

When *Zhong* 忠 Does Not Mean “Loyalty”

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Abstract One of the challenges of reading ancient Chinese philosophical texts is to recognize that certain keywords have attained significantly different senses in the more recent language, and to try to reconstruct, on the basis of contemporary documents, what these terms would have meant to classical audiences. One such term is *zhong* 忠, which is often mechanically translated as “loyalty.” Throughout the imperial period, and in many Eastern Zhou contexts, *zhong* did indeed mean something very similar to loyalty. However, simply plugging in the word “loyalty” every time one encounters *zhong* can lead to seriously incorrect translations, especially when dealing with texts from before the third century BCE. This article discusses a range of complex early meanings including “treating people right,” “being honest with oneself in dealing with others,” and “adjudicating a case fairly.” In addition, the relationship with *zhong* 中 is explored by means of a revealing Western Zhou bronze inscription.

Keywords Early Chinese philosophy · Loyalty · Problems of translation · Pre-Confucian philosophy

1 When *Zhong* 忠 Does Not Mean “Loyalty”

One of the challenges of reading ancient Chinese philosophical texts is to recognize that certain keywords have attained significantly different senses in the more recent language, and to try to reconstruct, on the basis of contemporary documents, what these terms would have meant to classical audiences. Both the scholastic commentaries in China and the influential Western translations by early missionaries tended to underestimate this problem. Today, for example, scholars agree that *fa* 法 can no longer be translated simply as “law,” and yet the misunderstandings reinforced by this longstanding misrepresentation have been profound (e.g., Creel 1970: 92–120).

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Another term whose ancient meaning is frequently misconstrued is *zhong* 忠, which is often mechanically translated as “loyalty.” Throughout the imperial period, and in many Eastern Zhou contexts, *zhong* did indeed mean something very similar to loyalty. The only nuance was that performing *zhong* entailed, above all, acting in the best interest of one’s lord, even if this involved openly remonstrating with him; some traditions, such as the *Sunzi* 孫子, went so far as to authorize disobeying the lord if one had reason to believe that it would bring him greater benefits (and as long as this was one’s true intention).¹ But, essentially the same considerations operate on the English word “loyalty” as well. We are not likely to declare a certain vassal fully “loyal” if, for example, he knows that obeying his lord’s command will lead to his lord’s ruin, yet silently obeys without explaining his misgivings.

However, simply plugging in the word “loyalty” every time one encounters *zhong* can lead to seriously incorrect translations, especially, as the following discussion aims to show, when dealing with texts from before the third century BCE. This suggests that “loyalty” is a derived meaning which gradually came to dominate in the late Warring States period and by post-Han times had all but supplanted the older, richer senses (Xu 2004; Fu 1990: 4f.; Graham 1989: 21). How this came to pass cannot be precisely explained by the available evidence, but inasmuch as the history of the word *zhong* seems to correlate with the development and eventual triumph of the bureaucratic state, it seems plausible that the word’s usefulness in denoting an indispensable political concept came to outweigh its usefulness in denoting anything else.

A straightforward early example of the use of *zhong* in the sense of “loyalty” appears in the *Xunzi* 荀子:

There are those who are loyal in the highest degree, those who are loyal in the second degree, those who are loyal in the lowest degree, and those who are despoilers of the state. To transform the lord by overspreading him with virtue: this is loyalty in the highest degree. To support the lord by attuning him through virtue: this is loyalty in the second degree. To anger the lord by using what is right to remonstrate against what is wrong: this is loyalty in the lowest degree. Not to care whether the lord is glorified or disgraced, not to care whether the state is good or not, to make secret pacts and curry favor, for no other purpose than to secure one’s own emolument and foster one’s associates: this is to be a despoiler of the state. (Wang 1988: 254; cf. the translation in Knoblock 1988–94: II, 202)²

Xunzi was not the first author to use *zhong* in this sense;³ the oldest source in which I have been able to find it is the “Knowing Loyalty” (“Zhizhong” 知忠) chapter of the *Shenzi* 慎子 (Wei 1936: 638–39; Thompson 1979: fragments 258–63).⁴ However, this is, *mutatis mutandis*, how the word is still understood even today: as a way of denoting the upright and vigilant service that underlings perform for their lords or employers. Such passages pose few interpretive problems even for modern readers.

¹ E.g., “There are commands of one’s lord that one does not accept” (YANG Bing’an 1999: 171). But this does not mean that the commander is disloyal: “He protects others and brings profit to his ruler; he is a treasure of state” (YANG Bing’an 1999: 227). Cf. also *Mencius* 1B9.

² All translations in this paper are my own unless otherwise indicated, but for each extended quotation from primary sources, I provide a reference to an alternative translation for the reader’s convenience.

³ However, LEE Cheuk Yin regards *Xunzi*’s usage of *zhong* as the sign of a crucial change (Lee 1991: 97ff.).

⁴ Assuming authenticity of the surviving *Shenzi* fragments. But it is not surprising that a renowned political philosopher should have been one of the first writers to cast *zhong* in this manner.

In line with the commonplace understanding of *zhong* as “loyalty,” some scholars have followed David S. Nivison’s opinion that *zhong* “is always directed toward superiors, or at most toward equals” (Nivison 1996: 65), and that *zhong* therefore cannot be an attribute of rulers (e.g., Pines 2002: 149; Van Norden 2002: 228). However, several passages contradict this theory. How, for example, is one to interpret the following statement from the *Application of Equilibrium* (*Zhongyong* 中庸)—in all likelihood a *later* text than *Xunzi*? “By being *zhong*, trustworthy, and redoubling their emoluments—this is how one encourages one’s men-of-service (忠信重祿，所以勸士也)” (Kong 1817: 1630a; cf. the translation in Plaks 2003: 40f.).⁵ This comes in the middle of a series of recommendations explaining how a lord can relate most effectively to various categories of subordinates. It should be obvious that translating *zhong* as “loyalty” here would yield a highly inappropriate sense. The references to “redoubling emoluments” and “encouraging men-of-service” indicate that the sentence is advising not vassals, but *lords*, to be *zhong*. To be sure, one may speak of “loyalty” to one’s inferiors (for example, “Ever loyal to his troops, the commander refused to sacrifice them in a lost cause”), but even this special kind of “loyalty” cannot be the same thing as what *Xunzi* described, in its various grades, in the above selection.

There are several knotty examples of this kind of *zhong* in the Confucian canon, which most translators have attempted to render as “loyalty” (or some cognate), even as they seem to recognize that this cannot be exactly right. Consider this quote from the *Zuozhuan* 左傳:

What I mean by being ruled according to reason, is showing a loyal *love* for the people, and a faithful worship of the Spirits. When the ruler thinks *only* of benefiting the people, that is loyal loving of them; when the priests’ words are all correct, that is faithful worship (所謂道，忠於民而信於神也。上思利民，忠也。祝史正辭，信也). (YANG Bojun 1990: I, 111; tr. Legge 1893–95: V, 48)

The translation is from James Legge (1815–1897). As one can see, Legge was not prepared to give up the sense of “loyalty” for *zhong*, but must have recognized that it seems somewhat odd to speak of a ruler’s loyalty to the people (as opposed to the people’s loyalty to their ruler, a much more conventional concept). His solution was to add the word “love.” “Loyal love” might, at first glance, seem to produce a satisfactory sense for *zhong* in this context, but other passages show that Legge has basically gone astray by assuming that the word must bear some relation to “loyalty.” For example, Legge is even harder-pressed in another line from the same text:

The duke said *again*, “In all matters of legal process, whether great or small, although I may not be able to search them out *thoroughly*, I make it a point to decide according to the real circumstances” (公曰：“小大之獄，雖不能察，必以情”).

“That,” answered Kwei, “bespeaks a leal-heartedness” (對曰：“忠之屬也”)⁶ (YANG Bojun 1990: I, 183; tr. Legge 1893–95: V, 86)

⁵ There are other Han examples. JIA Yi 賈誼 (201–169 BCE) lists *zhong* as one of the virtues that a tutor should instill in a future emperor; elsewhere (Yan and Zhong 2000: 172), the same text (Yan and Zhong 2000: 303) defines *zhong* as an impulse “to love and benefit [people] emerging from one’s core (愛利出中).” JIA Yi’s understanding of *zhong* is analyzed (inconclusively) in Svarverud 1998: 204–7. Similarly, according to the theory of dynastic cycles of DONG Zhongshu 董仲舒 (fl. 152–119 BCE), *zhong* was the cardinal virtue exemplified by Yao 堯, Shun 舜, and the Xia 夏 dynasty; in this context, Gary Arbuckle translates *zhong* as “wholeheartedness” (Arbuckle 1995: 591 *et passim*).

⁶ The parallel in *Speeches of the States* 1978 (4.151) does not include the detail that the lord’s habits are praised as *zhong*.

“Leal-hearted” is recognized as a word by the *Oxford English Dictionary*; it derives from “leal,” meaning “loyal, faithful, honest, true.” Although it was already an unusual word by Legge’s time, it is not hard to imagine why he chose it. Rendering *zhong* as “loyalty” in this passage would be even more problematic, inasmuch as we do not normally think of a *fair* or *conscientious* adjudicator as necessarily a *loyal* person. Yet Legge was still not ready to try a completely different sense, and settled on the compromise of “leal-heartedness”—which is really not much more than a fancy way of saying “loyalty,” but suggests, by its rarity, that Legge spent a lot of time ruminating about how to translate the word.

It is worth noting that this other sense of *zhong* as something that lords do in behalf of, or with reference to, their subjects is attested in the *Mozi* 墨子 as well:

The enlightened kings and sages of the past ruled the world and kept the feudal lords in line because they loved the people with due *zhong* and profited the people with due riches. *Zhong* and trust are linked to each other; as [the people] were shown profit in addition, they were not wearied throughout their lives and felt no fatigue until they departed from the world (古者明王聖人，所以王天下，正諸侯者，彼其愛民謹忠，利民謹厚，忠信相連，又示之以利，是以終身不厭，歿世而不卷). (Wu 1993: 254; cf. the translation in Mei 1929: 120)

Rarely is it noted that the Moist Canons (A 12) define the term *zhong*, and the definition has nothing to do with loyalty: “*Zhong* is to fortify the lowly because one considers this profitable (忠，以為利而強低也)” (Wu 1993: 469).

Many commentators over the centuries have assumed that *di* 低 (rendered above as “the lowly”) must be an erroneous graph, and have hastened to propose alternate readings (YANG Junguang 2002: 129; Graham 1978: 274), but the definition, as it stands, fits the use of *zhong* in the other Moist passage (Tan 1964: 91). As far as the Moists are concerned, *zhong* means treating the lowest members of the population generously, perhaps in the expectation that they will repay such consideration with tireless labor. If this *zhong* has any connection with “loyalty,” then, it might mean “fostering loyalty.” However, the basic sense of *zhong* in all the above examples seems to be something close to “treating people right.”

2 *Zhong* in Early Confucian Ethics

There is another, and probably more familiar, set of contexts in which *zhong* does not mean “loyalty.” Consider the following famous passage from *Application of Equilibrium* (cited here in the translation of Wing-tsit Chan, which will be critiqued below):

Conscientiousness (*zhong*) and altruism (*shu*) are not far from the Way. What you do not wish others to do to you, do not do to them. There are four things in the Way of the superior man, none of which I have been able to do. To serve my father as I would expect my son to serve me: that I have not been able to do. To serve my ruler as I would expect my ministers to serve me: that I have not been able to do. To serve my elder brothers as I would expect my younger brothers to serve me: that I have not been able to do. To be the first to treat friends as I would expect them to treat me: that I have not been able to do (忠恕違道不遠。施諸己而不願，亦勿施於人。君子之道四，丘未能一焉。所求乎子，以事父，未能也；所求乎臣，以事君，未能也；所求乎弟，以事兄，未能也；所求乎朋友，先施之，未能也). (Kong 1817: 1627ab; tr. CHAN Wing-tsit 1963: 101)

Chan’s “conscientiousness” and “altruism” are unsatisfactory renderings of *zhong* and *shu*.⁷ The two terms appear together in *Analects* 4.15, where they are identified by a disciple as the two elements of the Confucian Way. To cite D.C. Lau’s translation: “The way of the Master consists in doing one’s best and in using oneself as a measure to gauge the likes and dislikes of others. That is all (夫子之道，忠恕而已矣)” (Lau 1992: 33; CHENG Shude 1990: 263). “Doing one’s best” and “using oneself as a measure to gauge others” are Lau’s renderings of *zhong* and *shu*, respectively; the English reader would never know that these are precisely the same Chinese terms for which Chan has “conscientiousness” and “altruism.”

“Using oneself as a measure to gauge others” is close to the sense of *shu*. Confucius himself defines the term as a form of the Golden Rule (*Analects* 15:24): “Zigong asked, ‘Is there a single word that one can put into practice throughout one’s life?’ The Master said, ‘Is it not *shu*? What you yourself do not desire, do not do to others’” (CHENG Shude 1990: 1106; cf. the translation in Lau 1992: 155). *Shu* is also the method of *ren* 仁, “humanity” (*Analects* 6.30):

One who is humane, wishing to establish himself, establishes others; wishing to make himself successful, he makes others successful. The ability to take what is nearest [i.e. oneself] as an analogy can be called the method of humanity.⁸ (CHENG Shude 1990: 428; cf. the translation in Lau 1992: 55)

These passages make the force of *shu* clear: *shu* is placing oneself in the position of others, and acting toward them as one imagines they would desire. How can one possibly imagine what someone else would desire? By taking oneself as an analogy.

However, Lau’s “doing one’s best” and Chan’s “conscientiousness” both miss the sense of *zhong*. When dealing with others, Confucius asserts (*Analects* 13.19), be *zhong* (與人忠). As we have just seen that in dealing with others one ought to be *shu*, this means that we must be both *zhong* and *shu* at the same time; it can be no accident, therefore, that both the *Analects* and *Application of Equilibrium* mention the two terms together. *Zhong* also tends to be associated with *xin* 信, “trustworthiness” (Fu 1990: 9; Fingarette 1979: 389ff.): “Esteem *zhong* and trustworthiness” (*zhu zhong xin* 主忠信; *Analects* 1.8; CHENG Shude 1990: 34); and again: “If your words are *zhong* and trustworthy, your actions generous and respectful, then even if you are in the states of the Man or Mo barbarians, you will carry on (言忠信，行篤敬，雖蠻貊之邦，行矣)” (*Analects* 15.6; CHENG Shude 1990: 1056).⁹

Taking into account the propinquity of *zhong* to both *shu*, “reciprocity,” and *xin*, “trustworthiness,” I propose the definition “being honest with oneself in dealing with others” for *zhong*. The qualification “in dealing with others” is crucial: one never finds any sort of action characterized as *zhong* unless it involves another human being. The sense of

⁷ On *zhong* and *shu*, see esp. Fingarette 1979 (discussed in Van Norden 2002: 216–36; and Ivanhoe 1990). See also CHAN Sin Yee 1999; and Nivison 1996: 59–76.

⁸ Compare Mencius 7A4: “Act assiduously with *shu*; in seeking *ren*, nothing is more direct than this” (Jiao 1987: 883).

⁹ Friendship, moreover, is defined as “admonishing with *zhong* and guiding with goodness (忠告而善道之)” (*Analects* 12.23; CHENG Shude 1990: 877).

“being honest with oneself in dealing with others” is lucidly illustrated by the usage of *zhong* in Master Zeng’s triple self-examination (*Analects* 1.4):

Master Zeng said: “Everyday I examine myself on three counts. In planning on behalf of others, have I failed to be *zhong*? In associating with friends, have I failed to be trustworthy? Have I transmitted anything that I do not practice habitually? (曾子曰: “吾日三省吾身。為人謀而不忠乎?與朋友交而不信乎?傳不習乎?”) (CHENG Shude 1990: 18; cf. the translation in Lau 1992: 3)

Master Zeng is worried not that he may have done less than his “best”—for that would be too diffuse to be of much philosophical value—but that he may have failed to represent other people’s interests faithfully. *Zhong*, therefore, bespeaks a scrupulous self-analysis necessary to ensure the integrity of *shu*. Confucius tells us that we must relate to other people by taking ourselves as an analogy, by placing ourselves in the position of our comrades. However, this requires that we be vigilantly self-aware, lest we come to pretend that what is immediately and unreflectively advantageous to *us* is somehow advantageous to those whom we deal with.

Consider also *Analects* 5.19:

Zizhang asked: “Prime Minister Ziwen was thrice installed as prime minister, and his countenance was without joy. He was thrice dismissed from office, and his countenance was without sadness. He considered it his obligation to give a report of his administration to the new prime minister. What sort of a man was he? (子張問曰: “令尹子文三仕為令尹，無喜色；三已之，無愠色。舊令尹之政，必以告新令尹。何如?”) (CHENG Shude 1990: 331; cf. the translation in Lau 1992: 41–43)

The Master answers: “He is *zhong*” (though not anything more than that). The usual explanation is that Ziwen is a man who serves his ruler loyally, caring little about his personal fortunes. However, the understanding of *zhong* outlined above would entail a slightly different interpretation. Ziwen is *zhong* because he does not allow his concern for his own welfare to affect his behavior toward others. How should he treat his successor? *Shu* determines the answer: he should treat his successor as he himself would want to be treated by the former prime minister, were he in his successor’s position (Nivison 1996: 66; Van Norden 2002: 227f.; Fu 1990: 9f.). If Ziwen is chagrined by his lord’s fickle treatment, his grievance has nothing to do with the incoming prime minister, who wishes to know only such information as is pertinent to his new government. Ziwen, therefore, believes he must rein in his emotions if they interfere with his practice of *shu*.

3 The Etymology of *Zhong* 忠 and Its Relationship with *Zhong* 中

How does *zhong* come to mean “being honest with oneself in dealing with others,” and what accounts for the diverse Sinological misunderstandings of it? Lau’s and Chan’s translations of *zhong* (“doing one’s best” and “conscientiousness,” respectively) both seem to be inspired by the medieval definition of *zhong* as “making the most of oneself” (*jinji* 盡己), that is, making the most of one’s *xing* 性.¹⁰ Following such Neo-Confucian usage is anachronistic, to say the least, especially since *zhong* appears in early Confucian (and even pre-Confucian) discourse long before the emergence of the dispute over human nature. It is

¹⁰ I believe the oldest reference is Cheng and Cheng 2004: 315.

probably best, therefore, simply to set aside all renderings of *zhong* that are based on *jinji* as vestiges of scholastic exegesis.

The other question—why *zhong* means something more complex than “loyalty”—is not easy to answer definitively, but the connection with *zhong* 中 cannot go unnoticed. Inasmuch as *zhong* 忠 and *zhong* 中 are phonologically indistinguishable, even in Old Chinese, the first reasonable line of inquiry is to see whether they might merely be different ways of writing the same word. Thus one might find clues about the etymology of *zhong* 忠 by looking at the usage of *zhong* 中.

Although the most readily perceived senses of *zhong* 中 today are in the semantic realm of “center, middle” (together with the derived senses of “to hit the target,” even “to follow”—sometimes written 仲), Axel Schuessler’s useful and still neglected dictionary shows that “justice” and “impartiality” were prominent senses in early times (Schuessler 1987: 843–44).¹¹ This usage is especially common in passages dealing with the right way to handle legal proceedings. (The repeated references to litigation in bronze inscriptions bespeak an urgent social need for impartial judges.)¹² Consider this section from the *Documents* (*Shu* 書):

The king said: “Oh, be reverent about it! Officials, aldermen, and those who are related to me and share my surname—I speak with much trepidation. I am reverent about the law; only if it is virtuous is it the law. Now Heaven aids the people, and has made us its helpmates below. Be enlightened and clear [when considering] one side [of a case]. As one who brings order to the people, do not fail to be impartial [*buzhong* 不中] when hearing both sides of a case. Do not, for the sake of private advantage, be disorderly [when considering] both sides of a case. Lucre [obtained through corruption] is not a precious thing; it is but a storehouse of guilty actions, and is recompensed with many ills. What you must always fear is [Heaven’s] punishment. It is not that Heaven fails to be impartial; it is people, when performing their charge, [who fail]. If Heaven’s punishment were not so extreme, the common people would never have good government in the world.” (Gu and Liu 2005: IV, 2055; cf. the translation in Legge 1893–95: III, 609–10)

A similar emphasis on maintaining an attitude of *zhong* 中 is found in the famous *Mugui* 牧簋 inscription (ninth century BCE).¹³ The king’s charge reads:

Mu, long ago the former king commanded you to serve as Manager of Servicemen.¹⁴ Now I shall promote you and order you to oversee the Hundred Officials. In their court affairs, they are very disorderly; they do not apply the laws made by the former kings and also frequently abuse the common people. In their interrogations, they are often captious; they do not cleave to the law and are not impartial [*buzhong* 不中]. For

¹¹ Regrettably, Schuessler’s more recent dictionary does not include these senses (Schuessler 2007: 621).

¹² A famous example is the *Hu ding* 鬲鼎, which celebrates two successful lawsuits that Hu pursued as plaintiff. The inscription goes out of its way to mention that Hu was on friendly terms with the judge presiding over the first case. For the text, see *Complete Collection of Yin and Zhou Bronze Inscriptions: Transcriptions* 2001, II, 414 (i.e. inscription 2838). On legal cases in bronze inscriptions generally, see Shaughnessy 1999: 327f., and the sources cited there.

¹³ The *Mugui* is known only from two Song catalogues (Lü 1781: 3.27a–28b; and XUE Shangong 1633: 14.70), and thus is vulnerable to irresolvable doubts about its authenticity. The inscription is generally accepted as genuine, but crucial interpretive problems remain (Li Feng 2004).

¹⁴ The translation of this title is from Hucker 1985: 5761. For more on the office of *sishi* 司士, see Zhang and Liu 1986: 38–39. Li Feng reads this term as the better known *situ* 司土 (Li Feng 2004: 287).

this they are to be consigned to death. Now moderate and direct them; quell their crimes and investigate their reasons.¹⁵

Although several textual difficulties prevent this from being anything more than a tentative translation, the main points are clear. In particular, the reference to the bureaucrats' unjust interrogations is noteworthy: these are exactly the kind of venal magistrates who are condemned in the *Documents* for failing to grant equal consideration to both sides in a legal case. After granting Mu what seems to be an extraordinary promotion, the king does not neglect to remind him of the importance of impartiality: "Do not dare to be anything less than enlightened, impartial, and in conformity with the law (毋敢不明不中不刑)."

This sustained and evidently quite conventional use of *zhong* 中 in connection with legal proceedings (Li Feng 2004: 293) reminds one of Legge's "leal-hearted" duke from the *Zuozhuan*. Let us revisit that lord's proud assertion: "Whether the case is great or small, even if I am unable to analyze the matter, I force myself to [decide] according to the truth of the matter (小大之獄，雖不能察，必以情)." This principle, we remember, is immediately praised as "in the category of *zhong* (忠之屬也)." As we have seen, judges who decide cases fairly and conscientiously were called *zhong* 中 as far back as the Western Zhou. Consequently, removing the heart-radical 心 from this *zhong* 忠—in other words, replacing *zhong* 忠 with *zhong* 中—would not alter the meaning at all. In such contexts, the two graphs are essentially interchangeable: a *zhong* 中/忠 governor is one who hears both sides of a case, refuses to take one side for mercenary reasons, and therefore renders impartial decisions. (Moreover, with his high-minded conduct, he earns the loyalty of his subordinates.) One does not need to move very far from this archaic ideal of adjudicating cases without bias to arrive at the typically Confucian sense of *zhong* 忠 as "being honest with oneself in dealing with others."

Even in pre-modern times, however, ordinary readers of Chinese would probably not have instinctively regarded *zhong* 中 and *zhong* 忠 as denoting the same virtue (at least not before embarking on a specialized study of the very early usage of *zhong* 中 that we have examined here).¹⁶ This raises the possibility that *zhong* 忠 began to go its separate way, into the semantic domain of "loyalty," as the regularization of the script associated it permanently with the heart-radical. Before the time when *zhong* 中 and *zhong* 忠 were distinguished consistently by the writing system, they must still have been regarded as the same word; by the same token, the fact that the script eventually separated the two graphs, which can only reflect a scribal need for differentiation, shows that the protean *zhong* 中 graph had come to be regarded as underdetermined. Thus it seems significant that in the Guodian 郭店 manuscripts, the character *zhong* 忠 is sedulously written with the heart-radical on each occasion (Cheung et al. 1999: 190).¹⁷ By the third century BCE, it was

¹⁵ Following the transcription in *Complete Collection of Yin and Zhou Bronze Inscriptions: Transcriptions* 2001, III, 483 (i.e. inscription 4343), with several emendations proposed by Li Xueqin (Li Xueqin 2003: 53f.). See also the commentary and translation in Li Feng 2004: 286–91 (evidently drafted before the publication of Li Xueqin's article); and Shirakawa 1964–84: fascicle 19, 365.

¹⁶ Nor are the two words routinely associated by native speakers today; in a recent study of *zhong* 中, for example, ZHANG Libo 張立波 does not once consider its connection to *zhong* 忠 (ZHANG Libo 2006).

¹⁷ The graph *zhong* 中 is never used in this corpus in the sense of *zhong* 忠 (Cheung et al. 1999: 15). In fact, at one juncture, the Shanghai Museum version of the text known as *Xingqing lun* 性情論 uses the character *zhong* 中 in place of *zhong* 忠 (Ma et al. 2001–: I, 298), but the corresponding text in the Guodian *Xing zi ming chu* 性自命出 has *zhong* 忠. (I am grateful to Robert Eno for this reference.) This suggests both that the Guodian scribes distinguished between the two graphs with unprecedented consistency, and that the Shanghai Museum manuscripts may be older than the Guodian manuscripts.

evidently not considered possible to dispense with the heart-radical and still avoid confusion. Future archaeological discoveries promise to shed even more light on the early history of the 忠 graph; indeed, the received texts having been systematically regularized by early imperial redactors, paleography promises to offer the *only* means to trace the distinction between *zhong* 中 and *zhong* 忠.

To conclude: students of Chinese philosophy need to be aware that *zhong* 忠 does not always mean “loyalty,” especially not in the earliest contexts, and should consider its more complex ethical connotations when they encounter the term in their reading.

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