

## CHAPTER 5

## The Philosophy of the Analytic Aperçu

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Surveying the superabundant Chinese literature excavated, edited and annotated during the last few decades one cannot help but admire the judgement care with which Liu Xiang 劉向 (c. 77–6 BC) and Liu Xin 劉歆 (c. 50 BC–AD 23) chose and edited so many of our ancient books. If they were working from anything like those excavated versions of traditionally transmitted texts that we have this shows the immense task Liu Xin and Liu Xiang must have been facing as editors. The classical case study on the process of compilation by which this sort of editing was done still remains Piet van der Loon, "On the transmission of the Kuan-tzu."<sup>1</sup>

Writing is always 'writing as.' Correspondingly, reading has always had to be 'reading as.' Writing is never just the writing of text. It is the writing of a certain type of text from a certain culturally pre-defined repertoire of 'canonised' possible types of text, the repertoire of written genres. The philosophy of literary genres is a necessary precondition for any possible analytic history of literature. For China, it seems to me, this precondition is still very far from having been met.

The genres of Chinese literature were many. The *logia* and *apophthegms* in the Confucian *Analepts* were examples of one such early genre; one whose history has been studied by Donald Holzman.<sup>2</sup> The genre style of the *Analepts* comports a philosophical message: the intellectual message of the book was not conceived as an art of successful one-way communication and of precise argumentation. The message was all about illustrating through live *dicta* and *apophthegms* in context, the living sagehood or higher wisdom of certain individuals as it operates differently in its varying contexts. In particular this was of the sayings and dialogues involving Confucius and his disciples. The *Analepts* give both Confucius and several of his disciples a distinct voice all of their own. That vulnerable and often playful reflexive Master's 'voice' in the *Analepts* matters at least as much as whatever true opinions they were maintaining—more or less successfully and clearly.

1. *Young Pao* 41.1 (1952): 357–393.

2. "The Conversational Tradition in Chinese Philosophy," *Philosophy East and West* 6.3 (1956): 223–230.

The more extensive dialogues typical of the *Mencius* are another, problematic variety. Here again, the genre style comports an overall 'structural' message. The intellectual message of the book was conceived as a kind of propositional wisdom that is presented as winning out in dialogue and in disputation, and by and large not just in one-way philosophical or moral pontification. The figure of Mencius presented in this anonymous compilation is given no interesting 'voice' in the book. To the extent he is engagingly funny, it is unwittingly and in spite of himself. What counts here is the superiority of his arguments, and his superior analyses of important issues.

The very chapter headings of the *Xunzi* 荀子 gives away the genre style as well as the intellectual aspirations of this work. The intellectual ambition is not only to argue for certain theses, but to treat coherently, argumentatively, and precisely of certain general issues such as those of ritual, government, nomenclature, study method and so on. Even this compilation does mention Xunzi by name, in the third person, but somehow the author comes out as much more 'professorial' in the sense of Michel Foucault's lectures at the College de France. The style of the non-poetic parts of this book comports and 'boozes' a kind of classroom message atmosphere. It begins to smell of a classroom in ways that the book *Mencius* does not, because in the *Mencius* the discourse on intellectual issues is not yet disconnected from the painfully concrete social and political reality of the author, and the school that was to develop into an ivory tower had not yet emerged. (One is tempted to say that Xunzi's didactic style with its repetitious parallelisms as well as the more pedestrian repetitiveness in *Mozzi* 墨子 mark a move towards a 'classroom' style academic prose. For the emergence of such a classroom mentality in Europe see Jacques LeGoff, *Intellectuals in the Middle Ages*).<sup>3</sup>

The rhyming wisdom poetry of the *Laozi* by itself comports again an intellectual programme: this is the self-doubting, vulnerable, ephemeral and situational discourse that provides the intellectual meat in the *Analepts*. Here the genre style of ponderous and deliberate, polished and spiritual epigrammatic apophthegm comports a message in itself. The form of the rhymed mystifying provocative epigram excludes anything other than celebrating with rhythmic and rhyming pomp its own spiritual superiority, and mysteriously all-important wisdom.

Within what today is one long ancient book, separate literary genres are often represented, as indeed one might in the "collected works" of any famous writer. Thus the *Guanzi* 管子 contains dialogue sections that need to be read as moralising contextualised dialogue in the spirit of the *Mencius* on the one

hand, mystical *fang shu* 方術 treatises of edifying self-cultivation, thematic argumentative sections in the spirit of the *Xunzi* on the other, and then a crucial third professionalist almost practical text sort represented in the extensive *Qing zhong* 輕重 “economic chapters” that needs to be read as an administrative handbook.

Moving closer to my subject at hand, the dialogue sections of the book *Mohist* must be ‘read as’ belonging to a very different text sort from what today is commonly referred to as the *Mo jing* 墨經, the Mohist Dialectical Chapters. Within these Dialectical Chapters, the often enigmatically short and unrevealing *jing* 經 ‘canons,’ need to be read and interpreted as very different text sorts from the *shuo* 說 ‘explanations.’ A.C. Graham has shown how within these *jing* ‘canon’ again, two profoundly different text sorts have to be distinguished: one part has to be read as definitions and the other as propositions. Understanding the Mohist *Dialectical Chapters* involves acquiring a systematic ability for each subtext to ‘read it as’ the text sort it is written as and thus intended to be. And there again, the scheme of text sorts in the *Dialectical Chapters* in itself comprises something like an intellectual framework. It delineates, as it were, an overall topology of the intellectual space in which definitions of conceptual schemes are treated radically differently from propositions about the details within this conceptual space thus defined.

The present paper wishes to argue in some detail that an excavated text like the so-called “Yucong” 語叢 1 excavated at Guodian 郭店 presents another case in point, in some profound ways like the *Mo jing*: “Yucong” 1 needs to be very much ‘read as’ a variety of a text in the tradition of the *Dialectical Chapters*, except that these were not Mohist, and more importantly, the parts are in no way intended to be construable as forming a systemic whole. I am tempted to call them ‘intellectually pointilistic.’

The “Yucong” 1 is identified entirely on the basis of physical characteristics of the bamboo stationery used to write it on. We are told that the content was not taken into account when identifying the individual bamboo slips that had to go into this pile of slips. Now this “Yucong” 1 does not simply inscribe itself into the genre mould of the *Dialectical Chapters* at all. It constitutes a philosophically significant genre of its own. Let me try to outline some of the components of this “Yucong” 1 text sort.

The genre style of this text is well-defined: it can be read as consisting of two kinds of material:

- A. Short sequences of sometimes loosely interconnected short provocative analytic statements.
- B. Isolated short provocative analytic statements.

The genre style of this text comports one crucial feature of its intellectual message:

There is no humble self-doubting reflexivity *à la* Confucius to be expected in a book of this stylistic form,

There is no socially connected argumentative interface *à la* Mencius,

There is no coherently overall discursive elucidation *à la* Xunzi,

There is no narrative celebration of the moral excellence of an author *à la Yanzi Chunqiu* 晏子春秋.

There is no morally proselytising, educational or missionary overtone in any of the “Yucong” 1 pieces that would invite the reader to *shu yu dai* 書於帶 “write it down on his sash” as a moral motto of any kind whatever.

There is none of the intellectually self-righteous pomposity imposed by extensive rhyme *à la* Laozi.

There is no witty, free-wheeling self-humour as cultivated occasionally in the outrageously free genre style *à la* Zhuangzi.

There is no egg-headed, provocative and systematically intellectualist narrative, *à la Hanfeizi* 韓非子.

There is also no attempt at organised coherent and systematic analytic theorising *à la Mojing*.

The “Yucong” 1 turns out analytically pointilistic and quite predominantly provocative through a particular genre style, namely that of the programmatically enigmatic, pithy, and un-argued for analytic *jing* 經 ‘propositions, statements, or theorems’ which often are badly in need of a *shuo* 說 ‘elaborating explanation.’ I would like to show that as in the proverbially obscure *dicta* of Heraclitus (“The way up and the way down are one and the same”)<sup>4</sup> in the aphorisms of “Yucong” 1 one learns to expect to be surprised.

Only very occasionally do its theorems get organised into sequences of equally enigmatic and provocative theorems.

This paper then will present some of these theorems in English by way of illustration of the mainly stylistic and rhetorical points above. In an earlier publication I have provided an elaborated explanation which tries to bring out explicitly their provocative analytic edge.<sup>5</sup>

There will probably come a point when it will appear that my attempt fails. I shall happily leave it to the reader to decide where exactly this begins to be the case.

<sup>4</sup> Fragment 69.

<sup>5</sup> Christoph Harbsmeier, “A Reading of the Guodian 郭店 Manuscript *Yucong* 語叢 1 as a Masterpiece of Early Chinese Analytic Philosophy and Conceptual Analysis,” *Studies in Logic* 4:3 (2011): 3–56.

Let me begin with the title:

凡物由亡生。

One can indeed read this, as modern Chinese and all Western commentators I have heard of seem to read it, as repeating a cosmological proposition inspired by *Laozi*: "All things arise from nothing."

One thing is that this represents a misreading of the word *fan* 凡 which never means 'all' but is a modal particle meaning something like 'as a matter of principle'.<sup>6</sup> The point that interests us in this context is that this interpretation feels free to read this title according to what another text says and without any reference to what is in the present text itself. Now the present text itself has nothing whatsoever to do with cosmology or the origins of the universe and all the things in it.

But if we are not to read this along the lines of the parallel in *Laozi*, then how are we to understand it in the context of the present material? We need to find a reading that relates to conceptual analysis. We need a reading that does not tell a story about how things arise, but a reading which presents a conceptual analysis of a key concept. And also: the analysis has to have something unexpected or witty.

Now the concept of a thing is not intelligibly analysed in terms of it arising from nothing. On the other hand, the concept of 'arising' itself, which is a dominant theme throughout "Yucong"<sup>1</sup> is exquisitely analysed in terms of the fact that if you want to arise somewhere, you had better not already be wherever it is you want to arise. In other words, arising is something that has to happen where whatever arises was not. That is exactly what this very appropriate header, which is repeated in the body of the text, does indeed say.

The question now arises how exactly to arrange the excavated material under the heading we must hope we have correctly interpreted. Since in general the arrangement of the material remains completely uncertain one had better begin with some pieces that clearly do go together in the order we are reconstructing for them:

人亡能為。

Here again, current philological wisdom suggests that the text must be read differently. It must be emended to read: 仁亡能為 "Kind-heartedness one can in no way go about deliberately." This is indeed what would fit together very well with 義亡能為也 "Rectitude one can in no way go about deliberately." Such an emended reading creates coherence in a text that looks incom-

prehensible. For, surely, any man can act! The text, at first, makes no sense. Emendation is necessary. Moreover this new reading is phonetically not only plausible. We do have a perfect fit: the two words are exact homophones. What more can one ask for as an argument to defend the reading?

One might ask for another example where the character 人 is also clearly a scribal mistake for 仁, which of course, in much of the early excavated literature, is written with an entirely different character, with the heart radical under 身. For in these matters one isolated reading without support from other similar cases carries little plausibility and has a touch of the arbitrary.

But there is a much more powerful argument against this reading and indeed for interpreting the text as it stands. That is that the text as it is makes excellent sense in context. The translation we have seen provides exactly that kind of paradoxical sophistication that we shall observe in so many other statements. To come back to Heraclitus: our text makes a statement embarrassingly close in kind to Heraclitus' when he says: "Into the same river we enter and we do not enter. We are, and we are not."<sup>7</sup>

In one sense we can "be ourselves." We can't even help being ourselves, in fact! Not we! (As Heraclitus puts it: "We are.") But then there is this other aspect under which "Yucong"<sup>1</sup> considers the matter, the aspect of what man can go about doing, decide to do, do deliberately and so on. Among these things that he can set about doing, "being oneself" is not one of them.

The structural crux is this: the isolated statements in "Yucong" are not merely cumulative, like for example the "Tancong" 談叢 chapter of the *Shuoyuan* 說苑. Like La Rochefoucauld's (1613–1680) aphorisms they cohere. They add up to an overall vision that is intimately linked to the aphoristic form itself. This overall vision, which does not add up to any reasoned system, is articulated through a series of analytic *aperçus*. Some of these do fall into natural groups or unordered sets. It is important to realise that in these groups the individual members, though interrelated, always retain their semantic and rhetorical independence. They also share important stylistic features: none are narrative. None are moralising or moralistic. None of them contain injunctions of any kind. Those that are related to ethics will be shown to focus not on ethics as such but on the conceptual framework used to describe moral or ethical phenomena. None of them are cosmological in focus: those that appear to be related to cosmology will be shown to focus not on cosmology itself but on the conceptual framework used to describe cosmological or physical phenomena. None argue from scriptural authority. None contain arguments *ex auctoritate*. None of them contain any other references of any sort to named individuals.

6 See Christoph Harbsmeier, *Aspects of Classical Chinese Syntax* (London/Malmö: Curzon Press, 1981), ch. 6 "The so-called adjectival quantifier 凡". See also Wagner's contribution to the volume.

None of them display any dogmatic adherence to any school of thought. None are descriptive in any detail, or are in any way poetic in diction or style. None are explicitly discursive, involving complex arguments. None of them involve synonym compounds like *pengyou* 朋友. Extraordinarily, many are provocative, deliberately paradoxical. Nearly all of them are—in a broad sense—analytic. All of them are maximally concise—cut to the analytic bone.

Much of Chinese philosophical literature tends to be fond of historical narrative references and narrative illustration of philosophical points. This is even true of the Confucian *Analects*, and also of the introduction to the book *Gongyisunlongzi* 公孫龍子 which is primarily concerned with logical analysis. “Yucong,” like the *Laozi*, eschews all narrative or historical context. I shall try to show that its focus is squarely conceptual.

Much of Chinese philosophical literature involves different forms of advice; it analyses moral and prudential questions in order to arrive at prudential rules, moral advice, and valid ethical principles. From the *Analects* and the *Laozi* onwards, and for the prudential part—in such books as the *Hanfeizi* and the *Guanzi*—this has been the dominant mode of the *zhuzi* 諸子 literature. Significantly, the “Yucong” rhetorical style eschews all of this, focussing on conceptual analysis instead.

From the *Laozi* and the *Zhuangzi* onwards, Chinese *zhuzi* literature has paid intermittent attention to questions of cosmology and particularly the origin of the universe.<sup>8</sup> Much cosmological speculation is indeed represented in the excavated literature such as that from *Guodian* 郭店 and from *Yinque* 銀雀. Here again the “Yucong” style imposes a different conceptual perspective on cosmology. There is not one cosmological statement in “Yucong” 1.

From the *Analects* onwards, the appeal to authoritative and unquestionably valid written sources of wisdom has been ubiquitous. There are exceptions to this rule, such as the *Laozi*, the *Wenzi* 文子, and a whole range of the excavated literature. But even when there is no overt quotation, there is in most of our extant texts, including the *Laozi*, that notoriously traditionalist but often enigmatic phrase *gu yue* 故曰 “That is why it is said: ...” It is deeply significant that in *Yucong gu yue* occurs nowhere. To the writers of this text it does not matter what is “being said” by this authority or that—or even by themselves elsewhere. Their concern is directly with the subject matter at hand.

Scriptural reference is often to anonymous documents. But in addition to this there is the very common appeal to what *Laozi* 老子 said, what *Zi Mozi* 墨子 said, or what *Kongzi* 孔子 said, or indeed what *fuzi* 夫子 ‘(our) Master’

said and so on, where the idea is that the person referred to is incontrovertibly right. (Although it is to be noted that at least in the *Analects* the Master’s voice is not at all treated as infallible.) Intellectual insight, in Late Warring States China as in many places elsewhere, tends to want to strengthen its case by an appeal to the personal authority of men of incontrovertible wisdom. The refusal to make any such appeal in a book like the *Laozi* is a stylistic feature of that text. But at the same time that stylistic feature comports a fundamental point about the message in the *Laozi*: this message has, and is, its own authority. It is, as it were, intellectually autonomous, although it does show certain features of intertextuality the detail of which need not concern us here. What does concern us is the fact that “Yucong” refuses to make such appeals to any authoritative person because it speaks in its own intellectual right, and is beholden to no authority past or present.<sup>9</sup>

Most of Chinese philosophical literature—again from the *Analects*, which mention many dozens of individuals, onwards—makes frequent reference to the cases of certain individuals of various kinds. These texts have a strong tendency to the sort of anthropocentrism that links points of view in direct or indirect ways to the fates, experiences, strengths, or weaknesses of certain individuals. Han Fei refers to hundreds of individuals in his highly philosophical and highly analytic book and many excavated texts contain such personal references. The stylistic constraints in “Yucong” are such that references of this sort are excluded. The focus is not on historical or personal embedding of the propositions proposed. It is ahistorical in a provocatively ‘un-Chinese’ manner. Its defiant focus is on conceptual analysis alone.

Much of Chinese philosophical literature takes part and indeed takes sides in the broad on-going conversation between what Arthur Waley memorably called “ways of thought in ancient China.”<sup>10</sup> For example, the *Mencius* sees itself embattled against the Mohists and against what it thinks of as the ‘Yangists’ as well as the ‘Agricuralists’ (A.C. Graham), and in the process it sees no alternative but to stoop so low as to engage in ‘disputation’: *bu de yi* 不得已 “he saw no alternative.” Other texts like the *Hanfeizi* aim to reconcile or

<sup>9</sup> See for a distinction between references to external authorities and internal argumentative evidence Rudolf G. Wagner, “Der Vergessene Hinweis: Wang Pi über den Lao-tzu,” in *Text und Kommentar: Archäologie der literarischen Kommunikation IV*, eds. Jan Assmann and Burkhard Gladigow (Munich: Fink, 1995), 257–278, 272; id. *The Craft of the Chinese Commentator: Wang Bi on the Laozi* (Albany: SUNY, 2000), 251–252; Joachim Gentz, *Das Gongyang zhuan* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 70, and Dirk Meyer who distinguishes argument-based and context-dependent texts, *Philosophy on Bamboo* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 1, 227–233.

<sup>10</sup> See Arthur Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China* (London: Routledge, 1939).

<sup>8</sup> John Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology* (New York: Columbia UP, 1984).

accommodate perceived ideologies in the *Laozi* with statist ideologies attributed to the (entirely pragmatic and not ideological) Lord of Shang. Some texts, like the *Lishi chunqiu* juxtapose different ways of thought in some unmediated kind of encyclopaedic eclecticism. But by and large most transmitted texts we have, relate in one way or another to these 'schools of thought'. Strikingly, we find less of this positioning in relation to current ways of thought in the excavated literature written for specialists. "Yucong" cannot be called a Confucian text just because it mentions virtues like *ti* 悌 'brotherly love' and filial piety. Nor can it possibly be taken to advocate the teachings of *Laozi* just because it does make advanced use of concepts of *wu wei* 無為 'non-assertive action.' "Yucong" 1 discusses concepts as such, quite independently of their apturtenance to this way of thought or that. Its rhetorical constraint signifies an intellectual and analytic focus.

Vivid description and characterisation of persons and things is a hallmark of Chinese prose literature from the *Analects* onwards. Descriptive *ekphrasis* as in the description of the 'myriad holes' in *Zhuangzi*, ch. 2 is much rarer in Chinese literature than it is in Greek literature. But still, the descriptive mode is not absent in the Chinese tradition, whereas it is clinically absent in "Yucong" 1. The rhetorical constraint on vivid description is again the result of an intellectual discipline of analysis.

One might have thought that the notion of 'that is why' (*gu* 故) is absolutely indispensable in philosophical discourse. Indeed, the word marks the pivotal moment where an author passes from his premises to his conclusion. There are forty-three chapters of the fairly non-argumentative book *Laozi* in which the word *gu* figures and often establishes a fairly vague semantic link between what precedes and what follows. Sometimes one is even tempted to see this *gu* between different parts of a chapter as no more than a mark of a compiler's bad conscience. Nonetheless, all this awkwardness only serves to put our point into even clearer perspective: The *Laozi* was compiled by people who, increasingly as time went on,<sup>11</sup> imposed on themselves an intellectual *régime* involving the idea that the chapters needed to show an argumentative systematicity rather than a mere general coherence. Now the systematic rhetorical avoidance or at least absence of *gu* in all of "Yucong" 1 acquires a striking meaning. It signals a style of thought that I have called pointilistic, intuitively analytic, almost aphoristic, and averse to logically concatenated argumentative discourse.

Now I wish I could garnish my survey of what is not to be found in "Yucong" 1 with examples. But it is in the nature of things that what does not exist cannot

be 'shown' or exemplified as not existing. Thus, instead of illustrating what I have just summarised I shall proceed to give one example of what comes closest to refuting my basic thesis. This is the case of a sequence of statements that do in fact 'go together', although there are no discourse particles to mark this fact. They go together in the sense that they constitute so much of a tight and strictly coherent logical argument that it would seem to be doing violence to the strips to read them separately, as isolated propositions. Strips can 'go together' for plain grammatical reasons when an unfinished sentence seems very clearly to continue on to a new strip. Strips can also go together for perhaps less plain, logical reasons when an unfinished argument on one strip seems very clearly to continue on another strip. Of course, both in the judgement of cases of grammatical coherence and in the judgement of cases of logical coherence there will often remain an inescapable element of subjectivity. Given the limited evidence we have from ancient China, our interpretation of the coherence of these texts can rarely be more than tentative.

### 1. On the impossibility of managing to do what one makes a point of doing

為孝，此非孝也。

為悌，/此非悌也。

不可為也，/而不可不為也。

為之，/此非也。

弗為，此非也。

義仁能為也。■

If one makes a point of showing filial piety, then that is not filial piety;

if one makes a point of showing brotherly love, [slip 55] then that is not brotherly love.

These things one cannot make a deliberate point of practising (they must be spontaneous), [slip 56] and yet they must not be left unpractised.

If one deliberately makes a point of practising them, [slip 57] this is not right;

and if one refuses to practise them, that is (also) not right. ... [slip 58]

Rectitude one can in no way deliberately make a point of acting out. [slip 53]

### 2. On the possibility of investigating the good and the impossibility to set out to be good (because one would only be pretending to be good)

有察善，亡為善。■

There is the possibility of probing goodness/excellence (in others), but there is no way of going deliberately about practising goodness. [slip 84]

In this proposition, the generalisation is consummated: the issue, in all the propositions about the virtues, has been all along that of what is moral

<sup>11</sup> See the analysis of the *Laozi* 66 versions by Gentz in this volume.

excellence or goodness. This states the generalisation as succinctly as *Principia Mathematica* could have done in another context.

3. On the impossibility of setting out to be the person one is

人亡能為。■

"The person one is" one can in no way deliberately make a point of being/becoming? [slip 83]

Here comes the thunderous corollary, which would be even more stunning, if we did not have the similarly stunning and similarly aphoristic Heraclitus: "The same river we enter and we enter not. We are, and we are not." "Yucong," like Heraclitus, manages to problematise what it is to be the one one is. But "Yucong" does this in a civilisation, which is such that even after more than two thousand years of intellectual development it is still not ready to understand him. In their desperation about this proposition 1.4 it has been suggested that a person should be read as 仁. This sounds plausible because it would make the text comfortably repetitive and nicely predictable. But, of course, "Yucong" is not generally nicely repetitive and comfortably predictable in the first place. It is a manifestly provocative text at many points. It is true enough that the reading 仁 for the character 人 is unattested anywhere else in the hundred thousand bamboo slips that have been carefully sifted in Bai Yulan's 白於藍 *Jiandu boshu tongjiazhi zidian* 簡牘帛書通假字典.<sup>12</sup> However, since we know of no difference in the ancient pronunciation of these two characters it is quite easy to imagine that one character was carelessly miswritten for the other. Thus when a text with 人 'man' cannot be interpreted as it stands but makes excellent sense when one reads 人 as intended to represent the word 仁 'humaneness' then one might well need to understand 人 as if it were 仁 in order to make sense of the text. However, this does not mean that one is entitled to read 人 as 仁 anywhere, at will, *sine necessitate* (without being forced to by the context), as medieval logicians would have put it. In my interpretation I take the liberty of assuming that our scribe had good reason for choosing the character 人

12 Xiamen: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2008. See now Bai Yulan 白於藍, *Zhanguo Qin Han jianbo gushu tongjiazhi huizuan* 戰國秦漢簡帛古書通假字彙纂 (Xiamen: Fujian renmin chubanshe, 2012), which lists a number of instances where 人 is interpreted as 仁. 人 occurs tens of thousands of times in the corpus of excavated literature. The fact that in some cases philologists have found it necessary to read this common character as 仁 certainly does not justify a philological method according to which all instances of 人 are taken to invite the natural reading 仁.

here, and not the character 仁. And I have been led to do so by what I reconstruct as the overall internal logic of "Yucong" 1.

4. On things and the criteria of their identity as the things they are and on naming and names as the criterion of the names naming the things they name

有物有容，有稱有名。■

There being things, there are outlines > 'physiognomies' (of these things), there being calling, there is a name (for the thing called by that name). [slip 13]

For a thing to be the thing it is there must be a criterion of identification of that thing as the thing that it is, and that is its *rong* 容 'physiognomy'.

5. On two apparently contradictory types of investigation

察所知，察所不知。

One investigates what one understands, and one investigates what one does not understand. ... [slip 85]

6. On existence being a function of having a name

有生乎名。■

Existence arises from having a name. [slip 96]

7. On the nature of punitive coercion

刑非嚴也。■

Physical punishment is not a matter of showing severity. [slip 64]

8. On ontological self-determination

亡物不物，皆至焉，而亡非已取之者。■

There is no (category of) creature/thing that fails to act as the thing it is, and they all get to this point (of being themselves), and [slip 71] none are such that they have not themselves determined themselves. [slip 72]

The proposition that "no thing fails to thing," in all its defiant and entirely original departure from ordinary grammar, makes a point of ontology which in fact involves the dramatisation of ontology: the notion of choice, in this instance, involves a certain level of personification. It involves a kind of abstract personification that is not common in early Chinese literature.

**9. On the completeness condition for being called a sage**

盈聖之謂聖。■

When one fills out (>completely fulfils the criteria for) being a sage one is called a sage. [slip 100]

This literal transcription, if correct, would attribute to this text a statement puzzlingly close to the statement “Snow is white is true if snow is white.”

**10. On the consummate conceptual essence of sagehood**

備之謂聖。■

Providing completely the (relevant) criteria (sci.: for sagehood) is called sagehood. [slip 94]

**11. On a logical entailment of sagehood**

有聖有善。■

There being sagehood there is excellence. [slip 17]

**12. On the ontogenesis of human-heartedness**

喪，仁之端也。■

Being in mourning is the starting-point of humanheartedness. [slip 98]

**13. On the genealogy of precedence**

兄弟，識先後也。■

From (the case of) elder and younger brothers one becomes aware of who takes precedence. [slip 70]

**14. On the genealogy of social hierarchy**

父子，識上下也。■

From (the cases/concepts of) ‘father’ and ‘son’ one becomes aware of the relation between superior and inferior. [slip 69]

**15. On two subtypes of elective relations: the hierarchical versus the horizontal**

君臣、朋友，其擇者也。■

Relations between ruler and minister, and between friends, are the sort that are elective. [slip 87]

**16. On the fundamental distinction between kinship relations versus elective relations**

(孝敬??)父，有親有尊。/

長悌，親道也。

友、君臣，/無親也。■

(In the case of X-ing the) father there is blood relation and reverence. [slip 78]

Treating with fraternal respect

is a Way involving blood-bonds.

Among friends, and between ruler and minister [slip 80] there is no blood relation. [slip 81]

**17. On affection-generating versus respect-generating virtues**

[厚於仁，薄於義，親而不尊。

厚於義，薄於仁，/尊而不親。■

[If one emphasises humanheartedness

and one deemphasises] rectitude,

then one will be affectionate, but [slip 77] not reverent;

If one emphasises rectitude and one deemphasises humanheartedness, [slip 82] then one will be reverent but not affectionate. [slip 79]

**18. On the double origin of man's superior status in the world**

天生百物，人為貴。

人之道也，或/由中出，或由外入。■

When Heaven originated all kinds of creatures

man counted as the noblest of these.

As for the Way [slip 18] of man, in some cases [slip 19] it emerges from the inside/is endogenic, in other cases it enters from the outside/is exogenic. [slip 20]

**19. On endogenic versus exogenic virtues, humanheartedness and rectitude**

仁生於人，義生於道。/

或生於內，或生於外。/

Humanheartedness arises from (within) a person, rectitude arises (outside) from the Way. [slip 22]

The one arises from within, the other arises from without. ... [slip 23]

Humanheartedness, being endogenic, and a subjective virtue, has its origin within the person, rectitude, being exogenic, and an objective virtue has its origin within the Way.

The second proposition does NOT say the obvious, namely that (仁生於內，義生於外). (“Humanheartedness arises from within; rectitude arises from without”). It lifts the discourse onto a more abstract, analytic level. Some virtues/values have their origin outside, others inside.

## 20. On the endogenic versus the exogenic virtues

由中出者：

仁忠信。

由【外人者：

禮樂刑。】

As for those that emerge from the inside/the endogenic ones: these are humaneheartedness, devoted effort, and good faith.

As for those [which enter from the outside these are ritual propriety, music, and punishments] [slip 21]

## 21. On the epistemic conditions for mass education

察天道以化民氣。■

One investigates the Way of Heaven in order to transform the vital spirits of the people. [slip 68]

## 22. On epistemic antecedence I

知天所為，知人所為，然後知道。■

知道然後知命。■

Only when one understands how Heaven works, and when one understands how man works, [slip 29] does one understand the Way; and only when one understands the Way does one understand ordained fate. [slip 30]

## 23. On epistemic antecedence II

知已而後知人，

知人而後／知禮，

知禮而後知行。■

Only when one understands oneself does one understand others, only when one understands others does one [slip 26] understand ritual propriety, only when one does ritual propriety does one understand (proper) conduct. [slip 27]

## Conclusion

Surveying the pithy precision of these *dicta* in “Yucong” one is struck by their logical independence on the one hand, and by the stylistically manifested intellectual coherence of their approach on the other. As one feels that one is getting under the skin of some of these propositions, one feels invited to go on constructing new ones, thinking along these lines of critical analysis. It is a little bit like reading Wittgenstein. Not like reading the *Tractatus*—which does

avoid quotation and the like, yet which organises its propositions on a structured tree of subordination—but more like reading *On Certainty*. One feels invited to listen in on an intense intellectual effort that manifests itself not through a chain of well-rehearsed argumentation but through a jumpy and knotty sequence of highly polished analytic *aperçus*. To a Western reader these *aperçus* seem to hold a vague promise that they may constitute insights that constitute conditions for the possibility of any future account of the scheme of Chinese conceptual schemes, much in the spirit of Immanuel Kant. And the curious thing is this: these propositions are written as if they are intended very much that way. And it is not a coincidence that we find the punctuation marks in this pretty well exactly where we would have hoped to see them anyway. The text works indeed as a pointilistic attempt at conceptual clarification that is a perceived prerequisite for any future intellectual transparency. The Mohist logicians felt that way. It now appears that the Mohist milieu was not the only one in which this historically jejune, non-pragmatic and non-moralistic, ethereal analytic intellectualism was cultivated to an almost professionalistic, dry, and caustic perfection.

The social pendant to this analytic independence of mind, I like to think, was a cultural independence vis-à-vis any particular ‘school of thought’ or indeed ‘way of thought’ that the authors of these propositions may have been adherents of. These propositions do not give off the scent of polite submissions to a ruler. Defiantly they leave the prevalent hierarchical structures of communication in Late Warring States China. There is no advice here to a ruler. There is no intended audience of disgruntled courtiers either. The status of the authors is entirely irrelevant. It is their implicit argumentation that counts. And the argument matters only to those who happen to have that ‘philosophical’ taste for abstract de-contextualised conceptual analysis. The discourse is not *ad personam*, directed at this or that intended individual. The discourse is intertextual, but it poses as being abstractly self-contained. These propositions set out to establish an apolitical, independent, autonomous realm of what one might indeed call ‘academic’ discourse. They apply cold-blooded and iconoclastic logical analysis to what were the holiest of virtues in their time. The exciting thing is that these propositions seem to pose as philosophically non-partisan, unattached to any one particular philosophical school rather than another. And unlike Zhuang Zhou 莊周, the authors of these propositions avoid all manner of dogmatic social, ideological or moral conclusions, even of any narrative sceptic relativism, Montaigne style. Our text poses as curiously cool and abstract, analytically above all philosophical or social factionalism.



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## CHAPTER 6

## Speaking of Poetry: Pattern and Argument in the "Kongzi Shilun"

Martin Kern

The "Kongzi shilun" 孔子詩論 (Confucius' Discussion of the Poetry) is by far the most prominent text among the Shanghai Museum corpus of bamboo manuscripts dated to roughly 300 BC. Since its publication in December 2001,<sup>1</sup> it has attracted hundreds of articles and several book-length studies. In the months immediately following the initial publication, a vigorous online debate arose<sup>2</sup> during which at least six different sequential arrangements of the altogether twenty-nine bamboo slips were proposed. Moreover, Li Xueqin 李學勤 has argued that the text by no means reflects "Confucius' Discussion of the Poetry" but rather a 'discussion' that invokes Confucius; his proposed shorter title "Shilun" 詩論 (Discussion of the Poetry) is by now widely accepted<sup>3</sup> and for this reason alone—and against better judgment (see below)—will be used in the present study. Aside from detailed palaeographic analysis and vigorous discussions of interpretation and textual arrangement,<sup>4</sup> much research has been devoted to two questions: the authorship of the anonymous manuscript text<sup>5</sup> and, often related to the question of authorship, the text's position vis-à-vis the received *Mao Shi* 毛詩 where it has been compared to both the "Great

- 1 Ma Chengyuan 馬承源, ed., *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu* (yi) 上海博物館管藏戰國楚竹書(一) (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2001), 13–41, 121–168.
- 2 On <http://www.jianbao.org>, the principal online forum for academic discussions of early Chinese manuscripts.
- 3 For a convenient survey of these discussions, see Xing Wen, "Guest Editor's Introduction," *Contemporary Chinese Thought* 39.4 (2008): 3–17.
- 4 The three most important books, all reflecting the extensive discussion in the field, have been Huang Huaixin 黃懷信, *Shanghai bowuguan cang Zhanguo Chu zhushu "Shilun" jieyi* 上海博物館藏戰國楚竹書《詩論》解義 (Beijing: Shehui kexue wenxian chubanshe, 2004); Liu Xinfang 劉信芳, *Kongzi shilun shuxue* 孔子詩論述學 (Hefei: Anhui daxue chubanshe, 2002); and Chen Tongsheng 陳桐生, *Kongzi shilun yanjiu* 《孔子詩論》研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004). Chen, 315–341, provides a survey of the large number of publications on the manuscript that appeared just between December 2001 and March 2004. Recently, long after the present essay was completed, a massive new study has appeared: Zhao Fulin 晔福林, *Shangbo jian 'Shilun' yanjiu* 上博簡《詩論》研究 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2013).
- 5 At stake, of course, is not the identity of the writer, or copyist, of the recovered manuscript but of the text that is contained in this particular manuscript and that, so it is presumed,

