

Confucius and His Disciples in the *Lunyu*: The Basis for the Traditional View

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There is an emerging consensus that the received text of the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), though regarded throughout Chinese history as the best single source for the life and philosophy of Confucius,¹ did not exist before the Han dynasty. The work of scholars such as Zhu Weizheng 朱維錚, John Makeham, and Mark Csikszentmihalyi has left little doubt that the text was redacted sometime during the Western Han.² This does not necessarily mean, however, that the contents must date to a period later than Confucius and his disciples.³ A work that was *compiled* in a certain century does not necessarily consist of material *dating* from that same century.⁴ Thus, the new insights regarding the relatively late compilation of the *Analects* do not invalidate the traditional understanding of the text's philosophical importance. In this chapter, I shall present several examples suggesting that the *Analects* reflects an intellectual environment from long before the Han dynasty. These distinctive features of the text would have to be explained by any theory of its origin. The same evidence will also support the traditional chronology, which postulates the sequence *Analects*–*Mozi*–*Mencius*–*Laozi*–*Xunzi*.

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- 1 E.g., Creel 1949: 291: "All scholars seem to be agreed that, while some parts of the *Analects* are subject to question, the book in general is our best single source for Confucius." Creel was already aware, it should be noted, that there are no secure references to the received text of the *Analects* from before the Han.
 - 2 Zhu Weizheng 2002: 97–123; Makeham 1996, 2006; Csikszentmihalyi 2002, 2004: 28ff.
 - 3 Despite, e.g., Weingarten 2009: 598: "the textual material found in the received *Lunyu* may have originated anytime between Confucius's death in the early fifth century BCE and the second century BCE, or even later in the case of interpolations." See also Weingarten 2010: 199. Stumpfeldt 2010: 24: "In the past two decades ... it has been recognised that the material in the [*Analects*] is highly heterogeneous in nature and of varying authenticity" (without any references). Close parallels between two lines from **Yucong* 3 語叢三 (a manuscript from Guodian 郭店) and *Analects* 7/6 and 9/4 show that at least some material in the *Analects* has truly early origins: Cook 2012: 2.866–868; Li Xueqin 2009: 293–297. (Note that there is an earlier edition of Li with different pagination.)
 - 4 This is similar to Li Ling's (2008: 213) analogy of an ancient Chinese text as a glass of wine, with the wine (the textual contents) and the glass (the edition in which the textual contents have been transmitted) to be distinguished analytically.

Evidence from Intellectual History

The *Analects* make no mention of philosophical developments that took place after the fifth century BCE. Most strikingly, the text never refers to the concept of physical self-cultivation.⁵ This point is well illustrated by a comparison of the Confucian *Analects* with the Mohist *Analects* (sometimes called “Moyu” 墨語 in Chinese), a set of documents with a very similar structure and thus, though profoundly neglected, a natural *comparandum*.⁶ First, a word about the two texts. When I refer to the Confucian *Analects*, I shall restrict myself to chapters 1–15, as I accept the argument of D. C. Lau and others, on the basis of observations by Cui Shu 崔述 (1740–1816), that the last five chapters of the received text are written in a different style and belong to a different era.⁷

The informal title “Mohist *Analects*” is commonly used to refer to chapters 46–50 of the *Mozi* 墨子. These sections relate discussions between Mo Di 墨翟 (d. ca. 390 BCE) and an array of interlocutors consisting of disciples, political figures such as territorial lords, and representatives of various dissenting schools and points of view. The most famous passage in the series appears in chapter 50 (“Gongshu” 公輸), which tells of Mo Di’s role in dissuading the state of Chu 楚 from attacking Song 宋 with siege machinery invented by one Gongshu Ban 公輸般.⁸ But this is the least useful portion of the text for a number of reasons, in addition to its suspicious narrative mode. The chapter includes virtually no information on Mo Di’s philosophy and makes only passing reference to his disciples.⁹

For chapters 46–49, however, the epithet “*Analects*” fits very well, as the language and composition indeed remind the reader of the Confucian *Analects*. The text presents one brief episode after the other, with a minimum of details, always culminating in a teaching from the mouth of the Master. Some scholars accept the Mohist *Analects* as the Mohist equivalent of the *Lunyu*—that is, as an authoritative record of Mo Di’s life and sayings compiled after his death by his disciples.¹⁰ There are some thorny issues of dating, however, and it is clear,

5 Slingerland 2000: 139.

6 See, e.g., Ding 2011.

7 Lau 1992: 265–275. This is not to suggest that chapters 16–20 can be treated as a block from a single extraneous source.

8 For the controversy regarding Gongshu Ban’s given name, see the commentary in Wu 2006: 13.50.749n1; Goldin 2005: 158n45.

9 Luan 1957: 119.

10 E.g., Zhang (1936) 1975: 11.46.412, at the beginning of the “Gengzhu” 耕柱 chapter. Zhang also cites the opinion of Wang Kaiyun 王闓運 (1833–1916). Wu Yujiang (2006: 1027) cites the opinions of Hu Shi 胡適 (1891–1962) and Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), both of whom compare these chapters with the *Lunyu*. See also Zheng Jiewen 2006: 1.1–4; Jiang

at any rate, that the received version has been standardized by some editor.¹¹ (Mo Di's disciple Qin Guli 禽滑釐, for example, is referred to as a master in his own right.)¹² Nevertheless, those scholars who treat the Mohist Analects as a genuine document from the period just after Mo Di's death must consider it one of the most precious texts in the history of Chinese philosophy. Not only would it qualify as one of the oldest surviving works, but we would have to regard it as a Mohist *yulu* 語錄, a record of the Master's spoken teachings.¹³ In other cases—notably that of Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200)—where a thinker's *yulu* is extant, it generally comes to be one of the most carefully studied texts in his oeuvre. In the case of the Mohist Analects, however, I know of only one such intensive investigation: Zheng Jiewen's 鄭傑文 *Zhongguo Moxue tongshi* 中國墨學通史, published in 2006.¹⁴

This lack of attention may explain why the most important difference between the Mohist Analects and their Confucian analogue has eluded critics: the Mohist Analects discuss a greater variety of philosophical positions. For

1985: 477–478; Wang Dongzhen 1981: 51–52. Japanese scholars tend to take an opposing view; e.g., Yoshinaga 2004: 34–69; Watanabe 1973: 538–539. Both argue that these chapters are among the latest in the entire *Mozi*. (See also Ding 2011.) Durrant (1977–1978: esp. 265–266) observes that the grammar of the Mohist Analects is distinct in certain respects from that of other portions of the *Mozi* and suggests that differences in the intended audience (i.e., not necessarily differences in date) may account for these “textual contrasts.”

11 There are two notorious problems of dating. The first involves Mo Di's interview with Qi Taiwang 齊大王, which ostensibly means “King Tai of Qi,” in “Luwen” 魯問 (Wu 2006: 13.49.718). Su Shixue 蘇時學 (fl. 1865) and others identified this as a reference to Tian He 田和 (d. 385 BCE), otherwise known as Lord Tai 太公, who usurped the throne of Qi in 391 BCE. See *Shiji* 46.1886–1887. Some scholars have suggested that because of the title “King Tai,” the received text of the “Luwen” must date from after 357 BCE, since it was only in that year that the Tian family began calling themselves kings. However, the issue is not so simple. First, the Japanese edition of *Hōryaku* 寶曆 7 (= 1757) notes that one version reads *Qi dafu* 齊大夫—in other words, “a grandee of Qi” rather than “King Tai of Qi.” In addition, Bi Yuan 畢沅 (1730–1797) pointed out that the parallel passage in *Taiping yulan* 346.4a does not even contain the character *da/tai* at all, yielding simply “the king of Qi.” There is no conclusive evidence, therefore, that the phrase refers to Tian He. Note that Forke (1922: 579n7) is thoroughly confused regarding the dates; the best summary is still to be found in Qian Mu 1956: §§64–65, 70. The second problem is more complicated and has to do with the figure of Lord Wen of Luyang 魯陽文君, who appears in several anecdotes. For an overview of the issues (if not a perfect solution), see He Hao 1994.

12 See Luan 1957: 118; Luo Genze 1958: 194.

13 Tan 1995: 21.

14 Zheng Jiewen (2006: 1.4) writes at the beginning of his study that the Mohist Analects are “the most original material of the Mohist school, and therefore in what follows I shall rely chiefly on what is recorded in these five chapters” (更爲原始的墨家資料。所以，以下主要依據此5篇所記).

example, A. C. Graham suggested that one of the passages addresses what he called “Yangism”:¹⁵

Master Wuma said to Master Mo, “I am different from you. I cannot love universally. I love people from Zou more than people from Yue, people from Lu more than people from Zou, people from my district more than people from Lu, people in my family more than people from my district, my parents more than [other] people in my family, and myself more than my parents. I go by what is closer to me. If you strike me, it hurts; if you strike someone else, it does not hurt me. For what reason should I not resist what hurts me and resist what does not hurt me? Because I exist, there are [cases] where I [might] kill someone else in order to benefit myself, but there are no [cases] where I [might] kill myself in order to benefit someone else.”

Master Mo said, “Will you conceal your principle? Will you tell people your opinion?”

Master Wuma said, “Why should I conceal my principle? I would tell people.”

Master Mo said, “Then if one person is persuaded by you, one person will want to kill you in order to benefit himself. If ten people are persuaded by you, ten people will want to kill you in order to benefit themselves. If the whole world is persuaded by you, the whole world will want to kill you in order to benefit itself.”

巫馬子謂子墨子曰：我與子異，我不能兼愛。我愛鄒人於越人，愛魯人於鄒人，愛我鄉人於魯人，愛我家人於鄉人，愛吾親於我家人，愛我身於吾親，以為近我也。擊我則疾，擊彼則不疾於我，我何故疾者之不拂，而不疾者之拂？故有我，有殺彼以利我，無殺我以利彼。

子墨子曰：子之義將匿邪？意將以告人乎？

巫馬子曰：我何故匿我義？吾將以告人。

子墨子曰：然則一人說子，一人欲殺子以利己；十人說子，十人欲殺子以利己；天下說子，天下欲殺子以利己。¹⁶

What is wrong with Master Wuma’s “principle” (*yi* 義), Mo Di argues, is that if everyone in the world were to act on it, the result would be death and hardship.¹⁷ To judge from his own examples, Master Wuma is from Lu; some

¹⁵ The association of Master Wuma with Yangism goes back to Sun Daosheng 1982.

¹⁶ “Gengzhu” 耕柱 (Wu 2006: 11.46.645). Cf. the translation in Mei 1929: 219–220.

¹⁷ Graham 1989: 61–62.

commentators equate him with a disciple of Confucius named Wuma Shi 巫馬施 (b. 521 BCE) or with one of his descendants.¹⁸ Whether he is really a “Yangist,” that is to say, a follower of Yang Zhu 楊朱, is impossible to determine, because little is known about Yang Zhu’s teachings, and the term “Yangism” (like the corresponding Chinese term *weiwu* 為我) has been used promiscuously in the scholarly literature to cover many different ideas.¹⁹

Still, it is evident that the Mohist Analects are aware of an important new movement in Chinese thought: concern for the self and the body. Elsewhere, Mo Di says:

Suppose you said to someone, “I shall grant you a cap and sandals but cut off your hands and feet. Would you do it?” He certainly would not. For what reason? Because a cap and sandals are not as valuable as hands and feet. Or you might say, “I shall grant you the world but kill your body. Would you do it?” He certainly would not. For what reason? Because the world is not as valuable as one’s body.²⁰

今謂人曰：予子冠履，而斷子之手足，子為之乎？必不為。何故？則冠履不若手足之貴也。又曰：予子天下，而殺子之身，子為之乎？必不為。何故？則天下不若身之貴也。

This was a very common idea in Warring States China: worldly possessions are not as valuable as one’s life and limbs. (It is close, incidentally, to the kind of position that some later testimony associates with Yang Zhu himself.)²¹ The *Annals of Lü Buwei* (*Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋), for example, appears to borrow Mozi’s image:

18 See the comments by Su Shixue and Wu Yujiang (Wu 2006: 11.46.647n9). Wuma Shi’s name is sometimes read Wuma Qi 旗/期; see the commentary of Chen Qiyou in Chen 2002: 18.1240n18. However, it is possible that some other Master Wuma is intended; earlier in the same chapter (Wu 2006: 11.46.643), Master Wuma is quoted as saying, “To set aside men of the present and praise the former kings is to praise decomposed bones; it is as though a carpenter were to know decomposed wood but not to know fresh wood” (舍今之人而譽先王，是譽槁骨也。譬若匠人然，知槁木而不知生木). This does not sound like the opinion of a disciple of Confucius.

19 Goldin 2003: 204ff.

20 “Guiyi” 貴義 (Wu 2006: 12.47.670). Cf. the translation in Mei 1929: 222.

21 E.g., Liu 1989: 13.436 (“Fanlun” 汎論): “Keeping one’s nature whole and protecting one’s purity, not tying down one’s body with [material] objects—this is what Master Yang proposed” (全性保真，不以物累形，楊子之所立也).

Suppose there is a man here. He cuts off his head in order to exchange his cap [i.e., for a better one?] and kills his body in order to replace his clothes. The world would certainly think him deluded. Why is this? A cap is what adorns the head; clothes are what adorns the body. If one kills that which is adorned but treats as essential that which adorns, then one does not know what things are for.

今有人於此。斷首以易冠，殺身以易衣。世必惑之。是何也？冠所飾首也，衣所飾身也。殺所飾而要所以飾，則不知所為矣。²²

Other passages in the Mohist Analects reinforce the reader's sense that Mo Di has known about such arguments for some time. Consider the following:

Master Mozi said, "The scholars of today handle their bodies less carefully than a merchant handles a roll of cloth. When a merchant handles a roll of cloth,²³ he dares not sell it recklessly; he must choose the best ones. Scholars of today do not handle their bodies like this. Whatever their wills desire, they do. In the worst cases, they are punished; in the best cases, they suffer the stain of defamation. Thus, the scholars of today handle their bodies less carefully than a merchant handles a roll of cloth."

子墨子曰：今士之用身，不若商人之用一布之慎也。商人用一布，不敢繼苟而鬻 [=售] ²⁴ 焉，必擇良者。今士之用身則不然，意之所欲則為之，厚者入刑罰，薄者被毀醜。則士之用身，不若商人之用一布之慎也。²⁵

For all their moralistic pretensions, "the scholars of today" are reckless and end up endangering themselves. Mo Di himself, of course, is not sympathetic to the idea of saving one's skin at all costs,²⁶ and as we have seen, he cannot accept the arguments of Master Wuma uncritically. Nevertheless, he is portrayed as

22 "Shenwei" 審為 (Chen 2002: 21.1463). Cf. the translation in Knoblock and Riegel 2000: 557. The same chapter attributes a similar argument to a philosopher named Zihuazi 子華子 (Chen 2002: 21.1464). The latter argument also appears almost verbatim in the *Zhuangzi* (Guo 1961: 9B.28.969ff.; "Rangwang" 讓王).

23 Following Wu Yujiang's commentary: the second *bu* 布 in the original text is excrescent.

24 Following Bi Yuan's commentary.

25 "Guiyi" (Wu 2006: 12.47.672). Cf. the translation in Mei 1929: 225.

26 Consider the oft-cited story of Meng Sheng 孟勝 (d. 381 BCE), a Mohist master who preferred to die rather than betray the honor of the school ("Shangde" 上德; Chen 2002: 19.1266). Cf. Zheng Jiewen 2006: 1.67–69; Kanaya 1997: 1.312–313, 404; Graham 1989: 44–45.

being so comfortable with such rhetoric that he is willing to adapt it to his own purposes.

Whether or not we identify the theme specifically as “Yangist,” it is well known that this concern for one’s own health and well-being came to play a significant role in Chinese intellectual history from about the fourth century BCE onward. And yet the whole idea is absent from the Confucian *Analects*. Other terms familiar from the materialistic paradigm of most self-cultivation discourse, such as *yinyang* 陰陽, are likewise unattested—in striking contrast to a text like *Mencius* 2A.2, which must be read against the background of physical self-cultivation theories that Mencius wished to discredit.²⁷

[The disciple Gongsun Chou 公孫丑 said], “I venture to ask: wherein lie your strengths, Master?”

[Mencius] said, “I know words. I am good at nourishing my flood-like *qi*.”

I venture to ask, “What do you mean by ‘flood-like *qi*?’”

“It is difficult to say. It is the kind of *qi* that is greatest and firmest. If it is nourished with uprightness and is not damaged, it fills the space between Heaven and Earth. It is the kind of *qi* that accompanies righteousness and the Way. Without it, [the body] starves. It is engendered by the accumulation of righteousness and is not obtained through sporadic righteousness. If there is something in one’s actions that does not satisfy the heart, then [the flood-like *qi*] starves.”

敢問夫子惡乎長？

曰：我知言，我善養吾浩然之氣。

敢問何謂浩然之氣？

曰：難言也。其為氣也，至大至剛；以直養而無害，則塞于天地之間。其為氣也，配義與道；無是，餒矣。是集義所生者，非義襲而取之也。行有不慊於心，則餒矣。²⁸

Mencius’s theory, in a nutshell, is that habitual good conduct, not meditation or gymnastics, is what produces a healthy physique.²⁹ It is hard to imagine how this dialogue could have proceeded without an awareness of traditions like that of *The Internal Enterprise* (*Neiye* 內業), which explains how nourishing one’s *qi* can be used to attain a heightened state of intelligence and well-

²⁷ For the observation about *yinyang*, see Pines 2002: 701.

²⁸ *Mengzi zhengyi* 6.199–202. Cf. the translation in Lau 2003: 61ff.

²⁹ Goldin 2011a: 42.

being.³⁰ In sum, both Mo Di and Mencius seem to be well informed about contemporary practices of physical self-cultivation; the Confucius of the *Analects* does not.

To move now to another philosophical innovation that seems to have taken place after Confucius, but before Mo Di and Mencius: the Mohist *Analects* display an awareness of the school of Shennong 神農, the Divine Farmer.³¹ This is especially noteworthy in that arguments attributed to followers of Shennong are discussed in the *Mencius*, as we shall see presently.

“Among the rustic people of the south of Lu,” we read in the Mohist *Analects*, “there was one Wu Lü.³² In the winter he made pottery and in the summer he plowed; he compared himself to Shun” (魯之南鄙人有吳慮者，冬陶夏耕，自比於舜). Wu Lü believes that there is no use in talking so much about ethics: all one needs to do is attend to the daily labors necessary for survival. Mo Di has a devastating response:

Master Mozi said, “I have calculated this. I considered plowing and feeding the people of the world. If I am successful, I shall do the plowing of one farmer. Divide this among the world, and one will be unable to let each person get a single *sheng* of grain. Even if one could get a *sheng* of grain, it is obvious that that is not enough to satisfy those who are starving in the world. I considered weaving and clothing the people of the world. If I am successful, I shall do the weaving of one woman. Divide this among the world, and one will be unable to let each person get a single *chi* of cloth. Even if one could get a *chi* of cloth, it is obvious that that is not enough to warm those who are cold in the world.”

子墨子曰：翟嘗計之。翟慮耕而食天下之人矣，盛，然後當一農之耕，分諸天下，不能人得一升粟。籍 [=藉]³³ 而以為得一升粟，其不能飽天下之飢者，既可睹矣。翟慮織而衣天下之人矣，盛，然後當一婦人之織，分諸天下，不能人得尺布。籍而以為尺布，其不能煖天下之寒者，既可睹矣。³⁴

Mo Di goes on to claim that his value as a teacher is far greater than it would be as a farmer, since a teacher can teach everyone to plow, whereas a farmer plows

³⁰ Roth 1999.

³¹ For the seminal study of the subject, see Graham 1986: 67–110; also Graham 1989: 61–74.

³² Bi Yuan notes that in the parallel passage in *Taiping yulan* 822.8a, Wu Lü is called Wu Xian 吳憲.

³³ Following Bi Yuan's commentary.

³⁴ “Luwen” 魯問 (Wu 2006: 13.49.720). Cf. the translation in Mei 1929: 248–249.

singly. It is impossible to say whether this Wu Lü was in fact an adherent of the Shennong group, since the text does not tell us anything more about him. But the whole episode, including Mo Di's rebuttal, is comparable to Mencius's encounter with Xu Xing 許行 (3A.4), who is identified explicitly as a practitioner of the words of Shennong.³⁵ Xu Xing's tenet is: "The worthy [ruler] plows and eats together with his people; he governs while he prepares his morning and evening meals" (賢者與民並耕而食，饗飧而治).³⁶ When Mencius hears about Xu Xing from his disciple, he proceeds to dismantle his simplistic position:

Mencius said, "Must Master Xu sow grain before he can eat?"

[His disciple] said, "Yes." ...

"Does Master Xu wear a cap?" "Yes."

"What kind of cap?" "His cap is made of plain [silk]."

"Did he weave it himself?" "No, he traded grain for it."

"Why does Master Xu not weave himself?" "It would interfere with his plowing."

孟子曰：許子必種粟而後食乎？曰：然 ...

許子冠乎？曰：冠。

曰：奚冠？曰：冠素。

曰：自織之與？曰：否。以粟易制。

曰：許子奚為不自織？曰：害於耕。³⁷

Mencius goes on to show that even the metal in Xu Xing's plow must have been acquired from someone else. A harmonious society, Mencius demonstrates, must have various professionals devoting their energies to different tasks. For Mencius, who believes that human beings are moral animals, such professionals include specialists in ethics like himself. But the key to his refutation of Xu Xing is echoed, if not anticipated, by Mo Di's argument in the Mohist Analects: it is simply not efficient for everyone to farm. Mencius stresses the importance

35 Cf. Mei 1934: 132–133; Hsiao 1979: 220n21; Yang Junguang 1992: 228–229, 304–305. Qian Mu (1956: §113) identified Xu Xing with one Xu Fan 許犯, who is said in "Dangran" 當染 (Chen 2002: 2.98) to have studied with Qin Guli; see also Qian 1930: 56–57. This idea has been refuted several times; see, in addition to the above, Tong 2005: 2.658–661; Fang 1937: 143–144.

36 *Mengzi zhengyi* 11.367. See Zhao Qi's 趙歧 (d. 201) commentary for the terms *yong* 饗 and *sun* 飧; Jiao Xun (1987) also cites the concurring opinion of Wang Niansun.

37 Jiao 1987: 11.369–370. Cf. the translation in Lau 2003: 113.

of overseers, Mo Di that of teachers; both are really talking about the division of labor.³⁸

In the Confucian *Analects*, Confucius and his disciples are silent on this issue. There are various hermits who appear here and there, and who criticize Confucius for reasons that are often inscrutable. But no one makes a case remotely resembling those of Wu Lü and Xu Xing, whether as an argument to be advanced or to be refuted.

Last, the absence of any probing discussions relating to *xing* 性 and *qing* 情 must be mentioned too.³⁹ As A. C. Graham has shown, *qing* (often written 請) is a widely attested philosophical concept from the *Mozi* onward,⁴⁰ but the term appears only twice in the *Analects* (13/4 and 19/19), and in neither case is it a matter of any controversy. As for *xing*, we are told pointedly by Zigong 子貢 (i.e., Duanmu Ci 端木賜, 520–456 BCE) that it is one of the concepts never discussed by Confucius (*Analects* 5/12). The only other appearance of *xing* is in *Analects* 17/2, where Confucius states, “By their *xing*, people are close to one another; they grow distant from one another through practice” (性相近也，習相遠也). Not only is the quotation doubtful because chapter 17 is spurious in its entirety; the fact that Confucius and his disciples would have contented themselves with such a thin account of *xing* suggests that they were uninterested in, and perhaps uninformed of, the raging debates over *xing* that characterized philosophy in the ensuing centuries. (As examples, consider the positions taken not only by Mencius and Xunzi but also in such texts as the recently excavated **Xing zi ming chu* 性自命出 [Natural Disposition Emerges from the Mandate].)⁴¹ Zigong’s comment would seem to convey that the term was known to Confucius but that he did not think it demanded extensive investigation.

38 For other references to this concept in the *Mozi*, see, e.g., Wang Dongzhen 1981: 203–204; Okamoto 1992: 21ff.

39 One might also note the absence of *su* 俗 (vulgar), a word that is not common in texts from before the fourth century BCE (Pines 2005–2006: 185). For a general discussion of the language of the *Analects*, see Charles N. Li 1996.

40 Graham 1978: 179–182; also Graham 1986: 59–65. A recent conference volume contains two helpful overviews of *qing*: Puett 2004 and Harbsmeier 2004.

41 See, e.g., Goldin 2005: 36–57. The conversation in “Tangong” 檀弓 (Sun Xidan 1989: 10.270–272) between Youzi 有子 and Ziyou 子游 about the reasons for leaping (*yong* 踊) at a funeral leads to an analysis of *qing* that is of a piece with such texts as *Xing zi ming chu* and even the “Great Preface” (Daxu 大序) to the *Odes*. The fact that such discourse is entirely absent from the *Analects* undermines the commonplace assumption that “Tangong” can be considered alongside the *Analects* as a record of Confucius’s speech and actions. I am indebted to Kenneth W. Holloway for this reference.

In *Analects* 9/14, Confucius states a viewpoint that might be construed as a forerunner of the theories of Xunzi and the Guodian manuscripts: “If a noble man were to dwell among [the Nine Barbarians], what crudeness would there be?” (君子居之，何陋之有). The implication is that people without the benefit of instruction by a noble man will be as crude as savages (and, by the same token, that savages can be civilized with the right training).⁴² Yet, unlike most Han writers,⁴³ he seems to have felt no need to associate these ideas with the keyword *xing*.

Evidence from Philosophical Vocabulary

The philosophical vocabulary of the Confucian *Analects* does not reflect changes in the intellectual world that took place in the third and fourth centuries BCE. The linguistic tests pioneered by Bernhard Karlgren (1889–1978) have proven to be almost totally invalid; they were questionable even in their own day, and the plethora of Warring States and early imperial manuscripts discovered since the 1970s have shown, once and for all, that texts were not composed in a manner that would support Karlgren’s assumptions.⁴⁴ But these developments do not disqualify the study of philosophical terminology, which inevitably reflects the intellectual orientations of an author’s expected audience. For example, a knowledgeable reader will know that a text discussing “qualia” in connection with consciousness and perception cannot date from before the twentieth century, and not for any arcane linguistic reasons but because the word was coined—in its specific philosophical sense—by Clarence Irving Lewis in 1929.⁴⁵

Or, to take an example closer to the phenomenon that I shall describe in the *Analects*: when a text employs a technical term whose meaning changed over time, its usage can be helpful to historians who wish to place it in its intellectual context. Thomas S. Kuhn has pointed out that in the history of science, one such telling word is “planet,” which can be indicative of an entire underlying system of thought. If a work of astronomy refers to the moon as a “planet,” a reader has strong reason to presume that it was written in ignorance of Copernicus.⁴⁶ Another term that can be used as a benchmark is “element”; if a

42 See Goldin 2011a: 220–224.

43 Goldin 2011b: 228–232.

44 See the trenchant comments by Rudolf Wagner in Allan and Williams 2000: 130; also Shaughnessy 2006: 40–41; Luo Shaodan 2003.

45 C. Lewis 1929: 121.

46 Kuhn 1957: 45–77.

text refers to Earth, Air, Fire, and Water as “elements,” it is clearly operating according to an ontological system other than that of modern chemistry. Naturally, not all words are equally valuable for this sort of analysis. “Mastiff” has had essentially the same relatively narrow array of connotations for centuries. “Perversion” has not.⁴⁷

The first of two lexical items that have odd senses in the *Analects*—or, more precisely, antique-looking senses—is *zhong* 忠. In most philosophical writing from the Eastern Zhou and Han, *zhong* means something very close to “loyalty,” but this is obviously not what the disciple Zeng Can 曾參 (505–436 BCE?) means when he identifies *zhong* 忠 and *shu* 恕 as the keystone of Confucius’s ethics (e.g., *Analects* 4/15). As I have argued elsewhere,⁴⁸ the *zhong* of the *Analects* is related to a word that is more typically written with the graph 中 in bronze inscriptions and the *Exalted Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書), where it bears the sense of “being impartial,” “being unbiased,” sometimes specifically “hearing both sides of a case.” Only from the *Shenzi* 慎子 (attributed to Shen Dao 慎到, b. ca. 360 BCE) onward, it turns out, is the sense of “loyalty” attested. The older meaning did not die out immediately. There are other texts, such as *Mozi* and *Zuozhuan* 左傳, where *zhong* is used to mean either “loyalty” or “impartiality,” depending on the context. But by the time we get to the world of *Sunzi* 孫子 and *Xunzi* 荀子, *zhong* has scarcely any meaning *other* than “loyalty.” (And this detail would also seem to throw into doubt the theory that the *Sunzi* is the oldest Chinese philosophical text—older, supposedly, than even Confucius.)⁴⁹ The use of *zhong* in the *Analects* is thus markedly conservative, if not archaic.

For that matter, the whole “Golden Rule” approach to moral reasoning, which informs the concepts of *zhong* and *shu*, does not seem to have remained popular after the time of Confucius’s disciples.⁵⁰ Confucians and non-Confucians alike—whether Mo Di, Mencius, the philosophers of the *Laozi* 老子 and *Zhuangzi* 莊子 traditions, or *Xunzi*—soon preferred to base their ethics on other foundations. *Shu* is taken seriously in *Shizi* 尸子;⁵¹ this text, now extant

47 Davidson 2001.

48 Goldin 2008b. For the sake of economy, I shall not repeat all the examples cited in that study.

49 E.g., He Bingdi 1999; Chang 2007: 1.412n38; esp. M. Lewis 1990: 285n5. In Mark Edward Lewis’s view, military manuals were the first philosophical texts in China and indeed launched the philosophical burgeoning of the Warring States period. Another problem is that the *Sunzi* refers to crossbows and triggers (Pines 2002: 703).

50 Goldin 2011a: 15ff.

51 *Qunshu zhiyao* 36.625.

only in fragments, is attributed to Shi Jiao 尸佼 (alive in 338 BCE),⁵² but not enough is known about it to permit strong inferences.⁵³

The second telltale philosophical term is *dao* 道. When it appears as a noun in the *Analects* (in other words, not in the verbal sense of “to lead, to guide”), *dao* means something like “right or exemplary conduct.” It is not the cosmological concept known from texts such as *Laozi* and *Xunzi*. The main difference between *dao* in *Laozi* and *Xunzi* is that *dao* generates Heaven in the former and is dictated by Heaven in the latter; a related difference is that *dao* in *Laozi* has no inherent moral orientation, whereas for *Xunzi*, *dao* is the bedrock of morality itself. But otherwise, the usage is similar: *dao* is the inalterable structure of the universe, which we should learn to perceive and apply in our daily lives, rather than struggling bootlessly against it.⁵⁴

When Neo-Confucians read the *Analects* in the Middle Ages, they assumed that the word *dao* had the same connotations in Confucius’s idiom as it did in their own. Thus, when Confucius says, “If one hears *dao* in the morning, it is acceptable to die in the evening” (朝聞道，夕死可矣; *Analects* 4/8), Zhu Xi’s commentary reads, “*Dao* is the principle by which things are as they should be” (道者，事物當然之理).⁵⁵ That may fit Zhu Xi’s naturalistic metaphysics, but it is anachronistic. There is no attempt in the *Analects* (or in *Mencius*, it should be noted) to relate *dao* to natural processes; indeed, the Confucius of the *Analects* espouses no cosmological theory of any complexity. The closest he comes to making a statement about the cosmos is the claim—again in chapter 17—that Heaven speaks through the regular progression of the seasons (*Analects* 17/19). Michael J. Puett, among others, has argued that systematic cosmologies emerged only in the late Warring States period;⁵⁶ thus, it stands to reason that Confucius’s discourse is free of them.

Evidence from References to Other Philosophers

References to other philosophers within various philosophical texts provide the framework for an overall chronology. Examining who responds to whom, and who cites which precedents, is generally an undervalued technique in the study of early Chinese intellectual history. For example, I think it can put to

52 Qian 1956: §90.

53 Fischer (2012: e.g., 5, 12, 42) takes it as an authentic work by Shi Jiao.

54 Goldin 2011a: 81ff. This account is terser, but perhaps more precise, than Goldin 1999. See also the analysis of “foundational naturalism” in Peerenboom 1993.

55 Zhu Xi 1983: 2.71.

56 Puett 2002: 145–200.

rest the nagging question “What is Chinese philosophy?” over which much ink has been spilled in recent years. In most twentieth-century scholarship, “Chinese philosophy” corresponded more or less to the Chinese bibliographical category of *zi* 子 or *zhuzi* 諸子, “masters.” (Sometimes texts more strictly classified as *jing* 經, “canons,” were included as well, inasmuch as the *Analecets* and *Mencius* are recognized as two of the Thirteen Canons, and other *jing*, such as the *Zuozhuan*, also contain considerable philosophical material.) More recently, some scholars have questioned the practice of delimiting such inquiry according to traditional Chinese classificatory schemes. Donald Harper has used the phrase “natural philosophy” to refer to traditions involving medicine, divination, exorcism, and other practices that he terms “occult,” arguing that “philosophy” need not be restricted to the elevated “Masters” literature.⁵⁷ Others have asked whether “Chinese philosophy” refers to any coherent subject, and whether the very concept is hopelessly polluted by Western philosophical presuppositions.⁵⁸

One glance at the personages whom Xunzi mentioned by name (usually in the process of refuting them) will reveal the contours of what *he* considered his field of study: most prominently, Confucius, Mo Di, Mencius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Sunzi, and Shen Dao—in other words, all the names that would appear in a textbook of “Chinese philosophy.” He has hardly anything to say about medicine, divination, or exorcism and does not, as far as I can recall, name a single “occult” specialist. Thus, even if one is reluctant, for whatever circumpect methodological reason, to call Xunzi’s enterprise “philosophy,” there can be little doubt that Masters literature was regarded in its day as constituting a coherent subject.

Such references can also imply a sequence of debate: Xunzi responded to Mencius; Mencius did not respond to Xunzi. (There are similar phenomena in Western philosophy: Aristotle responded to Plato; Plato did not respond to Aristotle.)⁵⁹ And here we find impressive evidence supporting the traditional chronology. Consider table 4.1:

It must be borne in mind that the texts in this chart were not composed at a single moment in time, and thus, there is considerable chronological overlap among them. One aspect of the traditional view that must be revised is its ten-

57 Harper 1999: 813ff.

58 Defoort 2001 and the response in Raud 2006; see also Denecke 2010: 1–31, 326–346. Van Norden (1996) has defended a conception of Chinese philosophy, along with a consideration of its value.

59 Taylor 1969: 100–105, 116–138.

TABLE 4.1 Mentions of Masters in “Masters” texts

Text	Figures cited
<i>Analects</i>	(none below)
<i>Mozi</i>	Confucius ^a (and none below)
<i>Mencius</i>	Confucius, ^b Mo Di, ^c Song Keng ^d 宋輕 (and none below)
<i>Zhuangzi</i>	Confucius, ^e Mo Di, ^e Song Keng, ^f Laozi, ^g Shen Dao ^h (and none below) ⁱ
<i>Xunzi</i>	Confucius, ^j Mo Di, ^k Mencius, ^l Song Keng, ^m Laozi, ⁿ Shen Dao, ^o Zhuangzi, ^p Sunzi ^q

- a Most famously in “Fei Ru xia” 非儒下 (Wu 2006: 9.39.428–433), but see also “Gengzhu” (Wu 2006: 11.46.643; alluding to the dialogue known from *Analects* 13/16) and “Gongmeng” 公孟 (Wu 2006: 12.48.692).
- b Too many instances to cite singly.
- c *Mencius* 3A.5, 3B.9, 7A.26, 7B.26.
- d *Mencius* 6B.4.
- e The compound *Ru-Mo* 儒墨 appears as many as seven times in the *Zhuangzi*; for specific references to Confucius, see Littlejohn 2010.
- f “Tianxia” 天下 (Guo 1961: 10B.33.1082).
- g Again, too many instances to cite singly.
- h “Tianxia” (Guo 1961: 10B.33.1086–1088).
- i Mencius is not named in *Zhuangzi*, but there are allusions to phrases in the received *Mencius*, e.g., “the endpoints of humanity and righteousness” (*renyi zhi duan* 仁義之端), which is famous from *Mencius* 2A.6 (“Qiwu lun” 齊物論; Guo 1961: 1B.2.93).
- j Many instances, e.g., “Jiebi” 解蔽 (Wang Xianqian 1988: 15.21.393–394).
- k Again, many instances; one of the harshest is “Yuelun” 樂論 (Wang Xianqian 1988: 14.20.379ff.).
- l Primarily in “Xing’e” 性惡 (e.g., Wang Xianqian 1988: 17.23.439).
- m “Fei shi’er zi” 非十二子 (Wang Xianqian 1988: 3.6.92); “Tianlun” 天論 (Wang Xianqian 1988: 11.17.319); “Zhenglun” 正論 (Wang Xianqian 1988: 12.18.340–345); and “Jiebi” (Wang Xianqian 1988: 15.21.392).
- n “Tianlun” (Wang Xianqian 1988: 11.17.319).
- o “Fei shi’er zi” (Wang Xianqian 1988: 3.6.93); “Tianlun” (Wang Xianqian 1988: 11.17.319); “Jiebi” (Wang Xianqian 1988: 15.21.392).
- p “Jiebi” (Wang Xianqian 1988: 15.21.392).
- q Obliquely in “Yibing” 議兵 (Wang Xianqian 1988: 10.15.265–266); see Knoblock 1988–1994: 2.331n4.

dency to associate single texts with single authors;⁶⁰ recent work has shown that this is an unlikely scenario for any text from before the time of Xunzi and

60 A tendency that goes back for centuries, incidentally; witness Sima Qian’s (*Shiji* 74.2343) assertion that Mencius wrote the *Mencius*, a claim that few Western scholars would take seriously (e.g., Hunter 2014: 58–74, in contrast to Dong 1997: 151–154).

Han Fei 韓非 (d. 233 BCE)—and even they did not produce the editions of the texts that bear their names today.⁶¹ *Zhuangzi*, in particular, contains material that must range across a couple of centuries.⁶²

Nevertheless, the overall pattern is not easily reconciled with the notion that the *Analects* includes material from long after the time of Confucius and his disciples.⁶³ If that were the case, we would expect to find references to the same later personages mentioned in the other texts. In this vein, it is also worth repeating Arthur Waley's (1889–1966) observation that “the picture of Confucius given in the *Analects* ... differs from that of all other books in that it contains no elements that bear patently and obviously the stamp of folk-lore or hagiography.”⁶⁴ Han dynasty representations of Confucius have him performing all sorts of superhuman feats (such as lifting portcullises with his bare hands), but such fantasies are nowhere to be found in the *Analects*.⁶⁵



There are two general hypotheses that would account for the evidence presented in this study. The first is what might be considered an updated version of the traditional understanding: the *Analects* consists largely, if not almost exclusively, of sayings and discussions from the time of Confucius and his disciples. The second would be that the text derives from a later period and was craftily composed so as to avoid embarrassing anachronisms. Readers must decide for themselves which hypothesis they find more plausible, but I shall conclude with some reasons for doubting the second.

The notion that the redactors of the *Analects* would have avoided anachronisms is anachronistic in itself. Early Chinese literature is filled with anachronisms; they are concomitants of a historiography that prized moral accuracy

61 Fischer 2008–2009; see also M. Lewis 1999: 57ff. For an authoritative textual history of the *Xunzi*, see Gao 2010. For *Han Feizi*, the best studies remain Zheng Liangshu 1993 and Lundahl 1992.

62 For a recent criticism of the commonplace understanding that the so-called “Inner Chapters” (*neipian* 內篇) represent an authentic core of the *Zhuangzi*, see Klein 2010.

63 It is equally problematic for the so-called “accretion theory” advanced in Brooks and Brooks 1998, where the methodology behind their novel dates is laid out in appendix 1 (201–248). Their reasoning is fallacious: while they are correct that different chapters display different themes and styles, Brooks and Brooks seem to assume that the only way to explain such phenomena is to postulate a unique date of composition for each chapter.

64 Waley 1938: 14.

65 “Zhushu” 主術 (Liu 1989: 9.312). The classic statement of this problem is Gu 1982. For a recent overview of the various images of Confucius in later eras, see Nylan and Wilson 2010.

over factual accuracy.⁶⁶ More important, craftily compiled texts that purport to be relics from much older times still betray their engagement with the intellectual world into which they were released. As Alexander Campbell (1788–1866) wrote of *The Book of Mormon*:

This prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies;—infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of freemasonry, republican government, and the rights of man. All these topics are repeatedly alluded to.⁶⁷

Examples can be readily drawn from Chinese history as well. Most modern scholars consider the *Liezi* 列子 to be a spurious product of the Six Dynasties and not the text by the same name listed in the *Hanshu* 漢書 bibliography.⁶⁸ Not surprisingly, recent work has been able to show how the *Liezi* would have resonated with literati of that period.⁶⁹ Similarly, Wang Su 王肅 (195–256) claimed in his preface to *The Family Sayings of Confucius* (*Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語)—a work now widely thought to have been doctored by Wang himself—that it was presented to him by one of Confucius’s descendants, and that he considered it urgently necessary to publish the text, as it confirmed many of the positions that he had taken against the followers of Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200).⁷⁰ Thus, if it did not speak to the intellectual concerns of the early third century, *School Sayings of Confucius* would never have appeared; a less charitable judgment would be that Wang simply cobbled it together to provide doctrinal cover for his opinions. This subtle inability of questionable texts to escape their milieu is discernible even in works that contain genuine older

66 Goldin 2008a.

67 Campbell 1831: 93. The presence of Greek names such as Timothy (3 Nephi 19:4) is sufficient for most nonbelievers to doubt the orthodox account of *The Book of Mormon*. For more on Campbell’s critique of *The Book of Mormon*, see, e.g., Gutjahr 2012: 42ff.

68 The two most influential opinions have been those of Ma Xulun 1925 (a summary of which appears in Yang Bojun 1979: 301–305) and Graham 1986: 216–282. In the West, the case for the authenticity of *Liezi* is now usually taken to be hopeless, but several Chinese scholars still defend it (e.g., Ma Da 2000).

69 Yuan 2005; Dippmann 2011.

70 Kramers 1950: 91ff.; Goldin 1999: 138n53.

material within them. After all, much of the *Liezi*, and indeed almost the entirety of *School Sayings*, consist of passages with parallels in less controversial texts.

When we turn to the Confucian *Analects*, by contrast, we see very little that would have been germane to the primary philosophical questions of the early Han. There is no discussion of the structure of the universe, the imperial mandate, the science of gauging Heaven's intention on the basis of signs in the natural world, or the proper ritual and sumptuary distinctions for the various ranks in the social hierarchy—which were, to judge from the works of Lu Jia 陸賈 (ca. 228–ca. 140 BCE), Jia Yi 賈誼 (201–169 BCE), and Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179–ca. 104 BCE), the issues that excited philosophers at the highest level.⁷¹ By contrast, one of the most overt concerns of the *Analects* is to discourage the adoration of ghosts and spirits because they provide no useful moral guidance.⁷² This viewpoint would surely have aroused controversy during the period when Confucius lived, that is, the transition from Bronze Age religion to the more secular worldviews suited to the teeming society of the Eastern Zhou. But in the Han, it might almost have seemed quaint.

This difficulty should remind us that any theory of the compilation of the *Analects* is incomplete without an account of the purpose. People do not compose, record, and then preserve texts without some reason that, in their minds, justifies the effort. My suggestion is that the *Analects* was recorded to prevent Confucius's teachings from disappearing at a time when thoroughgoing social and political changes threatened old-fashioned methods of transmission, such as oral transmission from master to disciple. The survival of ideas in this new context could not be guaranteed if they were not written down. Mark Csikszentmihalyi has gathered compelling evidence to show that the *Analects* was “closely associated with the office of grand tutor to the Heir Apparent for much of the Western Hàn,” and it is a plausible hypothesis that the book was produced at that moment for use in the education of imperial princes.⁷³ But the weight of the evidence suggests that whoever was responsible for compiling this textbook included an overwhelming proportion of genuine material within it.

71 Goldin 2007.

72 Goldin 2011a: 13–14.

73 Csikszentmihalyi 2002: 149.

Epilogue

Readers will have noticed that the foregoing is predicated on certain convictions about the nature of ideas: they have distinct identities; they are not interchangeable; and, above all, they matter to people who hold or oppose them. I object to the notion, occasionally expressed in this volume and abundantly expressed beyond, that because our knowledge of the history of this or that ancient text remains imperfect, we cannot permit ourselves to say anything definite about the philosophy that it advances, or that attempting to take its ideas seriously can only result in a naïve reformulation of traditionalist prejudices. To be sure, texts are continually interpreted and reinterpreted, and no text that gains an appreciable audience can have the same meaning for every reader. (“Jamais deux personnes n’ont lu le même livre, ni regardé le même tableau,” according to Mme. Swetchine.) But I will always be fundamentally unpersuaded by an argument about a philosophical text that does not account for the philosophy.

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