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# The Consciousness of the Dead as a Philosophical Problem in Ancient China

*In memory of my mother*

Pois sinä lensit avaruuteen,  
niin ehkä löysit, mitä sä hait,  
sammuessasi maailmaan uuteen  
kirikkaamman, kauniimman loiston sä sait.  
– Larin-Kyösti (1873–1948), “Tähden lentäessä,”  
from *Lauluja Wanhasta Kaupungista* (1912)

Confucius’s dictum, “Revere the ghosts and spirits, but keep them at a distance” 敬鬼神而遠之 (*Analects* 6.20)<sup>1</sup> is often cited as the supreme expression of his humanism.<sup>2</sup> Instead of trying to descry how ghosts and spirits want us to behave – a science in its own right, with its proper techniques and professionals, throughout the Bronze Age – Confucius taught that it is incumbent on human beings to think through their own moral obligations and act accordingly. But the statement reveals another aspect of Confucius’s world view that is less often discussed: he must have believed that there are ghosts and spirits. For that matter, he believed that making sacrifices to ghosts and spirits is acceptable as long as the practice is kept within appropriate bounds. “To make sacrifices to a ghost that is not one’s own is toadying” 非其鬼而祭之，諂也 (*Analects* 2.24).<sup>3</sup> Doubtless we are supposed to infer that it would be beyond reproach to make due sacrifices to a ghost that is one’s own. Confucius advised his disciples to keep ghosts and spirits at a distance not because he denied their existence, but because he thought they do not provide useful moral guidance. Morality is something that we must work out on our own.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Cheng Shude 程樹德 (1877–1944), *Lunyu jishi* 論語集釋, ed. Cheng Junying 程俊英 and Jiang Jianyuan 蔣見元, Xibian Zhuzi jicheng (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990), 12.406.

2 E.g., Paul, (2010), 42; Schwartz, (1985), 120f. Chai and Chai, (1973), 33f.

3 *Lunyu jishi* 4.132.

4 Cf. Goldin (2011), 13f.

While Confucius's philosophy was thrillingly original in its own time, his ready acceptance of the existence of ghosts and spirits was unexceptional. Many passages from contemporary literature attest to the widespread belief in ghosts and their fearsome power.<sup>5</sup> Beliefs about ghosts are of great interest to intellectual historians, as they can imply deeper metaphysical beliefs, knowingly or unknowingly held. For instance, it would not be easy to account for ghosts within a framework of monistic materialism. Monists do not ordinarily believe in the possibility of life after death. The near ubiquity of the belief in ghosts in human societies has led some researchers to suppose that it is an element of "folk psychology," or the intuitive dualistic metaphysics (mind and body are separate) hard-wired in the human brain.<sup>6</sup> There remains the problem, however, that the conception of ghosts is not identical across all cultures. It is well beyond the scope of this study to decide whether ideas about ghosts are innate or acquired (or some combination of both); instead, I offer an examination of the range of attitudes about postmortem consciousness in early Chinese civilization in order to shed light on the range of attitudes about mind and body.

First, a survey of the evidence. Let us begin with the *Zuo Commentary to the Springs and Autumns* (*Zuozhuan* 左傳), which contains several memorable ghost stories.

晉侯改葬共太子。

秋，狐突適下國，遇太子。太子使登，僕，而告之曰：「夷吾無禮，余得請於帝矣，將以晉畀秦，秦將祀余。」

對曰：「臣聞之：『神不歆非類，民不祀非族。』君祀無乃殄乎？」<sup>7</sup>

The Marquis of Jin moved [the body of] Crown Prince Gong [i.e. Shensheng 申生, d. 656 B.C.] to a new grave.

In the autumn, Hu Tu was going to the lesser capital when he happened upon [the ghost] of the Crown Prince. The Crown Prince made [Hu Tu] climb into [his carriage] and act as his charioteer. He said: "Yiwu [i.e. the ruler of Jin] has no propriety. I have made a request of the Deity: I shall bestow Jin unto Qin, and Qin will make sacrifices to me."

Hu Tu responded: "I have heard: 'Spirits do not consume that which is not of their

5 Despite Graham, (1989), 15: "except for the Mohists, no one in ancient China much cared whether consciousness survives death."

6 One of the strongest proponents of this view is Jesse M. Bering, e.g., Bering (2006), 453–98 (with appended commentary by other scholars, and the author's responses). On "folk psychology" generally, see Churchland, (1981), 67–90; naturally, the topic has spawned a huge bibliography since then.

7 Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注, 2nd edition, Zhongguo gudian mingzhu yizhu congshu (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990), I, 334 (Xi 僖 10=650 B.C.).

kind; people do not cultivate what is not of their lineage.' Will the sacrifices to you not be annihilated?"<sup>8</sup>

Note that the name Shensheng means "Lives Again."<sup>9</sup> Stories about revenants like Shensheng are legion, and reveal an inescapably dualistic scheme. Although Chinese philosophers of this time had no technical terms corresponding to our "monism" and "dualism" (because they did not formulate the problem in the same manner), the underlying world view is nonetheless dualistic because the entity called "Shensheng" is plainly not metaphysically coterminous with the rotting physical remains of that prince. Rather, "Shensheng" is thought to be able to live on in some other form after the extinction of his body. That is dualism. The precise nature of this non-corporeal form is, to be sure, unclear from this account; as we shall see, attempts to specify the substance of ghosts caused considerable agitation and disagreement.

Shensheng's appearance seems directly related to his sense that he has been wronged, and other passages from the *Zuo Commentary* discuss methods of placating vengeful ghosts that wreak havoc among the living:

鄭人相驚以伯有，曰：「伯有至矣！」則皆走，不知所往。

鑄刑書之歲二月，或夢伯有介而行，曰：「王子，余將殺帶也。明年壬寅，余又將殺段也。」及王子，駟帶卒，國人益懼。齊、燕平之月，壬寅，公孫段卒，國人愈懼。

其明月，子產立公孫洩及良止以撫之，乃止。子大叔問其故。子產曰：「鬼有所歸，乃不為厲，吾為之歸也。」<sup>10</sup>

The people of Zheng alarmed one another about [the ghost of] Boyou [i.e. Liang Xiao 良霄, d. 543 B.C.], saying: "Boyou is coming!" Then they would all run around, not knowing where they were going.

In the second month of the year in which the legal codes were cast [i.e. 536 B.C.], someone dreamt that Boyou was walking in armor, saying: "On *renzi* day, I shall kill [Si] Dai [i.e. Boyou's killer]. On *renyin* day of next year, I shall also kill [Gongsun] Duan [who was in league with Si Dai]." When *renzi* day came, Si Dai died, and the denizens of the citadel were even more afraid. In the month of peace with Qi and Yan [i.e. 535 B.C.], on *renyin*, Gongsun Duan died, and the denizens of the citadel were more frightened still.

The next month, Zichan [i.e. Gongsun Qiao 公孫僑, d. 522 B.C.] promoted Gongsun Xie and Liang Zhi [i.e. Boyou's son] in order to placate [the ghost]. Then he ceased. Zitaishu

<sup>8</sup> Compare the translations in de Groot (1854–1921), (1892–1910), IV, 432f.; and James Legge (1815–1897), (1991), V, 157.

<sup>9</sup> Jens Østergård Petersen (private correspondence). Emmrich, (1992), 19, suggests that it means "Born in Shen."

<sup>10</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, IV, 1291–92 (Zhao 昭 7=535 B.C.).

asked the reason. Zichan said: “When ghosts have a place to come home to, they do not become a menace. I afforded him a home.”<sup>11</sup>

Liang Xiao was a nobleman in Zheng who had been killed in a dispute with Si Dai 駟帶 and others eight years earlier. In this episode, the ghost does not make a direct appearance, revealing himself only obliquely through dreams and through the chilling precision of his prophecies. But Zichan’s explanation leaves little doubt that (at least as he is portrayed in this text) he believes a real ghost is to blame for the shocking deaths of his two assailants. Zichan assuages the angry ghost by promoting his living son, furnishing the young man with the means to cultivate his deceased father properly.

Later, Zichan explains the physics that would allow someone like Liang Xiao to become a ghost:

及子產適晉，趙景子問焉，曰：「伯有猶能為鬼乎？」

子產曰：「能。人生始化曰魄，既生魄，陽曰魂。用物精多，則魂、魄強，是以有精爽至於神明。匹夫匹婦強死，其魂、魄猶能馮依於人，以為淫厲，況良霄，我先君穆公之胄、子良之孫、子耳之子。」<sup>12</sup>

When Zichan went to Jin, Viscount Jing of Zhao asked him about this, saying: “Could Boyou really have become a ghost?”

Zichan said: “He could have. When people are born and begin to develop, [they have] what is called a *po*-soul. Once the *po*-soul has been born, its *yang* counterpart is called a *hun*-soul.<sup>13</sup> If one battens on things and one’s essences multiply, the *hun* and *po*-souls will become strong; in this way, the luminosity of one’s essence<sup>14</sup> will reach the point of spirit-like perspicuity. When ordinary men and women die a violent death, their *hun* and *po*-souls are able to encroach on other people, and become licentious menaces. How much more so Liang Xiao, the progeny of our former Lord Mu [r. 627–606 B.C.], the grandson of Ziliang, the son of Zi’er!”<sup>15</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Compare the translation in Legge, V, 618.

<sup>12</sup> *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, IV, 1292–93.

<sup>13</sup> Does this statement imply that Zichan regards the *hun* and *po* as consisting of *qi* 氣? The question is worth considering, as *qi* is also understood as the substance of the body. Later, more systematic theories would construe *yin* 陰 and *yang* as complementary aspects of *qi*. Cf. Sivin, (1987), 59–70; also Porkert, (1974), 9–24. But these are based on texts from a different era, and I do not think the scattered references to *qi* in the *Zuozhuan* suffice to support any strong inferences.

<sup>14</sup> *Jingshuang* 精爽 (the luminosity of one’s essence) is clearly a compound noun; compare the usage *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, IV, 1456 (Zhao 25=517 B.C.): “The *jingshuang* of the heart—this is what is meant by *hun* and *po*” 心之精爽，是謂魂魄。

<sup>15</sup> Compare the translations in Brashier, (2011), 253 f.; Glahn, (2004), 32; de Groot, IV, 410 f.; and Legge, V, 618. I do not agree with Brashier’s interpretation of the phrase *qiangsi* 強死, which he understands as “dying when (the *hunpo* is still) strong” (417n.69).

This text, one of the oldest to refer to the *hun* and *po* souls, tersely addresses many themes relating to death and the afterlife, perhaps raising more questions than it answers. Zichan seems to be saying that people's *hun* and *po* souls can be nourished together with the physical body, and are not necessarily extinguished at the moment of death. Rather, when people die a violent death – especially if, like Liang Xiao, they come from a powerful family – their *hun* and *po* can become *li 厲*, a common term for malicious ghosts. We are not told how the *hun* and *po* can survive after the body has been destroyed.<sup>16</sup> Later sources expanded on the *hun* and *po*, but it is well known that they do not paint a consistent picture.<sup>17</sup> The *hun* also figured in a ceremony called “summoning the *hun*” (*zhaohun* 招魂), undertaken before burial, in which the *hun* is ritually entreated to return to the body before the deceased is finally declared dead.<sup>18</sup>

The idea that people who die violent deaths are likely to become dangerous ghosts is widespread in Chinese culture.<sup>19</sup> Gao You 高誘 (ca. A.D. 168–212), for example, wrote: “The ghosts of people who have died in battle are adept at fomenting disease among people; shamans are able to kill them through exorcism” 兵死之鬼，善行病人，巫能祝劾殺之。<sup>20</sup> It is no coincidence that many people who died unnatural deaths, especially in passionate defense of some cause, became popular gods. It turns out that there is little practical difference between a

**16** Earlier in the text, an observer notes that Heaven “will snatch away Boyou’s *hun*” 奪伯有魂 (*Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, III, 1168 [Xiang 襄 29=544 B.C.]), a phrase that is variously interpreted. Du Yu 杜預 (A.D. 222–284) took it to mean that Heaven caused his wits to fail (*sang qi jingshen* 喪其精神); see *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhengyi* 春秋左傳正義 (*Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏), 39.2009b. Yang Bojun (*ad loc.*) reads it instead as an indication that Heaven sanctioned his downfall.

**17** The clearest discussion is Brashier, (1996), 125–58. *Po* might have originally meant “moon-light soul,” i.e. the spirit or animating force that illuminates the moon, as in phrases such as *jishengpo* 既生魄 and *jisipo* 既死魄 (also commonly written *po* 霸), which refer to lunar phases. Cf. Schuessler, (2007), 417.

**18** The classic study is Yü, (1987), 363–95; see also Cook, (2006), 28ff.

**19** For the case of Pengsheng 彭生 (d. 694 B.C.), see *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, I, 175 (Zhuang 莊 8=686 B.C.), though here it is not clear whether Pengsheng is a full-fledged ghost or merely some sort of apparition. In fact, in the “Dinggui” 訂鬼 chapter of *Lunheng* 論衡, there is an attempt to distinguish between the plausible account that a boar appeared and the false belief that this boar was the vengeful ghost of Pengsheng: Huang Hui 黃暉, *Lunheng jiaoshi* (*fu Liu Pansui jijie*) 論衡校釋 (附劉盼遂集解), Xibian Zhuzi jicheng (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990), 22.65.941. There is a parallel account in the *Guanzi* 管子: Li Xiangfeng 黎翔鳳, *Guanzi jiaozhu* 管子校注, Xibian Zhuzi jicheng (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2004), 7.18.336f.

**20** From his commentary to *Huainanzi* 淮南子; text in He Ning 何寧, *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋, Xibian Zhuzi jicheng (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1998), 17.1198 (“Shuilin” 說林 chapter).

ghost to be feared and a god to be worshiped.<sup>21</sup> Lord Guan 關帝 (i. e. the warrior Guan Yu 關羽, d. A.D. 220) is a particularly famous case.<sup>22</sup> Maltreatment *after* death, especially relating to burial, is another well-attested grievance. The ghost of Shensheng, we remember, was enraged when his remains were exhumed, and a demonology excavated at Shuihudi 睡虎地 refers to the ghosts of unburied infants who haunt the living.<sup>23</sup>

Zichan's explanation of Boyou's ghost raises another issue: it seems to assert that ghosts possess faculties of perception. "The luminosity of one's essence will reach the point of spirit-like perspicuity" 有精爽至於神明. *Shenming* (spirit-like perspicuity) is a term known from philosophy and self-cultivation literature; its meaning is uncertain (and probably not identical in every context),<sup>24</sup> but it usually refers to mental processes. For example, Xunzi 荀子 (3rd century B.C.) uses the term *shenming* while discussing the characteristics that distinguish the heart-mind (*xin* 心) from every other organ:

心者，形之君也，而神明之主也，出令而無所受令。自禁也，自使也，自奪也，自取也，自行也，自止也。故口可劫而使墨云，形可劫而使詘申，心不可劫而使易意，是之則受，非之則辭。<sup>25</sup>

The heart-mind is the lord of the body and the master of *shenming*. It issues commands but does not receive commands. It prohibits on its own; it employs on its own; it considers on its own; it takes on its own; it acts on its own; it ceases on its own. Thus the mouth can be forced to be silent or to speak; the body can be forced to contract or expand; the heart-mind cannot be forced to change its intention. If it accepts [something], it receives it; if it rejects, it forgoes it.<sup>26</sup>

While there is no reason to assume that the figure of Zichan in the *Zuo Commentary* would have used *shenming* in precisely the same sense as Xunzi, it seems clear that, in both texts, *shenming* encompasses the ability to perceive phenomena and respond to them as warranted. Boyou's ghost is not simply a volitionless, malevolent force like a miasma; it is irate for specific reasons, targets spe-

21 The classic study is Harrell, (1974), 193–206. See also Yü (1990), 39–66.

22 E.g., ter Haar, (2000), 184–204; Duara, (1988), 778–95; and Diesinger, (1984).

23 Liu Lexian 劉樂賢, *Shuihudi Qinjian Rishu yanjiu* 睡虎地秦簡日書研究, Dalu diqu boshi lunwen congkan 76 (Taipei: Wenjin, 1994), 229 (*Rishu jia* 日書甲, "Jiejiu" 詰咎 chapter, Strip 50b2). On this text, see, generally, Harper, (1985), 459–98.

24 For an overview of scholarship, see Szabó, (2003), 251–74. Elsewhere I have translated *shenming* as "godlike insight."

25 Wang Xianqian 王先謙 (1842–1918), *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, ed. Shen Xiaohuan 沈嘯寰 and Wang Xingxian 王星賢, *Xinbian Zhuzi jicheng* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1988), 15.21.397 f. ("Jiebi" 解蔽).

26 Compare the translations in Knoblock, (1988–94), III, 105; and Burton Watson (2003), 133.

cific enemies, and ceases terrorizing the populace only when Zichan takes specific measures to appease it. Zichan understands it, and anticipates its actions, by attributing intelligence to it.

This spectral intelligence raises the question of whether ghosts and spirits can be deceived. A few passages in the *Zuo Commentary* address this issue. In the most famous of them,<sup>27</sup> Lord Jing of Qi 齊景公 (r. 547–490 B.C.), beset with illness, intends to follow the advice of some courtiers who recommend executing invocators and scribes in order to make a show of punishing them for irreverent service to the ancestral spirits. Yan Ying 晏嬰 (d. 500 B.C.), however, objects that ghosts and spirits cannot be deceived in this manner. When the ruler is good and wise, the invocators and scribes have no trouble telling the truth in their regular announcements to the spirits (this was a common ritual at the time),<sup>28</sup> but when the ruler is a tyrant, they are placed in an unsustainable position. According to Yan Ying, the ancestral spirits observe the ruler's conduct unflinchingly, and send down whatever boon or calamity he has earned. Submitting false reports is useless (and one might well ask why invocators and scribes are required to submit any reports at all, if the spirits already know the truth or falsity of what they are about to hear). The spirits exist; their intelligence is unerring, their power irresistible.

Elsewhere in the *Zuo Commentary*, however, there are acknowledgments that the existence of spirits cannot be verified. As various cultures have discovered independently, “there are no definitive answers to the question of what happens when one dies.”<sup>29</sup> When Lord Xian of Wei 衛獻公 (r. 579–559 and 546–544 B.C.) is forced to flee his domain after haughtily provoking an important nobleman, he dispatches his invocator back to the capital with the order to announce to the spirits that he is without guilt. Lady Ding 定姜, his father's widow, objects to his conduct, but not from the same point of view as Yan Ying. Rather, she casts the matter as a dilemma: “If there are no spirits, what would there be to announce? And if there are [spirits], they cannot be deceived” 無神，何告？若有，不可誣也。<sup>30</sup>

Lady Ding's critique displays a basic polarity that characterizes most early Chinese thinking about life after death: either the dead have no consciousness,

27 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, IV, 1416f. (Zhao 20= 522 B.C.). For a parallel (but by no means identical) account, see Wu Zeyu 吳則虞, *Yanzi chunqiu jishi* 晏子春秋集釋, Xibian Zhuzi jicheng (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1962), 1.12.42–43 (“Jingong bing jiu buyu yu zhu zhushi yi xie Yanzi jian” 景公病久不愈欲誅祝史以謝晏子諫).

28 The best discussion in English is Pines, (2002), 14–26.

29 Thus Grandin, (2006), 229.

30 *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, III, 1013 (Xiang 14=559 B.C.).

in which case there is no need to worry about what they may do or think; or they do have consciousness, in which case they act like vengeful ghosts with mysterious powers—that is to say, mentally like human beings, but physically very different. These are called variously “ghosts” (*gui* 鬼) or “spirits” (*shen* 神), with little systematic differentiation between the two terms.<sup>31</sup> It is hard to find any conception of the conscious dead other than the loose category of “ghosts and spirits,”<sup>32</sup> and certainly nothing like a Homeric shade. Nor, it should be emphasized, do the terms *gui* and *shen* refer exclusively to the ghosts of human beings; they can also refer to demons, spirits, and gods of whatever origin.

“If the dead have consciousness ...” is a productive rhetorical motif in early Chinese literature: the speaker typically sets up a dilemma (like Lady Ding in the foregoing example), showing that a certain action is bound to fail regardless of whether the dead have consciousness.<sup>33</sup> The Chinese word most often employed in such maneuvers is *zhi* 知, which usually means “knowledge,” “awareness,” or even “wisdom” (read *zhì*, i. e. 智), but the relevant sense is illustrated once again by Xunzi:

水火有氣而無生，草木有生而無知，禽獸有知而無義，人有氣、有生、有知，亦且有義，故最為天下貴也。<sup>34</sup>

Water and fire have *qi* but no life; grasses and trees have life but no *zhi*; birds and beasts have *zhi* but no morality; humans have *qi*, life, *zhi*, and in addition they have morality; thus they are the noblest things in the world.

*Zhi* is thus the capacity that distinguishes animals from plants. “Sentience” would be a safe translation, but I believe “consciousness” is fair as well, espe-

31 Cf. Poo (2004), 176; more generally, Deng Peiling 鄧佩玲, *Tianming, guishen yu zhudao: Dong-Zhou jinwen guci tanlun* 天命、鬼神與祝禱：東周金文嘏辭探論 (Taipei: Yiwen, 2011), 48–78. If there is any distinction between *gui* and *shen*, it is that the former tends to be pejorative. Cf. Ikeda, (1981), 216–89.

Sometimes *gui* and *shen* are explained paronomastically: *gui* 歸, “to return,” and *shen* 申, “to extend.” But such glosses do not elaborate on the difference between the two. See, e. g., Zang Kehe 臧克和 and Wang Ping 王平, *Shuowen jiezi xinding* 說文解字新訂 (2002), 604 (*gui* 鬼) and 986 (*shen* 申).

32 In archaic times, other terms were used, including *yan* 嚴 and *yi* 翼. See Ikeda, (1981), 199 ff.

33 On Dilemma as a rhetorical trope, see Goldin, (2005), 83 f. This would correspond to what I called “Type B” Dilemma.

34 “Wangzhi” 王制, *Xunzi jijie* 5.9.164.

cially since modern philosophers have not settled on any standard definition of that concept.<sup>35</sup>

Chinese philosophers of various orientations made use of the “If the dead have consciousness ...” theme.<sup>36</sup> In the *Han Feizi* 韓非子, for example, two emissaries from Wu 吳 are sent to conciliate the bellicose King Ling of Chu 楚靈王 (r. 541–529 B.C.). King Ling orders them to be bound and executed, their blood to be smeared on the drums of war. While they are awaiting this fate, they are taunted by men of Chu, but they respond: “If the dead have no consciousness, there will be no point in smearing your drums with our blood; if the dead do have consciousness, then at the time of battle we shall cause the drums not to sound.” 死者無知，則以臣釁鼓無益也；死者有知也，臣將當戰之時，臣使鼓不鳴。<sup>37</sup> Not surprisingly, they are spared.

The most amusing example involves a lecherous widow:

秦宣太后愛魏醜夫。太后病將死，出令曰：「為我葬，必以魏子為殉。」

魏子患之。庸芮為魏子說太后曰：「以死者為有知乎？」

太后曰：「無知也。」

曰：「若太后之神靈，明知死者之無知矣，何為空以生所愛，葬於無知之死人哉！若死者有知，先王積怒之日久矣，太后救過不贖，何暇乃私魏醜夫乎？」

太后曰：「善。」乃止。<sup>38</sup>

Queen Dowager Xuan of Qin [d. 265 B.C.] loved Wei Choufu.<sup>39</sup> When the Queen Dowager fell ill and was about to die, she issued an order, saying: “When I am buried, Master Wei must accompany me in death.”

Master Wei was horrified by this. Yong Rui persuaded the Queen Dowager on Master Wei’s behalf, saying: “Do you consider the dead to have consciousness?”

The Queen Dowager said: “They have no consciousness.”

[Yong Rui] said: “If your Majesty’s godlike numen is clearly aware that the dead have no consciousness, why would you vainly take the person you loved in life, and bury him with

<sup>35</sup> The philosopher John Searle has said on numerous occasions that he thinks his dog is conscious: e.g. Searle (2011); and (2002), 106–29. Xunzi would have said that his dog has *zhi*.

<sup>36</sup> In addition to the examples presented below, consider the plea attributed to Graceful Beauty Ban 班婕妤 (d. ca. 6 B.C.) after she was accused of witchcraft: “If ghosts and spirits have consciousness, they would not accept the complaint of one who has been insubordinate; if they do not have consciousness, what advantage could come of complaining to them?” 使鬼神有知，不受不臣之愆；如其無知，愆之何益？ Text in *Hanshu* 漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1962), 97B.3985 (“Waiqi zhuan” 外戚傳).

<sup>37</sup> Chen Qiyou 陳奇猷, *Han Feizi xin jiaozhu* 韓非子新校注 (Shanghai: Guji, 2000), 8.23.511 (“Shuulin xia” 說林下). There is a parallel passage in *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, IV, 1271–72 (Zhao 5=537 B.C.), but without the appeal to the “If the dead have consciousness ...” dilemma.

<sup>38</sup> *Zhanguo ce* 戰國策 (Shanghai: Guji, 1978), 4.167 (“Qin Xuan taihou ai Wei Choufu” 秦宣太后愛魏醜夫).

<sup>39</sup> This name appears to mean “The Grotesque Man from Wei.”

the dead, who lack consciousness? And if the dead do have consciousness, the former king has been accumulating his wrath for many days. Your Majesty, you will scarcely have the means to make amends for your transgressions – how would you have leisure for assignments with Wei Choufu?”

The Queen Dowager said: “Very well.” And she desisted.<sup>40</sup>

“If the dead have consciousness ...” is also used as a commonplace by rash lords who, having brought on their own ruination, regret having disregarded wiser counsel by ministers now deceased. In one episode, Lord Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (r. 685–643 B.C.) says this of his former mastermind, Guan Zhong 管仲 (d. 645 B.C.): “If the dead have consciousness, with what face and eyes shall I look upon Zhongfu?” 若死者有知，我將何面目以見仲父乎；<sup>41</sup> and in one of the most poignant moments in Chinese literature (with many parallel versions), King Fuchai of Wu 吳王夫差 (r. 495–473 B.C.) asks how he will face Wu Zixu 伍子胥 (d. 484) in the next life.<sup>42</sup>

In Confucian sources, the issue of whether the dead have consciousness is usually raised as a foil: in line with the attitude that we saw in *Analects* 6.20, the question is dismissed as not only unanswerable, but irrelevant to moral discourse. *The School Sayings of Confucius* (*Kongzi jiyu* 孔子家語), a text so diverse as to be impossible to date with any certainty, contains the following discussion:

子貢問於孔子曰：「死者有知乎？將無知乎？」

子曰：「吾欲言死之有知，將恐孝子順孫妨生以送死；吾欲言死之無知，將恐不孝之子棄其親而不葬。賜欲知死者有知與無知，非今之急，後自知之。」<sup>43</sup>

Zigong [i.e. Duanmu Si 端木賜, 520–446 B.C.] asked Confucius, saying: “Do the dead have consciousness? Or do they not have consciousness?”

Confucius said: “I should like to say that the dead have consciousness, but I fear that filial sons and obedient grandsons would disoblige the living in sending off the dead; I

<sup>40</sup> Compare the translation in Crump, (1996), §98.

<sup>41</sup> Chen Qiyou, *Liushi chunqiu xin jiaoshi* 呂氏春秋新校釋 (Shanghai: Guji, 2002), 16.979 (“Zhi-jie” 知接); see also the parallel in “Xiaocheng” 小稱, *Guanzi jiaozhu* 11.32.609.

<sup>42</sup> I know of four examples: Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, Zhongguo gudian wenxue jiben congshu (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987), 9.231 (“Zhengjian” 正諫); *Shiji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959), 41.1745f. (“Yuewang Goujian shiji” 越王句踐世家); Liu Jianguo 劉建國, *Xinyi Yue jue shu* 新譯越絕書, ed. Huang Junlang 黃俊郎 (Taipei: Sanmin, 1997), 11.244 (“Waizhuan ji Wuwang zhan meng” 外傳記吳王占夢); and Zhou Shengchun 周生春, *Wu Yue chunqiu jijiao huikao* 吳越春秋輯校匯考 (Shanghai: Guji, 1997), 5.96 (“Fuchai neizhuan” 夫差內傳).

<sup>43</sup> Yang Zhaoming 楊朝明, *Kongzi jiyu tongjie fu chutu ziliao yu xiangguan yanjiu* 孔子家語通解附出土資料與相關研究, Chutu wenxian yizhu yanxi congshu 19 (Taipei: Wanjuanlou, 2005), 8.101 (“Zhisi” 至思).

should like to say that the dead have no consciousness, but I fear that unfilial sons would abandon their parents and leave them unburied. Si, you wish to know whether the dead have consciousness or not. This is not a matter of any urgency today; in the future, you will know [the answer] yourself.”<sup>44</sup>

We may never know the precise source and date of this exchange, but philosophically the position is in the same tradition as *Analectis* 11.11:

季路問事鬼神。子曰：「未能事人，焉能事鬼？」

曰：「敢問死。」

曰：「未知生，焉知死？」<sup>45</sup>

Jilu [i. e. Zhong You 仲由, 542–480 B.C.] asked about the services for ghosts and spirits. The Master said: “You do not yet know how to serve people. How will you be able to serve ghosts?”

“May I be so bold as to ask about death?”

[Confucius] said: “You do not yet know life. How can you know death?”

Never mind what ghosts and spirits may demand—or what cult leaders may *assert* that ghosts and spirits demand, in order to arrogate your labor and loyalty; your moral obligations are to the living, and it is up to you to think them through independently.

An acknowledgment that many classical Chinese philosophers granted the existence of ghosts seems necessary in view of the overwhelming scholarly consensus, only recently challenged,<sup>46</sup> that there was never any mind-body dichotomy in pre-Buddhist Chinese philosophy. The late A.C. Graham stated the case categorically:

[The mind-body dichotomy] never emerged in pre-Han philosophy; the word *xin* 心, “heart” is sometimes translated as “mind,” reasonably enough in later philosophy influenced by Indian Buddhism, but in the classical period it refers only to the heart as the organ with which one thinks, approves and disapproves. (Thinking is not in traditional China located in the brain.) ... Confucius is not a victim of the post-Cartesian superstition of mind as “ghost in the machine”; he does not conceive the difference between ritual as dignified

<sup>44</sup> Compare the translation in Kramers, (1950), 238.

<sup>45</sup> *Lunyu jishi* 22.760.

<sup>46</sup> See Goldin (2003), 226–47; also Slingerland, (2013), 6–55. In Goldin (2003) I discussed unacknowledged mind-body problems in Chinese texts such as *Zhuangzi* and *Xunzi*, and shall not repeat my treatment of that material here.

and reverent performance and as empty formality in terms of the presence or absence of dignity and formality in the performer's mind.<sup>47</sup>

Though Graham's statement is somewhat opaque, I take it to mean that Chinese philosophers avoided dualistic metaphysics of the "ghost in the machine" type,<sup>48</sup> and in this respect were miles ahead of Western philosophers, who have only recently come to comprehend the weaknesses of such thinking. But if Confucius did not conceive of any mind-body dichotomy, what exactly did he mean by "ghosts and spirits"? While it is true that Chinese philosophers did not problematize mind-body interaction in a manner resembling Descartes,<sup>49</sup> Graham and others have overstated their case by denying that classical Chinese philosophy is entirely devoid of mind-body problems. There is too much resistance among certain modern critics to admitting that thinkers such as Confucius and Mo Di 墨翟 (d. ca. 390 B.C.) truly believed in ghosts; as a result, the intellectual world that they reconstruct is anachronistic and unpersuasive.<sup>50</sup>

For the most part, such notions are a consequence of not paying adequate attention to the work of historians and archaeologists. Most scholars of early China, if presented with the question "Were the dead conceived as having consciousness?" would think of sumptuous grave goods (including sacrificial victims such as concubines, servants, and pets),<sup>51</sup> oracle-bone inscriptions, and so on, and answer confidently in the affirmative.<sup>52</sup> No civilization has left behind more sources (written or otherwise) relating beliefs about deceased ancestors

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<sup>47</sup> Graham (1989), 25 f., with the Romanization converted. Cf. Zhang (2007), esp. 400; Hansen, (1992), esp. 75 ff.; Hansen (1989), esp. 84 ff.; and Granet, (1934), 319. Similarly, Jochim, (1998), 50 ff., denies that there is any place for a "mind-body dualism" in the *Zhuangzi's* concept of *xin*.

<sup>48</sup> The phrase comes from Ryle, (1949), 15 f. *et passim*; he used it to characterize what he called "Descartes' myth."

<sup>49</sup> Cf. Goldin, (2003), 233.

<sup>50</sup> For example, Wong and Loy, (2004), 343–63, contend that the *Mozi* does not really attempt to prove the existence of ghosts, but the only reason why they are reluctant to accept what the text actually says is that it comes across as irredeemably absurd today. We shall return to the Mohist conception of ghosts below.

<sup>51</sup> The tomb of Marquis Yi of Zeng 曾侯乙 (ca. 475-ca. 433 B.C.) is a famous example. See *Zenghou Yi mu* 曾侯乙墓, Kaoguxue tekan D.37 (Beijing: Wenwu, 1989), I, 45–59. For a general study of human sacrifice of the "accompanying in death" type (*xunzang* 殉葬), see Eschenbach, (2003), 167–91; the practice in Shang times is discussed in Keightley, (2012), 69–77, also 222 ff.

<sup>52</sup> Thus, e.g., Wang Bo, "Religion and Belief in the Shang and Zhou Dynasties," in *The History of Chinese Civilization*, ed. Yuan Xingpei *et al.*, The Cambridge China Library (Cambridge, 2012), I, 447: "Ancestor worship also requires a belief that the human soul does not perish after death."

than China, but this immense body of evidence is not as straightforwardly interpretable as it may seem.

For instance, the assumption that grave goods indicate conceptions of the afterlife is widespread. One representative is Jessica Rawson:

The presentation of a physical picture as provided, for example, by a tomb suggests the following: firstly a continuity of material life, with the dead person having both a past and a future to which the particular remains are relevant; secondly an abstract structure of belief about the nature of life and, in the case of a tomb, the life after death; thirdly the activation of a combination of these two sets of ideas by a single group of objects enabling the viewers, past and present, to project these two sets of ideas into other related situations and so embrace other peoples and other generations. Thus, physical remains provided patterns and templates for the imaginations of the ancient Chinese and do so also for us in our attempt to reconstruct those imaginations.<sup>53</sup>

Rawson also makes it clear that she does not think written sources are necessary when interpreting artifacts:

A distinguishing feature of the information about ritual from these early periods is the relative insignificance of the written records. For the purposes of the present discussion, it is my view that written and spoken words are by no means essential for an exploration of the characteristics and meanings of ritual.<sup>54</sup>

I would not dispense with written records as “relatively insignificant”; on the contrary, they disclose the important point that the ancient Chinese did not necessarily have the same understanding of grave goods as modern archaeologists. One of the fullest discussions of funerary rituals, including the preparation of goods for interment in the tomb, belongs once again to Xunzi,<sup>55</sup> who never says that the goods are intended for use in the afterlife. Rather, Xunzi emphasizes the psychological value of the entire process *for the living*. His comments on mortuary ritual are of a piece with his general argument that the purpose of ritual is to foster the moral development of its practitioners.<sup>56</sup> Proper mortuary procedures assuage the pangs of grief and manifest due respect for the dead.

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<sup>53</sup> Rawson (1999), 21n.1.

<sup>54</sup> Rawson (1999a), 21f. Rawson takes a similar tack in another paper from the same year: Rawson (1999b), 5–58. Her earlier paper, (1998), 107–33, was more evenhanded.

<sup>55</sup> See also the “Shi sangli” 士喪禮 chapter of the *Yili* 儀禮, which contains more details than Xunzi, but does not attempt to place the ritual procedures within an overarching philosophical paradigm. See Hu Peihui 胡培翬 (1782–1849), *Yili zhengyi* 儀禮正義, ed. Duan Xizhong 段熙仲 (1897–1987) ([Nanjing:] Jiangsu guji, 1993), 26.1639–28.1824.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Goldin, (2011), 75 ff.

故事生不忠厚，不敬文，謂之野；送死不忠厚，不敬文，謂之瘠。君子賤野而羞瘠，故天子棺槨七重，諸侯五重，大夫三重，士再重，然後皆有衣衾多少厚薄之數，皆有翬翬文章之等，以敬飾之，使生死終始若一，一足以為人願，是先王之道，忠臣孝子之極也。<sup>57</sup>

Thus serving the living without loyal generosity or reverent formality is called uncivil; sending off the dead without loyal generosity or reverent formality is called miserly. The noble man condemns incivility and is ashamed of miserliness; thus the inner and outer coffins consist of seven layers for the Son of Heaven, five layers for a feudal lord, three layers for a grand master, and two layers for a man-of-service. Thereafter, in order to revere and adorn them, there are for each [rank] protocols regarding the quantity and richness of [mortuary] robes and foodstuffs, and grades for the [corresponding] flabellum and décor. This causes life and death, ending and beginning, to be [treated] as one, and people's yearnings to be satiated. This is the Way of the Former Kings, the ridgepole of the loyal minister and filial son.<sup>58</sup>

The corpse is adorned, similarly, in order “to extinguish its nausea” (*mie e* 滅惡), because a nauseating corpse will be treated with contempt, and people who treat the corpses of their parents with contempt will eventually disregard them and thus act indistinguishably from beasts.<sup>59</sup> Not a word is said about preparing the corpse for life after death. And the longest passage goes out of its way to state that grave goods will not be used by the deceased, but are placed in the tomb as a sophisticated means of channeling the grief of the survivors:

喪禮者，以生者飾死者也，大象其生以送其死也。故事死如生，事亡如存，終始一也。始卒，沐浴、髻體、飯含，象生執也。……充耳而設瑱，飯以生稻，含以槁骨，反生術矣。設衾衣，襲三稱，縗紳而無鉤帶矣。設掩面、僂目，髻而不冠笄矣。書其名，置於其重，則名不見而柩獨明矣。薦器則冠有蓋而毋縫，響、廡 [= 甗] 虛而不實，有簟席而無床第。木器不成斲，陶器不成物，薄器不成內，笄筯具而不和，琴瑟張而不均，輿藏而馬反，告不用也。具生器以適墓，象徙道也。略而不盡，貌而不功。趨輿而藏之，金革響鞞而不用，明不用也。象徙道，又明不用也，是皆所以重哀也。故生器文而不功，明器貌而不用。<sup>60</sup>

In funerary rites, one uses life to adorn death; one sends off the dead in a way that greatly exemplifies their life. Thus one serves the dead as though they were alive; one serves the deceased as though they were present; end and beginning are as one. When [a person] has just died, one bathes [the corpse], ties the hair in a topknot, tends to the body,<sup>61</sup> and places food in the mouth; this exemplifies how [the deceased] was kept while alive. ... But filling the ears by putting plugs in them, providing raw rice for food, and filling the

57 “Lilun” 禮論, *Xunzi jijie* 13.19.359f.

58 Compare the translations in Knoblock, III, 63; and Watson, *Xunzi*, 101.

59 “Lilun,” *Xunzi jijie* 13.19.362.

60 “Lilun,” *Xunzi jijie* 13.19.366ff.

61 Following the commentary of Yang Liang 楊儵 (fl. A.D. 818), who suggests “clipping fingernails” (*zhao jian* 爪揃) as an example.

mouth with dried bones<sup>62</sup> are contrary to practice while alive.

One puts on undergarments, three layers of grave clothes, and a red silk girdle but no hooked belt. One puts on the face covering, wraps cloth around the eyes, and ties the hair in a topknot but places no cap or hairpin. One writes out the name of the deceased and sets it on a tablet, so that the name is not seen but the [identity] of the coffin is clear. The offerings include a cap rounded like a helmet but without a hair band; the vats and jars are empty and not filled; there are bamboo mats but no bed. Wooden objects are not completely carved; ceramic objects are not completely formed; bamboo objects are not completed to the point that they can contain anything. Reeds and flutes are supplied but not tuned; *qin* and *se* zithers are strung but not tempered. A carriage is buried but the horses are sent back [i. e. to their stables]. [All these practices] announce that the objects are not to be used.

One supplies articles from life in order to entomb [the deceased] decorously, and they exemplify the *dao* that he pursued.<sup>63</sup> One makes a selection [of his possessions] and does not include all of them; [one includes] things that have form but not function. One drives a carriage to the tomb and buries it, but the metal and leather fittings, the reins and straps, are not interred. This makes clear that it is not to be used. The purpose of [supplying articles] exemplifying the *dao* that [the deceased] pursued, and also of making clear that they are not to be used, is to emphasize grief. Thus the articles from life are embellished but have no function; hallowed articles<sup>64</sup> have form but no use.<sup>65</sup>

If any recently excavated tombs had been designed and stocked by adherents to such thinking, it would be a serious mistake for a modern archaeologist to draw inferences about views of the afterlife from the goods immured with the deceased. But not all grieving families in ancient China were sober Xunzians, and there is other evidence that some people really did imagine themselves enjoying their grave goods in a timeless afterlife. For example, there is a well-known story of an old scholar who asked his children to prepare a copy of the “Precepts of Yao” (“Yaodian” 堯典), along with writing utensils, for his eternal edification.<sup>66</sup> Some tombs contain documents and stationery, suggesting that

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62 Yang Liang (and most commentators following him) thinks the “dried bones” refer to cowrie shells.

63 Following the commentary of Yang Liang for *xiang xi dao* 象徙道. Thus a warrior might be buried with arms and armor, a scholar with books, etc. According to the interpretation of Hao Yixing 郝懿行 (1757–1825), now widely followed, the various rituals convey that the deceased “has changed his abode” (*yiju* 逯居), but this strikes me as implausible, inasmuch as *dao* does not ordinarily refer to an abode.

64 The best discussion of *mingqi* 明器 is Falkenhausen, (2006), 301 ff.

65 Compare the translations in Knoblock, III, 67–68; and Watson, *Xunzi*, 107 f. Poo, (2011), 27 f., translates part of the passage and interprets it similarly.

66 “Liu Zhao Chunyu Jiang Liu Zhou Zhao liezhuan” 劉趙淳于江劉周趙列傳, *Hou-Han shu* 後漢書 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1965), 39.1311. Pines, (2003), 119 f., refers to this and similar exam-

the deceased was thought to be able to read and write.<sup>67</sup> Numerous other texts intended to protect the deceased from spirits that might be disturbed by the construction of the tomb, or to secure his or her social status in the otherworld, likewise attest to a robust conception of the afterlife.<sup>68</sup> But any suppositions about Chinese views of the afterlife are questionable if they are based *solely* on grave goods, because one can never tell who chose the mortuary program (the deceased or the survivors?) and why (for use in the afterlife or for the catharsis of the living?). To make matters yet more confusing, it is clear that some grave goods, especially among the elite, were funerary gifts from colleagues and allies, and thus impart no direct information about the deceased's own beliefs and values.<sup>69</sup>

As mentioned above, most scholars of early China would probably think next of oracle-bone inscriptions as evidence that the dead were thought to possess consciousness. These documents are usually understood as the material by-products of a *do-ut-des* relationship with ancestral spirits and other gods: if we ask them about their needs, and then do as they require, they will reward us with health and prosperity; by the same token, if we neglect them, they will grow angry and punish us.<sup>70</sup> When anything unusual happened on earth, there was thus an urgent need to discover whether some spirit was behind it—and, if so, which one—so that he or she could be placated before proceeding to ever more devastating exhibitions of displeasure. Toothache today, earthquake tomorrow.

貞：王夢唯大甲。貞：王夢不唯大甲。<sup>71</sup>

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ples. For an overview of “theories to explain why the ancient Chinese placed texts in tombs,” see Cook, *Death in Ancient China*, 9.

<sup>67</sup> Thus Kalinowski, (2003), 895 f.

<sup>68</sup> Anna Seidel pioneered the study of these documents: e.g. Seidel (1987), 21–57; (1985), 161–83; and (1982), 79–122. See also Guo, (2011), 97 ff.; Harper, (2004), 227–67; Mittag, (2003), esp. 135–38; and Kleeman, (1984), 1–34.

<sup>69</sup> See, e.g., Yang Hua 楊華, *Xinchu jianbo yu lizhi yanjiu* 新出簡帛與禮制研究, ed. Ding Yuanzhi 丁原植, *Chutu sixiang wenwu yu wenxian yanjiu congshu* 33 (Taipei: Taiwan guji, 2007), 159–81; and Cao Wei 曹璋, *Zhouyuan yizhi yu Xi-Zhou tongqi yanjiu* 周原遺址與西周銅器研究 (Beijing: Kexue, 2004), 165–75 and 258–63.

<sup>70</sup> E.g., Liu Yuan 劉源, *Shang Zhou jizuli yanjiu* 商周祭祖禮研究, *Zhongguo Shehui Kexue Yuan Lishi Yanjiu Suo zhuankan* A.4 (Beijing: Shangwu, 2004), 237–65; Keightley (2000), 101 ff.; (1996), I, 38–49.

<sup>71</sup> Guo Moruo 郭沫若 (1892–1978) *et al.*, eds., *Jiaguwen heji* 甲骨文合集 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1979–83), #14199.

Divined: The King's dream was due to Da Jia. Divined: The King's dream was not due to Da Jia.

Presumably the king had had a nightmare.<sup>72</sup> Similarly:

.....王疾不唯大示。貞：王疾唯大示。<sup>73</sup>

... The King's illness is not due to the Greater Ancestors. Divined: The King's illness is due to the Greater Ancestors.

A cache of newly discovered oracle-bone inscriptions from an area called Huayuanzhuang dongdi 花園莊東地 also contains records leaving little doubt that the spirits of the dead were thought to be capable of inflicting harm:

癸酉卜，子耳鳴唯癸子害。<sup>74</sup>

Crack-making on *guiyou* day: The Child's ears are ringing; it is due to harm [inflicted by] Child Gui.

"The Child" may refer to a son of King Wuding 武丁 (fl. ca. 1200 B.C.),<sup>75</sup> while Child Gui appears to be the spirit name of a dead prince. A related inscription suggests that Child Gui could be propitiated by means of sacrifice:

癸巳，歲癸子 [羊 + 匕] 一。<sup>76</sup>

On *guisi* day, make a *sui*-sacrifice of one ewe to Child Gui.

But such records are not sufficient in themselves to establish that Child Gui was imagined as a conscious being. Toxins, noxious fumes, and so on cause discomfort too, but are not conscious entities, and it is possible (though, I think, not very probable) that, in the minds of Bronze-Age diviners, appropriate sacrifices could prevent the harmful influence of Child Gui just as rational measures could be taken to prevent harm from some inanimate cause. Thus it is helpful to follow a suggestion of my colleague Adam Smith and ask whether deceased ancestors were ever portrayed with variable psychological states. This would be a stronger indication of consciousness, as we do not ordinarily attribute psy-

<sup>72</sup> On dreams as a source of concern, see Liu Yuan, 240–42; and Ikeda, 223–24.

<sup>73</sup> *Jiaguwen heji*, #13697.

<sup>74</sup> *Yinxu Huayuanzhuang dongdi jiagu* 殷虛花園莊東地甲骨, Kaoguxue zhuankan B.36 (Kunming: Yunnan renmin, 2003), #275.

<sup>75</sup> On the identity of "The Child," see Yao Xuan 姚萱, (2006), 40–55.

<sup>76</sup> *Yinxu Huayuanzhuang dongdi jiagu*, #253.

chological states to unconscious objects. If we find texts attributing such emotions as anger or happiness to dead ancestors, we should have a much stronger case that they were conceived as having consciousness.

In a bold and widely admired article, the Chinese palaeographer Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 identified a previously undeciphered graph as *kan* 衍/侃,<sup>77</sup> “happy, content.”<sup>78</sup> If his hypothesis is correct, it unmasks the great importance of oracle-bone inscriptions such as the following:

甲辰夕，歲祖乙黑牡一，惠子祝，若，祖乙侃.....<sup>79</sup>

On the evening of *jiachen* day, make a *sui*-sacrifice of one black bull to Ancestor Yi. It should be the Child who invokes. Approval: Ancestor Yi is content ...

For now it is clear that the invocators were not merely taking precautions against some baleful inanimate force called “Ancestor Yi”; they were doing whatever they thought might make him happy. Ancestor Yi could just as readily be unhappy, and his psychological state was thought to be of utmost relevance to their own welfare.

Even if the final graph of this passage is not *kan*, there are many similar usages in bronze inscriptions (especially on bells, whose music was supposed to put the spirits in the right mood).<sup>80</sup> A wealthy and well-connected gentleman named Xing 興<sup>81</sup> had the following words inscribed on his bells:

夔林鐘用照格喜侃樂前文人。用祈壽永命，綽綽福祿屯魯。<sup>82</sup>

With harmonious *lin*-bells, I cause my Cultured Forebears to arrive splendidly, and bring happiness, contentment, and joy upon them, whereby I pray for longevity and enduring life; may good fortune and lucre, hoards of boon, be amply extended to me.

77 These are not identical and are not read in the same tone, but there can be no doubt that they are cognate.

78 “Shi ‘kan’” 釋「衍」「侃」, in *Lu Shixian xiansheng xueshu taolunhui lunwenji* 魯實先先生學術討論會論文集 (Taipei: Taiwan Shifan Daxue, 1993), 6–12.

79 *Yinxu Huayuanzhuang dongdi jiagu*, #6.

80 Cf. Falkenhausen, (1993), 25–28.

81 On Xing and his lineage, see Falkenhausen, (2006), 56–64.

82 *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng* 殷周金文集成, Kaoguexue tekan (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1984-), #246. Cf. 247–50, also belonging to Xing’s bell set: “I venture to craft for my Cultured [Forebears] a great treasure of harmoniously tuned bells, so as to pursue filial piety, to make sacrificial offerings to those who splendidly arrive, and to please the great spirits” 敢作文人大寶協夔鐘，用追孝，享祀照格，樂大神。

The “Cultured Forebears” (*qian wenren* 前文人) are the spirits of Xing’s deceased ancestors, and their “splendid arrival” (*zhaoge* 照格) refers to their descent into the invocation hall after having been aroused and delighted by the sound of his bells. We are still in the world of the *do-ut-des* bargain: I entertain you with bells, and you respond with good fortune and lucre and hoards of boon; the ancestors cooperate because they are “happy, contented, and joyful” (*xi kan le* 喜侃樂).

Several other bell inscriptions, such as the Fifth-Year Hu *zhong* 五祀胡\*鐘 inscription, employ similar formulae:

作厥王王大寶，用喜侃前文人，前文人庸厚多福。<sup>83</sup>

I make for those kings a great royal treasure, so as to bring happiness and contentment to my Cultured Forebears; may my Cultured Forebears therefore richly multiply my fortune.

And the Jing Ren Ning *zhong* 井人佞\*鐘 inscription:

肆佞\*作穌父大林鐘。用追孝，侃前文人。前文人其嚴在上，豐豐懌懌，降余厚多福無疆。<sup>84</sup>

Thus I, Ning, make this great *lin*-bell for Hefu, so as to pursue filial piety and to bring contentment to my Cultured Forebears. May my Cultured Forebears, solemn above—*fengfeng yiyi*—send down to me rich and manifold fortune without limit.

*Fengfeng yiyi* 豐豐懌懌 (Old Chinese \*phong-phong-lak-lak) not only imitates the sound of the bells, but also imparts a definite message: “Fecund and soothing!” As the ancestors are invoked and implored to rain down peace and prosperity, the bells themselves call out “Fecund and soothing! Fecund and soothing!”—echoing the prayer in their own brazen language.<sup>85</sup>

*Kan* 衍/侃, *le* 樂, and similar terms are used with respect to deceased ancestors in the canonical *Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經) as well. Consider the opening of “Nuo” 那 (Mao 301):

猗與那與，置我鞀鼓。  
奏鼓簡簡，衍我烈祖。<sup>86</sup>

Oh, how enticing! Oh, how opulent! We have set up our tambourines and drums. We beat the drums—how they resound! – and bring happiness to our illustrious ancestors.<sup>87</sup>

<sup>83</sup> *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, #358.

<sup>84</sup> *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng*, #110.

<sup>85</sup> For more on this phenomenon, see Shaughnessy, (1997), 181 f.; also Kern, (2009), I, 167 f.

<sup>86</sup> Luo Jiangsheng 雒江生, *Shijing tonggu* 詩經通詁 (Xi’an: San-Qin, 1998), 30.897.

<sup>87</sup> Compare the translations in Karlgren (1889–1978), (1950), 261; and Legge, IV, 631.

These lines would not be out of place in a bronze inscription, and must derive from a religious context similar to that of the Xing bells. The “Great Preface” to the *Odes*, though undeniably a document from later times, states that poetry is the handiest means of “inciting the ghosts and spirits” (*gan guishen* 感鬼神),<sup>88</sup> a claim that would also seem to presuppose the consciousness of the dead.

“Jizui” 既醉 (Mao 247), another poem in the *Odes*, is so illuminating that it warrants a complete translation here:

既醉以酒，既飽以德。君子萬年，介爾景福。  
 既醉以酒，爾殽既將。君子萬年，介爾昭明。  
 昭明有融，高朗令終。令終有俶，公尸嘉告。  
 其告維何？籩豆靜嘉。朋友攸攝，攝以威儀。  
 威儀孔時，君子有孝子。孝子不置，永錫爾類。  
 其類維何？室家之壺。君子萬年，永錫祚胤。  
 其胤維何？天被爾祿。君子萬年，景命有僕。  
 其僕維何？釐爾女士。釐爾女士，從以孫子。<sup>89</sup>

We are now drunk with wine; we are now satiated by your potency.  
 Myriad years to the noble man! Increased be your shining fortune!  
 We are now drunk with wine; your viands have now been presented.  
 Myriad years to the noble man! Increased be your splendid insight!

Your splendid insight effuses, lofty and bright, with a good end.  
 The good end has a beginning. The personator of the patriarchs makes an auspicious announcement.

What is his announcement? “The *bian* baskets and *dou* vessels are pristine and auspicious.  
 The friends have assisted; they have assisted with dignified demeanor.

“Their dignified demeanor was most timely. The noble man has filial sons.  
 The filial sons will not wane. Eternally you will be granted good things.  
 What are these good things? The corridors of your house and home.  
 Myriad years to the noble man! Eternally be granted blessings and progeny.

“What is this progeny? Heaven covers you with lucre.  
 Myriad years to the noble man! With a shining mandate, you will have followers.  
 What are those followers? You are given a lady.  
 You are given a lady; from her will come sons and grandsons.”<sup>90</sup>

<sup>88</sup> *Mao Shi zhengyi* 毛詩正義 (*Shisan jing zhushu* 十三經注疏), 1 A.270c. For a line-by-line commentary to the “Great Preface,” see Owen (1992), 38–49.

<sup>89</sup> *Shijing tonggu* 24.738–41.

<sup>90</sup> Compare the translations in Karlgren, (1950), 203–4; and Legge, IV, 474–78.

The key to this extraordinary source is the phrase *gong shi* 公尸, “personator of the patriarchs.”<sup>91</sup> The *shi* (the term can also mean “corpse”) is a member of the ritual assembly, typically a young male, who is chosen to act as the physical receptacle for the spirit of the ancestors as they are invoked.<sup>92</sup> (Surrounded by sacrificial vessels, the personator becomes a vessel in his own right.) Many other texts, including other poems in the *Odes* (such as Mao 209, “Chuci” 楚茨),<sup>93</sup> attest to this practice. Thus when the personator makes his grand “announcement,” what follows is understood as the words of the ancestral spirits (and I have tried to indicate this in my translation by means of quotation marks). They are not his own words; they are the words of otherworldly spirits realized in this world through his body. His own mind is somehow temporarily shut off.

The first words of the poem, *jizui* 既醉, literally “now drunk” (or “have become drunk”) lack a specified subject and are thus suffused in aporia. *Who* is drunk? It could be “We are drunk”: the participants in the feast state that they are drunk after having consumed the food and drink that was arrayed for the spirits, as was their custom. (According to *Mencius* 6B.6, Confucius left Lu 魯 when he was not given the piece of sacrificial meat that was his due.)<sup>94</sup> It could be “They are drunk”: an impersonal narrator referring to the participants. But in view of the context, it could also be “They are drunk”: the participants referring to the appeased spirits. And it could even be “We are drunk”: the spirits themselves, expressing their satisfaction through their mouthpiece, the personator. (The aforementioned “Chuci” states unequivocally toward the end of its re-enactment of the ritual: “The spirits are all drunk!” 神具醉止, whereupon the personator is permitted to retire.)

I do not think it is possible to comprehend a poem like “Jizui” without abandoning Graham’s hasty assertion that there never was a mind-body dichotomy in pre-Buddhist Chinese philosophy. What are the ancestral spirits who possess the personator if not disembodied minds temporarily making use of some external body? One might object that “Jizui” is a poem, not a liturgy or direct record of a rite, but this would be an objection that paradoxically clinches the argument. For even readers who do not really believe in disembodied spirits are expected to

<sup>91</sup> On *gong*, see, e.g. Tay, (1973), 550–55. The relevant meaning is “deceased lord or patriarch.”

<sup>92</sup> Cf. Liu Yuan, 308–12. The longest study in English is Carr, (2006), 343–416, but it is not necessary to subscribe to Julian Jaynes’s controversial theories in order to understand the rite. See also Puett, (2009), 695–720, which discusses mortuary procedures, including the personation ritual, in the three ritual canons. A briefer account is Paper, (1995), 111–15.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Kern, (2009): 173 ff. *Mencius* 6 A.15 refers to personation as well.

<sup>94</sup> Cf. Sterckx, (2011), 28.

be able *to conceive* of disembodied spirits. (I do not believe in disembodied spirits myself, yet I would not say that this prevents me from understanding the metaphysical premises of this poem.) Without an audience that understands what the personation ceremony is supposed to achieve, even if members of that audience do not believe in it themselves, the poem is meaningless.

This is a crucial point, because it refutes certain more strident versions of Graham's thesis, which hold that philosophers such as Confucius could not even conceive of any alternative to their metaphysics. Consider the opinion of Herbert Fingarette:

I must emphasize that my point here is not that Confucius's words are intended to exclude reference to the inner psyche. He could have done this if he had had such a basic metaphor in mind, had seen its plausibility, but on reflection had decided to reject it. But this is not what I am arguing here. My thesis is that the entire notion never entered his head. The metaphor of an inner psychic life, in all its ramifications so familiar to us, simply isn't present in the *Analects*, not even as a rejected possibility.<sup>95</sup>

Anyone who reads or hears "Jizui" either believes that the personator is truly speaking the words of the ancestral spirits, or consciously rejects that possibility. I do not see room for any middle position, and suspect, frankly, that Fingarette arrived at his wildly implausible position in part because he was unfamiliar with the broader culture out of which the Confucian *Analects* emerged.

It is also striking that, around the time of Confucius, a new type of bronze inscription emerged: with tropes and phrasing similar to those of the earlier bell inscriptions examined above, these new invocations aim to please not ancestral spirits, but influential personages in the mundane world. Lothar von Falkenhausen has dubbed this trend "philosophicization,"<sup>96</sup> which, he says, was "an important step in the direction of the Confucian advocacy of ritual for the sake of ensuring the social order in the here-and-now,"<sup>97</sup> as opposed to the older logic of ritual as an entreaty for supernatural aid.

Falkenhausen cites the Wangsun Gao *zhong* 王孫誥鐘 inscription as an example:

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<sup>95</sup> Fingarette, (1972), 45. See also Fingarette's (1979), 129–40.

<sup>96</sup> Falkenhausen (2008), 135–75.

<sup>97</sup> Falkenhausen, (2006), 297.

又嚴穆穆，敬事楚王。余不畏不差，惠于政德，淑于威儀，溫彝舒遲，畏忌翼翼，肅哲臧禦，聞于四國，彝厥盟祀，永受其福，武于戎攻，謀猷丕飭。簡簡蘇鐘，用宴以喜以樂王、諸侯、嘉賓及我父兄諸士。<sup>98</sup>

Moreover, solemn and dignified, I reverently serve the King of Chu. I am not fearful and do not err; my administrative virtue is kind, my awesome deportment [i.e. at ceremonies] refined. I am warm, respectful, and at ease. I am cautious and abstemious – oh, how careful! Prudent and wise, I take advisable precautions. Thus I am reputed in states in all four quarters. As I am respectful of my oaths and sacrifices, I shall continue to receive their blessings. I am warlike in military affairs; my plans and counsels are grand and correct. Resounding are the harmonious bells with which I feast and bring happiness and joy to the King of Chu, the territorial lords, the honored guests, as well as my fathers, elder brothers, and several men-of-service.<sup>99</sup>

No one reading this inscription in its own time (mid-sixth century B.C.), when literate men and women were surely more familiar with earlier inscriptions than we are today – many of them having handled inscribed vessels in the collections of their own lineages – could have failed to notice that the same language previously reserved for ancestral spirits is now brought to bear in homage to the King of Chu and other gentlemen. That the spirits were taken to be less awe-inspiring than one's overlord is sign that the consciousness of the spirits, or at any rate their ability to influence the world of the living, was laid open to question. Clearly the authors of such inscriptions *rejected the possibility* of writing a more old-fashioned appeal to the spirit of Ancestor So-and-so – as their grandfathers or great-grandfathers might have done.

The contours of a conclusion are starting to become clear. Not everyone in China believed in ghosts; not everyone believed that the dead have consciousness; and some people even took advantage, in their rhetoric, of the indeterminacy of post-mortem existence – but everyone who arrived at such skeptical positions could have done so only after rejecting the mainstream view that we become conscious spirits when we die, for no one in that society could have lived a day or two in ignorance of it. The rejection of “folk psychology” can be observed at more than one particular time, and served more than one particular purpose. In Eastern Zhou times, as we have seen, it was associated with a new emphasis on human relationships, both social and political. Centuries later, in the Eastern Han, there was an unmistakable voice representing a different kind of rejection. Wang Chong 王充 (A.D. 27-ca. 100) was interested in analyzing what he took to

<sup>98</sup> Liu Yu 劉雨 and Lu Yan 盧岩, eds., *Jinchu Yin Zhou jinwen jilu* 近出殷周金文集錄 (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2002), 60–85.

<sup>99</sup> Compare the translations in Falkenhausen, (2006), 296; and Mattos, (1997), 100–1.

be pernicious doctrines that people accept only because they have been repeated so often, and that do not stand up to scrutiny and common sense. To be sure, Wang Chong's notion of common sense was very different from our own. This is an author who wrote an essay called "Misconceptions about Dragons" ("Long-xu" 龍虛), in which he argued in all seriousness that dragons cannot fly; they merely ride upon clouds.<sup>100</sup> But modern readers must still be struck by opinions like the following:

人之所以生者，精氣也，死而精氣滅，能為精氣者，血脈也，人死血脈竭，竭而精氣滅，滅而形體朽，朽而成灰土，何用為鬼？<sup>101</sup>

That by which people are alive is their vital *qi*. When they die, their vital *qi* is extinguished. That which can produce vital *qi* are the blood vessels. When people die, their blood vessels dry out; when [the blood vessels] are dried out, the vital *qi* is extinguished; when [the vital *qi*] is extinguished, the body decays; when [the body] decays, it becomes ash and dust. By what means would it become a ghost?<sup>102</sup>

Here we have a fine materialistic monist,<sup>103</sup> but – at the risk of belaboring the point – it would be wrong to say that Wang Chong became a materialistic monist because no other alternative occurred to him. He expressed his materialistic views precisely because he wished to counter the belief in ghosts that he observed all around him.<sup>104</sup> Moreover, Wang Chong could hardly have been the first person in Chinese history to deny the existence of ghosts.<sup>105</sup> Faith in supernatural influence was already on the wane a century earlier, when Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 B.C.) conveyed in his collections of anecdotes that the best death is one that can serve as an instructive example for posterity, rather than as a springboard for vengeance from the other side of the grave.<sup>106</sup> We read and cite Wang Chong on ghosts not because his viewpoint was necessarily original, but because his book has been well-preserved (and his prose is so disarming).

And the rejection of ghosts prompted, in other camps, a rejection of the rejection. The most vivid examples come from Mohists, whose reaffirmation that

**100** *Lunheng jiaoshi* 6.22.291.

**101** "Lunsi" 論死, *Lunheng jiaoshi* 20.62.871. See also "Dinggui," *Lunheng jiaoshi* 22.65.931–47.

**102** Compare the translation in Forke (1867–1944), (1907; rpt. 1962), I, 191.

**103** Compare the opinion of Tesla (1856–1943) (1935), 6: "what we call 'soul' or 'spirit,' is nothing more than the sum of the functionings of the body. When this functioning ceases, the 'soul' or the 'spirit' ceases likewise."

**104** Cf. Zufferey, (1995), 260–66.

**105** Cf. Brashier, (2011), 221.

**106** See the insightful study by Sanft, (2011), 127–58.

the dead do have consciousness must have come after rejecting the *intermediate* theory that they do not. In a nutshell, the Mohist view of ghosts was that we must strive to convince everyone of their existence, because if people truly believe in all-seeing ghosts, they will not dare to practice evil.<sup>107</sup>

嘗 [=當]<sup>108</sup> 若鬼神之能賞賢如 [=而]<sup>109</sup> 罰暴也，蓋本施之國家，施之萬民，實所以治國家利萬民之道也。<sup>110</sup>

If the principle that ghosts and spirits can reward the virtuous and punish the villainous were spread among the state and its families, and among the myriad people, it would surely be a way to put the state and its families in order, and benefit the myriad people.<sup>111</sup>

The *Mozi* recognizes that although it might be convenient if everyone believed in ghosts and spirits, obviously many people do not, and thus it presents numerous ghost stories that are supposedly recorded in court documents, and should persuade any open-minded reader that ghosts are real. The following is a typical example:

周宣王殺其臣杜伯而不辜，杜伯曰：「吾君殺我而不辜，若以死者為無知則止矣；若死而有知，不出三年，必使吾君知之。」其三年，周宣王合諸侯而田於圃，田車數百乘，從數千，人滿野。日中，杜伯乘白馬素車，朱衣冠，執朱弓，挾朱矢，追周宣王，射之車上，中心折脊，殞車中，伏弔而死。當是之時，周人從者莫不見，遠者莫不聞，著在周之春秋。

為君者以教其臣，為父者以警其子，曰：「戒之慎之！凡殺不辜者，其得不祥，鬼神之誅，若此之僭濫也！」以若書之說觀之，則鬼神之有，豈可疑哉？<sup>112</sup>

King Xuan of Zhou [r. 827–782 B.C.] killed his minister Du Bo even though he was innocent. Du Bo said: “My lord will kill me even though I am innocent. If the dead have no consciousness, then [the matter] will end here; if the dead do have consciousness, I shall make my lord know of it within three years.” In the third year thereafter, King Xuan of Zhou gathered his feudal lords and went hunting with them in a park. There were several hundred hunting chariots and several thousand attendants; people filled the fields. At midday, Du Bo came mounted on a plain chariot with a white horse; his robe and cap were crimson. Holding a

**107** Cf. Goldin, (2011), 80ff. Brashier, (2011) 41 ff., points out that other texts, including some from the Confucian tradition, also refer to the utility of making people believe in ghosts and spirits.

**108** Following the commentary of Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1848–1908). On the phrase *dangruo* 當若 in the *Mozi*, see Graham, (1985), 3 and 11.

**109** Following the commentary of Bi Yuan 畢沅 (1730–1797).

**110** Wu Yujiang 吳毓江, *Mozi jiaozhu* 墨子校注, ed. Sun Qizhi 孫啟治, 2nd edition, Xibian Zhuzi jicheng (Beijing: Zhonghua, 2006), 8.31.336 (“Minggui xia” 明鬼下). (Note that the pagination in the first and second editions is *not* identical.)

**111** Compare the translations in Watson, (2003), 107; and Mei (1929), 170.

**112** “Minggui xia,” *Mozi jiaozhu* 8.31.331f.

crimson bow with crimson arrows in his armpit, [Du Bo] chased King Xuan of Zhou, shooting him in his chariot; he hit him through the heart and broke his back, killing him in the chariot. [The King] fell on his bow-case and died. At the time, none of the attendants among the men of Zhou failed to see this, and none among those who were more distant failed to hear of it; it is recorded in the annals of Zhou.

Those who were rulers used [this case] to instruct their ministers; those who were fathers used it to warn their sons. They said: “Be admonished! Be cautious! All those who kill the innocent – oh how they reap inauspiciousness. Executions [carried out by] ghosts and spirits are as harsh and swift as this.” If we observe [the matter] from such statements in books, how can we doubt that ghosts and spirits exist?<sup>113</sup>

Another tale in the *Mozi* is significant because it comes as close to representing a “ghost in the machine” as any Chinese text.

昔者宋文君鮑之時，有臣曰祝觀辜固嘗從事於厲，祿子杖楫出，與言曰：「觀辜，是何珪璧之不滿度量，酒醴棗盛之不淨潔也，犧牲之不全肥，春秋冬夏選失時，豈女為之與？意鮑為之與？」

觀辜曰：「鮑幼弱，在荷纜之中，鮑何與識焉？官臣觀辜特為之。」祿子舉楫而槁之，殪之壇上。當是時，宋人從者莫不見，遠者莫不聞，著在宋之春秋。

諸侯傳而語之曰：「諸不敬慎祭祀者，鬼神之誅，至若此其僭邀也！」以若書之說觀之，鬼神之有，豈可疑哉。<sup>114</sup>

In the past, in the time of Bao, Lord Wen of Song [r. 610 – 589 B.C.], there was a functionary named Priest Guangu, who was following the service for a ghost. The medium emerged with a staff; he said to him: “Guangu, why are the jade tablets and disks not up to their full measure? Why is the wine and millet unclean? Why are the sacrificial victims not unblemished and fat? Why are the offerings of spring, summer, autumn, and winter not timely? Did you do this, or did Bao do this?”

Guangu said: “Bao is young and immature; he is still in his diapers. What could Bao know about this? This was done specifically by the functionary in charge, Guangu.” The medium lifted his staff and beat him, killing him on top of the altar. At the time, none of the attendants among the men of Song failed to see it; none among those who were further away failed to hear of it. It is recorded in the annals of Song.

The feudal lords transmitted [the story] and commented: “For whoever is not reverent and cautious about sacrifices, executions [carried out by] ghosts and spirits are as harsh and swift as this.” If we observe [the matter] from such statements in documents, how can we doubt that ghosts and spirits exist?<sup>115</sup>

<sup>113</sup> Compare the translations in Watson, *Mozi*, 99; and Mei, 161f.

<sup>114</sup> “Minggui xia,” *Mozi jiaozhu* 8.31.332f.

<sup>115</sup> Compare the translations in Watson, *Mozi*, 101; and Mei, 163f. The story is also retold, with further reflections, in “Siyi” 祀義, *Lunheng jiaoshi* 25.76.1051ff., where the unfortunate priest’s name is given as Yegu 夜姑. I have discussed this passage in Goldin (2003), 236.

In this gripping tale of spirit possession, the medium (*zhuzi* 祿子) is understood as nothing other than the physical receptacle of the indignant ghost. If we were supposed to believe that the medium himself intentionally bludgeoned Guangu to death, the story would have no purpose in the context of the *Mozi*; rather, the whole point is that the unnamed ghost was able to punish the negligent priest through the medium's body. We can doubt that this event ever really happened; or, if it did happen, we can doubt that the *Mozi* is retelling it accurately; but we cannot doubt that readers of this passage were expected to grasp the concept of spirit possession.

The last passage raises one final question that needs to be addressed. If ghosts were said to be able to possess the bodies of mediums (and personators at lineage sacrifices), what metaphysical explanation was provided? This is, after all, the crux of the mind-body problem in the West: how can something immaterial affect the material world? In the West, this is known as the problem of “mind-body interaction.”<sup>116</sup>

I do not know of any Chinese text that poses this question explicitly, and philosophers were generally content to leave the issue unexplored. But there are some documents that shed tantalizing light. The ghosts' consumption of food would seem to be one of the most salient points of intersection between the material and the immaterial worlds. As we have seen, while regular sacrifices to the ancestral spirits were thought to be necessary for their sustenance, it must have been observed that they did not consume the food in any material respect, for the participants would typically divide and enjoy the victuals after the ceremony.<sup>117</sup> This problem recurs in a recently excavated text from Fangmatan 放馬灘 called *The Tomb Occupant's Record* (*Muzhu ji* 墓主記). It is a story of resurrection, and includes the testimony of a man named Dan 丹 (literally “Cinnabar,” the mineral of immortality), who claims to have died and become a ghost for three years before returning to the material world as a human being. *The Tomb Occupant's Record* thus pretends to offer the rarest of information: the perspective of a ghost. Dan concludes his report of the otherworld with these admonitions:

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**116** The relevant bibliography is enormous, but for a succinct overview of the problem, see Averill and Keating (1981), 102–7.

**117** The recently excavated administrative texts from Liye 里耶 even contain records pertaining to the sale of leftover food and liquor after a sacrifice (called *yuche* 餘徹). See Cao Lüning 曹旅寧, “Liye Qinjian *Ciliu* kaoshu” 里耶秦簡《祠律》考述, *Shixue yuekan* 史學月刊 2008.8, 40.

丹言：「祠者必謹掃除，毋以口灑祠所。毋以羹沃盥，鬼弗食矣。」<sup>118</sup>

Dan said: “Those who make offerings must carefully sweep and decontaminate [the precinct]. Do not sprinkle the place of cult with X [graph missing]. Do not moisten the pabulum with soup; the ghosts will not eat it.”<sup>119</sup>

How on earth do ghosts eat the pabulum when it is *properly* served? We are not told. The author was interested in clarifying religious practice for readers of the third century B.C., not resolving the metaphysical confusion of readers in the twenty-first A.D.<sup>120</sup>

In the Six Dynasties, it should be noted, ghosts were usually construed as consisting of *qi*.<sup>121</sup> But I do not think this is how the ancients generally understood ghosts. The many comments to the effect that ghosts cannot be perceived by sense organs suggest an attempt to portray an entity that does not partake of the regular qualities of matter. The best-known example is *Application of Equilibrium* (*Zhongyong* 中庸), Section 16:

子曰：「鬼神之為德，其盛矣乎。視之而弗見；聽之而弗聞；體物而不可遺。使天下之人，齊明盛服，以承祭祀。洋洋乎，如在其上，如在其左右。詩曰：『神之格思，不可度思，矧可射思？』夫微之顯。誠之不可揜，如此夫。」<sup>122</sup>

The Master said: “How bountiful is the inner power of the ghosts and spirits! One looks for them but cannot see them; one listens for them but cannot hear them. They are embodied in creatures and cannot be abandoned. They cause the people of the world to fast and purify themselves, and dress themselves bountifully, in order to submit sacrifices. Overflowing! As though above us, as though to our left and right. It is said in the *Odes*:<sup>123</sup> ‘Ah, what the spirits bring about is unfathomable! How much less can they be disparaged!’ This is the perceptibility of the imperceptible. Such is the irrepressibility of Perfection.”<sup>124</sup>

**118** I follow the transcription in Li Xueqin 李學勤, (1998), 405.

**119** Compare the translation in Harper (1994), 14.

**120** A rhetorical question that appears twice in *Liji* 禮記 addresses similar concerns: “How should one know which [foods] spirits relish?” 豈知神之所饗; “Tangong xia” 檀弓下, *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義 (*Shisan jing zhushu*) 9.1301c, and “Jiao tesheng” 郊特牲, *Liji zhengyi* 26.1457c. Cf. Sterckx (2011), 110.

**121** Cf. Poo (2009), 247. See also n.14, above.

**122** Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200), *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注, Xibian Zhuzi jicheng (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1983), 25. Compare “Taizu” 泰祖, *Huainanzi jishi* 20.1378f., which quotes the same lines from the *Odes*.

**123** Mao 256, “Yi” 抑.

**124** Compare the translations in Plaks, (2003): 33; Ames and Hall (2001), 96; and Hughes (1943), 113.

I read this as a statement that ghosts and spirits exist (and affect our daily lives), but their existence is not material because it cannot be discerned in the same way that we discern material things. The case is far from conclusive, however; the main point is that mind-body interaction remained as mysterious for Chinese philosophers as it did for philosophers anywhere else in the world. Different people had different beliefs about what happens when we die, but everyone agreed that the whole process is bewildering.

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