that this was promising, and tested him further by marrying him to his two daughters, who would have resented such a match. After three years his household was still peaceful, and so the Emperor abdicated and named Shun his successor. Shun's parents and younger brother were so nasty that they repeatedly tried to kill him, but Shun, to save his parents from themselves, endured it all, always obedient, and always cleverly finding ways to survive, and see to their welfare. After all, his duty

³See Dubs (1959). For this section I use Chan (1963) Ch. 1, Graham (1989) 1–8.

was to have children who would then carry on the ancestral cults and so preserve his parents in the afterlife.⁴ Shun preserved Yao's achievements by establishing filial piety, the honoring of familial roles, at the basis of government, and then, like Yao, he searched for a worthy successor outside his own line. He chose his minister of public works, Yu, who had single-handedly, through super-human efforts, brought under control the flooding of the Yellow River. Silt accumulated upstream and blocked the passage of water, and then, suddenly, released it when the natural dam broke. By dredging and other measures, Yu brought the river under control, working without stop for seventeen years, never once returning home until the job was finished. (This is a rationalized version of the tale—Yu was said to have carved out the rivers themselves for the first time, as a vast drainage system.) For his selfless care for the people, Shun made him Emperor. The government was established, then, on concord with Heaven, filial piety, and concern for the welfare of the people. Yu passed the succession on to his son, and his son to his, which, natural as it is, turned out to be a mistake in the end. Thus began the Xia dynasty. Over time, his successors became less and less competent, until a truly oppressive ruler arose, given to the pursuit of sexual pleasure and a dupe of his highly skilled but evil chief minister, and was duly overthrown by the heroic founder of the Shang Dynasty.⁵ Then the process repeated itself, and the Zhou Dynasty was founded. Gradually myth becomes legend and history, but always it remains a morality tale from which the sage can learn the intent of Heaven.

The lessons here are plain: the Emperor must be careful of women, who can lead one into debauchery (particularly since the Chinese were polygamous, and there would be competition among wives for influence over the Emperor); he must be careful to appoint the virtuous, not merely the skillful, and look after the people's welfare; he must strive to be filial, to preserve the virtues of his parents and ancestors; and he must follow the intent of Heaven, although relying on technology to shape the natural order to human purposes. Sometimes other lessons were drawn by more radical thinkers, in particular, lessons critical of father-son succession and in favor of appointing the genuinely worthy to office. The Zhou, who had shaped these tales, interpreted them in terms of the central lesson, that the ruler had to gain and retain the Mandate of Heaven, or he would be overthrown.

The Zhou Dynasty was founded by King Wen, who came to the throne of the Zhou state about 1100. According to the received story, he revered the office of the Emperor of the Shang, and would not attack

⁴See the selection from *The Book of History* translated in De Bary et al. (1960) 8–10.

⁵Something similar happens in Gibbons's account of the decline of the Roman Empire beginning with Marcus Aurelius, who is succeeded by his natural son, not an adopted son chosen for his merit.

him, despite his clear lack of virtue. The Zhou, west of the Shang, were a barbarian (that is, pastoralist) ally of that state, who buffered it from the barbarians further west. Wen converted this barbarian state from nomadic herding to agriculture, taking the Shang customs as his pattern. (That is, a tribe of nomads settled down and inserted itself as the government in a preexisting agricultural community, much as in Mesopotamia, where pastoral peoples repeatedly conquered the cities of the river valleys.) Such was his virtue, the story goes, that as Zhou, the inconveniently named Shang Emperor, became more and more arbitrary and violent, the allies of Shang turned to Wen for leadership. Wen died in 1050, and his son, King Wu, finally led the rebellion and overthrew the Shang in 1045. But King Wu died within a couple of years, before the conquest had been stabilized, leaving a minor heir. The Duke of Zhou, one of the King's brothers who had remained at the capital instead of taking a fief, declared himself regent for the boy, and, of course, immediately the King's other brothers challenged this action. The Duke got control of the situation after several years of fighting, and then, when the boy king came of age, abdicated in his favor. Thus he established himself as a model of brotherly duty, and consolidated the Zhou rule for generations to come.⁶

The Zhou justified their overthrow of the Shang Emperor through a revision in religious doctrine, shifting from the Shang emphasis on ancestor worship to worship of *Tian*, Heaven. Ancestor worship had become so dominant so early in Chinese religious thought that even the origins of the world had come to be viewed as the work of human ancestors. Heaven was conceived to be filled with the great ancestral spirits of the royal family. But the function of this worship was purely civic, for the Chinese had no active belief in a personal afterlife.⁷ People were conceived to have three sorts of soul within them, the *hun*, which joined the *hun* of one's ancestors in Heaven, the *po*, which remained at the grave, becoming weaker and weaker until it sank down to the Yellow Springs below the earth, where it eventually ceased to exist, and the *qi*, the life-breath which rejoined the *qi* of the whole universe at death.⁸ The *po* came closest to being the individual self carrying the individual's history with it, but philosophers tended to identify the self with the *qi*, and so not to consider

⁶Such was the Duke of Zhou's foresight that he advised the young king to found an alternative capital in the east at Loyang, to which the Zhou were able to retreat when the pressure of the western barbarians became too great several centuries later, in 770.

⁷There are a number of stories in the Chinese tradition of various immortals living in faraway lands to the West or East, and these stories form a significant part of Daoist lore. From the Han on, Emperors and high officials often spent a great deal of time and money trying to find an elixir of immortality, and there were supposedly a number of practitioners of Daoism who had achieved immortality. But none of this was available to ordinary people, or, indeed, to any except a very small number of extraordinary people, and what was at issue was always, it seems, the attainment of immortality, not rebirth in another world. That notion only entered China with Buddhism.

⁸Welch (1957) 112.

a personal survival after death as a meaningful option at all. The *po* and *hun* were both objects of the ancestor cult, which aimed to keep the former from turning resentful and harming people, and to gain the favor of the latter, and with it the favor of Heaven. Under the Zhou, this ancestor worship was abandoned as the core of civic religion. The view was pressed that favor with Heaven was a matter of being in harmony with nature, and had nothing to do with the intercession of one's ancestors, or else that such intercession depended entirely on one's virtue and not on one's particular ancestral connections or behests. Given their views about virtue, these two were functionally equivalent.

Thus, one document from the Zhou in the *Book of History* tells us that,

the best course is to establish virtue, the next best is to establish achievement, and still the next best is to establish words. When these are not abandoned with time, it may be called immortality. As to the preservation of family name and bestowment of membership in the clan branch in order to preserve ancestral sacrifices uninterrupted from age to age, no state is without these practices. But even those with great emolument cannot be said to be immortal.⁹

Only Mozi among philosophers talks about the *po*, and even he ignored the *hun*. A *po* is, in the doctrine of the Mozi's followers, a ghost, a persisting drive such as the lust for revenge that carries on after a person's death, not the full personality of the dead person.¹⁰ The Mohists used ghost stories to bolster their ethics with the expectation of revenge for wrong-doing even when the victims were dead, but they never suggested, as, for instance, Plato did, that we should behave ourselves so as to gain a favorable afterlife. The *hun*, which goes to Heaven, goes to Heaven in *every* case, and has the same fate regardless of virtue or vice. Before the introduction of Buddhism the Chinese never considered the notion that the character of the individual's own afterlife could be shaped by his moral character.

It is characteristic of ancestral spirits that they have no further history after death, and myth is isolated in the past, when those things that establish their characters and powers were done by them while still alive. In the end, though, even the particular events of most ancestors' lives are of little importance—the spirit comes to be defined entirely by his role as the family elder, and the family's envoy in the heavenly court, and his life is forgotten.¹¹ The Chinese often make genuinely notable ancestors the objects of public cult, erecting shrines

⁹*The Book of History*, Duke Xiang, 24th year. Chan (1963) 13. The point is that no endowment for the sake of future sacrifices lasts forever. One can imagine what the author of this remark might have thought of the burial practices of the Egyptian Pharaohs.

¹⁰*The Book of History*, Duke Chao, 7th year. Chan (1963) 12-13.

¹¹Schwarz (1985) 23 ff. I rely on Schwarz, Chapter 1, a good deal for Chinese religion under the Shang and Zhou.

to philosophers such as Kong Qiu, the general, Guan Yu, and innumerable others of various degrees of popularity. In China, an exceptional person easily takes on a numinous aura even before his death. As for the nature gods who play the central role in the Mediterranean, it seems clear that they had been more highly developed at one time, but their cult had come to be of secondary importance under the Shang, and so their mythology had degenerated. Indeed, their mythology tended to be assimilated to ancestor worship, and among the Zhou Tian was identified in one myth as the ancestor of the Zhou people, although his transformation was by no means complete, for he was still clearly the supreme god of nature, and had never lived a human life.

The Zhou Emperors, following practices developed in the late Shang, opposed “communicating with the spirits,” that is, they suppressed ancestor worship and the priests who consult the spirits in divination as a state cult. They did not attack ancestor worship in general, even holding that it was each family’s duty to maintain its own cult. They substituted worship of the nature gods, in particular Tian, for ancestor worship, thereby claiming that nature itself supported their reign. Thus they referred to their empire as “all below Heaven,” and reserved for the Emperor, Tian’s chief priest, the title, “Son of Heaven.” This had some inconvenient consequences, for the core of their doctrine was that Heaven could choose whom it wanted to give the mandate, and the choice would not always fall on the same family. If a family declined in virtue, it could be expected that it would be overthrown, with Heaven’s approval, by another family, as the Shang had been overthrown by the Zhou. It is difficult to construct a rationale for regime change that does not leave it open that the new regime might also some time fall. Providing a justification always means providing standards and ideals one must live up to.

The Zhou, upon their victory, established a feudal system, just as the Barbarian invaders of Rome did in Europe, endowing members of the family in each district with a hereditary possession of the command of the garrison, as it were, and adopting allies into the family so they could share in the spoils. (Since the Chinese were polygamous, the King would have dozens of brothers to take over the various fiefs.) Thus they made the organization of their clan the basis of the rule of the empire they had gained. This fief system was supplemented with a bureaucratic system in which expert advice and external regulation was provided by officials from the Emperor’s court. This seems to have worked out well, and from the recorded histories, the Early Zhou maintained peace within the Empire, waging war only with barbarians, for perhaps 200 years. In the Later Zhou and afterwards, the Early Zhou was seen as an ideal government from which things had declined. Zhou

customs and institutions enjoyed the same high regard as Roman law did in medieval Europe.¹²

China never saw the gods as the source of ethical standards, since it never conceived the gods as legislating for human beings. Rather, it took nature to provide the standards, so that it is natural that good should happen to the good, bad to the bad. Those who act in accord with their own nature (*ze*), or virtue (*de*), the highest development of the powers and competence natural to them, will be good. “Man and Heaven are one”—human beings are a natural part of the world, not, as often assumed in the early Middle East and Greece, somehow alien to and opposed to nature and its gods. Some men are bad, but then some trees are bad—not everything attains to its proper virtue—some, due to the unfavorable conditions under which they develop, turn out badly. The assumption that one’s virtue (*de*) is a consequence of the appropriate development of one’s nature (*ze*) is present in the *Odes*, a collection of songs from the time of the early Zhou. The assumption is also explicit in *The Doctrine of the Mean*, which reflects Confucian influence, and again, in “the Great Norm,” from the earliest, Zhou documents in the *Book of History*, both documents that became central to the Han synthesis of Chinese thought. The upshot is that spiritual beings (one’s ancestors) should be served, but this means keeping them happy and out of mischief, not following their orders. The spirits have some concern with ethics, and respond favorably to virtue rather than sacrifices, as would be expected if they act in accord with their *ze*, but they have no particular authority that justifies consulting them, and they do not legislate. One knows what is to be done from one’s own *ze* if one has attained to *de*, not from the spirits.

The Zhou justified their rise to power by claiming that the Shang had forfeited the Mandate of Heaven. The last Shang ruler apparently left a propaganda opening to his opponents, who claimed he lost his rule because he “did not make himself manifest to Heaven.”¹³ Perhaps his religious policy emphasized his familial ancestral cult, and neglected the nature gods. Or, more likely, his ancestral cult could not easily be taken over by the Zhou, since the ancestral heaven was full of native Chinese families, and had none of the barbarian Zhou families represented in it, so the Zhou resorted to religious reform. The mandate of heaven, they claimed, Heaven’s command to rule, not merely its permission, goes to the government that reverences heaven, and does good for the people, and the dynasty falls if aristocrats outside it gain the support of heaven and the people.¹⁴ It is not that the people choose, or that the legitimate power of the ruler depends on the consent of

¹²Schwarz (1985) 41–46, drawing on the work of Harlee Creel.

¹³Schwarz (1985) 39.

¹⁴*Book of History*, Prince Shi; *Odes* 235—Chan (1963) 6–7.

the governed. Rather, the people are a natural force to which one must adapt. *Li* (state ritual) should be used to make the people virtuous, and then Heaven will be pleased. To attempt to please Heaven by sacrifices betrays an irrational and superstitious attempt to bribe the world to give us good results when we have done what naturally produces bad results. In all this the people are viewed as essentially passive, so that virtue flows downward from the aristocrats, who have a natural right to rule.¹⁵ This is not to say that the King is always right, or the only one whose opinion counts, for a minister may correct a King, though he must be very respectful in doing so, but commoners, though they may complain, and their complaints should be heeded, should give no advice to those above them. They are not parties to the discussion, and have no standing to correct their betters.¹⁶

The nature of the ruler's virtue is to reconcile opposed interests and opposed factions, and thus to benefit all. In Kong Qiu there is frequent reference to the "sage king," *wang*, governing through ceremonial alone, which is rooted historically in the notion of a priest-King, who functions magically to bring prosperity and order to the Empire. Such notions may make the King indispensable, but they are also used by lower orders in the government to make him irrelevant, relegating him to an elaborate, all-absorbing court ceremonial that leaves them free to run things as they please. Kong Qiu does not seem to think that anyone except the true emperor appointed by heaven would have the power to regulate all things by his ritual acts, and the true emperor is expected as a Messiah or savior, emerging at some indefinite point in the future. In practice, we have to live with a *bo*, leader of a hegemony whose power rests on military force. A *bo* can accomplish a great deal, and Kong Qiu remarks that were it not for one such pragmatic ruler, China would have been overrun by western barbarians.¹⁷ Kong Qiu thought such a ruler ought to attempt to follow the way of a *wang* as far as he can, accomplishing things through ritual and the influence of his virtue rather than force, in somewhat the way that a Christian Bishop might urge on his King that he follow the way of Christ as far as he can.

¹⁵*Book of History*, "The Announcement of Duke Chao," Chan (1963) 8.

¹⁶In the *Book of History*, the advice given to the third Emperor of the Zhou by the Duke of Zhou, upon his building the new capital at Lo, suggests that it is wrong to say that previous dynasties had been allotted a certain time by Heaven to rule, and could not have prolonged their rule by holding to virtue. The Emperor must be virtuous, so that the commoners will imitate him. It is *not* said here that he should insure justice, or receive advice from anyone other than the elders among the aristocracy. The question is how to get the commoners to be virtuous, and the answer is that one cannot do this through laws or punishments. Of course, the Emperor's virtue includes humanity (*ren*), a just concern for the commoners' welfare. The situation the Duke faces is that the Empire is going to decline, so that the old capital will have to be abandoned under barbarian pressure at some future time. The Duke wants to establish a refuge for this eventuality, and he wants to address the question whether this, and further decline, is inevitable, or the situation can be turned around. Translated in De Bary et al. (1960) 10–12.

¹⁷*Analects* XIV 17. For this paragraph, see Waley in Confucius (1938) 49–50.

In 771 the Western Capital of the Zhou was overrun by barbarians, and the capital was moved to Loyang in the East. The lost territories were regained after a few years, but only through the Emperor's reliance on the feudal lords, to whom he had to make many concessions. The Zhou Emperor became a mere figurehead. There were at first a multitude of small independent states, but continuous warfare gradually reduced the number until only half a dozen independent states remained, and then Qin reestablished the Empire in 221. In this 500 year period warfare resulted in enormous suffering, but also created an environment in which innovation and social mobility attained unprecedented levels. This was the time that iron was introduced into China, and the old chariot armies gave way to massive battalions of lower-class soldiers armed with iron weapons. The situation was dire enough so that thinkers began to call into question the truth of the Zhou notions about *Tian* and the Mandate of Heaven. Why had the mandate been left in suspense for so long, leaving everything below in disorder? Surely the problems of the later Zhou were due to the Emperor's loss of virtue, so that he could not perform his function of uniting the feudal states and bringing peace to the Empire, but then why did Heaven not pass the mandate on to another family? This is the question that dominates the thought of the period, and it led naturally to the question: If Heaven is not going to intervene, what can *men* do to bring about a reunification of the Empire in peace under a single ruler? In practice, of course, the question for any given state was how *its* king could become Emperor. The Confucians looked for the answer in the success of the Zhou, and, skeptical of the influence of those practices on Heaven, considered the possibility that it was the Zhou ceremonial that was the secret of their success in establishing unity.

By the time of the Qin, who reestablished unity after the Zhou Empire fell apart, the feudal structure of the Zhou, dealing with ever more complex administrative tasks and requiring ever more personnel to handle the workload, had come to rely on "scholars," administrators serving under the feudal lords, and educated in the art of writing (which had become widespread only in the beginning of the period of disunion), mathematics, the literature and ritual of the Zhou, and military arts, who ruled the administrative divisions of the Empire in place of the old feudal chiefs. In fact the scholars represented, for the most part, the lower and middle echelons of the old aristocracy, though rich members of the merchant and trade classes had some opportunity to gain the requisite education, and the scholars developed into a separate class over time. The power of the aristocracy always vied with that of the civil service, and in most times the civil service was firmly under the thumb of the hereditary nobility, but it did most of the work, and it carried on its own traditions as the aristocratic regimes above it came and went.

Gradually, it became the case that one entered onto its lower rungs, at least, by examination in the

Confucian classics, and prepared for these examinations by attendance at a school. We might compare the Roman Empire, with its system of education in its own classics, and the emphasis on literary culture in its civil service. The classical disputes between the various philosophical schools in China should be viewed first of all as disputes between rival schools of civil service, and a state might choose early on to draw its officers from, say, the Mohists, or the Confucians. Those that sought a more private kind of salvation, like Zhuangzi, felt compelled to argue that a preference for the private life was good and permissible, and they often turned to criticism of the entire system of government, suggesting it would be better to get by with as little government as possible. The attempt of the Qin to break loose from dependence on the schools and their values ended in what was later viewed as disaster, and the Chinese civil service settled in under the Han dynasty for a lifetime of more than a millennium. The Confucian orthodoxy came to represent the official philosophical justification for the power of this class of scholar-administrators.

The contribution of the Confucian philosophical outlook to the stability of this long-lived political system is to be found first of all in¹⁸ an ethic rooted in social and emotional bonds produced not by reason, but in family relationships and custom reinforced by ceremony and literature. This ethic emphasized duty and consideration for others as well as a reverence for the past and the established ways, and undermined personal aggrandizement and “individualism” in thought and action. It was complemented by pragmatic, rational political policy, often officially disavowed when it seemed to clash with ethical concerns, but followed nonetheless. It was supported by the view that human beings are a part of nature, reflecting in their lives the structure of the world. Thus a justification was provided for the way things are, and emphasis placed on the harmony of opposed forces, and cooperation, rather than a conflict between good and evil. The public ethic was supplemented by plausible salvationist personal philosophies, Daoism, and, later, Buddhism, which were tolerant of social norms even as they criticized them, and permitted those members of the civil servant class who felt the need an ideological basis for escaping, at least on occasion, from public duties. In these philosophies idealism was a personal matter rather than publicly disruptive ideology, and the sage expected to bring about reform, if at all, by example rather than activism. The Confucian orthodoxy displayed a determinedly pragmatic bent, judging thought by its social usefulness, and refusing to explore rational foundations and presuppositions in the skeptical and speculative manner characteristic of European and Indian thought.

¹⁸Graham (1989) 6.

There were drawbacks to all this, of course. The Confucian world view provided no foundation for the development of the speculative sciences, for it eschewed the sort of explanation that depends on seeing how a thing is structured from its parts, and never developed mathematics or its associated logic, relying instead on analogical, and often merely metaphorical, argumentation rooted in literary pursuits. In the political realm, the Chinese style of thought could not provide a basis for a radical social critique, and the stability in social institutions it contributed to might be viewed as stagnation in the light of the development of Western democracy. But whether one approves or criticizes, Chinese philosophy is different enough in its background and presuppositions from Western and Indian thought to provide a fascinating basis for comparative study. Moreover, in its period of creative growth, leading up to the Han synthesis, Chinese philosophy takes an interest in explanation, criticism and argument, displays instabilities and discontent with the established view, and explores theoretical options, similar to those found in the Indo-European tradition. The victory of the Confucian synthesis was not preordained by the shape of the 'Chinese mind', but the outcome of political and social institutions. It is perhaps an object lesson in what happens when the philosophical community cannot establish an existence and social function independent of a totalitarian government.

Chronology of Classical Chinese Writings

Shang Dynasty – 1500 - 1045 BCE

Western Zhou Dynasty – 1045 - 771 BCE

Eastern Zhou Dynasty – Spring and Autumn Period – 770 - 453 : Contending States Period – 453 - 221

Before Kong Qiu—(1) *Book of History*, to 626 BCE, a collection of sources with introductions, arranged in chronological order, from the legendary Emperors Yao, Shun and Yü (3rd millennium BCE), the Xia Dynasty, ending with the monumentally degenerate Chieh, the Shang or Yin founded by Tang, to the early Zhou, founded by Wen and his son Wu. Most of this is forgery from as late as the 3rd or 4th century CE, but there is a core of genuine Zhou documents, together with middle and late Zhou forgeries attributed to earlier dynasties. Supposedly Kong Qiu wrote a brief introduction to each document. (2) The *Yi Jing*, or *Book of Changes*—the basic text gives clues to the interpretation of divination by means of bones and tortoise shells. The ten “wings” of the brief interpretations were supposed to have been written by Kong Qiu, but is in fact Qin or early Han.

550–500 BCE **Kong Qiu**. (2) *Analects*. (3) The *Li Ji*, *Book of Rites*, a collection of texts on a wide variety of topics, from the late Chou and early Han. (4) *Spring and Autumn Annals* — chronicles covering 722–481, without continuous narrative, sometimes later attributed to Kong Qiu, since they center on his home state of Lu. These records are extremely brief and obscure, and so were provided with commentaries of which the *Zuo Zhuan*, the *Gongyang*, and the *Guliang* commentaries from the early Han are the most important. (5) *Book of Odes*, a collection of poetry, much of it associated with the state cult, from the Early Zhou, but some of it popular songs given interpretations with political import. Five of the songs are believed to come from the Shang. It was later said to have been collected by Kong Qiu, a view now rejected, though many of the poems are contemporaneous with him. (1) – (5) are the five “Confucian Classics.” A sixth, the “Music,” is apparently lost.

479–381 BCE **Mozi**.

403–221 BCE **Zuo Zhuan** (commentary on the Spring and Autumn Annals, containing much literary fiction, romances, speeches, provision of background and simplified accounts of the arts—an excellent source for the life of the upper classes); **Guo Yu** (records of trials, with arguments on both sides, and a brief account of the decision made and outcome); **Guanzi** (a collection of essays on various topics from the Xijia Academy, including one section that amounts to an utopian historical novel, Yangist material, and a lot belonging to the Legalist school).

ca. 400–300 BCE **Laozi**, **Zhuangzi**, **Mohism**, **Mengzi** (371–289), **Hui Shi**.

ca. 300–250 BCE **Xunzi**, **Han Feizi**, **Gongsun Long**, **Zou Yen** and the **Yin Yang** school. The *Lu Spring and Autumn*, an encyclopedic work with various authors, about 240.

221 BCE Unification of China under the Qin Dynasty. With the Qin and the Han, the initial creative period of Chinese philosophy comes to an end, and Confucianism becomes entrenched.

206 BCE The beginning of the Han dynasty. The *Huainanzi*, an encyclopedic work of the Yin-Yang school. *Book of Rites*, which includes The *Doctrine of the Mean* and the *Great Learning*. These last two, together with the *Analects* and the *Mengzi*, form the “Four Books” selected by Zhu Xi (1130–1200) as basic texts, together with Zhu Xi’s commentaries on them, for civil service examinations after 1313. *Intrigues of the Warring States*, which covers 475–221, is a somewhat cynical historical novel, reacting against the moralizing histories, about the exploits of a hero leading an alliance of Wei Han and Zhu against Qin.

100 BCE **Shi Ji (Records of the Grand Historian)** of Si Ma Chien (145–85) (a work of synthesis, attempting to organize the various historical traditions of the different states, and squaring their chronologies with one another) — 12 chapters of annals, 10 of chronological tables, 8 of treatises, including material on rites, music, the calendar, astrology, various sacrifices, rivers and canals, standards of commerce and economic developments, 30 of history of the states of Zhou times and some fiefs of the Han, and 70 of biography of famous statesmen, generals, philosophers and such, and accounts of foreign lands. An autobiography of Si Ma Chien ends the work. The point of history up to this time had been the aggrandizement of ancestors, and consequent validation of the current rulers, while making moral points through analyses of great rulers. Si Ma Chien claims to produce an accurate account, rescuing notable men from oblivion and doing justice to famous men of the past. He was the first author to take any interest in cultural matters, and the affairs and customs of the common people.

2. KONG QIU (CONFUCIUS) IN THE *ANALECTS*

Changju and Jieni were cultivating their fields together. Kong Qiu was passing that way and told Zilu to go and ask them where the river could be forded. Changju said: “Who is that holding the reins in the carriage?” Zilu said: “It is Kong Qiu.” “You mean Kong Qiu of the state of Lu?” “Yes” “If it is he, then he already knows where the ford is.”¹⁹ Zilu then turned to Jieni. Jieni asked: “Who are you, sir?” “Changju is my name.” “You are a follower of Kong Qiu of Lu, are you not?” “That is so.” “The whole world is swept as by a torrential flood, and who can change it? As for you, instead of following one who flees from this man and that, you would do better to follow one who flees the whole world.” And with that he went on covering the seed without stopping. Zilu went and told Kong Qiu, who said ruefully: “One cannot herd together with birds and beasts. If I am not to be a man among other men, then what am I to be? If the Way prevailed in the world, I should not be trying to alter things.”²⁰

*Analects XVIII 6*²¹

Kong Qiu of the state of Lu, called Confucius in the West,²² was an itinerant teacher, training young men to enter public service, who advocated a return to the customs and culture of the Early Zhou as the way for a state to gain the Mandate of Heaven reunify China. There are many details in his traditional biography, including exact dates (551–479), but it is so encrusted with legendary material that it is very difficult to put together a trustworthy picture of his life.²³ The oldest and most reliable material is in the *Lunyu*, the “assorted

¹⁹This is sarcasm. Kong Qiu fancies himself a sage, and so must know everything.

²⁰Or, “I should not be considering changing places with these two.”

²¹As translated in De Bary et al. (1960) 22. One might note a parallel here to the Bodhisattva ideal of compassion, and in general to the communalist approach to life in the Mahayana.

²²“Confucius” is a Latinized form of “Kong fuzi,” “the Master Kong.”

²³For what it is worth, Ch. 47 of the *Book of History* relates that he was an official of Lu who rose eventually to become prime minister, but resigned when the king ceased to take an interest in affairs. The state of Qi had sent a collection of female dancers and entertainers to him which distracted him from his duties. It seems Kong Qiu may have attempted to institute reforms and been ousted and sent into exile by the feudal lords, or the king himself, who was not really interested. His plan would have been to get Lu to adopt the institutions of Early Zhou, which he trusted would end up introducing harmony into the state and lending the king influence with his neighbors so that his reforms would spread, eventually restoring the effectiveness of the Zhou king, or leading to the Mandate of Heaven being transferred to Lu. After the failure of his reforms, Kong Qiu wandered about in exile as a teacher for thirteen years, and was finally permitted to return to Lu as a private individual for the last three years of his life. He is most often portrayed as wandering in exile followed by his group of devoted disciples, who recorded his sayings. It is possible, though perhaps not likely, that this biography is entirely invented, and he never did hold a major public office, though his students were training to enter public

sayings,” or *Analects*. There must have been other early records, drawn on by Xunzi and Mengzi, for instance, most of whose quotations of the Master are missing from the *Analects*, but we don’t possess them now. It seems the last five chapters of the *Analects* (16–20) are later additions to the text, and Chapter 10 is perhaps a ritual text with no connection to Kong Qiu at all, though a Confucian would view it as a text describing the Master’s own style in matters of ritual and etiquette, something to observe and imitate, at least in spirit.²⁴ Chapters 3-9 and 11-15 form the most authentic and coherent representation of early Confucianism, or at least one school of it, that we have.²⁵

The *Analects* portrays a teacher who cannot obtain the high office necessary for him to reform the government. He travels from state to state with his disciples seeking a ruler who will employ him. He was certainly a teacher of the culture of the Zhou, preparing young men for public service, and he gained some reputation as such. He claims to preserve a tradition rather than presenting new doctrines, teaching *li*, the etiquette, customs and ceremonial of the Zhou, and *yue*, the dance, poetry and music of the sacred rites. He was reputed to have edited the *Songs*, a collection of poetry, much of it court poetry and the songs of the official rites, but some of it folk songs reflecting the views of common people, and its inclusion in the curriculum may have been his innovation.²⁶

The audience for Kong Qiu’s teaching is the aristocracy,²⁷ for the most part minor aristocracy, aiming

service. The many remarks on the *Analects* on the behavior of a gentleman who is seeking office and is snubbed and rejected may simply be good advice to his students, rather than autobiographical in intent.

²⁴Those who object to its authenticity point out that Kong Qiu emphasized the spirit of the thing, and in this text he seems to focus on inconsequential details and to behave obsequiously and insincerely. As for the latter charge, one can show respect for the office and institutions in one’s ceremonial behavior that one does not feel for the one who holds the office, and as for the former, it seems that punctilious attention to detail shows a respect for the ritual not present in a sloppy performance of it.

²⁵An alternative, and briefer, version of the material in the *Analects* occurs perhaps in the *Xunzi*, chapters 28–30, from the 3rd century BCE. (Jeffrey Riegel, “Confucius” in Stanford Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy (2002)).

²⁶One idea behind the use of the collection by the Confucians was that one could read the temper of the people by keeping track of popular music, and, by learning to perform the collection, one could shape one’s own responses and emotional nature to the patterns of people living under a good government. In discussion of the *Odes* Confucius seems to have focused on insights into the proper order of things hidden within the popular genres, and one couldn’t really study the *Odes* with him before one began to recognize these deeper currents of meaning in them.

²⁷The *qi*, to whom he addresses himself, were warrior-archers who manned the chariots in battle, rather than going on foot. There is every reason to suppose that Kong Qiu was himself of this class, and that his youth was spent in pursuits such as hunting and battle. He is not the scholar-administrator later identified with *ru*. The situation is made somewhat more complex by the fact the Kong Qiu seems to refer to the defender of the Way as a knight. Waley (*Confucius* (1938) 37) remarks that “the success of Confucianism. . . was due in a large measure to the fact that it contrived to endow compromise,” the compromise characteristic of ‘liberal’ views, “with an emotional glamour.” One can see the aristocratic value system behind Kong Qiu’s thoughts everywhere. So *Analects* II

to get a position in government. He is not unique, but represents a class of wandering teachers that had grown up to serve this function, and a particular school of such wandering teachers specializing in the ways of Zhou, the *Ru*. It seems that unemployed lower nobility, often rendered jobless by the ever-shifting political situation, might take up the profession, and sought its aid in finding preferment. Instead of teaching rhetoric, as did the Sophists in Greece, a skill suited to gaining power within the democratic constitutions of the Greek city-states, the *Ru* taught the old court etiquette and its associated music and ceremonial. In practice, no doubt, one would hire a Confucian to organize and conduct an important ceremony, a funeral for an important person, or a wedding with dynastic import, or send a young man to him as a student for a little while to gain a certain polish and bearing, not to become a full expert in the Zhou ceremonial. At least one point of the Zhou ritual would have been that it involved a conspicuous display of wealth and effort that could overawe states with fewer resources. But the more ambitious would argue that a state would do well to employ them in high offices, for they held the secret to the success of the Zhou. Not everyone agreed. A statesman of the time is recorded in the biography of Kong Qiu in the *Book of History* as saying:

The *Ru* are sophists and cannot be taken as a model or norm. Arrogant and following only their own opinions, they cannot be made subordinates. They attach great importance to the mourning rites, give themselves over to grief, and ruin great fortunes in funerals, a practice which cannot become common usage. Sophists who travel from place to place begging for loans, they are incapable of directing a state.²⁸

By the time of Mengzi, a century or so later, the *Ru* had become so established that they often received patronage from princes, and considered themselves worthy of this attention.

The *Ru* may have gained many of the characteristics of a priestly caste from their ritual duties within their aristocratic families. They had a penchant for record-keeping, and an attachment to funeral rites, which would have evolved out of ancestral sacrifices like the Hero cults of Greece, at which they presided. They insisted that a certain kind of holiness be recognized as a qualification to advise the ruler. They are Shamanistic figures, and originally their contact with the world of spirits, requiring ritual and moral purity not entirely consistent with common life, was the key to their wisdom and suitability as advisors to the King and his

12—"the gentleman is not an implement," that is, not a technician, but one who rules technicians. VIII 9 assures us that common people cannot be made to understand the way (and so are not suited to rule). IV 16 tells us the gentleman understands righteousness, not profit. He is ruled by the upper-class desire to serve and gain honor from service, for playing the right role, not by the lower-class fellow's eternal search for profit and a way to make a living. XVII 25. VII 26. IX 12.

²⁸Yu-lan (1937) 151 for the translation and citation.

officials. The *Ru* also took an interest in divination, indicated by their study of the *Yi Jing* (though the *Yi Jing* is not mentioned in the *Analects*). Like the priests of Amun in Egypt, they often recommend that the King leave the details of administration to them, focusing on ritual rather than running the country. It is not hard to see here a priestly group, experts in ritual, striving to hold onto power despite the demotion of their function to the level of keeping the Spirits “at a distance.” If the religious side of the ritual is no longer considered relevant to running the country, since no one really believes in the spirits or advice from the ancestors any more, perhaps it can be argued in a different way that the *ritual* remains essential, since it embodies the right Way, and the Way can only be learned through the ritual.

The *Ru* may originally have been priests and prophets, then, but by Kong Qiu’s time they had become a guild of teachers. By the time of the Han their curriculum covered the Six Arts: ceremony, music, archery, charioteering, writing and mathematics. The Six Classics were the core of the literary curriculum, and constituted the basic texts of Chinese culture. These were the Zhou texts that had been preserved in Lu, the *Book of History*, the *Songs*, the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the *Yi Jing*, the *Book of Rites*, and the *Book of Music* (now lost). The *Ru*, then, were in the same position as the classical teachers of rhetoric after Christianity established itself in Rome. Even if one disagreed with their implicit theology, not to work through their curriculum meant that one was not educated in the traditions of one’s culture. Of the other philosophical schools generally identified from the Classical period, only the Mohists could be considered as providing real competition, with their own methods of teaching and an alternative ideology. Indeed, it seems that the *Ru* were early on not conceived as a school of philosophy at all, but simply as teachers of the old tradition, who, as it happened, had some characteristic views. The Mohists were a radical movement, the other schools ephemeral manifestations of thought, the *Ru* a profession. It was conceivable that the *Ru* should have been converted to one or another philosophical view, and later Confucians, of course, absorbed all sorts of influences from other schools. Moreover, Confucians had serious disagreements among themselves, as the affair of the Legalists and Mengzi demonstrate. Nonetheless, it was not conceivable that the *Ru* should have been displaced by a philosophical school, any more than it is conceivable that English teachers should be displaced by Wittgensteinian philosophers. Only twice have the Confucians been seriously challenged, and both times it was by rulers who were determined to raze all that had gone before and make a fresh start. The first was the first Emperor of Qin, a Legalist, who at first flirted with the *Ru*, but became disgusted with their traditionalist squabbles, and finally banned the Classics and established punishments for any who “appealed to the past to condemn the present.” Tradition even has it that he burned 460 scholars alive in 212 BCE, on suspicion of sedition. Even so, he

supposedly retained seventy scholars in the capital—whether as a sop to conservatives or to educate the sons of the nobility, we do not know. The second was Mao Ze Dong, the founder of the current Communist regime.²⁹

Kong Qiu assigns the loss of the Mandate of Heaven to the failure to function within the natural order, which includes the ethical. His technique is to describe the perfect sage, which is the real nobleman, the one who knows what is important and has the highest virtue. He discusses the sage's virtues and the acts characteristic of his virtues, rather than laying down a code of behavior.³⁰ The natural order to be followed is the *dao*, the 'way'. A *dao* at its broadest is a way of life, although the word is used for much narrower ways, such as the way of the carpenter. Confucius is concerned with a way of life, and when he speaks of *the dao* he means the correct way of life, the best way, in conformity with our *ze*, our nature, and expressing *de*, the power and virtue that comes from a fully developed *ze*. The *dao* of Heaven is the natural order, which is never violated, of course, but the *dao* of human beings, for all that it is natural to them, can be lost or violated—human beings, for whatever reason (later Confucians give different accounts) can deviate from their *dao*. Often he speaks of the individual's way of life as his *dao*, and so speaks of a *dao* as being born, growing, being strengthened, being great or small, and so forth.³¹ More often he speaks of the ideal *dao*, which was actually followed by the Xia, Shang, and Zhou Empires in the beginning of their careers, and which he wishes to restore to the world.³² One can describe the way and so it can be heard, studied, and, of course, modeled or walked.³³ *Dao* might be viewed as an eternal thing, since there is only one right way for human beings to live in general, given the sameness of their nature, but an actual *dao* is an historical entity, an actual way followed by a given society, with appropriate, but not inevitable conventional components, and it can be developed and elaborated, improved and adorned with the various arts. The *dao* is something invented and developed by

²⁹This paragraph is developed from the remarks of Graham (1989) 31–33.

³⁰The philosophy attributed to Kong Qiu is reconstructed from what are assumed to be the earliest elements of *Analects*. In fact, the *Analects* and the other 'Confucian' collections would have attracted material from all these itinerant teachers, and it may be that our Kong Qiu is more a construction of modern scholarship than anything else. But it is handy to attach the doctrine of the early *ru*, before Mengzi, to Kong Qiu, and we shall do this here, assuming that the reconstruction of this doctrine from the *Analects* by modern scholars is a reasonable enterprise.

³¹*Analects* I 2, XV 29.

³²*Analects* III 24.

³³*Analects* IV 8, I 4, V 7.

human beings, even if it is a *natural* invention, and there was a time before it had been discovered. The *dao* must be learned, and one who has not studied and learned a culture following the *dao* cannot himself follow the *dao*. Kong Qiu studied the Zhou, for its culture embodied the *dao*, and it was the only culture about which he had relatively full information that did so. Thus, if one loves and pursues it without learning, he will go astray—without learning, love of *ren* is clouded by ignorance, love of understanding by loose and inaccurate thinking, love of *zhi* by rudeness, love of sincerity by harmful actions, love of courage by recklessness, love of firmness by cruelty.³⁴ One cannot rationally discover or construct *dao* from whole cloth—it must be rooted in a tradition.

In practice, Kong Qiu recognized, this tradition would be maintained within the context of a family. Thus, as long as the ruling family maintained the Way, following it within its internal affairs and training the young people up in it, the family is virtuous and will retain the mandate of Heaven. If it loses the Way, then another family, with greater virtue, will step into its place, but that family will be a noble family, with access to the Way, not a family of peasants or craftsmen, who follow a small way, not the way of one who rules. That rule was hereditary, and preferment took place within the noble families, was natural and proper, then. That is how virtue, produced by education and training within a virtuous family, is identified and tapped.

Behaving well is a matter of performing social rituals, and one's social roles, well. Fundamentally one has to be trained to behave well, and one may be persuaded to undergo the training, but the training won't take if one is forced into it. Ritual (*li*) is performed like drama, not followed like rules of etiquette. Thus one's actions are looked at not so much as the outcome of rational calculation, or free decisions revealing respect for the rules, or for one standard or another of judgment, but rather as performances to be judged in somewhat the way one judges musical or theatrical performances. Ritual can be performed sincerely or without sincerity, expressively or drily, with individual expression or effacing oneself in favor of the tradition, with inappropriate or appropriate expression, elegantly or clumsily, with too little or too much emotion, and a performance can be authentic or inauthentic, authentic to one's nature and experience, or authentic to the tradition, or even to the author's intentions if those can be identified. A performer is responsible for his performance, of course, but he cannot pull off a good performance simply by deciding to do so, and if he is responsible for a bad performance it may be because he did not train well enough for it, or perhaps because of bad taste, insensitivity, or lack of insight, insincerity or lack of knowledge of the tradition. The notion that we always

³⁴*Analects* XVII 7.

know what it is right to do, and then simply choose to do it or not, and are virtuous or not depending on our free choice, is simply alien to the Chinese tradition. This does not mean that decision and rational calculation does not play a role, of course. The teacher can point out the advantage of practice, and one can decide to practice.

Kong Qiu views punishment as one way to get people to behave well, but a relatively ineffectual one, and he does not think it reasonable to treat punishment as something required by the person's act, as moral desert, when dealing with the common people. His attitude is somewhat different toward the upper classes, where it seems people have had the opportunity to shape themselves to virtue, and Heaven may require punishment of those who behave badly, though even here the punishment is viewed very much as a *natural* consequence of one's bad actions. There are wrong, and not merely shameful, actions, and people are responsible for their actions, but those who do wrong need education, not punishment, to change. They need to get better at the performance of their roles and rituals, not change their plans in response to a schedule of sanctions. Education may be gained, above all, from the example of a superior³⁵—indeed, the chief job of the superior is to model wisdom through the expert and sensitive performance of social ritual, a difficult task.³⁶ Everyone first learns the rituals in the family setting, and the virtuous person is raised well, and then transfers the rituals and roles learned in the family to the larger sphere.³⁷ Proper friendships help, since we imitate one another and skill and virtue is contagious.³⁸ Influence over one's superiors (elders) is rooted in respect for them, as is respect for oneself from one's inferiors, and influence over one's inferiors is rooted in concern for their welfare and respect for their rights, that is, *ren*,³⁹ which is expressed by the sage in his expert performance of social ritual. A true ruler rules for the benefit of his subjects. *Ren* is the most basic virtue, because it recognizes the intrinsic worth of people, the most basic value.⁴⁰ Nothing else justifies the societal structure, and, in particular, nothing else can justify the role of the nobleman or his claim to rule. "If the nobleman

³⁵*Analects* II 1 and 3, IX 13, XII 17 and 19, XIII 6, XV 4, XVII 9.

³⁶*Analects* IV 6, V 11, VI 5.

³⁷*Analects* I 2: *Great Learning*, and *Analects* VIII 6, X 9, which instructs us to learn to do small things, which is pretty hard of itself, and the big things will get done right of themselves.

³⁸*Analects* I 8 and 14.

³⁹*Analects* XII 9.

⁴⁰*Analects* IV 2–6.

departs from *ren*, how can he fulfill that name of ‘nobleman’?”⁴¹

In general, activity is seen as a sign of the ineffective. The virtuous fellow attracts the best men,⁴² he does not go out and get them. It is not by managing, especially micro–managing, but by inspiring others to do their work well, that one is effective. The law is necessary in government, but it is best to use it as little as possible, in particular since law leads to litigation.⁴³ The habit of litigation means a habit of thinking how we might excuse ourselves from our duties—clever and glib people increase, the law becomes more and more complex to deal with such people, and they establish the legal profession. A class of sophists had emerged already in Kong Qiu’s time specializing in litigation.

The notion is not that human nature is intrinsically good, as in Mengzi later, but that it is subject to influence.⁴⁴ There is a trust in the other fellow to know his job, and the ruler does not do other people’s work, or direct them, but makes them virtuous so that they do their job seriously and well. This he does by appointing worthy people as his immediate subordinates, and ‘naming’, with true names, the various roles to be filled in society and the administration, and by providing a role model himself in his relations to Heaven, that is, his ritual sacrificial duties, and his family. He does not dabble in actual administration. Rather he provides a role model to those immediately below him, who provide one for those below them, and so on, down to the common people.⁴⁵

This is connected to an anti–utilitarian stance.⁴⁶ The man of *yi* does not calculate advantages. For one thing, if others see him doing that they will begin to do it, and society depends on our acting in accord with what is right even when it is not to our advantage. One who seeks advantage gives up doing his job well. We

⁴¹*Analects* IV 5.

⁴²*Doctrine of the Mean* 20

⁴³*Analects* XII 13 and 19, XV 5, II 1, IX 14. In our own culture a ship’s captain who knows his business will himself have very little to do except keep an eye on things. His responsibilities are the morale and training of the crew, and the execution of the ship’s mission, all other responsibilities falling on his subordinates. A captain who has a lot to do has not trained his crew properly. That is close to the Confucian view of the role of the gentleman put in charge of the state. (Note that *technical* training is provided by the appropriate technician. It is only moral training that is provided by the gentleman.)

⁴⁴*Analects* XII 2

⁴⁵*Analects* XV 5, XII 17 and 19.

⁴⁶*Analects* VIII 7, XIV 38; *Doctrine of the Mean* 14.

needs to trust others, which we can do if we trust ourselves.⁴⁷ This is why Kong Qiu dislikes punishment as a way of maintaining order.

Dao the people with coercion and order them with punishment, and they will avoid wrongdoing, but will have no shame. *Dao* them with *de* and order them by *li*, and they will have shame and moreover act suitably to their places.⁴⁸

There is a form of magic lying behind all this, at least historically speaking.⁴⁹ The ruler accomplishes an aim through ceremonial and pre-enactment, and through his *de*, and no doubt did this as genuine magical activity at one time. Kong Qiu has transmuted the magic into a matter of psychological influence, but the sense of ceremonial and respect for superior mana remains as a residue of the old practice, and just a little of the sense that something miraculous in this line could be performed by someone of truly great *de*. In the same way, Kong Qiu transmutes the code of the aristocrat into ethical doctrine.

For Kong Qiu virtue is the art that governs all others, and lays the foundation for social cooperation. It is an art for bringing people to cooperate with and benefit one another.⁵⁰ Kong Qiu found a human life possible only within society,⁵¹ and so, like Aristotle, he views the social development of a human being, the mastery of ritual and role, as a part of the natural course of development into a full adult. Human virtue is natural to human beings, due to their *ze*, even though it is necessarily developed within a social context, and as a result of social training. An analysis of the chief virtues from the Confucian point of view will serve to fill out his thought.

Zhi is a certain straightforward seriousness in one's approach to duty, not using his role or office for ulterior purposes, not just time-serving.⁵² A judge *is* a judge when he has *zhi*. The word is generally translated as "uprightness." The virtue is associated with one's "basic stuff," (also *zhi*, but a different ideogram), it is the underlying, which is directed and refined by rites and music. So when someone speaks of an upright fellow in his country who bore witness against his father, who had stolen a sheep, Kong Qiu remarks that in his

⁴⁷*Analects* XIII 27.

⁴⁸*Analects* II 3, tr. Hansen (1992) 64.

⁴⁹For this point, see Fingarette (1972).

⁵⁰*Analects* II 12, XVII 6

⁵¹*Analects* XVIII 6.

⁵²For my account of *zhi*, I depend especially on Yu-lan (1937) 66–69.

country upright people are not like that, and there is uprightness in protecting one's father from justice.⁵³ The underlying is respect for one's father, and one has to ask whether respect for the law here builds on that underlying virtue, or undermines it. Uprightness is a kind of strength, and does not worry about others' opinions, but rather what the right thing to do is. So when another fellow, out of concern for what people might think, borrowed vinegar himself so that he could give some to a neighbor who asked him for it, he was judged by Kong Qiu to be lacking in uprightness.⁵⁴ Uprightness is acquired through a study of the *Odes*, and Kong Qiu said that the meaning of all the poems in the collection can be covered with a single quotation, 'let there be no swerving aside,' i.e. no deviation from *zhi*.⁵⁵ But *zhi* without *li*, ritual, sinks into rudeness.⁵⁶ Without the basic stuff, one is a mere clerk, but without ritual, one is a rustic—the two need to be balanced against one another.⁵⁷ So one is roused by the *Odes*, but established by *li*, and perfected only by music and literature, *wen*.⁵⁸

Zhi is a form of wisdom,⁵⁹ for it involves knowing what's really important in the job at hand, and so it leads to and is related to *ren*. The man of *zhi* does his own work well, and does not meddle in the work of others,⁶⁰ and he takes the measure of a good job from himself (from his *ze*, his natural competence), not from external standards. If one has the nature of a judge, one needs no judgments from others to tell if he is doing the work of a judge well.⁶¹ Most important, a real nobleman who does his work well will get others to do theirs well. A real nobleman does not seek profit, but does his job because it is his job. If the nobleman does not

⁵³*Analects* XIII 18.

⁵⁴*Analects* V 24.

⁵⁵*Analects* II 2.

⁵⁶*Analects* VIII 2.

⁵⁷*Analects* VI 18.

⁵⁸*Analects* VIII 8.

⁵⁹*Analects* VI 22 and 30.

⁶⁰*Analects* IV 15, XII 11.

⁶¹*Analects* XV 24.

refrain from profit, no one will.⁶² The central problem is profit-seeking, which leads one to do one's job not for its own sake, but for pay, in the end, at the expense of the community. *Zhi* and *ren* are the same,⁶³ that is, it is *zhi* to be humane, for to have *zhi* is to know the real point of the exercise, which is the welfare of the people. Each supports the other, as it would be said later. Perhaps neither is found without the other.

This is all connected with "rectification of names."⁶⁴ If one does not act like a minister, is he a minister? Is he? The suggestion is that one judge the truth of "he is a minister" by considering how the person actually functions, rather than looking to his title. Of course, he may be called a minister, but unless he actually functions as such, plays the role with sincerity, he is not. In the later tradition Confucians assigned a duty to historians and scholars to call kings kings, and tyrants tyrants, and it was claimed that Kong Qiu himself had done as much in editing the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The supposition is that there is a system of names for the proper social roles within a well-formed society, and one can determine how one ought to behave (*yi*) by determining which of these names applies to oneself. Just as the natural world will function well if each thing follows its nature, its *te* or peculiar virtue, and is what it is, so the social world will function well if each person *is* what his social role specifies, acting it out with *zhi*. Similarly, how one ought to treat others is established by determining which name applies to the other. It is assumed, of course, that there will be some name applicable in each problematic situation, and that one will not find two different names both applicable, since this would result in a conflict of duties. (So, is one dealing with a father, or a thief? Both names are true of him, but given that the root of respect for the law lies in respect for one's father, "father," applies here, not "thief." One might say, "he's not a thief, he's my father," when someone suggests turning him in.)

Kong Qiu is not concerned with truth when he speaks of the correction of names. We sometimes say "now *that* is the Fifth Symphony," which suggests that other, inferior performances were not, but, of course, we don't mean that they weren't, but only that this performance is an exceptionally well-developed, mature one, expressing the Fifth Symphony as it really ought to be, capturing Beethoven's intentions. So Kong Qiu will say, "now *that* is being a son," or "*that* is loyalty." A son is someone who meets an ideal of behavior, and when we ask if he is indeed a son, we are not questioning his paternity, but asking if he really lives up to that

⁶²*Analects* IV 11 and 12—if one is motivated by profit, he makes enemies (since he is competing with other profit makers, and is not performing his duty well). XIV 24.

⁶³*Analects* VI 22, 30.

⁶⁴*Analects* VI 23, XIII 3, XII 11.

ideal. It is not a matter of propositional truth—of course it is the Fifth Symphony, and of course he is the man's son—but a matter of how good the performance is, how *true* the performance is *to* the real intent.

In the classic citation here, Kong Qiu asserts that the first thing he would do if entrusted with the government would be to correct names.⁶⁵ When challenged whether that makes sense, he argues that if names are incorrect, ritual and music will be inert, and if that is so, punishment will be misapplied, and then people will not know what to do. The reference to punishment may seem inconsistent with Kong Qiu's usual insistence in relying on ritual, but in fact it seems to mean that punishment must be applied *because of the failure of ritual*, and the punishment will be poorly applied since the guilty will be misidentified and the wrong actions punished. As for ritual and music, they will be effective only if there is sincerity, which hangs on the correctness of names, so that the ritual does not become mere hypocrisy. The correction of names would have to be accomplished by modeling the correct use, applying the names when they correctly apply and withholding them when not, or responding to the student's application, affirming it as correct or rejecting it as incorrect—one could not establish when the name applied by specifying it verbally in a definition, as the Mohists would attempt to do. *Li* is basic, and gives to names their meaning. One learns their meaning by learning *li*.

When Kong Qiu speaks of “thinking,” *si*, a Westerner is likely to envision reasoning and theorizing, but in fact he scarcely seems aware of the possibility of such a thing. *Si* is a matter of turning one's attention to a matter. This is done in the middle of one's body, at one's center of gravity, not in one's head—in our own culture, in dance or the martial arts one will often be taught to think of his actions as originating there. Thus, when it is suggested that “if one studies but does not think, one is caught in a trap, and if one thinks but does not study, one is in peril,”⁶⁶ the intention is that one be attentive to what is going on *and* study tradition, not that one strive to come up with new theories or assess the evidence for the old. Again, when Kong Qiu confesses that he once stayed up all day and night to think, but it would have been better to study,⁶⁷ the intention is that attending to the puzzling problem before him was of no help, and he should have spent his time finding out what the worthies of old did about such matters. In general, for Kong Qiu knowledge is acquired, if not by study, simply by attention to what is going on.⁶⁸

⁶⁵*Analects* XIII 3.

⁶⁶*Analects* II 15.

⁶⁷*Analects* XV 31.

⁶⁸For this paragraph, Waley in *Confucius* (1938) 44–46.

Yi meant originally doing what is laid down by the ruler, but evolved into doing one's duty, in particular, as opposed to taking profit.⁶⁹ *Yi* is not a matter of seeking to maximize utility for society at large, nor of following rules. One's duty is to persons, and is defined by roles.⁷⁰ Kong Qiu seems to assume that there is no difficulty knowing what one's duty is, the difficulty is doing it—but perhaps he intends that there is no hope in giving advice at all to someone who does not know what his duty is—it is sensible to urge those to do it who understand it, but we must speak to others of more fundamental matters, not of duty, if we want to help them. Filial piety, *xiao*, a respect for one's parents and their ways, and a desire for harmony, is a good part of *yi*.⁷¹ *Xin*, a related virtue, is keeping one's word, good faith, trustworthiness.⁷² It is a duty in particular to friends, and entails absolute truthfulness in every situation. *Li*, often translated as “rites” or “ritual,” will be followed by the man of *yi*, for *li* is more than mere etiquette.⁷³ *Li* involves above all correct behavior toward others, chiefly deference to one's superior, joined with modesty and sincerity. Here one can see, perhaps, a connection back to the original sense of obedience to a superior. But *yi* goes beyond *li*, and often what is one's duty is not specified by ritual. One goes by duty in situations not covered by ritual,⁷⁴ by considering that which makes ritual reasonable, namely respect for others and their welfare, *ren*.

The word *ren*, generally translated as ‘humanity,’ probably originated from a word meaning tribesman, rather like “gentleman” from “*gens*,” and it indicated the essential quality of a nobleman (*junzi*, son of a lord, as opposed to *xiao ren*, a small man), in relation to others. Kong Qiu has his own reading of what this quality is. At its root is a recognition of *yi*, one's duty to others. Thus, it is to love others, to treat others as it befits

⁶⁹*Analects* IV 16 identifies *yi* with one's duty. IV 17, VII 23. VII 37—*yi*, i.e. the sense that one has done his duty, leads to ease of mind and self-respect.

⁷⁰*Analects* II 24, IV 16, XII 17, XIII 3 and 6.

⁷¹*Analects* II 7, IV 21 and 18.

⁷²*Mencius* 1B8. Fingarette (1972) connects the rectification of names with performative utterances. Speech does not just describe, but it makes things the case, and one must be careful to do this in the right way. But I think he is wrong to make the connection. In fact, the point is that saying it is so does *not* make it so, it is not like announcing that the couple are now man and wife, and one can ask, even if the marriage is properly performed, if they are *really* man and wife? Do they act toward one another as man and wife? *Analects* VI 25 has it that “even if a *gu* (a type of ritual vessel) is not used as a *gu*, it is still a *gu*.” A thing's nature resides in itself.

⁷³*Analects* II 5 and 7.

⁷⁴For this interpretation of *yi*, see Schwarz (1985) 79.

a human being to be treated, as one would treat oneself.⁷⁵ It seems to be an all or nothing state, which even the best has only intermittently,⁷⁶ though when one has it it is effortless, for *ren* is a proper formation of the will.⁷⁷ This “conquest of oneself,” is attained by “return to ceremony,” that is, by genuinely entering into the spirit of *li*, which is respect for others.⁷⁸ The divorce of *ren* from *li* in Mozi, rooted in the identification of *ren* with benefitting others, rather than observing one’s duty to them and showing them respect, is not at all in the spirit of Kong Qiu. Mozi’s line is understandable enough once one asks how Kong Qiu knows what one’s duty to other in fact is. Kong Qiu assumes this will be clear, perhaps viewing *ren* as arising from *shu*, that is, a recognition of the likeness of others to oneself, and taking it that one knows how one wants oneself to be treated (that is, with due respect), but in fact this makes it difficult to arrive at a single, objective view of the matter. Different cultures and different people, taking what they would consider respectful behavior as the key, will arrive at very different pictures of one’s duty to others. Turning to benefit as the key, one might find an objective way of resolving the question what to do. (Or one might not. There is no reason why two different ways might not be equally beneficial, perhaps in different areas of life.) But that is Mozi’s way of dealing with the issue, not Kong Qiu’s. Kong Qiu said “Humans’ growth is toward being upright,”⁷⁹ and this is the classic passage arguing for his agreement with Mengzi that human nature is originally good. But uprightness is, it seems, not the same thing in all cultures. There are different ways within different traditions of respecting others’s humanity, and so human growth is conditioned by the community.⁸⁰ What counts as maturation depends to some extent on the *li* within which a person is raised.

We tend to connect uprightness with freedom of choice, so that an upright action is the outcome of

⁷⁵*Analects* XII 22. VI 30, XII 2 and IV 15 speak of a sort of reciprocity, i.e., what one seeks for oneself one seeks for others as well, whether it be welfare, or cultivation.

⁷⁶*Analects* VI 7.

⁷⁷*Analects* VII 30.

⁷⁸*Analects* XII 1—to practice *ren* is to subdue oneself and to return to ritual.

⁷⁹*Analects* VI 19. See also XVII 2, “In nature close to one another, in practice they distance themselves.” See Hansen (1992) 78 ff.

⁸⁰Perhaps that is the meaning of *Analects* XII 18, the case of the fellow who turned in his father as a thief, and was regarded as possessing great *yi*. Kong Qiu, as Hansen points out, only replies that in his country it is not done that way, and there is *yi* in that too. Perhaps he is being polite, and leading his interlocutor gently to see what is wrong with his view. But surely the fellow knew Kong Qiu’s views, and was proposing an alternative view of *yi*, so it seems more likely that Kong Qiu is saying that *yi* has different manifestations in different cultures. There is more than one solution to the problem how we are to respect one another.

deliberation. For Kong Qiu a choice naturally arises from one's state of mind, which simply is what one is at the moment. He is not concerned with correct deliberation, the application of rules, and the like, but with being in the right state of mind, and how to get there. Given the right state of mind, the right action naturally follows, as long as one has been properly educated. Of course, even the ability to settle into the right state of mind is developed through education. So the task is to educate oneself, not to deliberate over the particular case, or to force oneself to act according to a duty one does not feel.⁸¹ This is not to say that Kong Qiu does not think people ever deliberate or make choices,⁸² nor that he does not think people have an interior life of thought,⁸³ but rather that his model of choice-making does not involve a transcendent, free self. He thinks the choice arises naturally from one's considerations, which will go badly if one does not consider everything relevant. It is not a matter of surveying everything, becoming aware of the alternatives, and *then* making a choice, as though the choice might still go either way. A different choice will mean that one has not considered the same things, or was not aware of the same alternative actions. So if one wants to gain self-control, one must learn to consider everything relevant and avoid considering what is irrelevant, through education and avoidance of biased emotions, rather than learning to follow a certain rule even when one is not inclined to.⁸⁴

When Kong Qiu lays out the course of his own education,⁸⁵ he claims that at fifteen he was intent on learning, so had the right approach. At thirty he had found his feet, that is, he understood what was required, and had formed the correct core character. At forty he was not confused, that is, he did not lose sight of what he knew to be the important thing in the concerns of the moment. From fifty years of age he knew the decree

⁸¹*Analects* XVII 21—concerning the fellow who does not observe the three years of mourning for his parents, and feels comfortable wearing fine clothes. Kong Qiu tells him to go ahead, perhaps rather than be insincere, but in private he criticizes him for his lack of love for his parents. If one does not see why something ought to be done, and there is likely no way to get one to see it by raising considerations one has neglected, Kong Qiu leaves the situation be rather than arouse hostility by criticism of one's character. He does not urge the transcendent self to assert itself on behalf of the rule. Graham (1989) 25–30.

⁸²So, for instance, *Analects* XV 16, “I can do nothing at all for someone who does not say ‘what shall I do about this, what shall I do about this.’”

⁸³So he speaks of people examining or accusing themselves within, *Analects* IV 17, V 27, XII 4.

⁸⁴Indeed, Kong Qiu and the Chinese generally do not understand things in terms of a transcendent or ultimate reality to which other things are reduced, but rather see pairs of things that depend equally one upon the other. So God/nature, mind or nature/physical behavior, reality/appearance, good/evil, are none of them treated as pairs in which the second requires to the first to explain it, but not the first the second. They rather each require the other to be understood. This extends even to the way, and “man can enlarge the way, but it is not true that the way enlarges man.” *Analects* XV 29. That is, the way is not something that stands above man, so that man becomes greater by conforming to it. To follow the way, one need only become fully human, for humanity embodies the way and gives it actuality. See Hall and Ames (1987).

⁸⁵In *Analects* II 4.

of heaven, that is, he accepted that the outcome was beyond his control and concerned himself only with doing it right. From the age of sixty he had an attuned ear, that is, he responded to the subtleties of the situation, had acquired what a Buddhist would call “skillful means.” Perhaps, in particular, he was able to respond to the other’s viewpoint, so that he possessed *shu*. From the age of seventy he followed his heart-mind’s (*qin*’s) desire without transgression of the way. This is the story of the acquisition of wisdom, step by step, of becoming what human beings are by nature intended to and suited to become.

Kong Qiu’s discussion of *ren* is not concerned with justifying the way—that problem comes to the fore only with Mozi—but rather with interpreting the performance of the way when it might not be clear how it ought to go. It is like a problem of interpretation in musical performance. There one might settle on some key point, such as clarity to the listener, to govern difficult situations, and one of impeccable taste will set aside the rules and traditions of performance when it makes things clearer to the listener. Here Kong Qiu settles on the expression of genuine concern and respect for others in preference to rigidly following the rule. So in my country, he says, good people conceal the faults of their fathers from the authorities, and there is *yi* in that, too. *Ren* makes one capable of giving a correct interpretation to the Way. This includes a correct interpretation of the classification of roles, “correct names,” contained within the way, but also the correct interpretation of the various instruction sets for those roles and rituals. It is *ren* that is chiefly resorted to when the instruction set is unclear or there is a question which of different contradictory instruction sets is to be applied to the situation (if it is a father or a thief). Now ‘*ren*’ can indicate human nature, and Kong Qiu seems to view it as a natural tendency built into human nature—“our most genuine nature is to respect others,” one might say. This means that a certain natural objectivity can be attained in interpreting *dao*, and we can speak of correct and false interpretations. *Ren* works somewhat like intuition in leading us to the right interpretation without the use of calculation or reason.⁸⁶

Training for *ren* involves following *li*, and this in two senses of the word. On the one hand, ritual, propriety, and decorum must be followed, since merely having the right impulse is not enough,⁸⁷ and one’s

⁸⁶This reading of *ren* as the key to the interpretation of a *dao* that is otherwise ambiguous, in particular the key to deciding which classification one is to use in reacting to a situation (father or thief?), is taken from Hansen (1992), though Hansen seems to find this incompatible with much in the more classical reading of Kong Qiu that seems to me quite compatible with it.

⁸⁷*Analects* I 12.

behavior needs to be steadied and shaped by outer form.⁸⁸ If one's respect for others is to attain appropriate expression, in the right ways on the right occasions, one must pay attention to the common language of *li*, and since *li* has a conventional element and must be learned, without learning and culture one cannot fully realize *ren*. On the other hand, *ren* is shaped by culture, dancing, literature and music, also called *li*, though sometimes called *wen*, "embellishment."⁸⁹ The experience of society, its accumulated wisdom, is present in ritual and in the traditional culture. Reform is not envisioned here, and the old social order is assumed to be a wise one. The trick is to return to the old ways and make them work. We find it rather odd in the West that there should be such a close connection made between ritual and virtue, but perhaps the absence of a supernatural sanction for morality is relevant here, for the Chinese look for support for one's moral nature not in the threat of punishment or the fear of God, but in the social order. The small rituals of daily life both place before us the ideal (if we could only enter into the *spirit* of what our society tells us is polite behavior we should have the right attitude), and correct behavior evokes the right stance, the right set, just as a correct and alert posture produces alertness.⁹⁰

Li has in Kong Qiu a sacred quality. Following *li* is like performing a sacred ritual. One must respect it and treat it as something precious, and following the ritual properly absorbs and transforms a person, leading even to a kind of salvation, and adoption of one's correct place in the world. Confucians used the performance of music, in particular, as a kind of meditative rite, to focus themselves and console themselves in misfortune. It seems quite possible that the original of *li* for a Confucian is explicitly religious ritual, most particularly funeral rites connected to ancestor worship, and that Kong Qiu saw our more ordinary social rituals as parallel to religious ritual.

⁸⁸*Analects* I 14, II 4. For *li* as learning (i.e. rites and music together), see XVII 8, VII 8. XII 1 says that *ren* is curbing one's ego and following *li*. This could be taken as a strict definition, and in that case *ren* seems to be an impulse or capacity to follow *li*, and *li* is basic. This is more or less the view taken by Fingarette (1972), and perhaps Zixia and Zishang among Kong Qiu's disciples. But it seems better to read it as an assertion that *ren* is *what makes one capable* of curbing ego and following *li*, and that fits the notion of *ren* we have suggested.

⁸⁹*Analects* XV 29. The arts are no use if there is no *ren*, for they must be practiced for the good of the people—*Analects* III 3 and 8.

⁹⁰There is evidence in the *Analects* of a division among Kong Qiu's disciples over the question whether *li* or *ren* were most important in the character of the sage. Zixia and Zishang seem to have sided with *li*, and Ziyou with *ren*. So *Analects* XIX 1-16. The former accused the latter, it seems of over-estimating the power of *ren*, which must be developed and guided with *li*, and the latter argued that the former emptied *li* of its content, for *li* should express an antecedently existing *ren*. *Analects* XI 16 has Kong Qiu suggest that the one goes too far, the other not far enough, which are equally faults. This no doubt represents the view of the editor of the work.

Li is probably most troublesome to a Westerner because of its implications of class structure. It is simply assumed that the social order must be hierarchical, and the vast majority of men should be taking orders from those above them. The distinction between a good and bad government is that between a government ruled by the spirit of harmony characteristic of a good family life (which is also intrinsically hierarchical in the Confucian view), and a bad one is one arising from brute force and an interest in profit. The Confucian does not imagine that an egalitarian system in which everyone has a say is possible at all. Indeed, what is centrally expressed in *li* is *rang*, deference to others.⁹¹ Thus, when speaking of *li*, most of Kong Qiu's examples deal with the duties of the lower toward the higher, and when speaking of the duties of the higher toward the lower, Kong Qiu refers most often to *ren*, which represents a different kind of deference to others, a recognition of their worth and importance rather than a placing of oneself under them.

Turning to virtues that are less discussed, *jung* is concern for others, attention to benefitting others and observing their rights. *Shu* is sympathetic understanding of others. The word is related to *ju*, "to be like," so that "likening-to-oneself" is a possible reading. So, in the *Shizi*,⁹² what you do not desire to be done to yourself you do not do to others, what you dislike in others you reject in yourself, what you desire in others you seek in yourself, that is likening-to-oneself or *shu*. So *shu* is using the same standards for oneself and others. It is rather close to Kant's rational love for others. *Rang* is deference to others, yielding, and is the principle underlying *li*, and part of *ren* as well.

Many scholars hold that Kong Qiu, and everyone else in the Classical period except the Mohists, approaches the afterlife ("whether the dead have knowledge") and talk about spirits with an urbane disbelief. There were old ceremonies that presuppose an afterlife and spiritual beings, and Kong Qiu takes it as part of *li* to follow them. He even recommends executing the sacrifices with emotional involvement, as though one believed,⁹³ but when the questions of the real truth of the matter comes up, it is claimed, he recommends suspension of belief and attention to this life.⁹⁴ It seems likely that this over-interprets the texts. When Kong Qiu says to sacrifice as if the spirits were present he need not be suggesting that the spirits do not exist, and when he advocates tending to the affairs of human beings first, and keeping the spirits at a distance, he probably

⁹¹*Analects* IV 13.

⁹²*Shizi* A9B.

⁹³*Analects* III 12.

⁹⁴*Analects* VII 21, VI 22.

intends that one spend no more on the sacrificial rituals of the state than is strictly necessary to get the spirits to leave us alone. As for the appearance of a recommended suspension of belief, he probably means only that one should not worry about such matters, but instead think about how to get on with human beings, trusting that in any case the sacrifices will “keep the spirits at a distance.” This would be true, in particular, if one is not seeking the help of the spirits, but only their neutrality.⁹⁵ There seems to be disbelief abroad, and Kong Qiu is responding to that disbelief with a conservative’s recommendation—“that may all be so, though *I* would not say so, but does it not make sense to continue the practices anyway, as long as expenses are kept under control?”

It makes sense, as does most of the magic and ritual associated with the military aristocracy, because of its influence in terms of its effects on human behavior. Ancestral sacrifices may keep the spirits out of our hair, but they are also, more importantly, a matter of filial piety, respect expressed for one’s ancestors and the old ways, and sacrifices to the gods exhibit respect for the way and tradition in general. They are important, whether there are spirits or not, for the formation of one’s stance toward things, and the ‘enlightened’ intellectual may discover to his chagrin that much more is lost than superstition if he succeeds in eliminating them.

Kong Qiu speaks of knowing *ming*, the destiny assigned by Heaven, and in a number of places, he is concerned with whether Heaven has abandoned him or not.⁹⁶ He seems to have believed in a benevolent power of some sort, a favorable providence, but nonetheless, knowing *ming*, which he says he had accomplished by the age of 50, seems to be important whether or not one accepts this, because it produces a calm recognition that one can only do one’s best, and the result of one’s efforts remain beyond one’s control. It is associated with the rejection of utilitarian assessments of one’s efforts.⁹⁷ Associated with this is a denial of any “transcendent” moral principle. The way is not something that exists independently of our practice and our nature, and imposes itself upon us, or causes us to conform to it. “Man can enlarge the way, the way does not enlarge man”⁹⁸

⁹⁵For this matter, see Waley’s introduction, 31–33, to Confucius (1938).

⁹⁶*Analects* VII 23, IX 5, XIV 35, XI 9.

⁹⁷*Analects* XIV 36, XII 5.

⁹⁸*Analects* XV 29.

3. MOZI AND MOHISM

How then are we to judge plainly whether the thesis of these people is the right alternative? Master Mo-tzu pronounces: to assert one must establish norms. To assert without norms is comparable with establishing the directions of sunrise and sunset from [marks made] on top of a rotating potter's wheel: which alternative is to be judged right or wrong, beneficial or harmful, cannot become plainly known. Therefore to assert one must have the Three Gnomons. What do we mean by the Three Gnomons? Master Mo-tzu pronounces: there is finding the assertion's root, the evidence for it, and use of it. In what does one find the root of it? One finds it far back in the practice of the sage kings of old. In what does one find the evidence for it? One finds it down below by scrutinizing what is real in the eyes and ears of the Hundred Clans. On what does one use it? One applies it in punishment and administration, and observes whether it coincides with the benefit of the Hundred Clans and the state.

Mozi 35.⁹⁹

We have little biographical information about Mo Ti, but we can place him in the late 5th century, and it is clear that he was not a member of the knightly class, but a master craftsman, apparently a carpenter. That a commoner should be able to participate in a debate with the *Ru* over government may seem surprising, but if Mo was a military engineer, as seems likely, he would have had some political standing, taking a position of authority in the army that could not easily be filled from the noble classes. His approach to government reflects the interests of merchants and craftsmen. In particular, he hated warfare, and disdained the Confucian focus on family, which he saw as arguing for the hereditary office-bearing he rejected in favor of promoting the worthy. Indeed, Mo represents a development that was folded into the Greek philosophical tradition, but was finally ejected from the Chinese with the rejection of Legalism—he asserted authority as an expert craftsman, rather than a quasi-religious wise man suited to advise because of his virtue and his contact with underlying spiritual realities.

Mozi is the first mature philosopher in the Chinese tradition. It is in Mozi that we first find argumentation and the development of a vocabulary of disputation, and it is Mozi who first raised the question of justification for the traditional ways explicated in the gnostic utterances of the Confucians. The development of justifications and arguments for the Confucian system in Mengzi, and the development of skepticism and

⁹⁹Translated by A.C. Graham. For Mozi see especially Hansen (1992) and Graham (1989).

relativism in the Daoists, stem from Mo's challenge to the *Ru*, his denial of their views and rejection of their *dao*.

Mo takes his stand as an expert rather than a priest, but he criticizes the Confucians for having no real religious faith. The *Ru* place all their trust in ritual, without believing there are any Spirits appealed to in the rituals they conduct. This does not seem to have been the view of Kong Qiu himself. He speaks of reverencing the spirits, and keeping them at a distance,¹⁰⁰ and this seems to indicate that one should deal with the spirits strictly in accordance with *li*, but not that they don't exist. In a number of passages in the *Analects* Kong Qiu seems clearly to conceive Heaven as forming specific plans for the world. He wants to serve Heaven, and he comforts himself that if he simply sticks to what is right he will be doing his part, and it is up to Heaven to decide how to use him. But things had been going badly enough so that many later Confucians lost faith entirely in the good will and providential plans of Heaven. Mozi notes this in Kung Meng, who insists on punctilious observance of the rites while denying there are any spirits to serve. Kung Meng apparently thought the observance of the religious rites fostered good order even if based on mistaken views. As Mo sees it, such men are fatalistic, believing there is nothing they can do to bring about a good state, because they don't trust Heaven and its providence, and so, despairing of action, put the emphasis on the meaningless observance of ritual and music, hoping somehow to shape men in that way to virtue. The emphasis on *li* found in Zuxia and Zuyu among Kong Qiu's disciples, combined with Kong Qiu's resignation to the will of Heaven, converted to a pure fatalism, produced this despairing response to the events of the times. All a sage can do is be virtuous, and then wait for Heaven to make use of him. Mo wanted none of it. He saw it as an excuse for seeking emoluments while doing nothing.

This attitude, Mozi thought, was rooted in a failure to understand what tasks Heaven was responsible for and what tasks people were responsible for. In particular, Heaven was not responsible for naming the ruler, as the Mandate-of-Heaven doctrine might suggest. Instead, Heaven set the standards which the human ruler was to follow. Heaven did not establish customs or language. That was done by human beings, but, again, Heaven set the standards by which customs and language were to be accepted or rejected. Human beings were not to wait on Heaven to do their work, but to follow Heaven's standards in doing it themselves.

Indeed, Heaven's intent is essential to the formation of a good state. What is necessary to bring order to the affairs of men is that people recognize a common authority, that they conform to the will of a ruler. So

¹⁰⁰*Analects* VI 22.

everyone needs to follow their superiors, and the Emperor follows Heaven itself, since he has no other superior. If Heaven's standards are not followed, society will not be well-ordered, and the benefit and avoidance of harm that Heaven intends will not occur. Heaven's standards are not automatically followed by men, though they are easily discovered, and if men are careful they will see the best way. In effect, this is Mozi's assertion of the objectivity of the way, and its reliability and consistent applicability in all situations—to all “under Heaven.” If the standards were set up at random by the ruler, then they could not justify the way, for they would not apply where someone else set up different standards, and if Heaven's standards are ignored, this is not the fault of Heaven. Heaven follows its own way, and human beings can and should imitate its way, taking it as a guide, and perhaps it is natural for them to do so, but it is their responsibility to put that imitation together themselves.

Mo's views are summarized in the *Mozi* in ten points, all of which contribute to this picture. So he advocates (1) “elevating the worthy” to office, regardless of social class, as opposed to the *de facto* policy of the Confucians, restricting office to members of the knightly class, who have the advantage of a proper family training. The Confucian notion that all virtue originates in family relations, and that one's first duty is to family, is in fact a class-centered notion, for it confirms that those of ‘good family’ will thus be raised to be virtuous, while those not of good family will not, and that they should further their family's interests above the interests of others. However it is that Kong Qiu might have transformed the notion into something like a sociological observation, any member of the nobility would see immediately what was meant. The principle of elevating the worthy was accepted among Confucians only by Xunzi in the 3rd century, Mengzi, for instance, accepting it only in exceptional circumstances in place of hereditary office.

Mo also insisted on (2) “conforming upwards.” The point here is that people have to agree on social codes, and agreement cannot be arrived at by discussion, at least not in an empire or large state, since social customs differ arbitrarily from one community to another. The important thing is, first of all, that agreement be reached, and this is best done if everyone follows the rules laid down by a leader who could rectify these various *yi*, bringing them into agreement. Moreover, everyone can see that this would improve the situation, for they would all see in it much that was harmful, that is, harmful to people in general, for no one could cooperate with others, food, labor and useful *daos* were kept private and wasted.¹⁰¹ In a larger polity, the fellow at the top cannot do the job required of him without help, and so lower officials must be chosen by him, but

¹⁰¹*Mozi* 12.15-16 gives this as the explanation why people, once they fell into disorder, chose the wisest person in the world to unify the various *yi* in the world, so that no longer would each have his own *yi*.

the whole system will fall apart if the lower officials each follows his own *yi*. The principle is observed, perhaps, in a court system in which lower courts must honor as precedents the decisions of higher courts, setting the interpretation of the law.

The unification should be retained at every level, and the highest level needs to conform to heaven itself, so (7) “heaven’s intent” is to be followed. Heaven loves all, and intends to benefit all, as is evident in its provision for all. Heaven wants the world to live, become rich and exhibit order, and only through righteousness can these things occur in human society, and so Heaven wants people to be righteous. This means that the ruler must legislate in accord with nature, and so righteously,¹⁰² benefitting all impartially, as Heaven does.¹⁰³ Now that goal might be consistent with a number of different sets of rules. We still need an arbitrary authority to settle which of the acceptable sets is to be followed, then, and the ruler should be recognized as that authority, as long as he follows the intent of Heaven. This principle was probably attractive to the merchant classes because they looked to centralized government to regulate the power of the great families. It was easier to deal with, and get useful aid from, a formalized government centered on a monarch than an informal aristocratic oligarchy. Conforming upwards implied a centralized rather than a feudal government, since an official was to demand obedience to the level next above him, rather than to himself. In particular, Mozi insists that if the ruler wishes to do it, he can spread “concern for everyone” throughout his realm, for, as the Confucians claim, people lower down in the social scale follow the lead of those higher up, and so the policy is not impossible to implement. The behavior of the people and the officials can be changed through the moral influence of their superiors.

Mozi employs the term *yi*, “righteous,” in its ordinary sense of morally correct, in opposition to what is merely customary. He observed that not everyone’s customs (*su*) are *yi*, or reliably beneficial.

In ancient times east of Yue there was the city-state of Kai-shu. When their elder son was born, they rent and ate him. They said it would be beneficial to the younger brother. . . These practices were taken by the superiors to be correct administratively and those below them took them to be custom. Everyone acted this way all the time. They practiced these rituals and did not give them up. And yet how can these be the way of *ren* and *yi*?¹⁰⁴

¹⁰²Mozi 26.

¹⁰³Perhaps it should be noted how close this comes to a social contract theory of government, after the pattern of Hobbes, say. But it does not make the crucial move, which would be to suggest that the leader would not reasonably receive the approval of all the people if he were not impartial in seeking the welfare of all, and so would have to impose his rule on those disadvantaged by it by force, creating conflict and disutility. A notion of general welfare is working here, but not one of the ‘general will.’

¹⁰⁴Mozi 39, trans. Hansen (1992) 107.

Yi then is not, as in Kong Qiu, merely a matter of following the obviously right way even when it is unprofitable, for it is not necessarily obvious what the right way is. The fact that it is traditional does not make it right, and to be *yi* one must adhere to the *right* tradition. What was *yi* followed impartial customs, benefitting all. As for *ren*, Mozi takes it to be straightforwardly a generalized goodwill towards others, without any hint of upper class *noblesse oblige*. In all probability Mozi first introduced *ren* as the guide to distinguishing what is the *dao* from what is not, and he certainly uses the word a great deal more frequently than does the *Analects*. *Ren* assumed its prominence in Confucian thinking with the Confucian response to Mo, a response consolidated in Mengzi.

(3) “Concern for everyone” replaced the Confucian natural concern for one’s own family. In practice this meant that the government ought to concern itself with the welfare of everyone, and that one could justify one’s profession or livelihood in terms of its benefits to others. Merchants generally see pretty clearly that they make a living by benefitting others who pay them for those benefits, and they generally wonder if inherited family wealth leads the aristocrat to build a life style that benefits others at all, rather than themselves and their families alone. It should be noted that this is an ethic of duty, for Mo’s view is that one has a duty towards everyone, that is, the state and others in general. In assessing when benefits have been bestowed or harms inflicted, Mo generally looks to the effects on the social group as a whole, on people in the aggregate. How concerned should one be for others and the state? Going by the disutilities Mo identifies when concern for everyone is not the standard, one should be concerned enough not to harm others, or allow them to come to any serious harm if one can prevent it, concerned enough to cooperate with others in common endeavors beneficial to the group, and concerned enough to avoid wasting or taking more than one’s share of resources common to all.

Within, fathers and sons, older and younger brothers had angry words and an impulse to disperse. They could not engage in mutual aid. It got to the point that mutual labor could not use left over energy. People hid advantageous *daos* and did not share them. They would not divide and share rotting excess foodstuffs.¹⁰⁵

Mozi argues in one place that even one inclined to be partial to those close to him would approve, because of his partiality, others who were not partial, but universal in their concern. So someone about to go on a long journey would do better to entrust the safety of his family to a man of universal concern than a man

¹⁰⁵Mozi 12.

of partiality.¹⁰⁶ So the Confucian is in the paradoxical situation of being forced by his own principles to urge Mozi's principles on others! This is only a problem, of course, if one thinks that one should follow and recommend the same principles, but it would not have occurred to most Confucians that sincerity in one's adherence to principles would allow any other policy. Moreover, Mo even specifies that "on occasions like these there are no fools in the world," that is, that we all have a rational nature, and it is that rational nature that leads us to seek out a man universal in his concern. "Thus people condemn universality in words but adopt it in practice, and word and deed belie each other."¹⁰⁷

Mengzi, interestingly, makes a similar argument against Mozi's identification of benefit and harm as the a standard by which to judge actions and policies.¹⁰⁸ He suggests that if Mozi makes the standard public, then people are likely to misinterpret it, and to view benefit as profit for themselves, and thus to behave selfishly. So he ought to keep the standard secret, since it is beneficial to do so, and ought not to promulgate it since it is harmful to do so. This argument has rather less bite and a different structure from Mozi's objection to the Confucian preference for family, for the self-defeat of the principle hangs on a *misinterpretation*, but Mozi's argument suggests that the Confucian principle, *understood correctly*, undermines itself. Mozi's argument is a tool of moral reform, since it drives the consistent Confucian to disapprove his own principle when it is employed by others. Mengzi's argument only suggests, if such misinterpretation cannot be avoided, that the principle, though correct, should not be spread abroad, but kept restricted to those who understand it properly. It is this issue which led the descendants of the Neoplatonists in Jewish and Islamic thought to advise that their teachings be restricted to those of philosophical temperament, while more traditional religious views, leading to correct behavior, should be taught to the general populace. Indeed, one might read Mengzi's Confucianism as giving precisely such advice, for his argument for the Confucian preference for family seems to be based on its furtherance of general welfare. In substance, he may not differ that much from Mozi.

Mo argued under (4) "condemnation of aggression" against aggressive warfare. Here Mo's special position in the army is important, for he did not oppose defensive warfare, but rather formed his disciples into a society of defensive specialists who would offer their services to any state that was attacked, in order to make

¹⁰⁶Is that right? Perhaps he should entrust his family to his own brother, a man of partiality, but would be less inclined to do so if he knew his brother to be a person of universal concern, for fear he would not put his family first. But one can take this to be a comment on what behavior we look for from others *in general*.

¹⁰⁷Mozi 18 (Hansen (1992) 112-114. We shall see below that Mozi 46 makes a similar argument against the egoism of Yang.

¹⁰⁸Mengzi 1A:1.

aggression expensive and difficult enough so that even the more powerful states would think twice about it. It helped support this view that the legitimate Sage Emperors of the past were generally supposed to have gained their universal authority from their virtue, which led everyone to volunteer themselves as subjects, not from military conquest.

Mo's adherence to (5) "moderation in utilization of the state's resources" and (6) "thrift in funerals," as well as his (9) "condemnation of music," attacked government waste and the conspicuous consumption of the aristocratic classes. As so often happens in aristocratic societies, funerals, expressive of filial piety, were used as an opportunity for the display of wealth and influence. Music was attacked in particular, it seems, because the noble houses maintained large and expensive orchestras, and insisted that their music contributed to the formation of virtue. This expensive culture seemed to Mo, a practical member of the merchant class, to contribute nothing to virtue, and to involve a waste of money that should be spent in other ways so that it would actually benefit somebody.

(10) "Rejection of destiny" reflects the merchant's insistence that we make our own fortunes, and rejects any form of fatalism. Mo saw fatalism as characteristic of Kong Qiu, with his insistence on being virtuous whether it did any good or not, and his "wait for someone to offer to make use of you" approach to life.

Under (8) "explaining ghosts," Mo argued that support should be given to the popular view that spirits and ghosts are real, and will punish one for violent and antisocial actions. In particular, he seems to have advanced this view as a counter to the habit of political assassination found in the noble classes. Mozi never speaks of an afterlife in which one is rewarded or punished for one's behavior in this life. What interests him is that the dead man may revenge himself on his murderer. Perhaps most notable here is Mo's low culture, revealed not only in his rejection of the high culture (music) of the aristocratic class, but also in his rejection of the urbane sophistication of the aristocratic skepticism about religion and the spirits.

Since these views were in opposition to the traditions of at least part of the audience to which they were directed, they had to be defended with reasons, and so Mozi considers alternative views and presents arguments in favor of one, the right (*Shi*) alternative, over the other, the wrong (*fei*) alternative. He does not depend on personal authority to establish his views, claiming that he is a sage, nor does he appeal in any way to a reliable faculty of knowledge such as reason. Rather he gives the "Three Gnomons": An assertion's root is found when one finds it made among the Sage-Kings of old. Its evidence is found in the judgments of "the ears and eyes of the Hundred Clans." Its use establishes an option's value when one finds that the assertion,

when properly applied, is beneficial.¹⁰⁹ Mo assumes that these three criteria will agree with one another. No doubt, as a carpenter, he knew that if one acted on established and traditional views in the craft, which agree with the practice of the craft everywhere, and one produced good results acting on the view, one could assert that it was correct.

To clarify this, we should note that Mozi does not take the acceptability of an assertion to revolve around its truth, semantically conceived, so that the issue is whether objects in the world correspond to the view one has of them. Rather, the issue depends on how one is to make a certain distinction. “How should we distinguish this from that?” is the standard form into which he puts his questions, not “What is the world like?” If we interpret the Three Gnomons in those terms, they make rather more sense than if we try to take them as expressing, say, an empiricist theory of knowledge. So the first suggests that our distinction must agree with the established tradition for making such distinctions, the second that our distinction must be made in a way that is constant, that is practiced among all the Hundred Clans, rather than limited to one group of people. If we consider the question how to distinguish between, say, the just and the unjust, then, or right angles and non-right angles, we must follow the established meaning of the words, and we must distinguish them in a way that everyone will agree on. Otherwise we are guilty of altering the meanings of the words.

In particular, there is no suggestion here that the correct way to distinguish these things will be non-obvious and known only to a few. Throughout, Mozi is dealing with what is obviously so. Indeed, he does not even make any explicit room for the non-obviously correct by allowing non-obvious deductions from what is obvious in itself if we only think of it, the Greek way of getting agreement on proposals that violate common sense and go beyond common observation. He moves on, more or less oblivious to the idea that the world may appear to be one way and actually be another. The trick is not to escape mere appearance, but to escape bias, and the sorts of distortions in viewpoint that keep one from seeing what is in front of one’s nose.

As for the third Gnomon, we must make the distinction in such a way that its practical consequences work out well. Assuming the just is to be favored and the unjust avoided, then, we must make the distinction in such a way that when we do this, the results are found (by everyone, everywhere, in the established usage of those terms) to be beneficial, and not harmful. Consider the question whether there are ghosts. How do we distinguish the situation where there are ghosts from the situation where there are not? Well, first, we must get the established usage of the words straight, and so we must distinguish ‘there are’ from ‘there are not’ in

¹⁰⁹Mozi 35.6–10.

accord with the long-established usage of those words. In the second place, we must distinguish these two situations in a way that is found acceptable everywhere and by everyone (except, of course, among those who have *too much* sophistication and abandon the Three Gnomons). In the application of the distinction, we must ask what utility arises from it? Is it ever beneficial to assert that there are ghosts? Now the question we want to ask here is whether there are any ghosts *at all*, not whether there are ghosts present on this or that occasion. For the latter question, Mozi would advise, no doubt, following the Hundred Clans, and deciding the issue on the basis of the sorts of evidence that would normally be used to decide it. So sometimes, presumably, we would say that there are ghosts present, sometimes not. The question whether there are any ghosts at all is rather a different question, though, and the notion that there are ghosts, at least sometimes, seems presupposed in the distinguishing practices of the Hundred Clans. So the issue, perhaps, is whether to allow this linguistic practice, making this sort of distinction, at all. That can only be decided by applying the distinction between benefit and harm, and asking whether this linguistic practice results in benefit or harm to the people in general and the state. (It might seem the Hundred Clans should have ways of distinguishing between situations in which a *sort* of entity exists and when it does not, so that this is *not* the only way to decide, but Mozi does not seem to consider this.) Mozi is happy to argue that it benefits people, and so supports the practice against those who would oppose it by asserting that “there are no ghosts at all.”

One can do well in abandoning tradition and originating new practices, something the Sage-Kings in fact did, and every correct view of the sort that grounds a useful distinction was perhaps at some point first discovered.¹¹⁰ Thus Mozi sets himself against the Confucians. The authority of tradition, standing on its own, is rejected as a unique guide to acceptability, and it is pointed out, for instance, that the death customs of various tribes differ from the Chinese custom, some exposing a body to rot and then burying the bones (Zoroastrians), others burning the body on a funeral pyre (Hindus). Of course, the Chinese custom is correct, but only because it is beneficial, not because it is old and established custom. The same can be said of various customs of discrimination established in language. Some are beneficial, and some are not. Those distinctions that are beneficial should be made, the others should not.

Confucians, in their literary way, had a habit of using ideographic puns, and, in particular, they sometimes equated two concepts expressed in the same ideogram to make a point. So, it was asserted that “*ren* is *ren*,” that is, the virtue of humanity is human nature. Note that this move might be given in answer to the

¹¹⁰Mozi 39.19 ff.

question where humanity comes from, and is tantamount to asserting that it does not come from anywhere. It is not something that comes to belong to a human being at all, but is built in from the beginning. Similarly, in one passage in the *Mozi*, a Confucian, asked why it is that one makes music, replies that music is deemed a joy, where “music” and “joy” are expressed by the same ideogram. The point, of course, is that music is not made for the sake of anything else, but is deemed valuable in itself. Mozi takes it that the intention is to say something obvious to get agreement, and then asserts that this is like saying that a house is a house, when asked why one makes houses.¹¹¹ His complaint, perhaps, is that for anything at all, that thing is in fact that thing, but that truism does not explain why it is a good thing. This might look like a rejection of anything valuable in and of itself, but it is better to read it another way. If we go on, and ask why music is good, we might be told (in plain Chinese) that it is good because it brings joy to the aristocracy who get to enjoy it. But this is not an application of the third Gnomon, for two reasons. First, it is not enough that the item be simply useful to *someone* to be a good, but it must benefit the myriads of people, above and below, rather than the aristocracy alone. The complaint is that music is very expensive, and benefits only a few. Second, Mozi may be some variety of Utilitarian, but he is not a Hedonist. He does not reduce utility to pleasure. Indeed, pleasure and pain, it seems, has little place in benefits and harms. In his view, the pursuit of pleasure leads to harm, for it causes people to avoid the arduous work necessary to maintain minimal standards for economic security. It is hard enough simply to assure that people live to a decent old age.

Indeed, the argument of Mozi for his principle that one should be concerned for everyone, and not just for those close to him, is rooted in what is harmful to the world in general. States attacking each other, families dispossessing each other, lack of loyalty and compassion in subordinates and rulers, sons and fathers, and discord between brothers, these are the things that produce harm to the world in general, and all these harms spring from a lack of mutual concern. So the standard for assessing a policy ought to be concern for all, and mutual benefit, and avoidance of harm.¹¹² But this concern for all is not construed as concern for *each*. This concern is an ethical concern, not an affectional one, and the test is rule utilitarian, not act utilitarian. So one uses the principle of mutual concern and benefitting everyone equally to judge whether a social policy or rule is a good one, not whether an individual action is. Later Mohists argued that it is best for everyone if each of

¹¹¹*Mozi* 48.46–49.

¹¹²*Mozi* 15.11–15.

us takes care of our own, “there are no degrees of concern, but the application starts from the nearer.”¹¹³ Mengzi argues that the two principles of universal concern and special concern for those near one are incompatible, but the Mohists seem to take it that the second follows from the first. That is, the best way to assure that everyone’s needs are met is for each of us to tend first to our own needs, then to the needs of those closest to us, and only then to turn our attention to the needs of those more distant who need our help. This results in economy of effort, the economic use of resources, and helps assure that we know what we are doing when we attend to a need. Perhaps, and Mengzi seems to be on to this, it would also support selfish tendencies, but there are drawbacks like that in the individual’s putting the other’s needs first, as well, the sort of drawbacks that are observed by Capitalist economists in over-centralized government, for instance. So the two principles are applied in different situations, the one to establishing what rules are to be followed, and the other, as a derived rule, to an individual’s distribution of her particular resources. Indeed, Mozi argues that the second rule insures that at least some attention must be paid to others’ welfare, because concern for others’ parents is beneficial to one’s own parents—it will lead others to have concern for them. Just as harming others leads them to harm oneself, so benefitting others leads them to benefit oneself.¹¹⁴

Mozi assumes that the distinction between benefit and harm is one that is clear and will always be made in the same way by reasonable people, and so he can base all his other distinctions within the *dao* he presents on this one. This, of course, is easily challenged. So Mozi assumes it is a benefit to increase population, for instance, and currently the Chinese may not agree. How does Mozi in fact decide what is harmful and beneficial? He seems to rely on nature, Heaven. What heaven approves is beneficial. But what does Heaven approve? It approves whatever is in accord with a thing’s nature, whatever contributes to its natural flourishing. Moreover, Heaven approves the natural flourishing of *all* things, and nature works together to benefit all things. Harm only occurs when nature is somehow ignored. Now these are easily challenged assumptions. That one thing often benefits in the course of nature only when another is harmed is pretty obvious. Even if we restrict ourselves to human nature, and insist that what is of benefit and harm to humans is the measure, it can be argued that one human being or group of human beings is benefitted often through another’s being harmed. More to the point, perhaps, natural flourishing may naturally result in harm, for instance in over population, and loss of the ability to respond to challenges and difficulties. Adversity has its uses, and in the biological

¹¹³*Mengzi* 3A5, attributed to the Mohist, Yizi.

¹¹⁴*Mozi* 16 (Watson 46-47).

sphere, adversity may be essential to long-term survival. This all opens up a natural line of criticism which Mozi's opponents, as we shall see, took full advantage of.

The *Mozi* as it has come down to us is a complex text requiring some reconstruction at the hands of modern editors. Graham has established that it originally contained three treatises on each of the ten points of the school listed above, representing three schools into which the sect split. The "purists" represent probably the uncompromising views of Mozi himself. The "compromising" chapters represent a group who modified Mozi's message in various respects to make it more 'realistic' and more likely to be accepted outside the school, probably the school of the South, which Han Fei mentions as having one Tenglingzi as its leader. The South was behind the rest of China in its political development, and retained hereditary offices after the civil service system was well established in the North, so adaptation would have been necessary there. The "reactionary" group, which goes even further in its compromises, seems also to be southern. To give a sense of the variations, when the elevation of the worthy is discussed, the "compromising" chapter fails to mention the elevation of peasants, traders or craftsmen, while the "reactionary" further weakens the doctrine to the point where he only says that those appointed should not necessarily be of noble blood. When conforming upward is discussed, the compromiser omits to mention that one should send reports of one's superior's behavior over his head to his own higher-ups, and the reactionary makes the system feudal, demanding only that one conform only to his *immediate* superior. When it comes to what to do if the Emperor does not conform to heaven, the purist mentions revolt, but the compromiser only reform, and the reactionary omits any discussion of the issue. When it comes to warfare, there is some evidence the purist version does not mention defensive warfare, suggesting that Mozi himself may have been a pure pacifist, while the compromiser praises defensive war, and even allows that some offensive war may be just, if it punishes abuses. Whereas the purist makes the general point that the sage-kings followed the Mohist recommendations, arguing that they must have, since those are provably the wisest recommendation that can be made, the other two essayists take the authority of the sage-kings very seriously and try to support their views with old documents. The reactionary author adds to the authority of the practices of the sage-kings the intention of heaven and the will of the ghosts, as additional proofs for the other doctrines.¹¹⁵

4. YANG ZHU

¹¹⁵For this paragraph, Graham(1989) 51–53.

Now let me tell you what man essentially is. The eyes desire to look on beauty, the ears to listen to music, the mouth to discern flavors, intent and energy to find fulfillment. Long life for man is at most a hundred years, and the mean eighty, at the least sixty; excluding sickness and hardship, bereavement and mourning, worries and troubles, the days left to us to open our mouths in a smile will in the course of a month be four or five at most. Heaven and earth are boundless, man's death has its time, when he takes up that life provided for a time to lodge in the midst of the boundless, his passing is as sudden as a thoroughbred steed galloping past a chink in the wall. Whoever cannot gratify his intents and fancies and find nurture for the years destined for him, is not the man who has fathomed the Way. . . . Away with you, quick, run back home, not a word more about it. Your Way is a crazy obsession, a thing of deception, trickery, vanity, falsehood. It will not serve to keep the genuine in us intact, what is there to discuss?

“Robber Zhi” to a Confucian, *Zhuangzi* 29:48–53.¹¹⁶

From the 3rd or 4th century BCE, it seems that at least some in the knightly class from which the *Ru* were drawn withdrew from public life, and one writer whose work ended up in the *Zhuangzi* reports two types of such people in a list of ways of life damaging to good government. On the one hand there were those with “finicky ideas and superior conduct. . . interested only in being high-minded,” who withdrew from an excess of idealism and an unwillingness to make the compromises necessary in public office. On the other hand, there were those who were “interested only in doing nothing.”¹¹⁷

The representative usually named for the second group was Yang Zhu, who can be dated in the 4th century from a reported interview with a known ruler. He is described by Mengzi as taking the opposite extreme from Mozi, choosing selfishness, so that if by plucking out a hair he could benefit the world, he would not do it.¹¹⁸ The *Huainanzi* reports that Yang Zhu condemned the Mohist doctrines of concern for everyone, elevation of the worthy, service to the ghosts, and rejection of destiny, advocating instead “keeping one’s nature intact, protecting one’s genuineness, and not letting the body be tied to other things.”¹¹⁹ As it happens,

¹¹⁶Translation from Graham (1989) 64.

¹¹⁷*Zhuangzi* 15.1–5, cited from Graham (1989) 53.

¹¹⁸*Mengzi* 7A26, 3B9.

¹¹⁹*Huainanzi* 13.

five chapters of the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and four chapters in the *Zhuangzi*, defend these Yangist views.¹²⁰

The fundamental argument is that one has one's *qi*, one's breath or life force, from Heaven, and ought to keep it intact. Barring an unnatural end, this *qi* determines the length of one life, and to allow anything to cut one's life short is to reject Heaven's gift. The things in the world are intended by Heaven as the means to nourish one's nature, not something to be nourished at the expense of one's nature. Hence a wise man chooses those things which preserve his life and nourish his nature, observing his duty to Heaven to preserve Heaven's gift. This means a life of restrained pleasure, avoiding harmful, luxurious pleasures, and it means avoiding taking risks that could lead to a premature death.¹²¹ In China at the time, of course, undertaking public service or seeking power in the government risked a premature death.

One is tempted to compare Yang to Epicurus in Rome, but though they both provide a rationale for those born into the civil service who wish to withdraw from it, they don't work from the same premisses. Epicurus assumed that it was rational to maximize pleasure, and avoided luxury only because it fails to maximize pleasure over the long run. If he wished to prolong life as long as possible, it was only as long as it was, on balance, a pleasant life, and Epicurus advocated suicide if it ceased to be possible to prolong one's life pleasantly. Yang makes life itself basic, and argues that we have a *duty* to prolong it as far as we can by keeping ourselves in good shape, with our faculties intact. Thus, in the Yangist stories in which a sage is offered the Empire and turns it down to preserve his health, he is following a higher duty, not seeking pleasure. Indeed, the Yangist takes a position close to the Confucian preference for the welfare of his own relative, but presses it all one step farther, recognizing a duty to prefer his own welfare which outweighs all other duties.

Mozi thought there was a deep incoherence in this view of a duty to oneself. He argued that if one were actually to announce his views about this duty to others, he would harm himself, for he would have to announce that he would, if necessary, be willing to harm others to benefit himself. But to argue such a thing before others would be to urge them to behave in the same way, harming the speaker if it is necessary to do so to benefit themselves. So this principle forbids its own assertion to others. This because the principle is not beneficial to people in general. Perhaps the argument can be finished off by pointing out that the principle, not

¹²⁰Chs 1.2–3, “Life as basic” and “Giving weight to self,” 2.2–3, “Valuing life” and “Essential Desires,” and 21.4, “Be aware what it is for,” in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and Chs. 28–31 in *Zhuangzi*, “Yielding the throne,” “Robber Chih,” “Discourse on swords,” and “The old fisherman.” This section depends on Graham (1989) 53–64, Hansen (1992) 154–157.

¹²¹“Life as basic.”

being beneficial to people in general, is not beneficial to human nature, so not to one's own nature.¹²² It seems Mozi thought that one who conceives himself to have a duty to preserve heaven's gift of *zhi* must take that duty to apply to *zhi* in general, and one can imagine Yang digging in his heels and insisting that one's only duty is to protect what Heaven has given oneself, not what it has given to all and sundry. After all, one may have a duty to keep safe a gift from the Emperor, but one does not have any obvious duty to keep safe things given by the Emperor to others. Each must guard his own gifts from Heaven.

A second argument against Yang in Mozi notes that nothing is regarded as more valuable than doing what is right. This is why people will risk death to do the right thing. This draws on the Yangist method of argument which proposes that one will not allow his hands and feet to be cut off to gain wealth, or allow himself to be executed to gain the Empire, and that people will not do such things in these extreme and obvious cases establishes that one's person is more valuable than wealth or empire. This, of course, mistakes the Yangist argument, which aims not to reject Heaven's gift and so avoid offense to heaven, not to defend the most valuable thing one has. It would not be right to mutilate oneself, for it shows ingratitude to nature. Mo decides what is right by asking what does benefit and corrects or avoids harm. So he figures if doing the right thing is a matter of protecting and favoring oneself, then benefit to oneself must be a greater benefit than benefit to others. Yang decides what is right by seeing what one's duties are, and it seems to him clear that one has a duty to honor and protect a gift (even one of inferior value) from a superior. This is a matter of honoring the superior, not of maximizing utility. So Yang and Mo have different views what the intent of Heaven actually is—Yang sees us as receiving attention from Heaven as representatives of humanity, it being humanity that Heaven loves, while Yang sees Heaven attending to us individually. If Heaven loves humanity, we should do so, but if it loves us, then we should love ourselves.

One Yangist, Zuhuazu, seems to respond to this Mohist line of argument. He ranks in order of preference the complete life, in which we get all of what it is natural to desire, a depleted life, in which we get only part of what it is natural to desire, death, which is entirely neutral, and an oppressed life, in which we get none of the things we naturally desire, but get what we naturally hate. An unrighteous life he classifies as the last sort, for being unrighteous is something one naturally hates, and so death is preferable to it.¹²³ That would explain Mozi's observation without giving up Yangist principles. The same Zuhuazu also argued with the

¹²²Mozi 46.52–60.

¹²³Spring and Autumn Annals 2.2.

Marquis of Han, it seems, that it would be wrong to risk one's life in war to gain a small amount of territory if it is wrong to lose a limb to gain the Empire. The position taken, then, is that one ought always to do one's duty, but the duty to lead as good a life as one can, and so to avoid unrighteousness, outweighs the duty to assist others, and certainly outweighs unnatural ambitions to control others or enjoy more wealth than one can use.

5. THE ANARCHIST IDEAL AND SHENNONG

The rulers of the House of Shennong carried loads on their backs, their wives carried loads on their heads, to govern the Empire. Yao said, "Compared with Shennong I am like the twilight to the dawn."

Xizi B, 10B.¹²⁴

Among the rivals with whom Kong Qiu debates in the *Analects* are some hermits who live by themselves, tending their own fields. In most of the Chinese literature it is assumed that such people withdrew from society to avoid recognizing the illegitimate rulers of the time, and Kong Qiu generally takes a practical approach, asserting that we have to live with other men, and so must treat whatever state in fact is able to rule as legitimate and try to work with it. But some of these fellows seem to have taken more radical views, arguing that everyone should do manual work for a living, rather than oppressing others and taking their produce from them, that the ruler should be selected by merit, and should teach, but should not enforce laws through punishment. Mozi retorts that one may do more good for others by teaching than by manual labor,¹²⁵ and the *Mengzi* points out the benefits of exchange of goods and specialization of labor, and suggests that ruling is a kind of work that requires one's full attention.¹²⁶

The anarchic ideal became attached to Shennong, the legendary inventor of agriculture, who was asserted to have ruled before Yao and Shun. Kong Qiu had introduced Yao and Shun themselves as ideal rulers before Yu, the founder of the Xia. The later Mohists proposed Yu, the legendary hero who drained the lands after the great flood. Whatever one's ideal, one was compelled to find an early sage king that exemplified it.¹²⁷

¹²⁴Translation from Graham (1989) 67.

¹²⁵*Mozi* 49.49–54.

¹²⁶*Mengzi* 3A4.

¹²⁷So the *Huainanzi* 19.

From the 4th to the 2nd century BCE, the legend was that Shennong taught people agriculture, and inspected their work, but he lived off the grain he raised himself, and his wife made their clothing. He did not pursue luxuries difficult to make or obtain, and valued nothing without a use. Under his rule, without the use of laws or punishments, necessities were abundant, and crime non-existent, and there was no use for a Kong Qiu or a warrior king. The one government operation supposedly authorized under Shennong was the storage of grain in good years so that it could be distributed to prevent famine in bad, a policy that became basic in Imperial China. From this golden age things declined, so that under Yao and Shun there were rules, but no punishments, the Xia introduced punishments, but kept their word, the Shang swore oaths, and the Chou made formal covenants. This is two-edged, however, for those opposed to anarchy could argue that rules and punishments were needed now, though they were not in the beginning, because men now are too corrupt to be governed by the methods of Shennong.¹²⁸ We have seen the same development in the Mediterranean, with Cynicism.

6. THE INNER SOURCE OF VIRTUE: SONG XING AND “INWARD TRAINING”

The form of the heart is
Spontaneously full and replete,
Spontaneously born and complete.
It loses this form through
care and joy, pleasure and anger, desire and profit-seeking.
If are able to rid itself of
care and joy, pleasure and anger, desire and profit-seeking,
the heart returns to completion.
The natural feelings of the heart
cleave to rest and calm;
Don't trouble them, don't derange them,
and harmony will spontaneously be perfect.

The “Inward Training” chapter of the *Guanzi*¹²⁹

Song Xing and his colleague Yin Wen belonged to an academy of scholars supported by King Xuan of Qi (319–301 BCE), the Jixia Academy. King Xuan instituted the academy at the capital, Linzi, in part for the

¹²⁸*Huainanzi* 13. *Laozi* 80 speaks of the ideal of Shennong, and describes it as “making fiefs small and their people few,” each farmstead being a fief with its own independent ‘government.’ Here it is clear that the utopia envisioned is one in which modern technology, even writing, is abandoned.

¹²⁹Translation by Robert Eno, from his website at the University of Indiana.

prestige to be derived from the presence of the scholars, and in part for the pool of talent it would make available to Qi's recruiters in staffing government posts. The academy was established near the Jixia Gate, hence its name. Its members were selected by the King from those nominated by aristocratic patrons, and provided with stipends sufficient to support themselves and a number of disciples. The members of the academy had a requirement of residence, and of attendance at the ceremonial functions of the academy.

In the *Chuangzi* Song Xing and Yin Wen are represented as the leaders of one of the five schools of thought of the time. Their followers, like the Mohists, wore special identifying clothing, and traveled throughout the Empire teaching their doctrines. Like the Mohists, they advocated non-aggression and the disbanding of armies, elevating the effective and useful, ignoring rank, and pursuing thrift in government.¹³⁰ Mengzi is reported to have met the two traveling to dissuade two rulers from going to war on the ground that neither would benefit from such an action.¹³¹ A more idiosyncratic doctrine recommended that people avoid prejudiced and restricted views resting on a narrow attention to only a part of the situation, that is, that they follow "the conduct which is the heart-mind's," to produce harmony among people. The heart-mind (*xin*) is by nature sympathetic to others, and is penned in by excessive desires and prejudices, so that it does not respond naturally to what we encounter. Song Xing also advised ignoring the judgments of others about one's worth, for "to be insulted is not disgraceful," and claimed that most warfare was the result of responding violently to insult. One's true worth depends on what one is, not on one's reputation. He also advised pursuing only essential needs, which are few. The essential needs were identified as those which are common to all people, those essential to human beings. These doctrines, they said, dealt with the inside, and those they shared with the Mohists with the outside.¹³²

Xunzi criticizes Song Xing on the ground that there may be a distinction between social disgrace and moral disgrace, but to endure insult is to bear social disgrace. Social disgrace is not as bad as moral disgrace, and to be born in preference to it, but that does not mean that people do not naturally hate social disgrace, or that it is not a bad thing. Moreover, even if people were to decide that social disgrace is unimportant, they would still go to war because of other things that they hate.¹³³ But however that may be, it is interesting

¹³⁰*Xunzi* 6.4–6.

¹³¹*Mengzi* 6B4.

¹³²*Zhuangzi* 33.34–41; 1.18.

¹³³*Xunzi* 18.93–107.

departure from Confucianism for Song Xing to argue for an inner-directed approach to life. Indeed, it was becoming clear that the inner approach would be necessary if any justification for one set of social customs over another was to be found, so that wisdom consists in something more than following the oldest customs, and Song Xing prepared the way for Mengzi.

As for essential desires, Xunzi points out that even if the sorts of desires common to all men are limited, if we desire good tasting food, *and all we can get*, that is not exactly moderation in desires. So essential desires can lead to conflict just as much as the more socially determined desires for things like rank.¹³⁴

The Jixia Academy of which Song Xing was a member seems to be the source of the *Guanzi*, a collection of philosophical writing from between the 2nd and 4th centuries BCE usually identified as Legalist. Four of the chapters of this work describe meditation, of which Chapter 39: “Inward Training,” seems to be from the 4th century.¹³⁵ This text, mostly in verse, is the oldest meditation text we have from China, and it is clearly pre-Daoist, for its techniques are conceived to make one a gentleman, and to be entirely supportive of Confucian morality. The text’s doctrine is rooted in Shamanic practice. One seeks in this practice to gain *zhi*, the universal breath in all things, which at its purest is *zhing*, the luminous breath of the heavens. A person is to use the heart-mind to guide his own *zhi* so that he becomes filled with *zhing*, and then he will have good health into old age, Power will mature within and he will spontaneously accord with the Way. The power provided by the way hangs on one’s unity with other things through the *zhi* they share with one, the trick being to get this *zhi* to be free of turbulence due to desire. Once it is “floodlike,” flowing evenly and sweeping aside obstructions, a person will be in harmony with what is around him, and able to influence events. The paradox (and the text shares the Daoist love of paradox) is that one attains power by giving up desire, and it emphasizes that the sage guides and controls events, and is not controlled by them. Together with the elimination of desire, One must use moderation in diet and adjustment of posture to still the heart-mind, so that it is no longer restless. One whose heart-mind is stilled instantly grasps the meaning of all that he experiences, responding to every circumstance in accord with the Way. The connection to Song Xing’s view that we must free the heart-mind from being penned in by excessive desire, and his recommendation that we attend only to our essential desires, which are few and easily satisfied, seems clear enough, and some scholars have suggested, though without much evidence, that Song Xing was even responsible for the “Inward Training.”

¹³⁴Xunzi 18.114–118.

¹³⁵For a translation and discussion, see Harold Roth (2000?), *Original Tao: Inward Training (Nei-yeh) and the Foundations of Daoist Mysticism*.

The “Inward Training” is hostile to discursive learning. So it tells us that “if the form of the heart acquires excessive knowledge, life is lost,” in introducing its discussion how one should unify with things to transform them, and unify with affairs to adapt to them. Moreover, *dao* is said to be invisible in form, and unheard, though it resides in the heart. So the document holds, with Mengzi and Laozi, that the way cannot be expressed perfectly in words, or laid out through exceptionless rules. It also holds that the way is not learned through the practice of *li*, as traditional Confucians would have it, but through a return to the original form of the heart-mind, before it is disturbed by desire.

7. MENGZI

According to Gaozi, “if you fail to understand through words, do not worry about it [i.e. seek understanding] in your heart-mind; and if you fail to understand in your heart-mind, do not seek satisfaction [i.e. understanding] in your *qi*.” It is right that one should not seek satisfaction in one’s *qi* when one fails to understand in one’s heart-mind. But it is wrong to say that one should not worry about it in one’s heart-mind when one fails to understand words.

The will is commander over the *qi*, while the *qi* is that which fills the body. The *qi* halts where the will arrives. Hence it is said, “Take hold of your will, and do not abuse your *qi*.”

As you have already said that the *qi* rests where the will arrives, what is the point of going on to say, “Take hold of your will and do not abuse your *qi*?”

The will, when blocked, moves the *qi*. On the other hand, the *qi*, when blocked, also moves the will. . .

I have an insight into words. I am good at cultivating my flood-like *qi*. . . This is a *qi* which is, in the highest degree, vast and unyielding. Nourish it with integrity and place no obstacle in its path and it will fill the space between [i.e. unite] Heaven and Earth. It is a *qi* which unites rightness and the Way. Deprive it of these and it will collapse. It is born of accumulated rightness and cannot be appropriated by anyone through a sporadic show of rightness. Whenever one acts in a way that falls below *the standard set in one’s heart-mind*, it will collapse. Hence I said Gaozi never understood rightness because he looked upon it as external. . .

What do you mean by “an insight into words”?

From biased words I can see wherein the speaker is blind; from immoderate

words, wherein he is ensnared; from heretical words, wherein he has strayed from the right path; from evasive words, wherein he is at his wits' end. What arises in the mind will interfere with policy, and what shows itself in policy will interfere with practice.

Mengzi 2A2.

Meng Ko (perhaps 380-300 BCE) came from a small state adjacent to Lu, Zou, and studied under the grandson of Kong Xiu, Zisu. It is notable that toward the end of his life he traveled extensively, and was made a member of the Jixia Academy under King Xuan of Wei (319–301 BCE), and his views reveal the influence of other members of the Academy, in particular, of Song Xing and the “Inward Training.” Mengzi and his immediate disciples left a collection of sayings and dialogues, the *Mengzi*, from which we know his thought. He was not much respected as a philosopher in his own time, but after the Qin, the Confucian thinkers, looking back, seized on his work as a response to the anti-Confucian currents of the time that was not tainted like the work of Han Feizi by association with Legalism. They came to take his account of Confucianism as orthodox, reflecting the intentions of Confucius himself, and regarded his objections to Mozi and others were insightful and conclusive. Here I shall try to deal with Mengzi as he was, and look to his reputation later in later chapters.

Mengzi lived a sedentary life about sixty years, and then about 320 he decided to emulate Kong Qiu, traveling about in the hope of converting to Confucianism a king with the potential to become the sole ruler of China. He argued above all that military action alone would not accomplish that aim, that benevolent government was needed, in particular sparing use of levied labor, reduced taxes, reluctance to punish, and proper organization of agriculture. Mengzi agreed that a benevolent ruler might in theory conquer others out of a concern for the people, in order to establish good government and punish tyrants on Heaven's behalf, but he thought that wars in his time were never launched from such a motive, and argues that a King without a taste for killing would attract the people to put themselves voluntarily under his rule.¹³⁶ In the event, he found a king who seemed attracted to his teaching, the king of Qi, in 314, but it turned out that the King was duplicitous, and only wanted the public appearance of approval by a noted Confucian scholar of a war he intended to launch against a neighboring state. Mengzi resigned his post as advisor and returned home to finish out his life as a teacher.

The central issue in the interpretation of Mengzi's thought is his relation to Mozi and the Confucianism

¹³⁶*Mengzi* 1A5–6.

that Mozi criticized. He did not base his advice on maximization of utility, but rather on the practice of *ren* and *yi*, benevolence and right. But that does not distance him as much from Mozi as one might think, for he treats *ren* as simply benevolence, a disinterested concern for the welfare of others, and *li* in Mengzi indicates an inner sense of good manners rather than a knowledge of or rootedness in a specific ceremonial code. *Zhi*, wisdom, and *yi*, doing the right thing, rounded out the four major virtues that he recognized. *Zhi* and *li* were of minor importance, his position generally being definable in terms of *ren* and *yi*, so, though all were found within the heart-mind, and *ren* and *yi* were the basic virtues in a virtue ethic, not an ethic based on utility, as in Mo, nonetheless these virtues were conceived as Mo conceived them, not as they were conceived in the *Analects*.

Mengzi defended the hereditary system and the old manorial economy, and saw nothing wrong with the privileged position and high income of the upper classes, but despite these conservative views, he also thought the ruler held the empire from Heaven, and so ultimately from the consent of the people. Heaven does not speak to say what its disposition of the Empire is,¹³⁷ rather it reveals its intention through events, and the one divines Heaven's intention through the people's acceptance of a ruler. Indeed, if someone revolted from his Lord out of benevolence, and received Heaven's mandate, that is, the people accepted him, then he would not have revolted from his Lord, but rather have punished an outlaw usurping the throne.¹³⁸ Mengzi is nonetheless conservative enough to reserve the right to depose an unjust Emperor for those of his ministers who are of his own blood, and insists that the other ministers should resign their posts in protest if he will not reform, but should not rebel.¹³⁹ The people, of course, ought not to rebel either. He was not willing to countenance a breakdown of the feudal order to obtain a sage-king, for his conception of the ideal rule of the sage-king presupposed that order working correctly, not its replacement with something else.

The deeper roots of Mengzi's thought are revealed in his reaction to Gaozi, a Confucian of a more conservative variety, who insisted that conformity to *li* was the central influence in forming a virtuous character, so that the standard defining the way was external, and found in a specific tradition. He probably also held that the tradition was learned within a family setting, so that one first learns the virtues within a family context, and so concern for one's family is prior to concern for everyone. The opening of the *Mengzi* contains an extended discussion with Gaozi, which is easily the most extended piece of argument in the text. The

¹³⁷*Mengzi* 5A5.

¹³⁸*Mengzi* 1B8.

¹³⁹*Mengzi* 5B9.

question faced in this discussion is one that had not disturbed Kong Qiu's mind, how is it that human nature and Heaven come to be in agreement? Mengzi held that human nature was good, and evil came to be through external forces driving one to unnatural deeds. Gaozi held that human nature is neither good nor bad in itself, but contains both possibilities within it, which are realized through education and training. Thus Mengzi saw the world as essentially good, and ethical principles as built into human nature and a benevolent natural order, while Gaozi took the natural world to be neutral, and ethics to be a human invention. Some others, along the same lines as Gaozi, held that human nature was various, good in some men, bad in others, so that one might be born with tendencies toward good or evil. This last view claimed the advantage of explaining why it is that good fathers sometimes have bad sons, and vice versa, that is, why some people develop contrary to their upbringing, an inconvenient fact for the other two views.¹⁴⁰

Gaozi's view apparently had a wide following, and in several places in the *Mengzi* it is subjected to attack.¹⁴¹ Gaozi's problem, Mengzi thinks, is that he assumes human nature comprises a range of possibilities, but not a tendency to develop in one way rather than another. Gaozi, in effect, argues that a thing cannot possibly develop in a way that is not in accord with its nature. So it would be against nature for a human being to turn into a stone, say, due to adverse moral influences, and so this never happens, but it is not against nature for him to become selfish and short-sighted. If that happens, then it was in his nature to respond that way to those influences. One's nature can never be violated, and the mere fact that there are bad men means that it is consistent with human nature to become bad. Sagehood, then, is achieved through education, and is not innate. Mengzi counters that the nature of a thing includes not only such possibilities, but also certain tendencies of development. So, when, in the discussion reported in the *Mengzi*, Gaozi says that our nature is like a willow, and *yi* and *ren* like cups and bowls that can be made out of the willow, Mengzi responds that when one makes cups and bowls out of a willow one violates its nature, for it does not tend to develop of itself into cups and bowls, and its natural tendencies to grow into a living tree are interrupted when it is made into cups and bowls.¹⁴²

¹⁴⁰*Mengzi* 6A6.

¹⁴¹Mengzi apparently had a reputation as a debater, which he regretted. He claimed that he simply had no alternative, for it was the only way to oppose the doctrines of Yang and Mo, and defend the teachings of Kong Qiu. If the teachings of Kong Qiu did not prevail, he thought, the way of morality would be blocked, and sooner or later men would begin to devour one another. *Mengzi* 3B9.

¹⁴²*Mengzi* 6A1.

Gaozi tries the model of a whirlpool, which will flow eastward or westward depending on where one opens a channel for it. So it tends to develop, but the direction of its development is not built into it, but imposed from without. Mengzi replies that water still tends to go downward, and that is why it can be directed east or west. But though its natural tendency is downward, water can be forced upward against its nature, and it is in the same way that human nature is forced to become bad, but is naturally and of itself good, because it develops naturally and of itself into good.¹⁴³

Abandoning explanatory analogies, Gaozi states that nature is what is inborn, and Mengzi retorts by asking if this is like saying the white is white. Gaozi replies that it is, indicating, it seems, that he is giving a definition, so that nature is identical to the inborn. Mengzi asks if the same white is found in all white things. Gaozi answers that it is, which is not the answer Mengzi was looking for. Nonetheless, it makes sense in its own way, for even if the whiteness of snow differs from that of ivory, it is similar too, inasmuch as it is whiteness. So Mengzi allows this, but goes on to point out that the nature of an ox is other than the nature of a human being or a dog. When we speak of human nature we mean, it seems, what is inborn in a human being, and this can be specified, and is different from what is inborn in an ox or a dog. These different things differ in their natural course of development.¹⁴⁴ It seems Gaozi held that what is inborn in a human being is the same as what is inborn in an ox or a dog, that is, desires for sex and food and the like. Moral standards are imposed from without through training and *li*. Mengzi's concern, it seems, is to explain why this difference exists between dogs, oxen and human beings, for they can be trained to virtue whereas dogs and oxen cannot, but one can easily imagine Gaozi replying that dogs and oxen can indeed be trained to virtue, and there is a great difference between a well-trained and a badly trained dog.

Gaozi holds in another place that benevolence (*ren*, humanity) is natural to us, as are eating and sexuality, but righteousness (*yi*) is not natural, but comes from without. Benevolence towards human beings is a natural response of one human nature to another, and one might observe benevolence toward dogs in dogs, toward oxen in an ox. The standard here, what counts as another's welfare and that it is good that human beings do well, is one we take regard of by our nature. But righteousness (*pace* Mozi) is another matter. It involves responses to particular facts about the other which we have no natural impulse to make. So one, by

¹⁴³Mengzi 6A2.

¹⁴⁴Mengzi 6A3. In 6A7 Mengzi points out that if one plants seeds and cultivates them all in the same way, they will come out roughly the same, though accidental variations among individuals cannot be entirely avoided. Hence human nature, if nourished, will follow always the same path of development.

righteousness, treats elderly people differently from the young, even if one has never oneself been elderly and has no particular sympathy for the elderly, and the way in which one treats elderly people is specified by social custom. Mengzi replies that it is elderly human beings that one respects, not elderly horses, and so this is a natural, internal sympathetic response, rather than a trained one, after all. Gaozi rejoins that we treat the elderly with respect whether or not they are related to ourselves. It is natural to have a concern or respect for those closely related to oneself, but it takes training (training that even overcomes the natural preference for one's relatives) to develop respect for old people in general. (Here he seems to refer to the Confucian view that virtue begins with natural behavior within the family, which is then extended by training to form the basis of more distant and formal relations.) Mengzi thinks one naturally respects elderliness, not merely one's own people and human nature in general, for otherwise, one presumes, it cannot be explained why one respects elderly people, both in one's own family and outside it. Perhaps the best question to ask here is whether it is correct to make Gaozi's apparent assumption that one responds with concern naturally only for what is like oneself. Mengzi thinks it is natural for a human being to respect age, even if he is not himself aged.¹⁴⁵ This natural tendency might be rooted, for instance, in the natural respect of a child for its elders, just as the natural respect for an older brother is rooted in childhood, when the older brother is more capable, and a natural teacher and protector. But Mengzi is supposing here that the concern for elders generalizes, and is not restricted to the elders closely related to a person, with whom he was raised. Gaozi seems to have held that our natural sympathies are limited, and must be extended by social training. Mengzi seems to imagine that they are rooted in the heart-mind, which treats all things the same which are known to be the same in morally relevant respects.

In another place, Gaozi points out that we serve the other's elder brother first when he is visiting for dinner, even though we respect our own more, so that we are guided here by an external standard, not by internal feeling. Mengzi replies that it is because of the position the neighbor's elder brother occupies when he is a guest that he is respected more, and when it is suggested that the standard is nonetheless external, it is pointed out that we drink cool water in summer, hot in winter, and yet even Gaozi sees the standard here as internal. An internal standard can specify different behaviors in different circumstances. One *naturally* respects a guest in this way, just as one naturally prefers hot water in Winter, perhaps because one recognizes the need

¹⁴⁵Mengzi 6A4.

of the guest to be assured of his welcome, a need one would have when in that position oneself.¹⁴⁶ Mengzi presses his point, though, holding that the specific custom of showing respect by serving the guest first, not merely showing respect anyhow for the guest, is somehow innate or specified by nature. Perhaps he thinks this custom is rooted in a natural impulse to tend to the more respected person's needs first. Clearly Meng disagrees with the classic Confucian position. He does not see righteousness as something learned as one learns the *li*, but as something innate.

Does he allow no role at all for convention, then? Not even in the case of righteousness. Gaozi's position is that one naturally has sympathy for others like oneself, and so benevolence for other human beings. This would be one way of reading Kong Qiu, when he asserts that benevolence arises from *shu*, likening others to oneself. But righteousness is surely a matter of following certain rules that vary from one society to another, not to mention that it requires one to put aside one's natural preference for those closest to oneself on many occasions. So the standard for righteous actions is not our natural inclination, but an artificially imposed external standard we must learn. Mengzi holds that the standard in all cases is the natural response, and so is forced into the position that righteousness is the same in all societies. He can do this only if he reinterprets *li* as an instinctive respect for the other's feelings, not the following of specific rules that enable one to express that respect. In general, he must distinguish the following of the language of ritual developed within a society from the virtues expressed in it. The truly virtuous express the feelings of the heart-mind through the rituals they know, and one who simply follows the rituals without feeling possesses no virtue at all. The feelings are natural to us all, and may be expressed differently in different societies. His point seems to be that it is natural *for us* to express our feelings within *our* language, and it is natural to men to invent ways to express our feelings, just as it is natural to invent language to express our thoughts and desires. It is like saying that it is natural when making a discovery after much effort to cry out "Eureka!" if that is the way such a surprise is expressed in one's culture; that is, it is natural to express one's feeling of relief and surprise, but expression depends on a language, and in this culture one says "Eureka!" when experiencing those emotions, not, say, "By Jove, I've got it!"

It is a matter of nourishing the four shoots: "A heart-mind which sympathizes is the emergent shoot of benevolence (*ren*); a heart-mind which is aware of shame, of right (*yi*); a heart-mind which defers to others,

¹⁴⁶Mengzi 6A5.

of ceremony (*li*); a heart-mind which approves and condemns, of wisdom (*zhi*).¹⁴⁷ Mengzi points out that everyone will respond the same way, for instance, if they see a child about to fall into a well—they will be alarmed and feel compassion and an impulse to protect the child. Similarly, every human being has some desires that will lead him to risk his life, a desire, for instance, not to do shameful things, which is the root of righteousness. “It is not the case that only the worthy person has this heart-mind. All humans have it. The worthy person simply never loses it.”¹⁴⁸ One must not force the development of these shoots, and Mengzi tells a tale of a fellow who tried to pull on his rice shoots to get them to grow, thereby killing them all.¹⁴⁹ The story implies that training through ritual that one does not yet feel is a bad strategy, not, as Confucius and Gaozi thought, the only road to virtue. Still, one needs to nourish them, to give them exercise, i.e. opportunities to manifest themselves, and to recognize and protect them when they do.

All this assumes metaphysical import when Mengzi speaks of nurturing his *qi* as the “Inward Training” chapter of the *Guanzi* does. His “floodlike *qi*” is “the utmost in firmness.” One nourishes it by doing right, not sporadically, but consistently over a long period of time. It is starved by doing what dissatisfies the heart-mind. This *qi* links Heaven and Earth. It unites *yi* and *dao*.¹⁵⁰ Our *qi* is to be united to the *qi* of the natural world by the full development of our nature, then, so that we become maximally effective, our *qi* being attuned to the *qi* of the world. Indeed, the universal *qi* is reflected in one’s *qi* when it is fully developed by *yi*.

The myriad things are all here at my disposal in myself. There is no greater joy than to look back into oneself and find integrity. There is nowhere nearer to seek benevolence than in action in which one consistently likens-to-oneself.¹⁵¹

Thus it is that we are strengthened by consistent *yi*, and “moral principles please our minds as beef and mutton and pork please our mouths.”¹⁵²

These four beginnings of moral behavior are not only natural, then, they also naturally govern. Some desires are not associated with thought, and the eye or ear is simply drawn by what it senses. The heart-mind,

¹⁴⁷Mengzi 2A6.

¹⁴⁸Mengzi 6A10.

¹⁴⁹Mengzi 2A3.

¹⁵⁰Mengzi 2A2.

¹⁵¹Mengzi 7A4.

¹⁵²Mengzi 6A7.

which thinks, rules such smaller desires by nature. There are naturally smaller and greater desires, and a small man is someone who places the small desires, such as self-interest and sense pleasure, above the larger desires, such as the desire to do what is right.¹⁵³ One naturally seeks respect even above life, and if one offers a beggar food with a kick, even he will think it beneath him to take it.¹⁵⁴ So respect is more important to us than life itself, and this is the root of righteousness, for we demand righteousness toward ourselves from others, and if we liken ourselves to others we will demand it toward others in ourselves. So to act in accord with nature is not only to act on natural desires, but for those desires to be naturally adjusted to one another, in such a way that the person as a whole is benefitted and nourished by them. To grow in virtue one must be continually alert, balancing the relative importance of our various desires, and not allowing the small stirrings of shame and concern for others, deference and judgment, to be overwhelmed and silenced by desires that they should be governing. “The respect in which a man differs from the beasts and birds is almost negligible; the common man loses it, the gentleman preserves it.”¹⁵⁵ So these tender shoots of virtue must be nourished, and will grow strong in an environment in which the desires are kept within bounds and satisfied, but the natural development of a man or a plant will be distorted if necessities are not provided and the desires are left unsatisfied. “In good years most of the young people behave well. In bad years most of them abandon themselves to violence.”¹⁵⁶ “If they have a secure livelihood, they will have a secure mind. And if they have no secure livelihood, they will not have a secure mind. And they have no secure mind, there is nothing they will not do in way of self-abandonment, moral deflection, depravity and wild license.”¹⁵⁷ For this reason, Mengzi recommended thriftiness in a ruler, to preserve the people’s livelihood secure. Indeed, to pursue and punish them for the crimes they commit with an insecure mind is a form of entrapment, and not the action of a man of humanity. The chief function of government in all this is to provided a secure environment within which people can mature naturally.

But Mengzi does not quite give way to the Daoist view of non-action. Guidance is necessary as well,

¹⁵³*Mengzi* 6A14–15.

¹⁵⁴*Mengzi* 6A10.

¹⁵⁵*Mengzi* 6A8,

¹⁵⁶*Mengzi* 6A7. One is reminded of a line from *West Side Story*, in which the Jets claim, “We’re depraved because we’re deprived.”

¹⁵⁷*Mengzi* 3A3.

and here he seems to recognize that the traditional *li* are not entirely innate, though they are designed (in the best way, or only way, possible?) to support and mesh with the development of the four innate roots.

According to the way of man, if they are well fed, warmly clothed and comfortably lodged but without education, they will become almost like animals. The Sage worried about it and he appointed Xieh to be minister of education and teach people human relations, that between father and son, there should be affection; between ruler and minister, there should be righteousness; between husband and wife, there should be attention to their separate functions; between old and young, there should be proper order; and between friends, there should be faithfulness. Emperor Yao said, ‘Encourage them, lead them on, rectify them, straighten them, help them, aid them, so they discover it for themselves.’¹⁵⁸

In the end, one’s will should be consistent with what naturally increases *qi*. In a discussion of courage, Mengzi compares the strategy of Meng Shishe, who cultivates his *qi* directly by treating defeat and victory as the same, with that of Tsengzi, who, following Kong Qiu, developed his courage by never acting when he did not see clearly that he was in the right, and so used his will to form his *qi*. The will, he holds, is the commander, and the *qi* the energy that fills the body. So one must “take hold of his will, and not abuse his *qi*.” The point is that the will may be blocked, and then our *qi* is disturbed—we suffer a loss of energy, become discouraged. Or the *qi* may be blocked, so that we have less energy, which affects the will, and we attempt less.¹⁵⁹ What is needed is a strategy to avoid blockage of the will by avoiding inner conflict and dependence on external circumstances, and thus *qi* will grow. Floodlike *qi* is *qi* that flows in a smooth, straight channel, sweeping blockages aside, without turbulence produced by conflicting desires and inconsistent will. So one must, to attain this floodlike *qi*, move consistently toward a unified set of desires. To act contrary to what we see to be right creates turbulence in our *qi*, for though we do the thing, we feel shame at doing it, acting nervously and without conviction. Despite a natural tendency to return to virtuous behavior, consistent deprivation will overcome in the end.

Days and nights heal, and there is the nourishing air of the calm morning which keeps one normal in likes and dislikes. But the effect is slight, and is disturbed and destroyed by what he does during the day. When there is repeated disturbance, the restorative influence of the night will not be sufficient to preserve.¹⁶⁰

The *Mengzi* attributes to Gaozi the advice,

¹⁵⁸*Mengzi* 3A4.

¹⁵⁹*Mengzi* 2A2.

¹⁶⁰*Mengzi* 6A8.

If you fail to understand words, do not worry about this [that is, attempt to understand] in your heart-mind, and if you fail to understand in your heart-mind, do not seek satisfaction [that is, attempt to understand] in your *qi*.¹⁶¹

Mengzi agrees with the second point, interpreting it to mean we should only seek to satisfy a desire if we see it is clearly consistent with what is right, for the standard for what is right is engraved in the heart-mind. He recognizes that Gaozi did not intend it that way, for he found the standard for the right externally. The first piece of advice Mengzi rejects entirely, and his rejection is connected with his reinterpretation of the second. He thinks it is important to understand words, and claims that this is one of the two things he is himself exceptional at. Understanding words turns out to be a matter of recognizing biased words, immoderate words, heretical words, and evasive words, which signal the speaker's blindness and confusion. The proper words, then, would state things the way they are, and be free of bias and immoderation. Clearly a reference to Kong Qiu and the rectification of names is intended, but this is seen through the lens of Song Xing. What seems to be implied is that one needs a correct set of descriptive words, correctly applied, to direct the understanding of the heart-mind, and so penetrate to what is in fact right and benevolent. Gaozi's notion is that we must depend on the words and rituals, and not attempt to replace them with the feelings of the heart-mind in deciding how to follow *dao*. The heart-mind can only be trusted once it has been formed by ritual, and is directed by properly corrected names. Mengzi rejects this. One should depend on the feelings of the heart-mind, the original, undistorted feelings, the four roots, and reliance on words and rituals in their place leads to hypocrisy.

His view, then, suggests that the way cannot be formulated in precise rules, so that any linguistic formulation of it, and perhaps any realization in a system of customs, *li*, will fail to capture some aspects of it. This is very close to the view of the *Laozi*, that the constant and reliable way cannot be described or formulated. The constant *dao* cannot be *dao*'ed. Thus the way is not something external, imposed on us, but is innate, growing naturally from the feelings of the heart-mind.

Many of the passages in the *Mengzi* are more or less casuistical, discussing apparent cases in which a sage failed to follow ritual or the right, or behaved inconsistently on different occasions, and then making it out that once we understand the situation the sage faced we can see that in fact he behaved correctly. So, for instance, a sage accepts a gift in one case, but refuses a similar gift in what looks like a similar case. The disciple asks Mengzi about this, and he explains that in the one case the giver was unable to travel to visit him, and so sent

¹⁶¹*Mengzi* 2A2.

a gift instead, which properly honored the sage, but in the other the giver was quite able to travel and visit him, but sent a gift to evade the obligation, which was insulting. Here the recognition that some things genuinely are insulting (something Yang might not agree to), and a correct understanding of the word ‘insulting,’ without bias or immoderation, so that we recognize which gifts are in fact insulting, are both needed to find the right action. But the lead is taken by the heart-mind, and it is the response of the heart-mind, once distorting influences on its intuitive response are removed, that settles the issue, and determines the exact meaning of the words, and the exact specifications of the rules of ritual. Mengzi’s skepticism about the ability of words to provide a guide or specify a *Dao* spills over into a skepticism about custom and ritual as a guide. Nothing external will do. It is only an innate tendency to follow the way, the presence of the way, perhaps undeveloped, already within us, that allows us to understand and follow the way. The sage is the standard by which we decide what to include in our theory of morality, no theory can provide a criterion for identifying a sage. To identify a sage, one must look to his history, not some definition of his behavior. If he arrived at his present character through nourishing the four roots, then he is a sage, and if he does something odd, given our notions of virtue, it is up to us to find out the rationale for his behavior and alter our notions in view of it.

8. THE SCHOOL OF NAMES: HUI SHI

Among the Chinese attention to matters of logic arose, as in Greece and India, with debates among the various schools of philosophy, and the beginnings of logic were remarkably similar to its beginnings in those other cultures. It arose from a practice of formal debate, and reveled in paradoxical conclusions, and was looked on askance by conservatives. In China, however, logic never established itself, and, indeed, the meaning and intention of its early practitioners was entirely lost after 200 BCE. We have only a few fragmentary accounts preserved in Daoist sources, and the work preserved by the strangest of accidents by faithful but uncomprehending copyists from the later Mohists.

The most notable of these debaters was apparently Hui Shi, chief minister of King Hui of Wei (370–319 BCE), and a friend of the Daoist, Zhuangzi.¹⁶² Interestingly, both he and later, Gongson Long, whose

¹⁶²King Hui also kept at his capital in Daliang Mengzi, and the rhetorician Shunyu Gun. His successor, King Xiang, was apparently less interested in such patronage, and the scholars gathered by his father scattered, many going to King Xuan of Qi (reigned 319-301), and the Jixia Academy established by his father, King Wei (reigned 357-320), formalizing the patronage of his father, Duke Huan (reigned 375-358). (John Knoblock’s webpage, www.miami.edu/phi/knoblock, Department of Philosophy, University of Miami, 1996))

patron was the Lord of Pingyuan in Chao (died 252 BCE), are known for advising against war, and appealing to the principle of concern for everyone. So we can associate this school of debaters with the Mohists, advancing arguments against the traditional views of their Confucian opponents.

Hui Shi seems to have had interests similar to those of the Greek Presocratics, for we are told that when a strange man from the South asked him why Heaven did not collapse, or the Earth subside, and the reasons why there is wind, rain and thunder, he had answers ready, and was prepared to go on with such explanations indefinitely.¹⁶³ He wrote many books, and was even said to have composed a law code for his king, though it was, according to one advisor, too good to be practical.¹⁶⁴ He is best known for a set of ten paradoxes he advanced, detailed in the history of philosophy in *Zhuangzi* 33, “Below in the Empire.”

(1) “The ultimately great has nothing outside it, call it the ‘Greatest One.’ The ultimately small has nothing inside it, call it the ‘Smallest One.’” Perhaps we can take this to refer to two ways in which something is one. There is what really is, which hangs together as a single world, and then there is a point as in geometry, with no parts at all—so a collective unity, and a unity set over against other unities. The things we ordinarily deal are one in both these ways at once.

The next two points refer to ordinary things as they are related to these two Ones. (2) “The dimensionless cannot be accumulated, yet its girth is a thousand miles.” The point is made by Zeno, too—however many of the Smallest Ones we put together, we have no width, yet it seems that a width of a thousand miles is made up of an indefinite number of these smallest ones.¹⁶⁵ (3) “Heaven is as low as earth, the mountains level with the marshes.” This is true from the viewpoint of the Greatest One, since it extends without limit upward and downward, and so the distance between heaven and earth, indeed, any finite distance at all, is nothing when viewed as a portion of its extent, and yet it *is* a portion of this extent.

(4) “Simultaneously with being at noon, the sun declines, simultaneously with being alive, a thing dies.” If we ask precisely at what point a thing dies, it cannot be when it is already dead, so it must be when it is alive, presumably the last moment when it is alive. This smacks of the paradoxes Buddhist logicians such as Nagarjuna

¹⁶³*Zhuangzi* 33. This section depends Graham (1989) 76–82, and uses its translations.

¹⁶⁴*Huainanzi* 18.5.

¹⁶⁵Other paradoxes attributed to the Sophists in general in the same chapter of the *Chuangzi* include, “A stick one foot long, if you take away a half every day, will not be exhausted in ten thousand ages.” “A wheel does not touch the ground”—perhaps because a circle touches a tangent line at a point, so no length of the circle is in contact with the tangent line. “The L-square is not square, the compass cannot make circles,” perhaps because the figures drawn are only approximate. “When the arrow is at its fastest there is a time when it neither travels nor is at rest”—an instant, as in Zeno’s paradox of the arrow, seems to be meant.

find in time. One issue here might be that if we ask when a process is occurring, it can only be occurring at a particular moment, when it is the present moment, not at some moment before or after the present, but, of course, the situation at the moment seems to be static. Indeed, it is alive at this moment, just as in many previous moments, and *in the moment* nothing relevant to its dying seems to be different from what was going on in those previous moments, yet, *now* it is dying. (Or perhaps we are trying to hard: is “simultaneity” here only approximate, so that the meaning is, any time at all, the afternoon or a life, is nothing when viewed as a portion of all time?)

(5) “Being similar on a large scale, but different on a small scale, this we call ‘similar and different on a small scale,’ . . . the myriad things to the last one are similar, to the last one are different, and this is ‘similar and different on a large scale.’” This should be compared to point (1). The point is that everything is similar to everything else (so all are of one sort, each *is*, perhaps), but everything is also different in some way from everything else. On a small scale, things are different, perhaps, inasmuch as they are distinct individuals. On a large scale, they are different in kind (the myriad things are kinds, not particulars). The point might have been pressed further, so that the kind *being* and the particular are related to ordinary kinds in the way the Greatest One and the Smallest One are related to finite things.

(6) “The South has no limit, and yet does have a limit.” It is reasonably clear why the South has no limit, since however far South one goes, one can go farther South. That it has a limit is perhaps to be argued on the ground that we can speak of *all* the Southern lands.

(7) “I enter Yueh today, and arrived yesterday.” Here the assumption seems to be that one is, precisely at the moment between one day and the next, that one moment that is the last moment of Tuesday and the first moment of Wednesday, crossing the border into Yueh, and am for the first time in Yueh. So I enter Yueh (in the first moment of) today, but arrived (in the last moment of) yesterday. If one objects that one moment should not be assigned to both days, then we must either decide that there is a last moment of Tuesday, or a first moment of Wednesday, but not both, since no two moments are adjacent to one another (they will always be separated by some length of time, or else they will be the same moment). But it seems absurd to say either that Tuesday does not have moment when it ends (or that that moment is not part of Tuesday), or that Wednesday does not have one when it begins (or that that moment is not part of Wednesday). So there has to be a moment at the boundary of the two days shared by them, and if that is the moment when one arrives in Yueh, we have the paradox. (By the way, this suggests the more adventurous reading proposed for (4) is correct.)

(8) “Linked rings can be disconnected.” The reference seems to be to the magician’s trick in which linked rings are mysteriously separated from one another, one apparently passing through another. Perhaps the rings are perfect circles, so that they have no thickness. Then if one only brings the circles into contact, they will share a point, and nothing prevents them from then separating from each other, for this is exactly the same situation that would obtain if they approached one another from a distance when disconnected, and touched, after which they could clearly come apart again.

(9) “I know the center of the world: north of Yen up in the north, south of Yueh down in the south, you are there.” From any given point one can go the same distance in every direction, since the world extends infinitely outward, and so every point is the center.

(10) “Let concern spread to all the myriad things; heaven and earth count as one unit.” The idea seems to be that all the myriad things are one, and so concern for self entails concern for all, since all are one and the same as self. The myriad things are one, of course, in the sense that they are parts of one larger unit, and it is less than clear why I ought to be concerned for another as well as myself simply because the other is part of some larger whole to which I myself belong. It would be clear that concern with the other was entailed by concern with myself if the other and I were one in a different sense, so that we are the same individual. Since the first paradox seems to differentiate these two senses of “one” it may be that this was intended to be a fallacious argument.

The paradoxes connected with the Greatest and Smallest Ones appear elsewhere in *Liehzi* 5, though the passage in question seems to have been taken from a lost chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. There Tang of Yin asks Zhi of Xia whether there was a first thing, and is answered that it would not be admissible to say that there were things now if there were no first thing, and so there must have been a first thing. He then asks if nothing preceded the first thing, and is answered that the start of a thing is always the end of a previous one, and so it seems that nothing can come first. Moreover, what stands outside all things together, or preceded all events together cannot be known. His point seems to be that there *is* such a thing, else there would not be all-things-together, but aside from the fact that it is we can know nothing else about it. When pressed yet further whether space has a limit and is exhaustible above, below and in each of the eight directions, he replies that what is nothing is without limit, but the whole of things is inexhaustible, so he cannot know about such things. It seems that he intends that we can only know about things that have limits and an exhaustible list of parts, and so cannot know about the inexhaustible whole of things, or about that which has no limits, i.e. points and instants (“nothings”). Still, he does say that only the limitless is limitless, and only the inexhaustible is inexhaustible,

and he knows this much about them. The point seems to be that he knows that there must be something limitless and something inexhaustible from the arguments given, but that he cannot know anything about them except that they are.

It is very tempting to connect this passage with Hui Shi, the inexhaustible being the Greatest One, and that which is without limits being the Smallest One. That the smallest one, the limitless, is ‘nothing’ seems to be assumed when Hui Shi says it cannot be accumulated. If that connection is made, it seems that Hui Shi may have held that it is only possible to know about things that have parts, and are themselves part of a greater whole, and so have limits. One can know that the inexhaustible whole, or the part without further parts, must exist, but one can know nothing about them.

Hui Shi seems to be a Chinese combination of Gorgias and Zeno, thus far, and another reference to him extends that impression by suggesting Gorgias’s epistemology. Zhuangzi and Hui Shi were supposedly strolling together, and observed fish swimming in the river, upon which Zhuangzi remarked that the fish were happy swimming about freely. Hui Shi demanded to know how Zhuangzi knew the fish were happy, since he was not himself a fish. Zhuangzi parried with the observation that Hui Shi could not know what he, Zhuangzi, knows, by that argument, since he is not himself Zhuangzi. Hui Shi retorts that perhaps he does not know, but it still follows from the principle (that one can only know about one’s own mental states) that Zhuangzi does not know about the fish, and at this point Zhuangzi breaks off the discussion with the observation that it was asked “whence” he knows the fish are happy, and he knows it from up above the river. This last is a deliberate pun, of course, but it also expresses his conviction that one can only know things from a definite viewpoint, that one cannot know how things are in themselves, but only how they are from that viewpoint, which, of course, reminds us of another Greek Sophist, Protagoras. Here, as in our previous case, Hui Shi seems to argue for a certain skepticism about positive facts, but allows that we can know what is not the case—just as we know the inexhaustible cannot be exhausted, because the consequences of the assumption that nothing is inexhaustible are impossible, so we can know that we don’t know the mental states of others. (*Zhuangzi* 17)

Closely connected with this is another passage in the *Chuangzi*, in which Hui Shi replies to his king, who wants him not to use analogies in explaining himself, that “it is inherent in explanation that by using what he does know to communicate what he does not you cause the other man to know it. For Your Majesty now to say, ‘no analogies,’ is impermissible.”¹⁶⁶ He seems to have thought that one can understand only what is

¹⁶⁶*Shuoyan* 11. This suggests the later Mohist view that the function of a name is to communicate that an object is like the other objects one calls by that name.

analogous to what one has experienced, and so it might well be that we cannot know what a fish feels, if we have never been a fish.

This is about as much as we know about Hui Shi, but before we pass on to consider Gongsun Long we should note something about the forms of argumentation that seem implied in these references to him. One thing is that he seems to play a logical game in which one asks if a given statement is “permissible.” To show that it is permissible is to show that in some situation it is all right to say it, and in the case of a statement, that means showing that in some situation it may be true. It is also possible to argue that it cannot ever be permissible, on some general ground. One’s dialectical skill would be shown in establishing that a statement one would think impermissible (impossible) in fact can hold under certain unusual conditions, or in producing a general argument that a statement one would have thought permissible never is. This would involve, of course, working out exactly what the statement means, and attending carefully to what does or does not follow from it. The discussion of “don’t use examples” suggests that the game was extended to command forms as well, and if one could argue that it was never appropriate to give a command (because it could not be carried out, say), then one would have shown it ‘impermissible.’ Another point to note is that the paradoxes and logical puzzles introduced seem connected to the practice of mathematics, and they seem rooted in the same mathematical conceptions of the unit, points and geometrical figures that one finds at the root of the paradoxes of the PreSocratics in Greece.

For an understanding of Chinese thought, some knowledge about the Chinese language and writing system is necessary.¹⁶⁷ The earliest sources for writing in China are collections of bones and turtle shells used for divination in the Shang. Questions would be carved on the bone or shell, and then it would be heated in a fire, and the resulting cracks would be read to determine the answer to the question. The question would ask what was to be done in some situation, and the answer would select from set alternatives. Descended from this practice, as we shall see, is the *I Jing*. The modern form of the characters was standardized in the Han dynasty.

The written language for Chinese is not, it appears, a transcription of the spoken language. The earliest

¹⁶⁷For this topic, see Graham (1989) Appendix 2, and Hansen (1992).

ideographic characters do not give any clue as to pronunciation, and so the same written sentence would be spoken in different dialects (differing as much as the European languages do from one another) in different ways. Writing is a kind of sign language, and a written message can be read and interpreted by educated people of very different dialects.

Chinese characters are ordinarily divided into pictographs, such as the character for horse or mountain, ideographs, including characters for numbers, 'above', 'bright' (sun and moon combined), and forest (three trees), and phonetic compounds, which typically have a pictograph radical and a second component that contributes phonetic information to distinguish the different meanings that can be attached to the radical. The phonetic information depends on pronunciation of the Han period, when the system gelled, and so in practice these phonetic determinants carry little phonetic information nowadays. It appears that the character or characters for a given word were never regarded as representing sounds. The phonetic determinant was used to remove ambiguity. Of course, the pictographic characters that settled into place by the Han dynasty do not much resemble what they supposedly picture, but it seems that their origins lie in a stylized picture, whereas ideograms are something more like diagrams, sometimes making use of pictures. The characters and character combinations correspond to words, however, not ideas, and when two words are nearly synonymous they will nonetheless have entirely different characters assigned to them. Particles, which determine grammatical function of words preceding or following, mark the ending of sentences, and serve the functions we handle with pronouns and prepositions, have their own graphs as well, though they do not correspond very well to ideas.

There are plenty of foreign words introduced into Chinese, each with its own graphs, and words restricted to one dialect might also be represented in the written language, just as we use foreign words or localisms in our own writing. New graphs arose also for new words as they were coined, and for colloquialisms. Words fell out of use. There are signs that the earliest documents, Kong Qiu and Mozi, are attempting to track spoken language, and dialectical differences appear among them, but the literary language came quickly to be independent, only to have colloquialisms appear again in Ch'an and Neoconfucian records of the sayings of their teachers. The written language became entirely "ideographic" when adopted by neighboring cultures, the Korean and Japanese, for instance. These cultures, however, abandoned reliance on written Chinese to develop their own phonetic representations of their spoken languages, much as the Phoenicians and Greeks, improving on the writing they inherited from older cultures, developed alphabets.

The Chinese, lacking inflections, did not develop much in the way of grammatical theory. They did

note the difference between nominal (subject and object) and verbal positions in the sentence. Many words can only be used in one of the two positions, and would draw attention if used in the wrong one, and particles were identified as 'empty words', and it would be noted if one occurred as a 'live word'. Lists of particles were compiled and they were defined in terms of one another. The Later Mohists made the most progress in this sort of thing, and they differentiate a sentence from a string of names.

Since the same written language can be used for a number of different spoken languages, and is learned in common by scholars from the different spoken traditions, Chinese written characters take on something of the aspect of ideas or concepts, except, of course, that the 'concepts' here are clearly conventional. Hence it has been argued that one who thinks in terms of written Chinese is unlikely to fall into the usual Western theory of language that postulates an intermediate idea, a mental character, as it were, to stand in for the common meaning when a number of words in different languages turn out to have the same meaning. A mental picture of a cat - Katz - gato - felinus is not needed, for the graph does the job.

In Western languages tone is often used to mark the speech-act performed by a sentence, for instance, to mark it as sarcastic or ironic, an expression of surprise, a doubt, an attempt to persuade, and so on. In modern Cantonese, these functions cannot be performed by tone, since tone is part of what indicates what word is intended, and so particles are placed in the final position to indicate the intended speech act. Thus there is less tendency among Chinese thinkers to take it that the primary function of language is to state things than in the West. (Hansen 41-2) There is also less tendency to postulate an inner life of feelings and mental actions to explain the various speech acts. One doubts by uttering a sentence with the right particle at the end, not by performing a mysterious, inner mental action. To doubt is a linguistic act. So a hidden inner machinery of thought is not postulated, nor, for that matter, is an inner, hidden machinery of nature. Human stuff just acts that way, it is not that there is a hidden structure of invisible parts that accounts for the action. Everything is available on the surface. This may help avoid a common mistake in philosophy in the West, but it has disadvantages, for it is one reason why Chinese science never got properly off the ground. The hidden structure of hidden parts is basic to scientific explanation.

Again, Hansen (49-51) has pointed out that, in early Chinese thought, the language seems not to employ what we would call count-nouns, but only mass-nouns. As a consequence, he thinks, Chinese ontology does not look for continuing unchanging particulars with changing properties. Our problem is coordinating things with the material making them up, stuffs with particulars of which they are the matter, as is evident enough in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. How can a fundamentally real particular be made up of stuff that is constantly

changing, flowing in and out? In Classical Chinese, one is picking out parts of a stuff. A dress is a piece of cloth of a particular kind. So it *is* cloth. (For Aristotle, a tree is a substance, and wood, says, is the matter it is made of, but it is essentially particular, and so is not wood, nor is it simply a part of wood, a block of wood, as it were. One point to note here is that the Chinese seem to assume that each stuff has its own entelechy built into it, whereas Aristotle attaches entelechy to the particular.) Human stuff has as parts human beings, families, armies, states, and one might be interested in one part or another. So the assumption is that the reality is the stuff, a background out of which we carve objects by making distinctions and marking them with names. The Classical Chinese see us dividing wholes, including whole stuffs, into parts, in various ways depending on our purposes, to produce particular things, rather than building up wholes out of fundamental, inalterable, particular parts (Atomism), or introducing particulars in the guise of substantial forms to take hold of and shape the stuff. No mind-body problem emerges in the Chinese tradition.

Fundamentally, language is viewed as a social practice that functions to guide action. (Classical Chinese does not distinguish prescriptive from descriptive use of sentences except through context. They are all the same, they all guide behavior, though perhaps in somewhat different ways. Thus there is no worry in Classical China about how to get from facts to value. Clearly “value judgments” simply guide in a more direct way than “statements” do. So the question is how to avoid relativism or skepticism in valuations—is there a constant *dao*?) (Hansen 51-2) The smallest units of discourse are ‘words’ (*ming*), and the chief larger functional unit is ‘a guiding discourse’ (*dao*). To interpret or display one’s understanding of a *dao* is to act in accord with it, not to give truth conditions for it. This interpretation begins with the words, the understanding of which is displayed in the way in which one makes discriminations in action using them. To learn the words is to learn the socially accepted way to make those discriminations. (One problem here is, how do we extend our understanding to applications of the *dao* in new situations? [This might lie at the bottom of the dispute between Juxi and Wang Yangming.]

So, (1) Confucius and Mozi: What *dao* is the correct one for guiding society? A traditional *dao*, formed conventionally, or a *dao* deliberately reformed in response to utilitarian standards? (2) Mencius and Laozi, an anti-language phase, which seizes on a supposed natural, intuitive, innate *dao*, in one case placing it in natural human responses, in the other making the constant *dao* out to be a metaphysical reality that cannot be characterized, or *dao*’d. (3) The later Mohist school, who defend an external realism, so that the way the world is should shape the *dao* if it is to be correct, but reject the uncharacterizable constant *dao*, and Zhuangzi’s relativist-skeptical position, rejecting the notion that there is a constant or correct *dao* at all. (4) The final phase,

Xunzi and Han Feizi, who pressed an authoritarian resolution of the problem. Xunzi argued for a conventional authoritarianism, and Han Feizi for the *dao* to be set by the ruler. Pages 1-5. Note that the Confucians all go for a conventionalist approach, it is just a matter of what sets the convention, tradition, the sage attending to his original nature, or the ruler.

9. ZHUANGZI

Zhuangzi was fishing in Pu river. The King of Qu sent two grandees to approach him with the message: I have a gift to tie you, my whole state. Zhuangzi, intent on the fishing rod, did not turn his head. "I hear that in Qu there is a sacred tortoise," he said, "which has been dead for three thousand years. His Majesty keeps it wrapped up in a box at the top of the hall in the shrine of his ancestors. Would this tortoise rather be dead, to be honoured as preserved bones? Or would it rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud?" "It would rather be alive and dragging its tail in the mud." "Away with you! I'll drag my tail in the mud."

Zhuangzi 17.81–84

When Zhuangzi's wife died, Hui Shi came to condole. As for Zhuangzi, he was squatting with his knees out, drumming on a pot and singing. "When you have lived with someone," said Hui Shi, "and brought up children, and grown old together, to refuse to bewail her death would be bad enough, but to drum on a pot and sing—could there be anything more shameful?" "Not so. When she first died, do you suppose I was not able to feel the loss? I peered back into her beginnings; there was a time before there was a life. Not only was there no life, there was a time before there was a shape. Not only was there no shape, there was a time before there was *qi*. Mingled together in the amorphous something altered, and there was the *qi*; by alteration in the *qi* there was the shape, by alteration of the shape there was the life. Now once more altered she has gone over to death. This is to be companion with spring and autumn, summer and winter, in the procession of the four seasons. When someone was about to lie down and sleep in the greatest of mansions, I with my sobbing knew no better than to bewail her. The thought came to me that I was being uncomprehending towards destiny, so I stopped."

Zhuangzi 18.15-19¹⁶⁸

A number of different thinkers were brought under the name *Daojia*, the "School of *Dao*," in the

¹⁶⁸Translated in Graham (1989), 174 and 175–176.

classification of classical thinkers into the “six schools” by Sima Tan (d. 110 BCE). It is harder than one might suppose to find what is in common among them, but perhaps they are united by the view that “while other things move spontaneously on the course proper to them, man has separated himself from the Way by reflecting, posing alternatives, and formulating principles of action.”¹⁶⁹ This view extends to Ch’an Buddhism as well, but that would be attributable to Daoist influence.

The earliest of these Daoisms is (1) the Daoism of the *Zhuangzi*, a collection of writings of the 4th century produced by and intended for people uninterested in and even hostile to any role in government. This Daoism must be contrasted with (2) the Daoism of the *Laozi*, which arose perhaps a century later, and proposes an application of the common Daoist insight to the tasks of government. (3) The *Laozi* was adopted, coupled with supposed documents connected with the Yellow Emperor, inventor of the state and warfare, and given a Legalist twist, in the 2nd century. It then (4) was coupled with Yin-Yang “naturalist” tendencies under the Han, and allied with divination and a search for an elixir of immortality, all fundamentally at odds with Zhuangzi’s attempt to come to a reconciliation with change and death. These were all identified as the *Dao jia*, the School of the Way, by Sima Tan. At first the *Zhuangzi* was more or less ignored in favor the *Laozi*, but with the breakdown of the Han about 200 CE, people who were disillusioned with the life of the civil servant began to use the *Zhuangzi* as a guide to private life. The *Zhuangzi* received the commentary of Guo Xiang (d. 312 CE), and the *Laozi* the commentary of Wang Pi (226-249 CE), and henceforth the two works were regarded as the classics defining the school. Around this time or a little earlier, (5) a related popular religion arose, *Taojiao*, founded, according to tradition, by Zhang Daoling in 142 CE, which has thrived in China up to the present.

In this section we shall concern ourselves with the Daoism of the *Zhuangzi*. The book as we have it was compiled in the early Han, in the 2nd century BCE, as an anthology of writings advocating withdrawal to private life, all passing under the name of Zhuangzi. It comprises (1) chapters 1-7 (the “Inner Chapters”) and fragments of chapters 23-27 and 32, which appear to be writings of or relating to Zhuangzi himself (ca. 320 BCE), (2) most of chapters 12-22, which, though strongly influenced by Zhuangzi, were written by other authors, (3) chapters 8-11, which were written by an anarchist between 209 and 202 BCE (dealt with above in Section 5), (4) chapters 28-31, Yangist writings from the same period (dealt with above in Section 6), (5) and the Han syncretists, represented in chapter 32. It is capped off with a valuable history of the philosophical schools in chapter 33, “Below in the Empire.”

¹⁶⁹Graham (1989) 172.

Let us start with Zhuangzi's criticism of the rational argumentation of the philosophers of his time. In a discussion with Hui Shi Zhuangzi asks if it is admissible to conclude that everyone is a good archer if we count as the intended target whatever is hit, without determining ahead of time what they are aiming at. Assured that such a conclusion could be drawn on that assumption (though the assumption, of course, is false), he then asks if it is all right to conclude that everyone is a great sage if we allow no common standard in advance for being right, but take each to be indicating the right thing whenever he indicates what he is indicating. Again the point is granted. What then of the disputes between Confucians, Yangists, Mohists, and Hui Shi himself? Which one has it right? Clearly the implication here is that the common standard for determining who is right is missing, and each judges himself right without the application of a standard, simply assuming he has the ability, innate or learned as a way is learned, to directly perceive and point out the truth. Hui Shi goes on to say that all these people are challenging him, shouting at him, and making arguments to refute him—could it be that no one has even denied what Hui Shi has said?¹⁷⁰ Apparently Hui Shi takes this to follow from what Zhuangzi has suggested, and we should no doubt do the same.

So each of these schools points out some aspect of reality, and none is wrong to do that, but might the question be which aspect of reality is the one that *should* be pointed out? Which is relevant to the issues at hand? To refute Hui Shi, it is necessary to make use of some publicly shared standard for deciding whether the aspects of reality that interest him are relevant or not. The question is not if it is true, but if that particular truth is useful here. Instead, his opponent only emphasizes that there are these aspects of reality. More in particular, to deny his position, his opponent would have to say what he is saying, that is, point to the same thing. But then he would be affirming it, not denying it. Stating a proposition is like shooting a target with an arrow. One must hit the target to state the proposition. But what is the target? One cannot specify the target ahead of time, for that would be to state the proposition in preparation for stating it. One must simply take it that whatever has been pointed to in the world by what one has said is what one intended. But then, how can one deny that this, which has been pointed to, is even there? How could we have pointed to it if it is not even there?¹⁷¹

This is developed most fully in *Zhuangzi* 2, "On Making All Things Equal," a classic both of literature

¹⁷⁰*Zhuangzi* 24.38–41, as interpreted by Graham (1989) 177-178.

¹⁷¹The argument has to be filled in a good deal, but the way in which it is filled in here coheres with the other texts well. The answer, perhaps, is that when we say something we are not picking out some feature of reality to point to, or at least not necessarily doing so. Somehow we can say things that are not so at all. Compare the Greek Sophists, and Plato's reply to them—one picks out something when one utters a statement, namely the thing talked about, but then one says something about it, and that may be true or false of it. So sentence meaning involves more than just reference, inasmuch as it involves predication.

and of philosophical reflection. The piece opens with the the sage Ziqi (Master *qi*) apparently in a meditative state, staring up at the sky, “vacant and far away, as though he’d lost his companion.” It seems he is not interacting with anything in the world, free from the focuses and oppositions that make up life. His attendant summons him from this meditative state by remarking on it, and Ziqi responds that now he has lost himself (presumably in returning to the ordinary life of the natural world, or perhaps he had lost himself, his ordinary, natural self, in his contemplation). He then asks his attendant if he understands—“you hear the piping of men, but you haven’t heard the piping of earth. Or if you’ve heard the piping of earth, you haven’t heard the piping of heaven!”

Asked what this means, Ziqi replies with a satirical cosmogony—the Great Clod belches out breath, he says, that is *qi* arose in the beginning from the source of all things. This breath produces noises of all sorts as a wind that sets all the hollows it encounters to sounding. This is the piping of the earth, and Ziqi’s attendant identifies the sounds produced by whistles and flutes as the piping of men. As for the piping of heaven, this is heaven’s blowing on the myriad things, each in a different way so that it can be itself. The image is one of a uniform source for all these sounds, but each particular sound represents what that thing makes of all this. Each takes what it wants to be itself. Perhaps: Each natural object produces its own sound expressive of itself, and so makes itself known, when it encounters awareness (*qi*), the wind, and that is the piping of the earth. The piping of men is the expression men make of themselves, but not merely as natural things—it is their expression of themselves in human language, by which they make themselves understood. And the piping of heaven is the self-expression of the source of things in natural things.

The point of the satirical approach is not to deny the truth of the cosmogony, which is a pretty conventional Chinese version of things, but rather to poke fun at the sense of heavy import with which it is usually told, as though the meaning of life is revealed here. Zhuangzi simply has no *respect* for the Great Clod that belches out the universe, or the myriad things that arise in the great noisy storm that the belching produces. There is nothing *important* going on here. It is just the way it is, and, when we consider the importance attached to it all, a little comic in an ironic way. The notion that it could be read in *that* way!

Following this cosmogony he tells the story of humanity within this world: Men become entangled with things, they lose themselves in strife, and exhaust themselves in holding on to the positions they have taken and the things to which they have assigned value, sure that they can judge right and wrong, truth and falsehood. And so they fade into old age, and as death approaches, they are unable to restore themselves to the light from whence they came. That is, they take it all so seriously, and are unable to see that all the different

viewpoints of things are equally true and false, valuable and worthless, from one viewpoint or another. All the emotions, virtues and vices are identified as natural occurrences, produced by a True Master, perhaps (it is unclear if Zhuangzi's insistence that there must be a True Master is serious or tongue-in-cheek), but this True Master, being outside the natural order, has no form by which he can be known. He expresses himself, can express himself, only in the natural order. No one knows where these thoughts, inclinations, emotions come from, though we would not exist without them, and they perhaps would have nothing to attach themselves to without us. The implication is that the Great Master is not a personal self somehow in control of these things. If something is identified behind them it is not the individual person, but the universal source the Great Clod or the wind it belches forth, which cannot be described since to describe is to differentiate from other things, and it is the ground in which the differences arise.

This launches us into an attempt to identify the self. Which part of me is the true self that controls the rest? Mengzi, for instance, would seize on the heart-mind as the True Lord among all these parts of ourselves. But, now, does that mean we can tell what is right by following the heart-mind given to us? But if what determines what is true and right is some such natural faculty, and that does seem like the only reasonable proposal, then, of course, it is my particular instance of this natural faculty that is my particular guide, and then everyone is a sage. Each of us is elevated to the position of the criterion of the right and true, and none of us can be wrong.¹⁷²

This remark is now justified by a discussion of language, responding to Mohist thought. Words are not mere wind, they say something. But for a word to say something, what it says must somehow be fixed. It won't do to fix what a word says with a definition, and then deduce one's own ideas from that definition, taking it to identify the underlying reality referred to by the word. One's opponent will simply give different definitions, relying on his own intuitions, and fix the word's meaning differently. Nonetheless what the word says must be fixed. So what does a word rely upon to establish it as right or wrong in a given application? Well, what does the Way rely upon to make it the true way? The Way does not cease to exist simply because it does not rely on some more fundamental way, and there must be such a Way at the bottom of things, to avoid an infinite regress of ways—somehow there is a point where we just know what to do and how to do it, and there is no way we know, so that *we are* the criterion of correctness. Similarly, a word cannot rely on further words

¹⁷²Note how often the criterion of the right and true is identified in the West as something supernatural, which stands above individual minds and somehow *guides* the natural faculties on which we rely (Plato's Forms, for instance, and Kant's transcendental functioning of the faculties). The *Zhuangzi* does not recognize anything supernatural other than the source of all things, and it insists that this source cannot be described, except insofar as it expresses itself in nature.

to define its meaning, and those words on yet further words, ad infinitum. There is a point (quickly reached) at which the word simply stands on its own. Its use is what it is, and we understand it by knowing how to use it, and knowing how to use it is simply being able to speak using it, not a matter of understanding some theory expressible in words about its use.¹⁷³ It never occurs to Zhuangzi that we might know how to use it by observing what underlying reality it points out for us. Knowing how to use it is knowing when it applies and when it does not, and this cannot be specified by specifying the reality it points to, for to do that we would have to know how to use words already.

So the right approach is to use “clarity” or “illumination” to make clear the meanings of words. In explanation, each thing is both *this*, the thing close by and familiar to us, and *that*, the thing that does not appear to us, because it is at a distance from us, though that can be a this, if our viewpoint shifts to bring it nearby. So “that barn,” so far away that I can barely make it out becomes “this barn,” right up close where I can see and touch it. Similarly, “this” (meaning, now, as the Chinese term translated here can, “what is right”) becomes what is wrong when viewed from another vantage point. This and that arise from each other, that is, we can only understand it as this if we understand how it can be that, and vice versa. So what we do in coming up with a name or description is to seize on some aspect of what is presented to us, and refer to this, and that aspect may be the opposite of some other aspect *that can only appear to us if we shift our point of view*, and *that* aspect is for the moment not perceived by us. The sage perceives that aspect which is relevant in each case, shifting his point of view as is necessary to do so, always aware of the possibility of a shift in point of view, always aware that every point of view is right from its own perspective, though not all are equally useful if we have an end in view. The sage uses illumination from the light of heaven, the standpoint outside of all things, or embracing all things, to see all the various aspects of reality, and his this is also that, his that also a this.

His “that” has both a right and wrong in it; his “this” has both both a right and wrong in it. So, in fact, does he still have a “this” and a “that”? A state in which “this” and “that” no longer find their opposites is called the hinge of the Way. When the hinge is fitted into the socket, it can respond without limit. Its right is without limit [it applies to every thing] and its wrong is without limit [it is inapplicable to each and every thing]. So, I say the best thing to use is clarity.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³Zhuangzi 2.23-26. Graham (1989) 178. Also 2, 32 ff., where it is suggested, “a road is made by people walking on it; things are so because they are called so. What makes them so? Making them so makes them so. What makes them not so? Making them not so makes them not so. Things all must have that which is so; things all must have that which is acceptable.” (Tr. Watson (1968) 40)

¹⁷⁴Zhuangzi 2.29-31. Watson translation (1968) 40, combined with Graham translation (1989) 179. My explanatory paraphrase in square brackets.

What happens next seems to presuppose a discussion that also pops up later in Gongsun Long.

Rather than use the pointed-out [that is, horse] to show that to point out [a horse] is not to point out [a white horse], use what is not the pointed out [that is, white horse]. Rather than use the horse to show that a horse is not a horse, use what is not a horse [that is, white horse]. Heaven and earth are the one thing pointed out, the myriad things are a single horse.¹⁷⁵

To point out a white horse, the paradox examined by Gongsun Long suggests, is not to point out a horse. How does one show this? One could use what is pointed out, that is, horse. Somehow we are to show that a horse differs from a white horse. But, as Gongsun Long indicates (see the discussion in the next section), that seems hard to do, for it does not differ in its being a horse, and in pointing out the horse, that is all we have to work with. No, rather we should point out white horse, which clearly does differ from horse inasmuch as it is white, whereas a horse as such is of indeterminate color. This makes sense, and we shall examine the import of the paradox, which was presumably not Zhuangzi's, but more the sort of thing his friend, Hui Shi, would have dealt in. What is pointed out, the one thing, is horse, which happens, accidentally to be white or brown, and to point out a white or brown horse is not to point out the universal or the collection of all horses, but it is to point out an element of that collection, something falling under the universal. Similarly, heaven and earth are what we point out, and to point out horse is not to point out heaven and earth, but heaven and earth which is accidentally horse. To show that heaven and earth are not horse, then, use horse, and show us how it implies specific characteristics which are not characteristics of heaven and earth. Indeed, the universe, all things, cannot be assigned any characteristics at all, for to do that, *first* we have to make distinctions and divide it into opposing parts or aspects.

Summing up the argument, naming is pointing out reality. Naming a particular sort of thing is pointing out reality with some addition, pointing out one side of some distinction to be made in reality. Saying (asserting) something is like naming. It, too, is pointing out reality. Saying a particular thing is pointing out reality with an addition, pointing out some aspect of reality, something evident of reality from some viewpoint, but not from others. So to point out a horse presupposes that there is something which picks up that aspect of reality, to which it is evident when horseness is present, but horse is not evident from the viewpoint of, say, a detector of colors. So horse and white are different things. But when one points out horse, or points out white, one points out something in each case, and the same thing, namely reality. Else it would not be pointing out. One simply points this one thing out from different viewpoints.

¹⁷⁵Zhuangzi 2.31-33, as translated in Graham (1989) 179-180. My explanatory paraphrase in square brackets.

At this point one might wonder why it is correct to point out heaven and earth, rather than correctness depending on one's pointing out the particular situation at issue. Of course, that is all right, too, and the sage attends to heaven and earth, and so avoids being caught in conflict with others and all it entails in the way of self assertion, rigidity, and decay. But also, Zhuangzi points out, the sage is looking for the way which is constant, that is, which always useful, which always contributes to success.¹⁷⁶ The sage relies on this way alone, at least insofar as he is sagely (though he may also be a cook and, as such, rely on a way that is only useful when we are hungry). Moreover, he does not know he is relying on this way, for it is a way that cannot be characterized. In particular, there is no way to reason oneself to the view that all things are one, no way to give a description of the way in which things are one, to characterize reality as such. He tells a story of a monkey trainer whose monkeys are rebellious because they get three acorns in the morning and four at night, and so agrees to give them four in the morning and three at night, with which the monkeys are delighted.

There was no change in the reality behind the words, and yet the monkeys responded with joy and anger. Let them, if they want to. So the sage harmonizes with both right and wrong and rests in Heaven, the equalizer. This is called walking two roads.¹⁷⁷

This does not mean that the sage understands that all things are one. It only means that he treats all things as one, and when the Yellow Emperor in one place suggests that “the myriad things are one” he is himself aware of having transgressed the way by putting it into words. And so the folly of trying to put it into words, to conceptualize it, is expressed.

The knowledge of the men of old had arrived at something—at what had it arrived?¹⁷⁸ There were some who thought there had not yet begun to be things [in the very beginning]—the utmost, the exhaustive, there is no more to add. The next thought there were things [in the very beginning], but there had not yet begun to be borders. The next thought there were borders to them [in the beginning] but there had not yet begun to be “It's this, it's not.” The lighting up of this and not this is the reason why the Way becomes deficient.¹⁷⁹

The intellectual progression here attempts to establish conditions under which we can explain how people came to be deceived, and came to grasp at things being this way or that, as though there were a right and a wrong

¹⁷⁶This is rather like *arete*, virtue, as identified in Plato. It is a character trait which is beneficial in *every* situation.

¹⁷⁷*Zhuangzi* 2.38-39, translated Watson (1968) 41.

¹⁷⁸This is expressed in a way that suggests someone other than Zhuangzi insisting that the men of old knew something about the matter. So he asks what they knew, and gives a sarcastic answer.

¹⁷⁹*Zhuangzi* 2.40-42. Translated Graham (1989)180.

way, and so fell into all the trouble and conflict that results from that. Many later commentators took it that Zhuangzi meant this project seriously here, and so was producing a metaphysical argument concerning the nature of Reality. In fact, he seems to view it as mistaken from the very first step. Even to say that there had not yet begun to be things (in reality) in the beginning, before reality had been altered, is to step outside the Way. In particular, one might note, one has already insisted that something is not! Moreover, the attempt to escape this error leads to the assertion that things are, that their borders are, that “it’s not” and “it is” are. And so, in the end, that first mistake produces the conditions under which, once all these distinctions are “lit up,” so that one *attends* to them, one has abandoned the way. To analyze the situation is to fall into the trap. Let the monkeys respond as they want to. No doubt there is a difference, it’s just that the sage takes no notice of it.

Zhuangzi imagines how one might attempt to express reality through denial.

Let us try to say it. There is beginning. There is not yet having begun the having of a beginning. . . there is there not yet having begun to be that not yet having began the having a beginning . . .¹⁸⁰

The infinite regress is clearly unacceptable, and yet, it is also unacceptable to speak as though things were present before they began to be present, a situation before the first situation!

So Zhuangzi rejects Hui Shi’s conclusion that everything is one, with his usual irony.

Now that we are one, can I still say something? Already having called us one, did I succeed in not saying something? One and the saying make two, two and one [my denial that things are many] make three . . . Therefore if we take the step from nothing to something we arrive at three, and how much worse if take the step from something to something! Take no step at all, and this according to which you go by comes to an end.¹⁸¹

And so a sage, Gaptooth, is pressed as to what it is he knows, is there some ‘this’ in which all things agree, and he asks, “how would I know that?” Then, cleverly the tables are turned on him, doesn’t he know then what it is he does not know? But even here the sage demurs, “How would I know that?” Then, it is suggested, we know that no one knows anything? Even here, he says, “How would I know that?”¹⁸²

It seems wrong, though, to call this doctrine skepticism. It does not deny knowledge in general, but knowledge of *reality*. Now that would be denying knowledge in general if reality was all that is, and what

¹⁸⁰Zhuangzi 2.51 f.

¹⁸¹Zhuangzi 2.51–55. Translated in Graham (1989) 181.

¹⁸²Zhuangzi 2.64–67.

mattered to Zhuangzi, but it is not. When we talk about the myriad things we make some sort of reference to reality, or so he argues, but he does not argue that we say anything about reality as it is in itself. We only say something about reality as it appears from a certain viewpoint. And what we say is true. What matters is what goes on when one ignores reality and works from the viewpoint.¹⁸³

The bait is a means to get the fish where you want it, catch the fish and you forget the bait. The snare is a way to get the rabbit where you want it. Catch the rabbit and you forget the snare. Words are a way to get the idea (*yi*)¹⁸⁴ where you want it. Catch on to the idea and you forget the words.¹⁸⁵

But, it might be objected, Zhuangzi raises the Cartesian question concerning dreaming, and argues that we cannot know if we are dreaming or awake. Is not that a skeptical position? Well, it is a way of getting at the question what things are ultimately real, of calling into question the whole of reality at once.

While we dream we do not know we are dreaming, and in the middle of a dream interpret a dream within it; not until we wake do we know that we were dreaming. Only after the ultimate awakening shall we know that this is the ultimate dream.¹⁸⁶

The point, of course, is that we can never know that the most recent awakening was the ultimate one. So, in the end “he does not know if he is Chou who dreams he is a butterfly or a butterfly who dreams he is Chou.”¹⁸⁷ But the possibility of awakening shows that an unknowable reality lies behind the dreaming/waking dichotomy just as it lies behind all the others. Dreaming is not the unreal and waking the real. From the standpoint of the waking, the dream is not so, but from the standpoint of the dreamer. . . Sometimes reality appears to us as dreaming (if we have awakened or expect to), sometimes as waking (if we are aware that we might dream but don’t suppose we are dreaming now). Most of the time, perhaps, it appears to us as neither, for most of the time we don’t raise the question if we are awake. How would a sage behave in a dream? No doubt, skillfully and wisely, taking things as they appear given his current viewpoint, leading the best dream life he could, and

¹⁸³One might call the position anti-Realism. Perhaps it is a sort of Kantian anti-Realism, in which reality is granted, but then dismissed as unknowable—Kant’s doctrine concerning theoretical reason, standing alone, without any supplement about pragmatic reason.

¹⁸⁴It must be noted, of course, that getting the idea here is not a matter of formulating it in some language of thought with its own, natural, words. Rather, it is simply seeing how to proceed.

¹⁸⁵*Zhuangzi* 26.48. Translated in Graham (1989) 200.

¹⁸⁶*Zhuangzi* 2.81–83. Translated in Graham (1989) 195.

¹⁸⁷*Zhuangzi* 2.95. Translated in Graham (1989) 195.

perhaps unsurprised upon awakening and discovering that from another viewpoint none of it was so.

In one place there are three ways identified in which one may speak effectively. One may “speak from a lodging place,” that is, discuss the matter from someone else’s borrowed standpoint. There is nothing wrong with doing this as long as one remains aware that it is not the only standpoint, and in philosophical discussion this enables one to argue with a person from his own position, the only way that in the end will change his mind. This will work nine out of ten times. One may say something from one’s own authority, expecting people to accept that, if one has enough experience to do so, and this is called “weighted saying.” This works seven out of ten times. Finally, one can use “spillover saying,” the name being taken from a vessel designed to tip and pour out the excess, and then right itself, when filled to the brim. Here one does not adhere to any one viewpoint, but in saying what he says, says nothing. That is, he does not affirm his viewpoint as describing reality as it is. Whenever that interpretation comes to be put on it, it tips over, and spills out the excess meaning. Always you keep it evident that whatever is not admissible from here is from somewhere else, and what is admissible from here is not from somewhere else.¹⁸⁸

Reflecting back to the beginning of the discussion, can we say what our innermost self, from which all else in us arises, is? Zhuangzi would presumably answer, “How would I know that?” with the implication that any answer to the question would presuppose a way of knowing, illegitimately. Connected with this skepticism regarding the real self is Zhuangzi’s peculiar attitude towards death and dismemberment. Stories in the *Zhuangzi* repeatedly report him treating these misfortunes as matter of fact occurrences about which one should make no fuss, outraging the usual Chinese sentiments. In effect, he takes death as a matter of a shift of viewpoint, the *qi* that makes one up transforming into the *qi* of some other sort of thing. At bottom the dying man remains what he always was, the unknowable subject of endless transformation. Or perhaps that does not quite get the attitude right. Such a formulation presupposes that one has begun on the road of conceptualization, so that he identifies a reality behind things, even if he does not go farther. If we take no step at all, we will not do even that, but approach death, like we approach all else, with a matter of fact attitude, without discrimination and without evaluation.

In discussing the essential nature of man, Zhuangzi identifies it as precisely that which leads us astray, judging that something is or is not, really, so.

Judging “It’s this, it’s not” is what I mean by the essential to man. What I mean by being without the essential is that the man does not inwardly wound his person by likes and dislikes,

¹⁸⁸ *Zhuangzi* 27.5-7. Graham (1989) 200–201.

that he constantly goes by the spontaneous and does not add anything to the process of life.¹⁸⁹ This does not mean that the Genuine Man is someone in whom human nature never manifests itself, for that would be an animal. In the Genuine Man neither Heaven nor Humanity is the absolute ruler.¹⁹⁰ One must live the life produced by Heaven, but one must also know that a man seeks knowledge. What a man does is to use his “wits” (the word that replaces heart-mind among the Mohists) to nurture what his wits can know nothing about, his real self.¹⁹¹ It seems to be assumed that there is a reality we know nothing about, and that this reality is genuinely important, but the only way to nurture it is to nurture our selves as we know them from one standpoint or another.

But even here there is a difficulty, for Zhuangzi thinks one can never know whether one is acting from his human nature, or Heaven is acting through one. The distinction between my voluntary action and the spontaneous action of nature in me is not one we can make out, except from one or another viewpoint. Indeed, one should not attempt to act without acting, to allow Heaven its way, for to attempt to do this is to use a human contrivance for success, and so is self-defeating. “The perfect man hates Heaven, hates what is from Heaven in man, and above all the question “Is it in me from Heaven or from man?”¹⁹² Indeed, the sage would not make the distinction, but would simply act spontaneously, and so would often enough act according to human planning. To be genuine and spontaneous is not to *do* anything, much less to refrain from doing something.

(2) All things in flux, and one names the whole by the part he chooses to go by. So at the moment of change it is neither this, nor not-this.

10. THE SCHOOL OF NAMES: GONGSUN LONG

The book *Gongsun Longzi* was forged between 300 and 600 CE, much of it being constructed around

¹⁸⁹*Zhuangzi* 5.55–58. Translated in Graham (1989)195–196.

¹⁹⁰*Zhuangzi* 6.19 ff.

¹⁹¹*Zhuangzi* 6. 1 ff.

¹⁹²*Zhuangzi* 23.73 f. Translated in Graham (1989) 197.

later Mohist fragments, but there are three pre-Han essays preserved in it, “White Horse,” “Pointings and Things,” and “Left and Right,” which are generally attributed to Gongsun Long. These would have been written before 251 BCE, when the Lord of Pingyuan, Gongsun’s patron, died, and surely after Zhuangzi and Hui Shi. The texts here are rather difficult to interpret, so we will present the text first, and then discuss its meaning.¹⁹³

The first involves us in the question how to interpret a phrase such as “white horse.”

Is it admissible, “white horse is not horse?”

It is admissible.

Why?

‘Horse’ is that by which we name the shape, ‘white’ is that by which we name the color. To name the color is not to name the shape. Therefore I say, ‘white horse is not horse.’

The best way to read this would seem to take “white horse” as a name of a kind, a combination of two simpler kinds, white and horse. But if one combines two kinds in this way one gets a new, more specific kind. So the kind, white horse, is not the kind, horse. One might want to say that the kind, horse, is a collection of kinds, one of which is white horse, but then a member of a collection is not the same as the collection. The sentence we have rendered “white horse is not horse” would ordinarily be taken in its Chinese form to mean that a white horse is not a horse, which seems absurd, but it could also be taken to mean that the kind white horse is not the kind horse, which is certainly defensible. Gongsun Long works from the latter interpretation, then, and to point out that the one phrase names both a shape and a color while the other names only a shape will establish his claim that the two kinds differ.

The dialogue goes on with an objection:

You deem a horse which has color not a horse. It is not the case that the world has colorless horses; is it admissible that the world has no horses?

Certainly horses have color, which is why one has white horses; supposing that horses were colorless, and one had only simple horses, how would one select a white horse? Therefore white is not horse. A white horse is horse and white combined. White and horse are two things. When we bring together two things as a common body, one may not one-sidedly call them horse. Therefore I say, white horse is not horse.

The objection suggests that the kind horse would have no instances if horses are not white, black and brown horses, for all particular horses have one color or another. Gongsun grants that all particular horses have color, and one can point out white horses. But the fact that we can conceive colorless horses (not to mention brown and black horses) only establishes that the kind white is not the kind horse more strongly, and so the kind white

¹⁹³This section follows Graham (1989) 82–95 closely, using its translations with some minor alterations that don’t affect the sense, and its analysis in most places.

horse is a combination of two distinct kinds, and, when dealing with such a combination of kinds, one may not call the combination by just one of its two elements. So a sword, if it is a combination of blade and hilt, cannot be called a hilt or a blade, except, of course, figuratively, in a synecdoche.

But perhaps an objection can be built around the fact that this combination of white and horse is not like the combination of ox and horse, if one were to use ‘ox and horse’ for, say ‘draft animal,’ for not every white thing is a white horse, in the way that every ox is a draft animal, nor is every horse a white horse.

If horse not yet combined with white is deemed horse,¹⁹⁴ and white not yet combined with horse is deemed white, and you put horse and white together under the compound name ‘white horse,’¹⁹⁵ this is applying the same name to them combined as uncombined, which is inadmissible.¹⁹⁶ Therefore I say it is inadmissible that white horse is not horse.

White does not fix anything as white; that may be left out of account. ‘White horse’ mentions the white fixing something as white; what fixes something as white is not ‘white.’ ‘Horse’ selects or excludes none of the colors, therefore one may answer it with either a yellow or a black. ‘White horse’ selects some color and excludes others, and the yellow and black are both excluded on grounds of color; therefore one may answer to it only with a white horse. To exclude none is not to exclude some. Therefore I say white horse is not horse.

The reply is that the phrase ‘white’ does not select or exclude colors, for in itself it does not further determine anything else. The phrase ‘white horse’ does select white, and exclude black and yellow horses, but it is the whole phrase that does it, not just ‘white.’ So one cannot construct the meaning of the phrase by taking the extensions of its parts and simply combining the extensions. One must see that the function of the word ‘white’ in the phrase is to select white *horses* and exclude all other colors of horses. ‘White’ standing alone does not have this function, it doesn’t fix anything as white, or select the white members out of some class of things.

The semantics of the phrase ‘white horse’ has been made clear now, but a last point is still attempted by the objector, a point hanging on the substitutability of the one phrase for the other in context. So:

Having a white horse cannot be called ‘lacking a horse.’ What cannot be called ‘lacking a horse’ is having a horse. If having a white horse is judged to be having a horse, why if judged to be white is it not a horse? Someone who seeks a horse will be just as satisfied with a yellow or a black horse; someone who seeks a white horse will not be satisfied with a yellow or black horse. Supposing that white horse were after all horse, what they seek would be one and the same; that what they seek would be one and the same is because white would not be different

¹⁹⁴So that ‘horse’ covers all horses, even black ones.

¹⁹⁵Thus ‘white horse’ will apply to whatever is white, *and* to whatever is horse, so to white dinner plates, and brown horses.

¹⁹⁶In general, if A and B are different kinds, then applying the same name to them combined, that is, to everything that is either A or B, and uncombined, that is to horses alone, and to white alone, is not possible.

from horse. If what they seek is not different, why is it that such horses as the yellow and black are admissible in the former case but not in the latter? Admissible and inadmissible are plainly contradictory. Therefore that a yellow and a black horse are one and the same in that they may answer to 'having a horse' but not to 'having a white horse' is conclusive proof that white horse is not horse.

Gongsun Long seems not to answer the objection directly. He gives an argument in the same spirit to show that white horse is not horse, since the two phrases cannot be freely substituted, preserving truth, in other phrases. It is interesting that it is at this point that Gongsun Long claims to have established conclusively that white horse is not horse, for it suggests that he thinks the meaning of the two phrases is established by the role they play in larger phrases in which they occur, in complete sentences. He does not in fact indicate any fallacy in the objector's argument, but he could have pointed out that a lot of things other than having a horse cannot be called 'lacking a horse,' for instance, having a white horse cannot, and, for that matter, having a horse and cottage cannot. So the second premise in the argument is false.

The second essay, "Pointings and Things," concerns whether it is possible to point out the world, the totality of things, given that pointing out seems to involve separating what you intend from other things you do not intend. So the thesis is that one cannot point out the totality of things, for

When no thing is not the pointed-out, the pointing out is not pointing it out.

The argument for this position is as follows:

Without pointing out of things from the world, there is nothing by which to call things *not* the pointed out. If the world itself is treated as the things, may they be called the pointed out? That pointed out is something the world does not have in it, those things the world does have in it. It is inadmissible that what the world does have in it be deemed what it does not.

The point here is that we cannot identify the world with all the things contained in it, that is, the whole with its parts.

There being no pointing out of the world, the things may not be called the pointed out, which is the 'it not being pointing it out,' which is 'no thing not being the pointed out.' That there being no pointing out of the world the things may not be called the pointed out, is there not being anything not the pointed out, which is 'no thing not being the pointed out,' which is 'to point out not being to point it out.'

Gongsun Long straightens this out by distinguishing the way in which things are the world, i.e. as parts of a whole, from the way that they are not, that is, none of them is the whole.

There being no pointing out of world derives from each thing having its own name, and not being deemed the pointed out. When though not deemed the pointed out we call them the pointed out, we collect together the not deemed the pointed out. It is inadmissible to take

your step from having in it the not deemed the pointed out, to having nothing in it not deemed the pointed out. Moreover, points out are what the world its collects together. There being no pointing out of world is there undeniably being pointings out of things, which is your 'there not being anything not the pointed out, which is no thing not the pointed out.' It is not that to point out is not to point it out, it is pointing out combined with a thing which is not pointing it out.

This is the crux of the argument. When the world is pointed out, there appears to be a contradiction, i.e. to point the particular thing out is not to point that thing out—but in fact the thing is pointed out, pure and simple, but also something else happens which is not pointing it out, namely the collecting together of this and all these other pointings out, so that all are pointed out together. The pointing out of the world just is the pointing out at the same time of all of these, and necessarily involves these collected pointings out. So

Supposing that within world there were no pointing out of things, what would we have the opportunity to call *not* the pointed out? If within the world there were no things, what would we have the opportunity to call the pointed out?¹⁹⁷ If there were pointing out of world, but no pointing out of things, what would we have the opportunity to call *not* the pointed out, [when we] say it has in it no thing not the pointed out? Moreover, if pointing out inherently and in itself is deemed not pointing it out, how is it that it depends on things in combination with which it is deemed pointing them out?

The point made, then, is that one can speak of a collection in two ways: either by speaking of each thing in the collection, and asserting or denying something of each of its members, or by speaking of them 'all together,' as a collection, in which case the assertion or denial does not apply to each of the things referred to, but only to the collection considered as such. So, to borrow a medieval European example, we can say all the Apostles were holy, or all the Apostles were twelve.

The last of Gongsun's essays involves the Chinese expression of the numbers one and two, which consists in a single horizontal line, and a pair of horizontal lines one above the other. We will make do with the Roman numerals 'I' and 'II'. It is asked whether there is I in II, and replied that there is not. It is imagined that the two I's are separated, and then are brought together to make the II, so from I I to II. When they are separated, neither the I on the left nor the I on the right is in II, so how is it that the II we make is the I on the left combined with the I on the right? The reply is that the two I's are altered when they are brought together. So the I in the II is not the I over on the right, the I simply in itself, but the I combined with the other

¹⁹⁷The point is that if nothing were pointed out in the world, then nothing would be indicated which it could be said is not what is pointed out in pointing out the world. And if there were nothing in the world to point out, then it seems one could not point out the world at all, since "all things" would refer to nothing.

I to make II.

All three of these discussions involve questions rotating around the collections and references to them. It would seem that the collection cannot be referred to apart from what is collected together, and yet it seems to be something over and above the mere ‘uncollected’ members of the collection. Gongsun Long thinks, it seems, that in such cases the ‘collecting’ always involves something new being introduced over and above the bare presence of the members in the collection, and, though he does not seem to make a great point of it, the new element seems to have something to do with how these things are treated or regarded by we who consider them. It may not be stretching the point too far to suggest the Gongsun Long is trying to avoid a certain realism about collections. They are not something mysterious over and above their members. Rather, when we speak of collections we treat their members in a different way than we do when we consider the members separately. This commits him to explaining just how we treat their members differently, and, of course, filling in that detail is not an easy thing to do.

11. LATER MOHISM

Mozi 40–45 preserves, in a confusing textual arrangement,¹⁹⁸ a number of related Mohist writings from the late 4th to the late 3rd centuries. The core consists of thirteen ethical propositions “Expounding the Canons,” covering the ten doctrines (canons) defining the school. These were accompanied by demonstrations, rooted in definitions of the terms involved, though a portion of the text containing the most basic definitions, those of terms entering into the statement of the canons themselves, is lost. This core was expanded later into a manual of disputation, consisting of annotated definitions and propositions on an expanded list of canons. The annotations seem to be notes from a teacher’s lectures on the basic text, which was probably memorized. To this, finally, was added “Names and Objects,” a continuous treatise which is only partially preserved in the text. The outcome is an encyclopedic work covering discourse (how to connect name and object); ethics (how to act); knowledge and change; geometry, optics and mechanics (knowledge of objects); and argumentation (knowledge of names). Under each of these five subjects one has a list of definitions and then a list of propositions demonstrated from the definitions.

Knowing here is conceived to occur through the wits (*chih*), and is never placed in the heart-mind, as

¹⁹⁸The key point in understanding the garbled text was first noted by Liang Xixao in 1922, and the text is fully worked out and translated in Graham (1978). This section depends heavily on Graham (1989).

in the other schools. The wits are compared to eyesight, and distinguished from thinking, the use of the wits to seek out knowledge, without necessarily finding it, and knowing, which is actual contact with the object, like sight. Understanding is knowledge which one can make clear in discourse, i.e. through proof. (A3-A6) Knowing differs from perception inasmuch as it continues even after perception has passed. (B46) Knowledge is said to occur by report, as when others inform us, by explanation, as when it is demonstrated or it is explained what something is like, and by experience.

This is suggestive, and one can only wish for further information. The wits are apparently identified neither with the heart-mind nor with the senses. Is the argument actually made that they cannot be identified with *any* bodily organ that depends on external circumstances to produce a current awareness of a situation? How is the distinction between knowledge of a thing and understanding worked out? Is a distinction recognized between what is known from experience, and what is known through argumentation, or is it conceived that the same things are sometimes known both ways? Knowledge arising from experience is apparently enduring in a way that sense acquaintance is not, and yet it arises from sense acquaintance, one must suppose. How is it that this occurs? Do the wits add something to what the senses report?

Names are said to be of three kinds, unrestricted, as when we use ‘thing,’ which can name anything at all; of a kind, as when we use ‘horse,’ when the intention is that whatever is like the object shall receive the name; and proper names, which apply to just one particular individual. (A78) (The view does not postulate real universals with which we are to be acquainted—experience is only of individuals of various kinds.) Speech informs us by telling us that something is like something else we know. Knowledge by explanation covers both knowledge based in demonstrations arising from definitions, and knowledge established by use of analogy, so that we say what a thing is like. The conflation of these two is interesting, and it suggests that argument was conceived to work largely by analogy. One observes that A is like B in some respect, and then concludes that it is like B in some further respect. Knowledge by experience is more basic than knowledge by explanation, since the analogy must be rooted in something we know from experience.

The Mohists are convinced that their doctrines can be established by *bian*, arguing out the alternatives, and that the resulting knowledge is permanent and unchanging. They argue in particular that the ‘necessary’ is the unending, and occurs where “complements are perfect,” i.e. in cases where a classification is exhaustive and not overlapping, as in “elder brother or younger.” In general, being this or not this is necessary, for to name a group of like things ‘this’ is to imply a converse naming of everything else ‘not-this.’ (A41, A73, A74) So they state the principle of the excluded middle. The necessary applies also to connections, causal connections

between objects as well as necessary logical connections between words. So “from things that follow from or exclude one another we know beforehand,” that is, before experience, “what it is.” (A93)

This is applied in geometry in a series of definitions. So “of all” is “of none not so.” (A43) “Straight” is “in alignment.” (A57) “Of the same length” is “each along all of the other when straight.” (A53) A center is that from which all lengths are the same. (A54) “Circular” is “having the same lengths from a single center.” (A58) It is necessary, and known beforehand, then, that the points on a circle are all the same distance from a common point. The logical doctrine here is perhaps insufficient for its purpose, for one cannot give a full account of geometrical demonstration simply in terms of such definitions and class inclusion, but must develop a logic of functions and relations. But Chinese geometry, unlike Greek geometry, offered no formal demonstrations, and certainly no deductive system of demonstrations. It remained quite elementary.

[This is in part a response to criticism of Mozi’s reliance on Heaven to establish the standard of benefit and harm on which ethics is based, both to guarantee its constancy and to justify it, since Heaven commands us to follow it. Is it right because Heaven commands it, or does Heaven command it because it is right? An alternative way to establish that we “must” do it, then, namely it is logically necessary to hold that preference.] The Mohists seem to have developed their logical doctrine with something other than mathematics in mind. They wish to establish a knowledge of necessary truths in an area where such knowledge is most useful, ethics. The sage develops a doctrine of necessary desires and dislikes, which should be universal for all rational people, and those who understand the arguments for these desires and dislikes will see their necessity and share them. But any particular action to benefit a person will have to go beyond the Sage’s general concern for man as such, and will depend on thinking through the situation actually faced at the time. (Expounding the Canons 2)

Only when the three things are all complete are they sufficient to generate the enjoyment of benefit in the world. The sage has concern, but does not have affirmations which benefit current situations, that is, affirmations about the transient. Even if there were no men at all in the world, what our master Mozi affirmed would still be present.

In effect, the Mohists hold that their utilitarian ethic is a set of necessary truths knowable a priori, rooted in the meaning of terms such as “good” and “right.” So benefit is what people are pleased to get, harm what they dislike getting. (A26, A27) One can guess that concern for a person is desiring benefit and disliking harm for him, on his own behalf. To be on behalf of someone is to give the most weight to that person, in relation to a set of desires, in the light of all that one knows. (A75) A unit is a division within a total (A2), and the “principle of weighing” suggests that the total is preferred to a unit when avoiding harm or seeking benefit is at stake, as for instance, when one considers one’s own benefit as opposed to the benefit to one’s finger, say.

From this principle, then, it follows that concern for everyone is preferred to concern for individuals. Benevolence is concern for units on their own behalf. (A7), and to do right is to benefit everyone. (A8) Achievement is benefitting the people. (A35). Here it should be observed especially that the doctrine concerns what the person who knows the most, the Sage, would prefer, and leaves it open that most people in fact prefer something else, due to their lack of knowledge, a lack the sage can supply if one follows his logic.

Though it is rationally required to have concern for all men, it is not required actually to benefit all men equally, for societal arrangements assign different tasks to different positions. So one must do more for creditors, rulers, superiors, the aged, one's elders, kin, and parents, but that does not mean that one should be more concerned for them. (Expounding the Canons 9, 12) Indeed, one has a special duty to deal with his own affairs effectively, since one can do that himself far more effectively than anyone else can, but that does not mean that one has greater concern for himself.¹⁹⁹ (Expounding the Canons 10) So doing what is right is reduced to a special case of benevolence toward all, since it is a matter meeting one's own particular duties to particular people, and it is judged beneficial to all that one should have such duties in the situation one is in. It should be noted that the Mohists saw no problem with being concerned for all while choosing to execute some, even though innocent, for the benefit of all. The practice of executing whole families in some criminal cases was supported by them.

But let us turn now to a more detailed consideration of Mohist logic. Distinctions useful in argument were developed here much as in Western logic. So a number of senses of "the same" are sorted out—being one object with two names, i.e. identity; being within the same whole; occupying the same place, i.e. together, and being the same in some respect, i.e. of the same kind. (The Chinese term for "same" does not quite cover the same range of cases as our term does.) From this it follows, of course, that corresponding senses can be identified for "different." (A86, A87) To apply the notion of sameness in kind, essential for the use of general terms, one needs a standard, and, for example, a circle, a set of compasses for drawing or testing proposed circles, or the idea of a circle (its definition) may serve as a standard. (A70, A71) Following these matters, advice is given on argument, much of it rotating around avoidance of ambiguity and equivocation on terms. So "if the description takes a subtle turn, seek his reasons," (A94), "where the standard is the same, examine what is the same in it," (A95), "make the criterion stay," so that one should examine the respects in which a

¹⁹⁹At one point the text seems concerned that the number of men might be unlimited, and then one should have an infinite concern, and it is responded that one should have a concern for men that one is in no position to help, and can have concern for them, simply by being concerned for men in general, but it does not follow that one ought to be taking steps to benefit them.

thing is said to be so-and-so, distinguishing different respects, and force one's opponent to stick to a single sense for his terms (A97). One must "make the kind stay," so that, for instance, one may note that this is true in general of a kind on the basis of one example, but it might be objected that it is not in general true of that kind on the basis of another, and in that case we need to make sure that the instances really are of the same kind, by examining their likeness to the standard by which the kind is identified. (B1, B2)

A large number of useful distinctions are developed. For instance, in "both fight" and "both are two" we can infer in the first case that each fights, but not in the second case that each is two. Again, if a big, white stone is broken up, the parts will be white, but they may not be big.

Should we say "Yao is good at ruling," given that Yao is dead? We might speak here "from the present, placing the present in the past," and then we can affirm it. That is, we speak in the present tense, but imagine the present in which we are speaking to be the time when Yao is alive. But we might also speak from the past, placing the past in the present. In that case the intention is to speak of the time when Yao existed, carrying that time to the present as though Yao *still* existed. Then what we say, that Yao remains good at ruling, is false. (B16)

Again, two senses of "stay" and "not stay" are distinguished. In one, involving a duration, a thing stays the same if it falls under the same name throughout the period, and does not stay the same if it at first fits the name, say, and later does not. But we can also speak of something not staying the same when it is something only for an instant, as when an arrow is directly opposite a pillar in its flight. It is now opposite the pillar, but at no time before or after this is it so. So it does not stay opposite the pillar for any duration, even though it is, or remains, opposite the pillar for an instant. (A40) Here, surely, is a reply to the Sophist's paradox in the *Zhuangzi*, in which it is said that, "when the arrow is at its fastest there is a time when it neither travels nor is at rest." The reply will be that there is no contradiction here, for there is no duration at all when the arrow stays in one spot (is at rest). It only stays in one place in a durationless way, for an instant, and its staying for an instant is simply a matter with its being at the pillar, say, in that instant, which is logically compatible with its not staying in that one spot for any duration at all, as long as it is elsewhere immediately before and after that instant.

Mohist geometry defined a point as the "starting point" of a line (A61), a definition which may well have been pressed into use in the same way that Aristotle's notion that a point is the limit of a line, and not any part of it. Thus the paradox of Hui Shi, that "the dimensionless cannot be accumulated, yet its girth is one thousand miles," can perhaps be answered. Another of his paradoxes, that the South is unlimited, yet has a

limit, also seems to be dealt with, when it is announced that “Their being limitless is not incompatible with its being for every one of them.” (B73, B74) The South, if limited, is exhaustible, and if not, is inexhaustible. If it is argued that the limitless is inexhaustible, it is replied that men may fill, and therefore exhaust, the South, even if it is limitless, so long as the number of men is limitless. The limitless can be exhausted by the limitless. We ought not to act as if we know that the number of men is limited and then announce that they cannot fill the limitless South. We don’t know whether the number is limited or not. (This catches the spirit of the replies of Aristotle and Anaxagoras to Zeno’s related paradoxes, and is effective.)

A most important distinction is developed around the substitution of identicals. It is observed that the mere fact that the same thing is said of X and Y does not mean that X and Y are the same thing, and the mere fact that they are the same thing does not mean that the same thing can truly be said of both. (Names and Objects 14, 15, 17) So, looking at the first case, a cube is not the same as one of its faces, nor is a man the same as his finger, but when we touch one of its faces, or the finger, we touch the cube or the man. As for the second case, white horses are horses, and riding white horses is riding horses, but we cannot argue similarly that robbers are people, and so killing robbers is killing people. The reason, of course, is that killing robbers is to be preferred, but killing people is not. Similarly, a young lady’s loving a handsome man and her loving her brother are two different things, even if her brother happens to be a handsome man. A boat is wood, but entering a boat is not entering wood (idiomatic for piercing wood or soaking into it). More obvious cases used to establish the point: disliking the abundance of robbers is not disliking the abundance of people.

A particular point of interest: one is concerned for a person only if one is concerned for all persons. If one is concerned with a person because he is one’s brother, then one is concerned for one’s brothers, not for persons. It does not follow from “he is concerned for his brother” that “he is concerned for a person.” (On the other hand, to be concerned for a particular person dubbed by a proper name, for Huo, is to be concerned for a person. Apparently it is not envisioned that one can have a basis for one’s concern that does not refer to a kind, but directly to an individual as such.) When it comes to riding horses, however, one rides a horse as long as one rides *some* horse, and he does not need to ride all horses.

The point of all this is not to develop a set of general rules for valid inferences, and no such rules are proposed. It is rather to post a set of warnings, places where someone committed to an over-generalized rule might go astray. So a Confucian might argue that if we are really concerned for persons in general, we ought to be concerned for robbers, since they are persons, and so should not want to punish them, and this, of course, is absurd. So one ought to be concerned for one’s relatives, or some other more limited set of people, not for

persons in general. The Mohist can block this argument by analyzing it as a case of substitution of equivalents (“robbers” for “persons” in “concern for persons”) in which the kinds and the context involved do not permit such a substitution. In general, Mohism rejects a purely formal rule of substitution, holding that the applicability of a rule always depends on the content of what is being said. This is not to claim that no argument ever has logical necessity, and the Mohist is quite willing to advance cases in which they do to show his own doctrines correct.

‘Illustrating’ is referring to another thing to make it clearer. ‘Parallelizing’ is putting sentences side by side and letting all proceed. ‘Adducing’ is saying, ‘if it is so in your case, why may it not be so in mine too?’ ‘Inferring’ is using something in which the one he rejects is the same as those he accepts, to make him accept the former. (Names and Objects 11)

He may even hold that there are formally valid logical rules, for instance, that for any kind, a thing either does or does not belong to that kind in a given respect, but not both. What he is not interested in is the development of an ideal logical language in which the syntax precisely reflects the semantics, so that syntactically defined rules can serve as an infallible guide to validity. Unlike Aristotle, the Mohist identifies his fallacies without making reference to any inadequacy in the language in which they are expressed. He does not speak of figures of speech, looser and stricter senses, and the like. Indeed, the absence of any reference to metaphor and figures of speech in the analysis of many of the cases is rather striking, and underlines the Mohist lack of interest in isolating or constructing a language in which logical form is reflected in syntax.

At least part of the reason for this is a general lack of interest among the Chinese in what the West would call grammar. The Greeks produced a grammatical analysis of their own language very early on, perhaps because the language, with its complex array of inflections, lent itself to such an enterprise. Chinese has a grammatical structure, but it is not so obvious about it as Greek. Our Mohist tells us that a

sentence is what is born in accordance with fact, grows to full length in accordance with a pattern, and proceeds according to its kind. (Names and Objects 10)

This identifies the indicative sentence as basic, ignoring other moods, focusing us on semantics, and indicates an awareness of the ‘pattern,’ the structure of the sentence, and the grammatical need for the pattern to be completed, for all the empty slots to be filled in, before one has a finished sentence. The last remark, that it “proceeds according to its kind,” indicates the Mohist awareness that the pattern is not enough to settle what does or does not follow from it, that the content must be taken into account as well. So the Mohist was aware of the ‘pattern,’ but he was content to approach such patterns piecemeal, noting similarities and differences

between sentences without a general semantic or syntactic theory, and he was quite prepared for the ‘pattern’ to turn out a poor guide to logical form.

The later Mohists stand out from other Chinese schools not only in the sophistication of their logic, but also in their approach to the physical sciences. Here we find piecemeal causal explanations rooted in technology rather than the correlative yin-yang thinking that took over Chinese thought in the course of the 3rd century BCE. Cause is defined as that without which an event will not come about, and divided into those causes sufficient to produce their effects and those which are not of themselves sufficient. The source of doubt in causal reasoning is identified as the possibility of several causes for a single event, so that a fighter might have collapsed because of the wine he drank, or perhaps because of the midday sun. (B10) The sciences dealt with in the text are those amenable to analysis in terms of causes sufficient to produce their effects, without the confusion introduced by multiple causes of the same effects. So the five processes by which fire, metal, wood, soil, water, and then fire were supposed to succeed one another were rejected. (B43) Moreover, the sciences dealt with can be treated geometrically. Among the phenomena treated (not always with a correct explanation) are the inversion of images in curved mirrors when they are moved so that the focal point is between the mirror and the observer, the principle of the lever, and even the dependence of prices on supply and demand.

The disappearance of the Mohist approach in Chinese thought, it seems, was due to the dominance of the aristocratic administrative classes in its culture. With the rejection of Legalism, the application of any sort of technological calculation in the state, treating it as a machine to be designed, was entirely abandoned, and with it all respect for technology as a key to understanding things of any real importance. The administrator was, in theory, trained in virtue and a literary understanding of the world, drawing, as we shall see, on correlative schemes of classification rather than geometry and efficient, mechanical causation to understand the world. The Chinese philosophic world developed an allergic reaction to the technological approach, and to treating the world in any way at all as though it were machinery. Perhaps this enabled certain insights harder to come by in the Western tradition, but it also meant that what has turned out to be the key to understanding the natural world was unavailable, and even despised, within the intellectual culture of China. In the West the brief flowering of mathematical science in the Hellenistic period was preserved through the centuries of dominance by theological concerns, in part because God was conceived to have designed a machine, a machine it might be worth while coming to understand, when he made the world. Mathematics and physics had a place, if a small one, within the late antique and medieval world view, and, when conditions were right, a technological flowering led to a flowering of theoretical science as well. In China these things had no place at

all, and technological developments never had a chance to contribute to the world view of the intellectuals.

12. LAOZI

Two strands to the book, advice on how to live, and metaphysical talk about the Dao.

If one makes the distinction, then the distinction establishes itself (18; 19; cf. 2, end of 23). So it is like a self-fulfilling prophecy. If you make these distinctions, on the societal level, you create hypocrites and rebels. If you oppose these, you arose opposition. On the personal level, if you expect good and evil, it will happen. Most unhappiness is due not to not having enough, but to wanting more. We label what we have as bad, what the other has as good.

20 — note the sarcasm. Against distinctions on the personal level. 22 — Even having what you have labeled good is bad, for you fear losing it once you label it that way, which taints your enjoyment. So that desire which has fear as its inevitable companion is to be eliminated. Acting is all right, even with an aim in mind, as long as this sort of desire is not aroused. That is the point of not acting, and that tells us what acting with non-action would be. Also (connected how?) Action rouses opposition, non-action does not.

2 — The sage's non-action. He teaches without words, that is, by example. He shows the right way, but he does not distinguish it from the wrong.

3; 7 — No personal interests (I guess of the sort that entails fear). Only then can one act spontaneously and effortlessly.

8 — No competition, and hence the emphasis on the virtue of the female in 10, 6, etc. Let him win, and maybe he'll stop playing. But note that inaction is a way of getting what you want in this stuff as much as it is a way of stopping the wanting. You win by letting him win. 7. 30; 57; 22.

64 — Inaction here is *timely* action, and the minimal action, because it is done at the time when the smallest action, rousing least opposition, least establishing the distinction, can be done, while the problem is small. 30; 31 — If one has to use force, use the least required, and once aim is accomplished, forget it.

67 — Attitudes we ought to have, compassion, frugality, humility, from which arises strength, generosity, leadership. One becomes leader by not insisting on leading.

80; 3 — The original state had no money or possessions, no power over others, no reputation or prestige. These are things invented by people, not natural goals, and they drive men mad. Each of them involves setting oneself against others. So it is not a denial of pleasure and the like. (80 — ok to decorate one's

clothes) Need physical welfare, affection and companionship. So they do live in villages. But even this not to be sought by *action*. Not even Dao is to be sought this way (48).

[Note that the advice is not entailed by the factual remarks. One could simply see this as identifying the inevitable sources of human misery if inaction is not a possible strategy. Is such inaction unworthy of a human being (Nietzsche), ineffective, or otherwise objectionable?

It seems no contradictions are asserted of Dao. Nor need it be assumed that no one at all can name it or speak of it, but it cannot be done with our language, tainted as it is with attitudes that lead us to see what is not there. So 1, 4: Dao is empty as well as nameless. Cosmogony of sorts? 40 — looks like non-being, then being, then things. But perhaps all he means is that what is such and such comes from what is not such and such, which is perhaps a truism, but he is thinking of its application to the issue of inaction and the arousing of opposition. So also 2. So we might view Dao as natural law, which governs the arising of things. The uselessness of action, that it brings reaction and opposition, is part of Dao.

1 — The Dao that can be “called Dao,” literally, “dao’d”. The original Dao is one, without any distinctions in it to provide two. Sage has a shift in apperception, so that things no longer look desirable, etc. How to become a sage? 52, 56, 48. Simplify, slow down one’s life. Get rid of unnatural desires, don’t try to satisfy them. Keep calm, avoid aggression. 10. No breath control or meditation seems to be suggested.

Later Daoists read into Laozi (1) Alchemy (2) Stories of the Blessed Isles where the Immortals live, (3) Hygienic practices leading to longevity (elixir of life from alchemical processes), (4) supernatural powers. There is also a development of hedonism and skepticism.

13. XUNZI

Heaven has a constant course, which is not maintained for sage Yao, nor abandoned for tyrant Chieh. If you respond to it by order it is auspicious, if you respond to it by disorder it is baleful.

Xunzi 17/1.

Xun Zhing was a noted Confucian author of the 3rd century BCE. Like many others of this time he assumed that the way of human beings is culturally invented and independent of the natural way of Heaven, even if it depends on it, a view that was given over or considerably modified in later Confucian thought. Indeed, even Confucians of his own time for the most part did not adopt it, and his student, Han Fei mentions

seven other Confucian sects, which Xunzi attacked as worthless, vulgar *ru*. In general, he criticized the other sects for their one-sidedness, only Kong Qiu having achieved a properly comprehensive view. So Mozi understood utility, but not culture, and Chuangzi understood what is Heaven's, but not what is man's. (Xunzi 21/21f). This would imply that he took something from each of these various schools, and in fact he did. From Mozi, for instance, he borrows the "elevation of the worthy" (Xunzi 9/2f) and the emphasis on thrift. From Shen Tao he recognizes the importance of law and punishment, sometimes verging on the Legalism of his disciples, Han Fei and Li Ssu. From Song Xing he borrows the notion that the desires essential to human nature are few. He was something of a modernist, adopting the pragmatic approach to government popular in the leading states of his time.

The historian Ssu-ma Ch'ien reports that Xun was the most noted of thinkers living at this time in Ch'i, where King Xuan had established his Chi-Xia academy. King Xuan and the last of the eminent scholars supported by him had died, but Ch'i remained a place of intellectual ferment, and it was no doubt here that he learned debating skills and shaped his thought. In 255, having been slandered by someone, he moved south to Ch'u, where he received a post, but was dismissed in 238 when his patron was murdered. After this he settled down to edit his works, discouraged with public life and the influence in the courts of shamans and soothsayers, vulgar *ru* and frivolous fellows like Zhuangzi. The strength of Qin was growing apace, and their king, Zhao, thought the *ru* of no use in running a state.

Xunzi thought that Heaven and Earth followed their own way, always providing sufficient resources for human beings, though no guidance in their use. Human beings have to find their own way to exploit these resources, which Xun optimistically thought were always sufficient if well used, a way which required a harmonious social order. He was particularly hostile to divination, since human beings should rely on their own way, and have no need for divination or prayer. The natural world is always the same, and its way is none of our business, we should not pry into its secrets or seek omens. Misfortune and good fortune are due to human actions, not Heaven. Of course, Heaven has given rise to human beings, and the heart-mind is a man's ruler from Heaven, the senses the officials from Heaven who report what is happening to the ruler, and external things are nourishment from Heaven. The essential in human beings, *ching*, is for Xun the authentic nature prior to ritual and morality, that is, the natural passions underlying the way of human beings, liking and disliking, being pleased or angry, sadness and joy. (It does not include the natural course of development for a human being if nurtured, and not deprived, as it does in Mengzi. Thus Xun disagrees with Meng's judgment that man's *ching* is good.) The heart-mind makes choices on behalf of the passions, and this is called thinking.

Thus the arousal of the passions is distinguished from the response of the heart-mind to a perceived situation on their behalf. A gentleman adopts the way and so is able to impose a pattern on nature, the same pattern as Heaven and Earth follow. The gentleman is the third, aligned with Heaven and Earth, whose way, even though it is his and not that of Heaven and Earth, is parallel to that of Heaven and Earth.

Thus our nature, the authentic in us, desire and the love of profit, which result in jealousy and hatred, is bad. Man's nature must be shaped, like a warped arrow, if it is to be straightened, and this requires teachers and standards (a craftsman and a straight rod against which to straighten it), ritual and the righteous. But, if man's nature is bad, where did rites and righteousness come from? The Sages invented them in the way that craftsmen invented pots and pans. They did not arise, as Mengzi suggests, from tender shoots in our natures, in accord with a course of development natural to man, shoots to be nourished and protected from harsh conditions and social artifice. The training needed to become virtuous must *shape* the expression of our desires.

Xunzi's view might suggest that there was a time before the sages invented these things when human beings lived very badly, following their unreconstituted natures, but as a matter of fact Xun thought that the Way was always known, and has not changed over time. The reason we connect it with the Zhou is that these are the earliest records we have recording the Way. The Sage, then, can work it out for himself, and verify the truth of claims about the Way, but no one is envisioned who first invented it. Culture is our ally, not our enemy. The sage works it out by *shu*, likening to oneself. Since all human beings are of the same kind and the same nature, he can use himself to come to an understanding of human beings and their relations.²⁰⁰

It should be noted that man's nature is not bad because our desires are egoistic and selfish. It is simply that they are anarchic, and lead to conflict, and our natural response to that is aggressive (whether it involve aggression on our own behalf or on behalf of a father or brother). So we desire to become good because of our bad nature. We realize that we are missing something, that order and consideration for others is necessary, and the Sages set out to supply that lack.

Xunzi does not mean to deny that anyone lacks a nature sufficient to become a sage. He agrees with Mengzi that everyone, whatever his talent, has what is needed to become a sage if he works hard enough at it. (Here Xun distinguishes between the mere possibility of doing a thing, and the possession of the active capacity to do it. So it is possible for the farmer to be (to become) a carpenter, but he may not be capable of being a carpenter, for he has not learned what a carpenter knows, and so "cannot" do what a carpenter does.) Rather,

²⁰⁰Xunzi 5/35.

he differs from Mengzi on what the nature of the training is, Xun taking it much more as *yang*, Meng as *ying*.

So for Xunzi intelligence, the heart-mind, is the source of the good in human beings. The wise spontaneously desire the good, but this is not because they are good by nature, but rather precisely because they are by nature bad, and recognize that fact and the necessity for bringing our natural complement of desires and passions into order. Perhaps the virtues are, to borrow a phrase from David Hume, natural inventions, and humanity a naturally inventive species. This leads him to deny the proposal of the *Laozi* and Song Xing that there is a need to reduce the desires. Xunzi is no primitivist. He is optimistic that men, who unlike animals have many desires, can nonetheless bring those many desires into order. A desire, if it is satisfiable within the pattern of the way, is in order. If it is not, then we must restrain the impulse to satisfy it until it is. No desire is in itself inadmissible or permissible—it all depends on what can be done, something intelligent thought must work out. Having more or fewer desires is not the issue, the control of the expression of those desires by one's intelligence is. The heart-mind, the seat of intelligence, is capable of being *shen ming*, “daimonic and clear-seeing,” due to its autonomy. It gives orders, even to itself, and nothing else gives orders to it. One knows the way by making the heart-mind unified, empty and still. To make it empty is to avoid allowing what is already stored there (in the memory) to interfere with what is about to be received, so that one's intellectual vision is distorted, to make it unified is to assure that the different things it knows do not interfere with one another, so that one's view of one matter biases one's view of another, and to make it still is to assure that in its constant activity play and dreaming do not interfere with knowledge.²⁰¹ Thus these terms receive a very different interpretation from Zhuangzi's, which makes emptiness a matter having nothing stored there at all, unity is a matter of seeing all things as one and the same, and stillness is Daoist contemplation. Nonetheless, Xunzi characterizes the heart-mind that has attained these qualities as *shen ming*, and compares it to a perfectly reflecting mirror or clear water. He thinks that the heart-mind is clear-seeing as long as it does not panic and is not confused—one sees ghosts only at such times, not when one is calm and self-possessed.²⁰²

Among the virtues, Xunzi emphasized particularly *li*, which he saw as the alternative to the fear of punishment (preferred by Legalists) in controlling one's desires. Righteousness, *yi*, he saw as the essential and defining quality of a human being, because it makes apportioning and thus social cooperation possible.²⁰³

²⁰¹ *Xunzi* 21/34-39.

²⁰² *Xunzi* 21/76 ff.

²⁰³ *Xunzi* 9/69-73.

Knowledge, human beings share with the animals. Apportionment is a Late Mohist idea, and Xun finds it necessary in particular to further specialization and division of labor, which requires agreement on exchange.²⁰⁴ As for *li*, the purpose is to enable the desires of all to be satisfied, in accord with their places in the social structure. The social structure is needed to restrict competition, which leads to disorder and poverty. But this social structure cannot be designed on Mohist lines, making everyone equal, without exceeding resources, and so an apparently arbitrary preference has to be given to the desires of some. Ceremonies step in where the passions are most extreme to keep them in control. In particular, this is true of funerary and mourning ceremonial. Xunzi has no brief for an afterlife at all, and sees this ceremonial as entirely a matter of curbing dangerous emotions.²⁰⁵ Finally, music and dance he took to regulate the expression of joy, and so to put one's breath or *ch'i* in order.²⁰⁶

Xunzi's discussion of naming responds to Later Mohist work on the topic. First, the purpose of names is to exhibit what things are genuinely similar and different from one another, particularly in point of their nobility or baseness. However, before describing something one needs to distinguish different sorts of sentences, which are identified by examples. There are sentences, for instance, like "riding white horses is riding horses," and one might say that "killing robbers is killing people" is like that. But it turns out that, although the sentence about robbers is then true enough, it is not what we meant in the discussion, and it is better to clarify it through its negation, "killing robbers is not killing people," which is true if it is like "loving her brother is not loving a handsome man." In this way different logical forms are identified by providing exemplars of them.

How do we decide whether to assimilate or differentiate two things? This is done through the senses for objects, but for things such as explanations and reasons, pleasure and anger, sadness and joy, and so forth, the heart-mind makes the decision. So the right response to paradoxical statements like "mountains and abysses are level" would be to point out that mountains and abysses and level things are easily differentiated using the senses.

Given this, Xunzi advises us to assign names at various levels of generality, depending on our purposes, there being a highest level, "things," and a lowest level. Naming is by convention, and the appropriateness of

²⁰⁴Xunzi 10/5-7.

²⁰⁵Xunzi 19/13-15.

²⁰⁶Xunzi 20/26-28.

a name is a matter of its fitting the convention. A good name is consistently used, and easy and straightforward. Particulars, even of the same kind, are separated from one another in location. He then turns to discussion of the sorts of fallacies introduced by the later Mohists. One class of ill-formed statements are those that involve disordering objects by confusion in using their names. They are to be resolved by consistent application of the convention giving meaning to the name. For instance, “a horse is not a horse”—perhaps this is to be taken as “this one horse is not (a) horse,” or perhaps it is Gongsun Long’s “a white horse is not a horse.” In any case, the rejection of the statement seems to hang on its incorrect use of names of different generality. K’ung Ch’uan resolved Gongsun’s puzzle by noting that a name standing alone is more general than one combined with another, but the combined name and the name taken alone may still be applied truly to the same object. In the first reading, the confusion would rest in the use of “horse” in one case to name a single horse, and in the other to name horses in general. This sentence is factually wrong—the objects are disordered by the use of the names. A second class will not be factually wrong, but will involve some confusion disordering *names*. A case of this sort is “killing robbers is not killing people.” The point seems to be that, as similar as this may look to “a white horse is not a horse,” it is not intended to be understood in such a way that robbers are not considered people, and the Mohists who defended it insisted on this. The confusion is of another sort. In fact, perhaps it could best be cleared up by introducing a new name, say “executing” for justifiable killing, and “murder” for unjustifiable killing. Then “executing robbers is not murdering people” will be clearly enough true. The confusion is not in the facts, in the existence of the distinctions and likenesses being identified, but in the use of killing with two different meanings in the two cases.

14. HAN FEIZI AND LEGALISM

In ordering the Empire one must always take as basis what is essential in man. What is essential in man is to have likes and dislikes, which is why reward and punishment are effective. Once they are effective, prohibitions and commands can be established and the Way of Order is complete. The ruler grasps the Handles and occupies the power-base, and so his orders are carried and his prohibitions deter.

Han Feizi, Ch. 48²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷Translation in Graham (1989) 278. For this section I have taken particular note of Burton Watson’s introduction to Han Feizi (1964), and Graham (1989) “Legalism: An Amoral Science of Statecraft,” 267-292.

A number of pragmatic manuals of statecraft from the 3rd and 4th centuries BCE provide a theory how the state should be run that abandons the feudal traditions behind Confucianism and its reliance on personal virtue, as well as the reliance on universal love among the Mohists. Most of these works, comprising the Legalist school of thought, were attributed to ministers of state. Two important exceptions are the works of Han Feizi (died 233 BCE) and a member of the Jixia Academy, Shen Dao (writing about 310 BCE). The *Guanzi*, a collection of writings, many of them Daoist, from the 4th through the 3rd centuries, was attributed to a chief minister of Qi who died in 645 BCE, while the *Shangzi*, some of the chapters of which can be dated to about 240 BCE was attributed to a chief minister of Qin who died in 338 BCE. We also have some fragments from a book attributed to Shen Pu-hai, chief minister of the Han who died in 337 BCE. These books were addressed to rulers, and the authors must often have hoped to obtain or consolidate positions of power by convincing the ruler that their policies were best. The environment was similar to that of Renaissance Italy, and the writings of Macchiavelli are comparable to Legalist works. That they were strictly intended for Princes was no doubt something of a literary fiction. These works are patterned on technical manuals of a sort that were appearing in many areas of endeavor, and they advocate specific technical solutions to problems of governing, not merely a generally cynical approach to the idealistic ideologies of Confucians and Mohists. There is a specific program of reform here fitted to the times.

Han Feizi is the great synthesizer of this tradition. Unlike the other founders of schools in Classical China, he was not a product of the minor aristocracy. He belonged to the ruling family in Han, and so was unable to dissociate himself from the perilous fortunes of a small state surrounded by powerful enemies. He studied under Xunzi with Li Ssu, who became the chief minister of Qin. He unfortunately suffered from a bad stutter, and so focused on writing, no doubt intending his books for the King of Han. In 234 BCE, when Han was near being annexed by Qin, in desperation he was sent to Qin as an envoy (by a king who had ignored his advice up to this time), no doubt in part because it was known that the king of Qin admired his writings. But he was no match for Li Ssu, who convinced the king that he would be loyal to the interests of Han, not Qin. So he did not succeed in his mission, but was placed under arrest, and an investigation of his activities was launched. Li Ssu, having isolated him from communication with the ruler, sent him poison where he was imprisoned. Out of despair, and no doubt on Li Ssu's advice, Han Feizi committed suicide in 233. The story is that the king later regretted having placed him under arrest. Li Ssu himself was executed in 208. The affairs of princes and their advisors were as uncertain in China at this time as they were in Renaissance Italy, and Han Feizi observed in his writings that a ruler could not even trust his own wife and children, since everyone stood

to gain from his death. The ruler must never reveal his inner thoughts and plans to anyone, and must be continuously on guard against deception. “The leper pities the king.”²⁰⁸

There seems to have been a connection between Legalism and Daoism early on, and the Legalist ruler has something in common with the Daoist sage. (Indeed, many Emperors later took on the role of the Daoist sage quite self-consciously, seeking immortality through alchemy.) Like the sage, the ruler withdraws to a mysterious realm inside his palace, avoiding intimacy, concealing his thoughts and motivations, standing above the laws and considerations of right and wrong. “The enlightened ruler reposes in nonaction above, and below his ministers tremble with fear.”²⁰⁹ The ruler observes and listens, and distributes punishments and rewards in accord with the performance of his ministers. Above all, he rewards those who live up to their words, and punishes those who do not produce the results they promise. He need not be wise or skilled, and should form no schemes himself. He uses the wisdom and skill of his ministers. To reveal his own plans is to invite false advice. To trust in individual persons is to expose the state to all the abuses of the old feudal order, so that the ruler can no longer determine what is really going on, and becomes the tool of cliques and important families.

An exposition of the *Laozi* is found in the *Han Feizi*, as well as two chapters that seem to fuse the *Laozi* with Legalist doctrine, and are even written in the poetic format of the Daoist classic.²¹⁰ This is the only attempt we have in Legalist writings to provide anything like a metaphysical background to their political doctrines. It is unclear if these are in fact by Han Feizi, but if they are it is clear that the idea was not completely worked out. Perhaps it is more likely that they represent another work, “The doctrine of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi,” by Huang-Lao, who is described by Sima Qian as an author who had been studied by Shen Dao, Shen Buhai, and Han Fei.²¹¹

In “Interpreting Laozi,” the notion of *li*, principle, or the patterns in things, is introduced. (This is the concept that was to become central in Juxi’s thought in the 12th century.) These patterns are standards, as it were, established in nature. The Way that can be formulated in words is not the constant way, then, since the constant Way embraces all the various ways (*tse*) of particular sorts of things, the ways or patterns by which

²⁰⁸*Han Feizi*, Ch. 14. For Han Feizi’s biography, see especially Watson’s introduction to *Han Feizi* (1964).

²⁰⁹*Han Feizi*, Ch. 5 (trans. Burton Watson) for the quotation and the whole paragraph.

²¹⁰Chapters 20 and 21, “Interpreting Laozi” and “Illustrating Laozi,” and Chapters 5 and 8, “The Way of the Ruler,” and “Wielding Power.”

²¹¹*Shi Ji* Chs. 63 and 74.

we can separate out each sort of thing from its background and recognize it, and is not itself formulable.

All patterns are apportionings of square or round, short or long, dense or loose, hard or soft. Hence it is only after a pattern is fixed that one can get to 'Way' it [that is, name it]. In the fixed patterns, then, there are surviving or perishing, birth or dying, flourishing or decaying; and the things which now survive and now perish, which die as suddenly as they are born, which first flourish and afterwards decay, may not be called 'constant'. Only that which was born with the dividing of heaven and earth and until their dissolution will not die or decay may be called constant.²¹²

The point of grasping the patterns in affairs is, of course, to achieve the results one wants. The thinking involved here is a matter of spotting patterns that repeat themselves in different affairs. For instance:

. . . if employing a great multitude, you keep changing things around you achieve few results, if storing a great vessel you keep shifting it somewhere else it will be badly damaged, if in boiling a small fish you keep meddling with it you rob it of freshness, if in ordering a great state you keep altering the laws the people will suffer from it. This is why a ruler who has the Way values stillness and does not keep altering laws.²¹³

The chapters in imitation of the poetry of the *Laozi* use the Daoist phrases, but not as Lao did. They are code words, as in an allegory, and the paradox disappears when one understands their meaning. We have already observed this in connection with 'non-action'.

The Chinese, driven by population growth and technological advances, were at this time opening up new lands to cultivation. This, along with the continuous warfare, which often placed new lands at the disposal of the conquerer, enabled many rulers to acquire lands that could be placed directly under the central government and farmed for taxes, rather than being handed out as fiefs in return for feudal obligations. Thus central government gained increasing advantage in its conflict with the feudal establishment. The Legalist program was designed to enable a ruler to establish his own power base at the expense of enfeoffed lords under him, eventually displacing them from power entirely and unifying the state under a central bureaucracy, funding a professional army out of taxes rather than relying on feudal levies, and running things through a system of bureaucratic law rather than relying on personal loyalties and customary rights and obligations.

Thus the Legalists borrowed a good deal from the Mohists. Like the Mohists, they aimed to establish a rule of law, and the appointment of the worthy rather than those with family connections. But unlike the Mohists, they thought that one would never convince a ruler to seek the welfare of all equally, and if one did,

²¹²*Han Feizi* Ch. 20, translated in Graham (1989) 287.

²¹³*Han Feizi* Ch. 20, translated in Graham (1989) 287.

the ruler would not get far trying to obtain cooperation from his people by pointing out its advantages for the welfare of all. Instead, they assumed that a ruler in fact aim to increase their own power and benefit personally from their position, rather than seeking the welfare of all, and would be advised to use force to get people to follow the laws that were good for them. The power of the state and the ruler can be increased if he brings prosperity and good order to the state (the tax base improves, there are more young men to be recruited into the army, industrial capacity goes up, and so on), and so a ruler of any intelligence has good selfish reasons to seek the welfare of the people up to a point, though not so far as a Mohist would like. So an absolute ruler with an expensive bureaucratic system and aggressive warfare were necessary accompaniments of the only strategy that could provide order.²¹⁴ Legalist views bear comparison to the views of the Cynics in the West. In both schools, thinkers despair of benevolent rule by the wise and virtuous, or self-rule by a population with the welfare of all in view, and so look for a way in which some good can be achieved, and the worst disorders avoided, under the rule of selfish, corrupt and violent men.

The *Shangzi* argued that people were organized in the beginning by kinship—perhaps the author was aware of tribal societies at the borders of civilized states. Then, as the population increased and competition for resources became more severe, they shifted to “elevating the worthy,” that is, moral persuasion of the Confucian sort, people naturally recognizing the authority of experts and sages. When the population increased yet more, “honoring rank,” became necessary, and was contrived by the sages.²¹⁵ Han Feizi views this progression not as a decline from the Way, nor as improvement, but simply as adaptation to new circumstances. Elevating the worthy is a fine way to run things, as long as the population pressure is low enough. But population tends to increase geometrically over time, and so circumstances change when resources no longer match the population so well. It is not a matter of man’s nature being good or evil. It is a matter of increasing poverty making people unwilling to listen to the wise. Thus new organizational principles are needed, in particular, the use of force to maintain order.²¹⁶

²¹⁴In the *Shangzi*, one sees Legalism at its most cynical. The people have been made usable if they come to delight in warfare (Ch. 18), one should employ scoundrels in government so that the people will prefer the law to their immediate rulers (Ch. 5), in warfare, victory often follows the performance of actions that the enemy would be ashamed to do (Ch. 20). Han Feizi, on the other hand, notes that the Sage, when he imposes punishments on the people, does so not out of hatred, from his concern for people. (*Han Feizi* Ch. 54.)

²¹⁵*Shangzi* ch. 7.

²¹⁶*Han Feizi*, ch. 49: “the generosity with resources in ancient times was not benevolence, it was because resources were ample; the competition and robbery of today is not dishonesty, it because resources are sparse.” See also *Guanzi*, ch. 35, ch. 31. Graham (1989)271-273.

The sages who came next originated divisions between lands, between properties, and between man and woman. Portions being fixed were unenforceable without controls, so they established prohibitions. The prohibitions being established were unenforceable with no one in charge of them, so they established officials. The officials being installed were insufficient with no one to unify them, so they established a ruler. When they established a ruler, elevating worth was abandoned for honouring rank.”²¹⁷

What is required, then, is adaptation to circumstances, not the following of old customs. Indeed, Han Fei objects, it is impossible to determine what the customs really were in ancient times, thousands of years ago. “To be certain of it without evidence is foolishness, to appeal to it though unable to be certain of it is fraud.”²¹⁸ Moreover, “Former generations did not share the same doctrines; which antiquity shall we take as a standard?”²¹⁹

The common doctrine in these writings is that good government depends, not on the personal virtue of those who govern, but on political institutions, that is, the law, established methods for controlling administrators, and occupation of the power base. Mengzi and Xunzi had both argued that “standards” (*fa*) cannot work by themselves, but need a virtuous ruler to apply them. In effect, their claim is that one cannot formulate the rules that need to be followed with precision, and then depend on someone without any independent understanding or judgment to apply them to cases. The ultimate standard for these liberal Confucians is the judgment of the sage, so that they depend on that “elevation of the worthy” to attain societal order which the Legalists thought could no longer be relied on, given the increase in population and scarcity of resources. The standards do work by themselves according to the Legalists, that is, one need only examine the explicitly stated standard to see what to do. The *Guanzi* categorizes standards into seven types: (1) those rooted in the *qi* of heaven and earth, the principles (*tse*) of things, that is, natural law, the external realities we have to deal with in establishing the other standards, (2) exemplars, names, and resembling cases, ideal kinds, called “models” (*xiang*); (3) standards in the narrow sense, that is, standards of measurement such as the foot and inch, compasses and carpenter’s squares, (4) transformations of character in rearing children, training people, so standards to which education has to conform, (5) incentives and deterrents to action, exploited by laws, (6) “methods of the heart-mind” such as being sincere, generous, likening-to-oneself (*shu*) (this drops out

²¹⁷*Shangzi* ch. 7, quoted in Graham (1989) 272.

²¹⁸*Han Feizi*, ch. 50.

²¹⁹*Shangzi*, ch. 1.

in later Legalist works), (7) standards stated in terms of numerical measures, weights, distances and the like, the statistical information the ruler has to take account of.²²⁰ Standards must be not only correct, but *clear*, so that anyone can apply them, not just the sage. In particular, the populace controlled by the laws must understand what the laws are, what will earn punishment, and what will earn rewards. This cannot be kept as a secret among the aristocrats. Thus the carpenter's square and compass, which stand in for the expert judgment of the trained eye, makes everyone capable of accurate work, and so the standards adopted by the ruler should be such that no great talent is needed to apply them, or observe them, and get good results.

This was not mere theory. The publication of formal legal codes was the first and most essential step in the bureaucratization of a state from the 6th century on, and was opposed by those with an interest in maintaining the older system built around feudal obligations, custom and tradition. The *Shangzi* insists that punishments be set by the law, and recognize no differences in rank. Han Feizi argues that the social institution of a power base is not enough for order, since bad people will more frequently than not occupy the power base. But the social institutions establishing a power base may include laws which work well to impose order. Then it will not matter too much if a bad person occupies the power base, for the government continues of itself, whoever ends up Emperor.²²¹ (It is assumed that the bad ruler will not change the laws or basic institutions, even if he takes advantage of them to enrich himself or gain other personal ends, and excepts himself personally from the sway of law.) His hope lies in the institutions formally established, in the law, not the virtues of the ruler. These institutions are run by lower officials. Han Feizi, then, is talking about a government of laws, not of men, and one must suspect ulterior motives in his advice to the ruler. In practice, the later Confucians also aimed to make a virtuous emperor unnecessary to good government. Virtuous civil servants would be good enough, and the examination system helped guarantee this, as long as the emperor could be kept inactive.

In addition to firm occupation of a power base, and support of the rule of law as advocated by the *Shangzi*, Feizi argued that a ruler must control his bureaucracy through methods like those evolved by Shen Buhai:

Method is bestowing office suiting assignments to qualifications, making responsible for the object as laid down by the name, halding fast to the Handles which deal death or life, and testing the abilities of all the ministers. There are in the hands of the ruler. Law is having the

²²⁰*Guangzi* ch. 6, cited in Graham (1989) 274.

²²¹*Han Feizi* Ch. 40.

statutes publicly available in the government offices, punishments which the people know for certain will be applied, rewards given consistently for punctiliousness in the law, and punishments imposed consistently on violators of the decrees. These are what the subjects take as their exemplars. Without method for the ruler there are abuses up above, without law for the subject there is disorder down below. Neither is dispensable . . . ²²²

Lord Shang was lacking in his methods for controlling the ministers, and so he did not obtain hegemony for the Qin—all that happened was that the ministers gained fiefs, and so were strengthened, while the ruler was weakened. Lord Pu-hai left the old statutes of Jin in place, so that they stood together with the new statutes of Han, and so Jin did not gain hegemony. It is best that laws be public, but methods should be private.

Han Feizi puts special emphasis in methods on matching name and office. This is apparently a deliberate rereading of the Confucian notion of “correction of names.” Rather than making sure that a minister really does act like a minister, relying on the sage’s wisdom to determine what in fact a minister is, the Legalists insists that the ruler must compare the performance of a minister to what he has said he will do, which no doubt includes what he has acknowledged as the duties of his office, which are formally laid out in the law. One does not check the intuition of the sage to see what his duties are, but the words uttered and written down. It is important that ministers not do more than they are charged or undertake to do, for division of power among the ministers is one of the ways in which the ruler holds onto control. But it is also important that they not do less, for then one has to put up with incompetence and failure. So the wise ruler will punish those who exceed or fall short, and reward those who do exactly what they say they will do.²²³ Moreover, those who are worthy by this standard may be elevated.

15. THE QIN DYNASTY

The Period of Contending States ended in 221 BCE with the victory of the Qin. The new “First Emperor,” Shi-huang-ti, held absolute control of the whole of China, without having to tolerate independent feudal lords. Indeed, he claimed that he had attained a degree of control and security that not even the early Sage Emperors could boast. He introduced a new ideology to justify his rule, and instead of claiming the Mandate of Heaven, he claimed, using the theory of the five elements, that in the natural course of things

²²²*Han Feizi*, Ch. 43.

²²³*Han Feizi*, Ch. 7. One is reminded of the rule utilitarianism of Mozi when Han Feizi specifies that even if it is beneficial to the ruler for a minister to exceed his office on some occasion, he must still be punished for doing so.

Water, the Qin, had prevailed over the Chou. He thus adopted black as the color of his robes and banners, hitched 6 horses to his chariot, and continued the policies of Legalism already imposed on the Qin state under Duke Hsiao (361-338 BCE). “Only a resolute harshness, deciding all things by law, incising and deleting without benevolence, generosity, mildness or righteousness, fits with the numbers of the Five Potencies.”²²⁴

The Emperor decided, on the advice of his Legalist minister, Li Ssu, not to enfeoff his sons in the conquered states, but rather to reward them with stipends out of the taxes, and he set up 36 administrative units in the Empire, all under direct control of the central government. In 213 a scholar proposed that his sons be enfeoffed, “taking antiquity as his model in affairs,” and the urging seems to have represented a serious enough unrest that Li Ssu recommended the schools be suppressed. Wandering scholars recommending the following of antiquity had no place in a modern state run by rational decrees from the central government. The Emperor ordered the destruction of all histories of states other than Qin, and all privately owned copies of the works of the Hundred Schools. (Officially recognized scholars were allowed to own copies, and it seems Confucians were recognized.) We depend on the historians of the Han, especially Ssu-ma Ch’ien, for our information, and the scholars of the Han were fiercely biased against the Qin state, but historians credit the accusation of book burning and restriction of reading, although they generally reject the Han claim that 460 scholars were executed in 212. The Emperor apparently did order the execution of the whole family of anyone who “appealed to the past to condemn the present.”

The Emperor did not handle the conservative opposition well, and his taxes and labor levies, used to advance such projects as the building of the Great Wall, alienated the people. A peasant rebellion in 209, almost immediately after the Emperor’s death, led to civil war, and the eventual foundation of the Han Dynasty in 202, with an erstwhile merchant as Emperor. (It also provided an opportunity, briefly, for Shen-nung utopianism to be practiced here and there.) Naturally the new government availed itself of the ideology of the Confucians. If anything justified the conviction that the opinion of the common people revealed the Mandate of Heaven, this did. Punishment by mutilation was abolished, along with many other harsh policies of the Qin. For a while fiefs were attempted again, but that led to a number of rebellions, and the administrative system of the Qin was quickly reestablished. Indeed, Legalistic policies continued dominant, but now they were concealed, and restrained, by a Mencian Confucian orthodoxy. The acceptance of Confucian ideology only became quite official, reaching the point of sacrifices to Heaven rather than other supreme gods, in the last

²²⁴Graham (1989) 370-371. *Shi Chi*, ch. 6. See Twitchet and Fairbank (1986).

years of the 1st century BCE.

The general shape of the emerging ideology was revealed already in the *Lu Spring and Autumn Annals*, an encyclopedic work compiled by scholars working under Lu Pu-wei, chief minister of the Qin in the 240's BCE. This work retains Legalism in practical politics, divorcing its recommendations from its theory of the state, which is Confucian and Mohist. This is all done within a framework of Yin-Yang cosmology, and a Yangist view that the state is to be viewed as a means for the protection and development of private life, both for the ruler and the subject. In the later synthesis Laozi and Daoism, and eventually Buddhism as another option, an option never fully accepted by the Confucians, shaped the private life of the educated man, and replaced the materialistic ideals of the Yangists.²²⁵

Indeed, for a while Daoism contended with Confucianism for first place in the emerging synthesis of the Han. In 1973 a copy of the *Laozi* was found in a 2nd century BCE Han tomb with four appendices, one of which records a dialogue between the Yellow Emperor and his ministers in which Legalism is merged with Daoism. In particular, the Emperor is to refrain from personal intervention in the application of law and administrative processes within the state, and this is identified as inaction or *wuwei*. Again, rewarding and punishing according to the law, and comparing an official's performance against his title are identified as part of the Way. This tendency is pursued in the *Huai-nan-tzu*, an encyclopedic work of the Han which presses the *Chuangzi* into service, in particular the "Way of Heaven" Chapter.²²⁶ That chapter describes nine stages succeeding one another in learning to govern, (1) Heaven and (2) The way and its potency, which applies to the ruler, who is to respond to events as they are mirrored in the clarity of his heart-mind. He does nothing, but his ministers have particular jobs, and so must do something, as discussed in the remaining stages: (3) Benevolence and right action, (4) Portions and responsibilities, (5) Shape and name (title compared with performance), (6) Grounds for appointment, (7) Inquiry and inspection, (8) Approving and condemning, and (9) Reward and punishment. So Confucian, and then Legalist doctrines are folded into the mix. But the author insists that the order of discussion is important, and that earlier stages form the foundations for the later stages. So the later stages are to be viewed as policies recommended for adoption in order to accomplish the aims set out in the earlier stages of training. This would imply, for instance, that when the later policies failed to serve the earlier expressed aims, then they should be omitted. So a governor would only apply the Legalist policies

²²⁵For these developments, see Graham (1989), especially 372 and following.

²²⁶It will be recalled that the *Zhuangzi* is a composite work, and here we are moving in the latest portions of it, no doubt produced in the 3rd century BCE.

properly if they are in service of benevolence and right action, the Confucian core of the thing once one passes beyond non-action.

“Below in the Empire,” another late chapter in the *Chuangzi*, provides a history for this doctrine. The assumption is made that the Sage Emperors understood all of it, but fragments of it survived in the collapse of good government following them. Thus the various schools each seize on some fragment, and have only a narrow, partial view of the truth. (We have seen something of this sort already in *Xunzi*.) So the tradition of the Way was replaced by a number (five, of course) of different traditions of various formulae. These are the tradition (1) of Mozi, (2) of Sung Hsing and Yin Wen, (3) of P’eng Meng, T’ien P’ien and Shen Tao, (4) of Guanyin and Laozi, and (5) of Zhuangzi. The Logicians did not even have a tradition going back to some fragment of the old wisdom, but are entirely worthless. Indeed, they boasted that they had no tradition, and many formulae. The Confucians are identified as preservers of the classics, and it is to be noted that Zhuangzi and Laozi are assigned to different traditions. Legalism is to be found in the third of the traditions (Shen Tao was one of its founders). The author is hard on this tradition, but it does honor the neutrality of the way to self and moral principles. The problem is, as in the “Way of Heaven,” that it is applied mechanically (ruthlessly) without an understanding of the aims and the Way of Heaven lying behind it. Thus, “even in the right things they did not escape from the wrong.”

Ssu-ma T’an (father of Ssu-ma Ch’ien, the historian), in the 2nd century BCE, identified six schools within a similar scheme, the Yin-Yang, the Confucian, the Mohist, the Legalist, the School of Names (the Logicians), and the Daoists. The Logicians, rehabilitated, are taken to have drawn their inspiration from the comparison of “shape and name”, that is, the identification of the true purpose of each sort of administrator, developing the Confucian “rectification of names.” This approaches the final formulation, but we can note that the Yin-Yang school is still firmly detached from the Daoist school. The members of this school, of course, were seeking after some confirmation of their worth in tradition, and were in the process of identifying themselves with Daoism, on the ground that Yin and Yang arise from the Great Ultimate, which they identified with the unnameable Dao of Laozi. So their work is to fill in the details of the procession of the world from the unnameable Dao. Here is T’an’s assessment of the six schools:

I have examined the Yin-Yang lore; it is too detailed and multiplies superstitious taboos, it keeps people restrained by excessive fears; but its phasing of the overall harmonies with the four seasons is not to be neglected. The *Ru* are learned but short on essentials, strenuous but to little effect, which is why their practices cannot be followed in full; but there is no substitute for their grading of ceremonial between ruler and minister, father and son, and of distinctions between husband and wife, elder and younger. The Mohists take frugality to an

unacceptable extreme, which is why their practices cannot be followed generally; but their strengthening of the basic and thrift in utilising is not to be abandoned. The School of Law is harsh and merciless; but their rectification of the spheres of ruler and subject, superior and inferior, cannot be improved on. The School of Names makes people glib and prone to lose sight of the genuine; but it is indispensable to scrutinize their correcting of names and objects. The School of the Way makes intelligence quintessential and daimonic, concentrated and unified, every prompting in accord with the formless, in tranquillity bringing the myriad things to sufficiency. As for the lore which is theirs, it is grounded in the overall harmonies of the Yin-Yang school, selects the best from the *Ru* and the Mohists, picks out the essentials of the Schools of Names and Law. It shifts with the times and changes in response to other things; in establishing as custom and applying in practice there is nothing to which it is inappropriate; its point is condensed, but easy to hold on to, the effort is little but to much effect.²²⁷

Perhaps the problem with this fundamentally Daoist synthesis is its appeal to Emperors and their higher officials, for it seems to leave the Emperor free of the moral law of the Confucians, since the Way, which the Emperor alone follows in its purity, stands above benevolence and the right. It seemed that humanity and the right should take first place, not the daimonic Dao. In any case, under Emperor Wu (140-87 BCE) Confucianism began to prevail. Following the lead of Xunzi, the Confucians identified the other schools as blinkered, not wrong, and absorbed what they found valuable from each of them. We will examine the Han syncretism with its Confucianist outcome and some sidelights to it and reactions against it in the next chapter.

²²⁷Translated in Graham (1989) 377-8.