

A Reading of the Guōdiàn 郭店 Manuscript *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1 as a Masterpiece of Early Chinese Analytic Philosophy and Conceptual Analysis

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Abstract. This paper attempts a detailed philosophical interpretation of the Guōdiàn fragments published under the name *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1. These fragments have been grouped together on the basis of purely physical criteria. Remarkably, they all turn out to be interpretable as sophisticated statements of related to problems of conceptual analysis. *Yǔcóng* 1 is thus shown to be something of a non-Mohist treatise of analytic philosophy and of logical analysis. A striking feature of *Yǔcóng* 1 turns out to be the pervasive interest in logical paradox.

In this exploratory paper I shall try to argue that *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1 is not at all like the *Táncóng* 談叢 chapter of the *Shuōyuàn* 說苑. It does not consist of *yǔ* 語 “speech, talk (as part of dialogue)” and is not a *cóng* 叢 “congeries” at all. I shall also try to show that it deserves more philosophical attention than it has received so far.¹

The title *Yǔcóng* 語叢 is chosen, and universally accepted as far as I can see, because this document is said to be comparable to two chapters in *Shuōyuàn* 說苑, *Táncóng* 談叢, and in *Huáinánzǐ* 淮南子, *Shuōlín* 說林. ([26]) In fact, the *Huáinánzǐ* chapter is quite different in structure and content from *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1, since it provides narrative illustrations, and what is lacking in *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1 is exactly these *shuō* 說 “explanations/elaborations”. The *Shuōyuàn* 說苑 chapter is indeed a collection of current sayings, *geflogelte Worte*. But the *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1 will be shown to be nothing remotely of the kind. The comparison with these two chapters is profoundly misleading, as will be seen in what follows.

I want to show that it can be read as something more like a truncated *jīng* 經 “canon” of sophisticated abstract propositions of considerable logical interest, a variant on the *Mòjīng* 墨經 “Canons of the *Mòzǐ*”. All I can pretend to prove is that the document CAN be read in this way. It is for the bamboo specialists to decide whether they want to read it this way, and perhaps they may even aspire to decide to what extent it should indeed be read in this way.

I used to believe that the intellectual style of the dialectical chapters of the *Mòzǐ* 墨子, the so-called *Mòjīng* 墨經 were special to the Mohist tradition, but it seems to

me that *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1 shows that non-Mohist more conventional thinkers of the Late Warring States period were writing in something of the same spirit of logical analysis.

In any case, for what I take to be this truncated analytic *jīng* 經 “canon” I shall try my best to reconstruct a relevant elaborated *shuō* 說 “explanation”. And this I submit for discussion by the many specialists who are more familiar with the conventions of excavated Chinese literature than I am.

At the outset I must also confess the sad fact that I have never physically seen any of the excavated objects I here discuss. I do not know anyone who has seen and studied them physically and carefully in the bamboo. I do not know anyone who has witnessed the production of the very beautiful objects that have been photographed for us. For some profoundly unsettling reason everyone I know seems to have had to rely on photographs only, without any knowledge of exactly how the objects came to be made to look as they do look in these photographs.

It is even more unsettling that I have never seen any carefully documented and professionally photographed detailed scientific archaeological report on how exactly the bamboo strips I am discussing in this paper have come to have their present shape.

For a scientist it is curious to have to discuss physical objects one has never been allowed to see with one’s own eyes.

Method

In the interpretation of excavated literature one must be prepared to argue for documented separate answers to at least all of the following six independent questions, and in the following order, before one can enter into questions of substantial overall interpretation of the hermeneutics of the text:

- A. What exactly is the correct explicit *lì shū* 隸書 transcription A of what we see in the bamboo graph X?
- B. What exactly is to be considered the standard *lì shū* 隸書 form B for which A stands.
- C. What exactly is the standard *lì shū* 隸書 character C which is taken to be written by B.
- D. What exactly is the ancient Chinese word D which is written here by the character C.
- E. What exactly is the lexeme meaning E, irrespective of the syntactic function of the word D in this context.
- F. What exactly is the relevant lexeme entry, including the exact syntactic function, of the lexeme E in this particular context.

The best of the current commentaries on excavated texts that I know often do not pose these questions separately and distinctly, and even where they do answer them, they rarely provide documented arguments for the answers chosen versus the possible alternatives that are rejected:

- A. The identification of clerical script transcriptions A, though often controversial, are generally argued for *ex auctoritate* only.
- B. The identification of standard forms B is typically unargued for, but not necessarily uncontroversial.
- C. The question of which standard forms C are to be chosen is typically wide open to unargued-for conjecture.
- D. The decision on which ancient Chinese word D is written by C often remains wide open to disagreement.
- E. The decision which general meaning E of the word D is relevant in the context is again wide open to disagreement. This decision on the relevant general meaning of a word should probably be distinguished from a distinct syntactic question, although one might take these to be just two aspects of one and the same lexical decision.

The point is that when one says X 讀為 Y “X is to be read as Y”, where Y typically has a considerable range of syntactic functions, the current statement of the form X 讀為 Y “X is to be read as Y” is quite inadequate as an answer to the question of how exactly the given X is to be *understood*. F. The decision in which syntactic functional meaning F the general meaning E is to be construed in the present context is again highly problematic. Even when it is answered in translation, it is not generally answered on the basis of explicit arguments showing that F is preferable to alternatives.

What is disconcerting about the constitution of the texts I am about to interpret is that what might seem to be reconstruction of characters and emendation of texts turns out, in fact, to be much closer to what is known as *informed conjecture*. There is a recurrent *circulus vitiosus* “a vicious circle” in which the texts get established by emendations based on the very assumptions that these same texts are then taken to prove. Again and again one is tempted to deliberately reconstruct passages in such a way that as one gets to the point of interpreting them it will happen to turn out that they conveniently support one’s preconceived conclusions about the text as a whole. Reconstruction comes to be full of self-fulfilling promise.

I do not know how to escape from this hermeneutic predicament. Interpreting this kind of text is very much like interpreting a medieval musical score: one’s interpretation is systematically underdetermined by the score which it is an interpretation of. Even when Casals plays his Bach cello suites as well as he does, his interpretations are never presented as more than one way in which Pablo Casals felt, on a given occasion, that these cello suites were best played. I do not claim that I play my bamboos anywhere as well as Casals played his suites, but my interpretations - though based on many years of reflection - always remain underdetermined by the text and notoriously ephemeral in nature. Indeed, my argument is that our bamboo textual score is deliberately and defiantly enigmatic. Therein lies a profound difference to

the radically underspecified medieval musical scores as well as Bach's written scores.

THE TITLE

凡物由亡生。²

As a matter of principle, things originate coming from where they were/are not.

1. The notion of *shēng* 生 “origination” is at the heart of much material in the *Guōdiàn* 郭店 manuscripts, very much including the present *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1. The statement above works towards a logical and conceptual analysis of this concept. It is not a narrative cosmological account of how things originated. On this point, as the definitions that follow show very clearly, our text contrasts radically with *Lǎozǐ*'s cosmogony:

天下萬物生於有，All the myriad kinds of things arise from Being, 有生於無。and Being arises from Nothingness.



slip 104³

2. It is important to recognise that this title is not descriptive but constitutes a logical analysis of a concept, namely that concept of origination. Thus this does not constitute a description what things were found to be like when they were originating, or what they are like when they are originating. This constitutes a logical analysis of what it is for a thing to originate in the first place, very much in an Aristotelian spirit of philosophical clarification.

3. This analytic statement, we shall find, sets the scene for the whole of *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1, which constitutes a long series of highly abbreviated results of logical analysis, much in the style of the Dialectical Chapters of the *Mòjīng* 墨經.

4. *Fán* 凡 must not be misunderstood the way it is misunderstood in the big dictionaries, or as the immensely useful recent dictionary 王力古漢語詞典 p. 64 has it, as “所有的，一切的” “all; the whole lot”. The matter is worth dwelling on.

The word *fán* 凡 practically never means just “all”: it is a heavily abstract modal particle meaning something like “as a matter of principle”, and as in the case of *fū* 夫 the sentences introduced by *fán* 凡 must always be non-narrative and not descriptive in a tensed way. The particle *fán* 凡 thus functions as a generalising abstract modal particle. It is worth dwelling on this point because it shows the common phenomenon of handbooks tending to agree on very basic points of grammar that are manifest misunderstandings.

²See [21], p. 183 “凡物由亡生”即“老子”的“有生於無”。

³All pictures used in this paper are taken from [14].

5. 勿, transcribed here as 物, depicts a knife with drops of blood, and the early reference of this word, in the oracle bones, does seem to be to (possibly castrated) sacrificial animals. It is interesting to note that the word refers here not only to the more general meaning “creature”, not only to the even more general meaning “thing”, but much more abstractly to the general notion of any “object/phenomenon”.

The subject of of this general theoretical proposition is the notion of the origination of anything whatsoever. For example, “heat” can only originate where it was not before it originated.

6. The simple graph 由 is widely attested in the Chǔ manuscripts. We need to know what may have caused a scribe to use what may well have been a puzzling graph even in his own time, and what certainly was an extraordinarily laborious character to choose to write for a scribe who we have every reason to believe was paid by the character. Why would a scribe take the time to write a very complex character when it would appear that he could have got away with writing a much quicker and simpler one. The identification of this character is abundantly confirmed in several contexts in the rest of the chapter.

7. *Yóu* 由 is a transitive verb specialised which makes a verb phrase that modifies another verbal expression, in this case *shēng* 生.

*⁴ 8. Regarding *wàng* 望 [26] conjectures that 字在此疑當讀為亡無 “the character, I suspect, should here be read as *wáng* (*wú*)”. This is universally accepted by other scholars. However, the matter is far from clear. The reading *wú* for 亡 is interesting for methodological reasons and deserves the following probably excessively long philological excursion. What is well-attested everywhere is the meaning “無” for the word written as 亡. What is actually not at all well-attested in the earliest sources is the pronunciation corresponding to modern Chinese *wú*. Lù Démíng 陸德明 is pervasively uncertain about the reading in his *Jīngdiǎnshìwén* 經典釋文 and clearly does not want to commit himself to the reading *wú* anywhere.

p. 169, *Liji* I.16b glosses the phrase 有無 as follows: 皇如字，無也。一音無。下同。

p. 192 *Liji* II.26a, commenting on 亡則 the gloss is 如字。又音無。 and p. 203 如字，無也。一音無。

p. 256, *Zuozhuan* 3.22a we have the very interesting comment: 如字，猶無也。讀者或音無。

p. 281, *Zuozhuan* 5.14b: 音無。又音如字。

p. 329, *Guliangzhuan* 9b and 11a: 音無。又如字。

p. 332, *Guliangzhuan* 15a: 音無。一音如字。

p. 348, *Lunyu* 8b1: 如字。一音無。

⁴Notes preceded by an asterisk are of special interest to sinologists only.

p. 355, *Lunyu* 21b: 如字。無也。

p. 370, *Zhuangzi* I.22b. 如字。

It turns out that there is not one case in which Lù Démíng settles unambiguously for the pronunciation *wú*. When *Guǎngyùn* 廣韻 does not register the reading *wú* this cannot be because it did not know of the meaning “無”, but the dictionary did not recognise any new pronunciation under that meaning. The *Jiyùn* 集韻 records the reading because of its generally much laxer policy of inclusion of problematic readings.

The graphs for 望 in our text seem to suggest that Lù Démíng’s intuitions were right, and that in the meaning “無” the character 亡 must probably not be read as the phonetic predecessor of *wú*, but closer to the pronunciation the character *wàng* 望. (We shall see below that a closely similar problem arises for the character 食.)

The issue involves some very serious questions that I have never seen discussed properly anywhere: What exactly is meant by a gloss like “亡音無”? Thus, when commentators disagree about pronunciations of characters they may disagree about four very different things:

- A. the presumed ancient pronunciation by the author,
- B. the observed correct pronunciation in the language of the commentator,
- C. the traditional practice of pronunciation when reading ancient texts in schools,
- D. the recommended paedagogical practice of pronunciation when reading texts in schools.

When a phonetic gloss is first attested in Han times, in Six Dynasties times, in Táng or even in Sòng times, we need to be sure, in each case, whether the gloss constitutes a guess on presumed ancient pronunciation, observed current pronunciation, a report on traditional school pronunciation, or a recommendation for future school practice. Otherwise, when comparing two competing glosses, we will continue to compare one commentator who is reconstructing what he conceives of as the ancient pronunciation, with another who is recommending a paedagogically useful pronunciation for use in reading classical Chinese texts in schools.

To the extent basic problems of this order concerning the very nature of ancient phonetic glosses are not faced squarely and resolved satisfactorily, reconstruction of Chinese historical phonology will remain fundamentally ill founded. And it needs to be kept in mind that neatly systematic and paedagogically useful late readings are in fact the most likely to turn out to have been well-meaning paedagogical rationalisations rather than objective observations or source-based recordings of historical fact.

9. The punctuation in *Yúcóng* 語叢 1 is highly significant: it marks the end of propositions with a striking degree of regularity which contrasts very much with punctuation practice for example in the Laozi manuscripts.

10. The logical point, informally put, is that if you want to “originate” in a place, you must be sure first not to exist in the place where you want to originate. Origination logically implies a stage of non-existence in a place, followed by a stage of existence in that same place.

11. Remarkably, there are two copies of this line: slip 1 gives the title, and slip 104 repeats the proposition. In fact, the slips 1 and 104 have remarkably different graphs for 望.

I propose to discuss the propositions in *Yücong* 語叢 1 under my own headings of convenience which try to highlight the intellectual ambitions which I shall try to demonstrate predominate in this text. A quick survey of these headings may serve as an intellectual menu by means of which the impatient reader find quickly whatever topics seem promising.

1. METAPHYSICS: ON THINGS AS SUCH, AND THEIR NAMES

- 1.1 On the very notion of a changing thing
- 1.2 On ontological self-determination
- 1.3 On the criteria for being the thing one is, and for being extended
- 1.4 On the earthly nature of form and exhaustibility as a necessary condition for extension
- 1.5 On things and the criteria of their identity as the things they are and on naming as the criterion of the names naming the things they name
- 1.6 On the link between designation and criteria for the application of designations as the basis for the generalisation of the application of designations

2. HEAVEN, EARTH, MAN AND FATE

- 2.1 On the heavenly realm of ordained fate and the earthly realm of physical shapes
- 2.2 On the logical relations between three basic types of understanding: that of Heaven’s movements, that of human actions, that of the Way of things, and that of ordained Fate
- 2.3 On a necessary condition of an understanding of Fate

3. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The highly abstract analytic spirit comes out in other definitions of concepts such as that of “seeking”, which is central to all manner of intellectual investigation, but which would not in fact count as an ethical or metaphysical keyword.

- 3.1 On the logical conditions for being called a sage
- 3.2 On completeness as the conceptual essence of sagehood
- 3.3 On a logical entailment of sagehood
- 3.4 On the accessibility of the ‘arts’ and sagehood to objective investigation

- 3.5 On two basic types of investigation
 - 3.6 On cognitive presuppositions contained in concepts: the cases of humanheartedness, rectitude, and of beauty
 - 3.7 On the very notion of seeking
 - 3.8 On the very notion of lacking
4. CONCEPTUAL PARADOXES
- 4.1 On existence being a function of having a name
 - 4.2 On proliferation leading to absence
 - 4.3 On delimiting a number opening for unlimited delimiting
 - 4.4 On remaining in one's place through moving
 - 4.5 On being right about being in the wrong
 - 4.6 On the same communicating with the same
5. PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY
- 5.1 On the realms of reality and the human organs in charge of them
 - 5.2 On the necessary conditions of the possibility of likes and dislikes
 - 5.3 On some psychological and physical features of creatures endowed with the material features of having blood and vital energies
 - 5.4 On the genealogy of social hierarchy
 - 5.5 On the genealogy of precedence
 - 5.6 On the fundamental distinction between kinship relations versus elective relations
 - 5.7 On two subtypes of elective relations: the hierarchical versus the horizontal
 - 5.8 On two alternatives left to those under the sway of power
 - 5.9 On the vexation associated with the joys of life
6. THE NATURE OF MORAL ACTION
- 6.1 On the impossibility of managing to do what one makes a point of doing
 - 6.2 On the impossibility of doing what is right by setting out to practise rectitude
 - 6.3 On the possibility of investigating the good and the impossibility to set out to be good (because one would only be pretending to be good)
 - 6.4 On the impossibility of setting out to be the person one is
 - 6.5 On action as considered choice, and failure to act in accordance with one's choice as weakness of the will
7. VIRTUES
- 7.1 On the very nature of the concept of morality
 - 7.2 On the ontogenesis of humanheartedness
 - 7.3 On the very essence of humanheartedness
 - 7.4 On the symmetry of the notion of good faith, and its failure to suggest equality

- 7.5 On affection-generating versus respect-generating virtues
- 7.6 On endogenic versus exogenic virtues humanheartedness and rectitude
- 7.7 On the endogenic versus the exogenic virtues
- 7.8 On the endogenic versus exogenic origins of man's superior status in the world
- 7.9 On the precarious fragility of determination and good faith

8. RITUAL, MUSIC AND PUNISHMENTS

- 8.1 On constraints on the deviation from prototypes: the case of ritual propriety
- 8.2 On the nature of conceptual origination regarding music and punitive coercion
- 8.3 On the logical primacy of ritual propriety vis-a-vis punitive coercion
- 8.4 On the nature of punitive coercion
- 8.5 On the contingency of ritual propriety on the basic nature of others and its moderating impact
- 8.5 On the essence of worthiness as the ability to sort things out in patterns
- 8.6 On the ontogenetic primacy of goodness vis-a-vis music
- 8.7 On ritual and propriety and music, compared
- 8.8 On the taxonomy of necessary conditions for knowing what one is doing
- 8.9 On the essential function of the presence of visiting guests

9. EDUCATION

If one is entitled to follow Liú Zhào's transcription of the following proposition, there is also an important distinction between *tiān* 天 and *rén* 人 in ethical theory that is by no means trivial:

- 9.1 On heavenly social standards as opposed to human education
- 9.2 On the conceptual basis of ordained fate and a necessary condition for social standards
- 9.3 On the need for abstract investigation as a basis for mass education
- 9.4 On intellectual coherence as a necessary condition for education

10. THE "CLASSICS"

- 10.1 On the purposes of the "classics"
- 10.2 On the creation of the *Songs*

1. METAPHYSICS: ON THINGS AS SUCH, AND THEIR NAMES

1.1 On the very notion of a changing thing

凡物/有本有化 *⁵ (or: 標), 有終有始。

...As a matter of principle, things, having what is basic, (also) have transformations (or: marginal parts); in ending they (also) constitute a beginning (of something else). [slip 47-48]

The statement that “As a matter of principle, things [slip 48], having what is basic, (also) have transformations (or: marginal parts)” announces its fundamental theorising character by the initial particle *fán* 凡. When carefully considered in the context of conceptual analysis, it might be taken to be of considerable theoretical interest: as for any object whatever, it has two distinct parts: the “essentially” invariant basis *běn* 本, and its “accidentally” changeable states or transformations *huà* 化.

To put it in less Aristotelian terms, this text distinguishes between what a thing basically is and remains throughout any changes it may undergo on the one hand, and on the other hand the changes or changing states and characteristics of that invariantly self-identical thing. This proposition, then, if we are not mistaken, makes what we might call a metaphysical theoretical statement about what it is for a thing to be a thing. It distinguishes an invariant “essence” from (changing or marginal) “accidents”.

The word order in *yǒu zhōng yǒu shǐ* 有終有始 “there is end, there is beginning” is puzzling if one presupposes the trivial reading along the lines of “have a beginning and an end”. For this ordinary interpretation, the word order would have to be *yǒu shǐ yǒu zhōng* 有始有終 “there is beginning there is end”. The proposition here, if I understand it correctly, is logically subtle and indeed metaphysical: when there is what we call the end of something, this must be - by logical necessity - because what has ended has begun to be something else. Nothing can, as it were, simply peter out and disappear without a trace. What appears to be disappearance is always a beginning of something else into which what ends is transformed and of which it must count as



slip 48

slip 47

⁵[21] reads 有本有化, whereas [13] has this as 有本有標. Both these readings invite the basically the same interpretation along the lines of conceptual analysis. [17] refuses to commit himself on how to interpret the puzzling graph and simply copies the original bamboo shape into his edition.

the beginning.

Already at this stage one notes the penchant for paradox which will be seen to dominate much of the intellectual proceedings that follow: what is an ending constitutes itself, and eo ipso, exactly by and in being an ending, a beginning.

1.2 On ontological self-determination

亡物不物 *⁶, 皆至焉 *⁷, 而/亡非己取之者。

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

This proposition is in an ontological mode which is not common in pre-Buddhist Chinese philosophical literature. The discourse is about what is true of things *qua* things. And the proposition does not flinch from the highly theoretical intransitive verbal use of *wù* 物 “function as the thing one is”.

For a thing to be the thing it is it must function as that thing as a result of determining this functioning itself. (And this self-determination, in the thought as we reconstruct it, does not imply any “freedom” of the thing to have done otherwise.)

The Taoist ideal of *bù wù* 不物 “not acting as a mere thing” and therefore not being *wù yú wù* 物於物 “treated as a thing by things” is an ontological impossibility: no thing does this thing of not acting as itself. One cannot rise above one’s status as the thing/creature one is. (Contrast *jūn zǐ bù qì* 君子不器 “The gentleman does not serve as a tool (for anyone else’s use).” from the Analects. Here the gentleman DOES act out what it is to be a gentleman exactly by his refusal to serve as an instrument for others/superiors to use.)

The “metaphysical” discourse in our proposition is not of the kind one generally expects in Chinese philosophy outside traditions such as that of the *Mò jīng* 墨經.



slip 71-72

⁶亡物不物, [17], p. 165: 此句可能是說“無物不可視之為物”, “Perhaps this sentence means no thing cannot be regarded as a thing”. “[12]: 後一個物是役使義. 莊子, 山木: 物物而不物於物. 管子, 內業: 君子物物不為物使” 均是其意. “The second 物 has a causative meaning.”

⁷皆至焉, [17], p. 165 reads 至 as 致 which is certainly possible. He explains: “皆致焉” 可能是說拿來為我所用. “It means perhaps one can take them and make use of them for oneself.” [19], p. 26 explains: “皆至焉” 指萬物皆至. “It means that the myriad kinds of things all reach.”

1.3 On the criteria for being the thing one is, and for being extended

有物有容，有盡有厚。

There being things there is an outline > “physiognomy” (of these things); there being an exhaustible there is extension. [slip 14]

For a thing to be the thing it is it must have the defining feature (I call it physiognomy) by which it is judged to be indeed the thing it is. If a thing does not have any feature that distinguishes it from other things, no feature that characterises it as being what it is (nothing that serves as its *ti ēn einai* to recall Aristotle’s awkwardly memorable and strictly ungrammatical *façon de parler*) then such a thing would be neither here nor there. It would not even be itself, in a manner of speaking.

Physiognomy *róng* 容 and extension *hòu* 厚 are both abstract features. The concept of *róng* 容 does not identify any feature of a particular thing: the concept identifies the characteristic feature by which it is recognised as being what it is.

The concept of *hòu* 厚 “extensions” does not specify any specific extension of a specific thing: it focusses abstractly on the feature of being extended in the sense of having a “more-or-less” in terms of size. For a thing to be a physical object it must have a defining feature, and it must have such an extension.

For a thing to have an extension, that extension must be finite or bounded. (Otherwise it would be not a thing but a dimension of things only.)

The focus of this proposition is conceptual. It is in the style of the *Mò jīng* 墨經: for a thing to count as a thing it must have what Chinese Buddhists came to call *xiàng* 相, a physiognomy of features that count as marks, criteria, or signs inherent in the thing. There are those who ascribe this sort of metaphysical reflection in China to Buddhist influence. In view of this fragment, they may have to think again. Not because these kinds of reflection will have been shown to be current in pre-Buddhist China, but because they may have been demonstrated to have an unfocussed existence. Like that of Mohist logic.

The technical and highly abstract use of *róng* 容 “face outline > outline > appearance (> physiognomy)”, like that of the notion *jìn* 盡 “exhaust > exhaustible > exhaustibility (> finiteness)” here are part of this particular theory. This proposition is not to be interpreted as continuing any doxographic tradition of what tends to be said about things or extensions. The conceptual style and the stipulative technical use of vocabulary is entirely like that of the *Mò jīng* 墨經.



slip 14

Hòu 厚 “thick > extended (> being extended > extension)” follows the pattern of theoretical abstraction in the *Mò jīng* 墨經 style. Note that *Mò jīng* 墨經 MOJ 1.55 topicalises extension and defines extension very subtly: 厚，有所大也。“Being extended is having that than which one is larger.”

1.4 On the earthly nature of form and exhaustibility as a necessary condition for extension

有地有形，有盡而後/有厚。

There being Earth there is form, only there being an exhaustible is there extension. [slip 6-7]

One can imagine something that is not of Earth to have form. There is no conceptual incoherence in this. On the other hand, for there to be something extended, there **must** be a exhaustible dimension for it to be extended.

A thing has *hòu* 厚 “thickness > extension” only if that extension is finite, according to this view of things. Space as such has no extension, along this line of thought.

It is important to note that this text rises above the level of ordinary propositions which mention subjects and say something about these subjects. This proposition actually takes a theoretical interest in the difference between sufficient and necessary conditions which is not a grammatical subject at all. “Only there being an exhaustible is there extension.” is a statement which involves a necessary condition. “There being Earth thereis form” involves a sufficient condition only. It is this contrast between necessary and sufficient conditions that seems to be one non-topicalised significant focus of this proposition. “Being extended” logically presupposes there being an exhaustible, having a shape does not logically presuppose this belonging to or coming from Earth. The first is a matter of logic, the second a contingent matter of fact.

There is no contradiction between *yǒu dì yǒu xíng* 有地有形 and *yǒu dì ér hòu yǒu xíng* 有地而後有形. But there is an important logical distinction which our proposition here takes an interest in.

At this stage, if we understand the text correctly, the theoretical discourse shifts from conceptual considerations (on physiognomy, shape, extension, being an exhaustible) to the logic of statements concerning these concepts: the difference between sufficient conditions and necessary and sufficient conditions. But the focus is shifted only by the use of paradigmatic statements. Not, in this case, by any explicit abstract terminology of “necessary” versus “sufficient” conditions, as in the opening definitions of the *Mò jīng* 墨經.



slip 6-7

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

有物有容，有稱 *⁸ 有名。 *⁹

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

As in the case of *yǒu dì yǒu xíng* 有地有形 “There being earth there is shape” this sets out with a repetition of a proposition discussed elsewhere in order to go on to a striking analytic point: just as for there to be a thing there must be a physiognomy characteristic of that thing, so for there to be a designating of things there must be names used as designators for these things. Names are critical parts of process of designating. But names must not be confused with the designating by the use of these names.



slip 13

Again, the focus of this proposition is theoretical, being concerned with the logical relation between names and designating. From there being a name one cannot conclude that there is designating. The name can be used to designate.

GUAN 37.1.5 has a strikingly abstract statement that may be usefully compared in this connection: 凡物載名而來 “As a matter of principle, things arrive carrying a name.” Things always come under discussion under a description that identifies them.

1.6 On the link between designation and criteria for the application of designations as the basis for the generalisation of the application of designations

號 *¹⁰ 與 *¹¹ 容與，夫其行者。

It is when the appellation accords with the physiognomy of things that it proceeds (so as to become applicable to other things with similar 容 “physiognomy”). [slip 109]

⁸The graph for 稱 is controversial. My interpretation follows that [20], p. 208. [27] reads this as 家 “family” which does make sense and suggests that all families had names. But, of course, the passage would be philosophically much less exciting.

⁹Compare [21], p. 184 who translates the second part opaquely: 有了物體就有形貌，有了稱呼就有了名字。 “Once there are physical objects there are shapes; once there designations there are names.”

Hào 號 or 呼 is the technical term for whatever form of words is used as a referring expression. Besides the names of things this also includes deictic expressions and anaphoric pronouns.

This difficult proposition, if I read it correctly, has profound significance. It distances itself from the current idea that designations must accord with things/objects/referents themselves. And it states that what matters for designations is the phenomenology of things, the *róng* 容 “characteristic physical manifestation > physiognomy” of things rather than the things themselves.

Xíng 行 is “become current > become generalisable”. The technical term *xíng* 行 “proceed logically to analogous cases” is current in *Mò jīng* 墨經.¹²

“If that thing is still specifically the thing it is called, what I call this will not ‘proceed’.”



slip 109

2. HEAVEN, EARTH, MAN AND FATE

2.1 On the heavenly realm of ordained fate and the earthly realm of physical shapes

有天有命，有地有形。^{*13}

There being Heaven there is what is ordained (by Heaven); there being Earth there is physical shape. [slip 12]

Again, we have not a description of what Heaven does (among many other things), but an analysis of what is the constitutive essence of Heaven as conceived the the authors of *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1: Heaven is quintessentially the ordaining agency: it lays down orientations like moral norms of proper behaviour in particular, but quite generally, what defines Heaven is its ability to (abstractly) ordain the course of things.



slip 12

¹⁰(69) 號: [31] reads this as 乎. I follow the suggestion by [17], p. 165. [21] read the graph as 呼.

¹¹與: [17], p. 161 reads this simplified graph as 邪 in both cases and punctuates after the second.

¹²See B 72 彼猶惟 [乎] 其謂，則吾謂不行。

¹³See [21], p. 184 paraphrases: 有了天就有命運，有了地就有形體。But 體形 “physical shape” is not the same as 形體 “body endowed with physical shape”. [21], p. 184 gives the *lì shū* 隸書 transcription with the heart radical for the bamboo graph one reads as *xíng* 形. One would like to know what triggered the use of this radical in the bamboo graph. This remains one of the many unsolved epigraphic problems.

Physical shape is from Earth, as the principle of earthly substance. The Heavens have *wén* 文, but they have not *xíng* 形 “shape”. There are no “heavenly bodies” in the early Chinese scheme of things. The world of shapes *xíng* 形 in this cosmological system is the earthly world. And the world of what is ordained is a heavenly world not of physical shapes but of abstract rule and content.

The proposition is concerned with the organisation of ontological principles.

One may compare the very different *Guǎnzǐ* 管子, *Nèi yè* 內業 which is concerned with ontogenesis and philosophical anthropology of man in the cosmos: 凡人之生也, 天出其精, 地出其形, 合此以為人. “As a matter of principle, when it comes to the origin of man, Heaven brings out the subtle essence, Earth brings out the physical shape, and combining these they make them into man.” Our text is not concerned with any narrative of the “cosmographic genesis” of things or their “genealogy”, as Nietzsche would say: it is concerned with the conceptual relations between Heaven, Earth, what is ordained/fate, and physical shape.

2.2 On the logical relations between three basic types of understanding: that of Heaven’s movements, that of human actions, that of the Way of things, and that of ordained Fate

知天所為，知人所為，然後知道，知道然後知命。

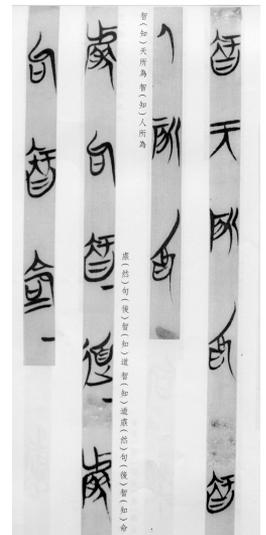
Only when one understands how Heaven works, and when one understands how man works, does one understand the Way; and only when one understands the Way does one understand ordained fate. [slip 29-30]

The phrase *zhī dào* 知道 is unusual though not unattested elsewhere: the current expression is *dé dào* 得道 “obtain the Way”. And the difference is crucial: this proposition is not about pragmatic cognitive mastery but about theoretical analytic comprehension.

This is not a matter of one knowing what men do and of knowing what Heaven does. *Zhī* 知, here as typically elsewhere, is not “to know” but has its basic meaning “to understand (properly)”.

Wéi 為 is a way of doing something for which one takes the initiative, and the word is distinct from *xíng* 行 which refers to moral conduct for which one takes responsibility.

The *Book of Changes* is the place where this double understanding of the Way is found to be expressed, as the proposition below on the *jīng* 經 “classics” states explicitly: 易，所以會天道人道/也。“The Changes are that by which one comprehends



slip 29-30

the Way of Heaven and the Way of Man.”

The link between these two independent propositions is made clear by their place on the strips 29 and 30.

2.3 On a necessary condition of an understanding of Fate

其智博然後知命。

Only when one’s knowledge is broad does one understand ordained fate. [slip 28]

Not that the reference of *qí* 其 is generic and non-anaphoric. Such usage is also very well attested for *zhī* 之 in the Analects and elsewhere. The present proposition distances itself from current notions that ordained fate is “personal” in the sense of being directed personally towards the individual whose fate is being determined: one understands fate only when one understands the *bó* 博 “generality, broad range” of the range of ordained fate which covers both human affairs and the affairs of Heaven/Nature.



slip 28

The Guōdiàn manuscripts make no epigraphic distinction between verbal 知 “understand” and nominal 智 “wisdom”, both *zhī* and *zhì* always being written indistinguishably as 智. Very interestingly, in the *Mǎwángduī* 馬王堆 manuscripts both forms co-occur, but in these manuscripts they are not linked to different pronunciations/words. Thus the traditional distinction corresponding to the distinction between the modern readings *zhī* and *zhì* cannot be related in any regular way to the graphs 知 and 智 in pre-Hàn or even early Hàn epigraphy.

Whatever regularity we find in transmitted texts regarding the distinction between 知 and 智 would appear to be a matter of mid-Hàn dynasty editorial policy rather than earlier epigraphic practice. The transmitted Warring States texts represent a Han interpretation of the distinction between 知 and 智 rather than primary Warring States evidence.

I dwell on this epigraphic point because it is symptomatic of a number of other cases of this sort that need careful analytic attention: the objects we study, even in the case of transmitted pre-Hàn texts are essentially Hàn transcriptions transmitting already Hàn dynasty readings of much older texts.

3. CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

The highly abstract analytic spirit of *Yǔcóng* comes out in other definitions of concepts such as that of “seeking”, which is central to all manner of intellectual investigation, but which would not in fact count as an ethical or metaphysical keyword.

3.1 On the logical conditions for being called a sage

盈聖之謂聖。*¹⁴

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

This literal transcription, if correct, would attribute to this text a statement puzzlingly close to “The statement *Snow is white* is true iff snow is white.” Our proposition here would amount to saying that “If anything fulfills the conditions for ”being a sage “it is called a sage”. This is, of course, strictly true, and logically exact, but for a modern reader aware of Tarski’s work on the concept of truth it sounds too good to be true.



slip 100

3.2 On completeness as the conceptual essence of sagehood

備*¹⁵之謂聖¹⁶。

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

The current ancient Chinese view of the sage is that he represents supreme creativity, wisdom and moral excellence.

The present proposition, apparently taking this for granted, makes a purely formal point about sagehood: that to qualify for sagehood one must provide for meeting the criteria completely.



slip 94

¹⁴(62) [17], p. 159 and p. 162 reads: 盈聽之謂聲 which may well be a correct transcription from an epigraphic point of view but which I find very hard to interpret.

¹⁵(59) 備: [17], p. 162 and p. 168 suspect this should be read as 服. [19], p. 27 compares 語叢 3: 物不備, 不成仁 “If the relevant things are not provided completely this does not constitute humanheartedness.” He insists on our 備 as the correct reading.

¹⁶聖: [17], p. 162 suspects that this should be read 聽.

This tries to capture the idea that the concept of sagehood involves a kind of comprehensive perfection.

3.3 On a logical entailment of sagehood

有聖有善。

There being sagehood there is excellence. [slip 17]

Like beauty, sagehood manifests itself in a kind of excellence/goodness: it is among the commendable features a person may have.

The text is concerned with the highly abstract general feature of excellence that beauty and sagehood have in common. From a modern logical point of view one might say that the interest of the text is in the subsumption under the *genus* EXCELLENCE of the *species* SAGEHOOD and BEAUTY.



slip 17

3.4 On the accessibility of the ‘arts’ and sagehood to objective investigation

藝與聖¹⁷ 為可察也。

The arts and sagehood count as accessible to investigation.[slip 86]

The kind of investigation here envisaged is of the kind envisaged in the preceding propositions. The “investigation” is constituted by checking whether the relevant logical conditions are fulfilled.



slip 86

¹⁷(53) 藝與聖: [26] is in doubt whether one should read the bamboo graph we read as 藝 as 藝 or as 勢. [31] reads the bamboo graph we read as 聖 as 聲.

3.5 On two basic types of investigation

察所知，察所不知。

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

This unpunctuated proposition focusses on a philosophically important structural duality in the concept of explicit understanding/investigation/analysis:

1. one may either explicitly understand/investigate a concept like *shàn* 善 “goodness/excellence”, as mentioned below, or *chá yú zhī zhōng qíng* 察 “investigate/analyse my own innermost feelings” in which case one aims to make explicit a kind of conceptual knowledge one already has.

2. Alternatively one may explicitly understand/investigate something like the mind-set of one people, 察夫民心, in which case one aims to clarify what one did not know. Conceptual analysis is typically of the first kind, and the present proposition may be said to clarify and analyse in the manner of *biàn* 辨 “distinguishing” the very concept of conceptual clarification as deployed in *Yúcóng* 語叢 1.



slip 85

3.6 On cognitive presuppositions contained in concepts: the cases of humanheartedness, rectitude, and of beauty

有仁有智，有義有禮，有美有善。

There being humanheartedness there is understanding, there being rectitude there is ritual propriety; there being beauty there is excellence. [slip 15-16]

Humanheartedness manifests itself in internalised empathetic understanding.

Rectitude manifests itself in corresponding forms of outward propriety in behaviour.

“Beauty” is not mere physical attractiveness here. It is the quality that makes things admirable, as in *měi dé* 美德 “admirable virtue”. The case is interestingly comparable to Plato’s philosophical deepening of the meaning of *to kalón* “the beautiful”, although such comparisons obviously are no philological argument in a sinological context. On the other hand, they may often serve as useful reminders of the Western reader’s hermeneutic bias when it comes to Chinese philosophy.



slip 15-16

3.7 On the very notion of seeking

求 *¹⁸ 者亡有自來也。

In the case of seeking the object sought never comes of itself. ... [slip 99]

This unpunctuated proposition analyses a common-use non-technical concept, very much in the spirit of analytical philosophy as practised by the logicians. The important point is that the logical analysis does not serve any key term of moral philosophy or of political philosophy, or indeed of cosmology. The concern is with the logic inherent in a current concept, not with the transmission of some ethical message.



slip 99

3.8 On the very notion of absence/lacking

缺生 *¹⁹ 乎未得也。

Lack arises from not yet > quite having got something. [slip 91]

“Lack”, again not a technical term in any discipline of Chinese thought, is analysed conceptually as not just absence *tout court*, but the absence of something which one has expected but failed to get or to find.

We have a highly abstract conceptual clarification, in this case of a concept which is of no moral importance, but of some logical interest: the distinction is between *quē* 缺 on the one hand and *wáng* 亡 (which is probably synonymous with *wú* 無 although the commentators defining one as the other by itself does not warrant this conclusion).



slip 91

¹⁸(61) 求: our reading of this graph disregarding the heart radical in the bamboo graph is suggested in [16], p. 535. But in this instance the presence of the heart radical is plausible enough insofar as seeking involves psychological processes and is a “trying”, namely “trying to find”.

¹⁹(57) 缺生: [31] reads as 決 the bamboo graph we transcribe as 缺, and he adds a comma after his 決.

4. CONCEPTUAL PARADOXES

4.1 On existence being a function of having a name

有生乎名。

Existence arises from having a name. [slip 96]

Existence, if it is to be registered, must be of named objects. Nothing can be said to exist if it is not identified by a referring expression of some sort. Existence-claims are always of named things of which it is said that they exist. In this sense, then, existence depends on names. Without something being named, nothing can be said to exist.

The ordinary concept of *yǒu* 有 “have > exist (> existence)” is here problematised as an abstract



slip 96

The paradoxical nature of this statement is as typical for *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1 as it is for much of the Mohist dialectical chapters. A deverbial concept that deserves analytic attention. The focus is on what we might call “ontology”. And that abstract concept of existence is related to the very abstractly conceived notion *míng* 名 “name > have a name (> naming)”.

4.2 On proliferation leading to absence

多好者，亡好者也。*²⁰

If one has many preferences one has no preferences. [slip 89]

Hào 好 is not of the same order as *měi* 美 in the context of *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1. Nonetheless the echo of LAO 2 is evident. The taste for paradox is something *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1 shares with the *Lǎozī* as well as the dialectical chapters of the *Mòjīng* 墨經. The more one prefers, the less one prefers what one prefers.



slip 89

²⁰(55) 多好者，亡好: the reading of the two bamboo graphs as 好 is due to Qiú Xīguī.

4.3 On delimiting a number opening for unlimited delimiting

數 *²¹，不盡也。

In counting one does not reach an end. [slip 90]

To count something is to determine its finite number. And yet, in principle, and abstractly, in counting there is no end. There is no end to the series of natural numbers. This paradox lives on its provocative brevity.

One might also translate more tamely, reading *shǔ* 數 “count” as *shù* “number”: “As for numbers they are inexhaustible.”



slip 90

4.4 On remaining in one's place through moving

物各止於其所，我 *²² 行/止 *²³ 之。

Each creature rests in its own place (in the scheme of things); as a person it is through action that one rests in one's place [slip 105 and slip 111]

On the surface, things change and move. They do not rest. And yet, through their movement and change they stay within their systematic place in nature, in the intellectual *systema mundi*. Each thing in its own stable and constant way. Change is real but not fundamental.

Having made this provocative statement, this proposition might appear to take a personal turn, indicated by the authorial “I”, *wǒ* 我。

However, the appearance is misleading, as are all dictionaries and grammars dealing with the first person pronoun *wǒ* 我 that I have seen. In fact, this word, like *wú* 吾 and unlike the very personal *yú* 余/予, is regularly used in an impersonal way where it is translatable as “one; you”. The failure to recognise this usage has caused much confusion in the translation of Chinese philosophical texts into English and into modern Chinese.



slip 111



slip 105

²¹(56) 數: Qiú Xīguī reads the problematic bamboo graph as 數.

²²(67) 我: [31] reads the bamboo graph as 義.

²³(71) 止: I follow the Wénwù 文物 editors in reading this bamboo graph as 止.

This proposition delights in the paradoxical fact that one stays in one's place through movement/action.

4.5 On being right about being in the wrong

悲喪亡其所也，亡非是。*24

When one is sad about not occupying one's proper place that is in no case wrong. ... [slip 73]

This is a puzzling proposition, but I believe it may be read as something of a logical teaser or a paradox: When you are not in the right place that would seem to be wrong. But if what one is doing in the wrong place is to be sad about the fact that that is where you are, one is never truly in the wrong place. One's very sadness turns out to be the right "place" to situate oneself in.



slip73

One would never suggest such a reading for this phrase, if it did not occur in a context that is so full of logical paradoxes.

The notion of *qí suǒ* 其所 "one's proper place" is important because it assumes a scheme of things, or a system, in which everything has its proper place.

4.6 On the same communicating with the same

凡同*25者通*26。

As a matter of principle, things that are the same (in some respect) communicate. [slip 102]

This enigmatic proposition looks like a paronomastic gloss. Any interpretation must remain even more tentative than usual in this kind of material.

When one is the same, there should be no communication, but in fact, communication depends - paradoxically - on this identity (of overlap).

What we have is a concise formulation of the principle underlying the theory of *gǎn yìng* 感應 "resonance". (See [1]) We have something of a play on words, the technical term for which is *paronomasia*, a paronomastic gloss.



slip 102

²⁴悲喪亡其所也: The graph we read as 亡 is controversial. [16], p. 537 declares it is "芒"字之誤, 讀為"喪亡". [21], p. 74 comments on the bamboo graph we gloss as *wáng* 亡 "be absent" as *zuò* 作 "arise", as follows 讀為"作", 起也. "悲其所" 似是 "悲作於其所" 之意.

²⁵(65) [11], p. 145-46 suggests that 同 may be read "痛", "慟" 或 "恫"(read *dòng*) 悲傷.

²⁶(65) [11], p. 145-46 reads the bamboo graph for 通 as 踊 "jump ritually as in grief".

5. PHILOSOPHICAL ANTHROPOLOGY

5.1 On the realms of reality and the human organs in charge of them

容色目司也 *²⁷; 聲耳司/也; 嗅鼻 *²⁸司也; 味口司/也; 氣容司也; 志心司 *²⁹。

The “physiognomy” (of things) and colours are controlled by the eyes; the sounds are controlled by the ears; the smells are controlled by the nose; the taste is controlled by the mouth; the personal vital spirits are controlled by the physiognomy; the aspirations are controlled by the heart/mind. [slip 50, slip 51-52]

The use of the administrative term *sī* 司 “official; be in charge of, control”, reminiscent of the similarly administrative term *guān* 官 in *wǔ guān* 五官 “five organs”, is striking and original. The functions of the organs are explained on the analogy with bureaucracy. Just as we find a bureaucracy of Hell and a bureaucracy of the Heavens, so we find a bureaucracy of the organs in a human being.

There is an equivocation on the term *sī* 司. The physiognomy is not the organ through which one perceives a person’s *qì* 氣 “personal vital spirits”, whereas eyes, ears, nose, mouth, and even the heart/mind can be construed as organs through which one becomes aware.



slip 51-52

slip 50

²⁷容色目司也: [26], p. 200, note 8 is in doubt how the graph we transcribe as 司 should be read, but this does not affect our interpretation: 當讀為“治”或“司”。

²⁸[26], p. 200, note 9 suspects that the graph we transcribe as 鼻 may represent a corrupted short form of *bì* (鼻). It seems interesting that a common word of this sort causes such trouble for the scribe.

²⁹The epigraphy of 志心司 is interesting, because it would appear that the repetition sign after 志 is taken to refer to a part of that character only.

5.2 On the necessary conditions of the possibility of likes and dislikes

有生有知而後好惡/生。

When there is life and there is awareness, only then is there liking and the disliking of things. [slip 8, last character on slip 9]

The logically necessary conditions of *hào wù* 好惡 “liking and disliking” are specified. Being alive and not dead is one such necessary condition. Being aware (of what one likes or dislikes) is another such necessary condition. One cannot like or dislike what one is unaware of, or when one is generally unaware of things.

“Liking and disliking”, then, is not applied to plants “liking” the warmth of the sun and turning towards it. And this seems plausible enough.



slip 9

slip 8

One notes the existential mode predominating in the formulation of the necessary condition. Not “one has to be alive”, but the much more theoretically stilted “there has to be life”, or perhaps “one has to have life”. Such ways of speaking are naturally understood as traces of “academic” technical school discourse, such as we can see in the *Mòjīng* 墨經, and such as one is familiar with in great detail from Aristotle’s lectures.

The graph *zhī* 知 is to be preferred here as a transcription in spite of the fact that the interpretation of that graph must be nominal. The distinction is between *zhī* 知 “understand, know; understanding, knowledge” and *zhì* 智 “clever; wisdom”, and not between a verb and a noun. We have noted above that both these distinct words were written indifferently 智 in pre-Han and many early Han manuscripts. The graph 知 is late.

Xúnzǐ 荀子, *Wáng zhì* 王制 has a passage that may be usefully consulted in connection with our present proposition: 人有氣，有生，有知，亦有義，故最為天下貴也。 “Man contains vital energies, life, understanding and also moral standards, therefore man counts as being the most noble thing in All under Heaven.” This passage, however, is descriptive of anthropology, but not at all in the style *ér hòu* 而後 conceptual analysis in terms of necessary conditions for what anthropology would describe.

5.3 On some psychological and physical features of creatures endowed with the material features of having blood and vital energies

凡有血氣者，皆有喜/有怒，有慎有莊(?)。其體/有容，有色 *³⁰有聲，有嗅/有味 *³¹，有氣有志。凡物/有本 *³² 有化 *³³，有終有始。

As a matter of principle, whatever has blood and breath always has (i.e. is capable of) joy and has (i.e. is capable of) anger, and it has (i.e. is capable of) diligence and has (i.e. is capable of) seriousness(?); its body has a characteristic physiognomy, it has colour and it has sounds, it has a smell and it has a taste, it has (personal?) vital energies and aspirations. As a matter of principle, in things having what is basic they (also) have transformations (or: marginal parts), having an end and they (also) constitute a beginning (of something else). [slip 45-46, slip 47-48 and slip 49]

This complex passage addresses something which in modern terms one would call philosophical anthropology.

Joy and anger are currently considered as basic features of the animate, but being *shèn* 慎 “careful, wary” and *zhuāng* 莊 “serious; dignified” are not conventional subjects which it is natural to bring up in connection with all animate creatures. In *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1 these concepts are taken to be foundational because they are at the root of that kind of “higher pitch of awareness” which is constitutive of ritual propriety and indeed moral commitment.

And the category of seriousness, not much privileged in pre-Buddhist Chinese discussion is here listed up as a crucial ingredient. But what is surprising is that these



slip 45-46



slip 49 and slip 47-48

³⁰有色: The bamboo graph for 色 can also be read as a variant for 顏 which would not make a big difference to our interpretation.

³¹有嗅/有味: The lower part of the bamboo graph 臭 is not the standard form of 犬. But this does not affect the reading.

³²凡物/有本有化: The bamboo graph for 本 has a pair of 虫 at the bottom, as in 蠱, and one would like to know why the scribe chose this expanded form.

³³凡物/有本有化: The bamboo graph I read as 化 is transcribed by [13] as 卯 and read as 標.

latter two qualities seem to be attributed to *jiē* 皆 “all” creatures endowed with blood and “vital energies”. This remains puzzling indeed.

In conformity with a prevalent Chinese rhetorical practice, the all-important part of this complex proposition is left to the end: the personal vital energy *qì* 氣 and the personal aspiration *zhì* 志. As will emerge in the next proposition, *qì* 氣 is used here in a personalised sense which is not at all the same as the use of the word in the purely biological phrase *xuè qì* 血氣 “blood and vital energies”.

It must also be noted that this series of existential statements does not have the conditional structure which is so common elsewhere: it appears that the statements simply constitute a coordinate series. And yet, the attributes of animate creatures lined up here are not on the same level. Joy and anger are at the root of careful attention and seriousness. The basic features of the body from characteristic physiognomy to taste are basic for personal vital energies and personal aspirations.

For the statement that “As a matter of principle, in things [slip 48] having what is basic they (also) have transformations (or: marginal parts), having an end and they (also) constitute a beginning (of something else). [slip 49]” See the beginning of Section I.

The punctuation in the extended proposition is interesting. There is no punctuation mark after any of the initial independent parts of the passage, only at the very end.

And in the end, what is stressed is the importance of those separate and crucial beginnings, which are referred to elsewhere in *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1 as *duān* 端 “basic beginnings, paradigmatic origins”, and in the passages below, these beginnings are discussed without any technical terminology being employed to refer to them. (Compare *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1 slip 98.)

5.4 On the genealogy of social hierarchy

父子，識 *³⁴上下也。

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

The familiar concepts of father and son are taken as the basis of the general abstract notion of hierarchical superiority.



slip 69

³⁴The bamboo graph which, following [21], we read as 識 is controversial. [17] reads the graph as 致. [11], p. 214 interprets it as 極至.

5.5 On the genealogy of precedence

兄弟，識先後也。

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

Again, the perspective is one of conceptual/cognitive analysis: the paradigm of precedence is learnt from the relation between the eldest brother and his younger brothers (or, literally, an elder brothers and his younger brothers).

The general ritual principle is learnt from the concrete family paradigm.



slip 70

5.6 On the fundamental distinction between kinship relations versus elective relations

(孝敬??) 父 *³⁵, 有親有尊。 *³⁶長悌, 親道也。友、君臣 *³⁷, /無親也。

(In the case of X-ing the) father there are blood relation and reverence. Treating with fraternal respect is a Way involving blood-bonds. Among friends, and between ruler and minister there is no blood relation. [slip 78, slip 80 and slip 81]

These propositions do not commend filial piety or respect for superiors. They analyse an abstract contrast between relations of respect which do involve blood relations and those which do not.



slip 81 slip 80 and slip 81

³⁵(48). (孝敬??) 父: A number of suggestions have been made for filling the two-character gap for which I supply 孝敬.

³⁶(49) [21] compares the strictly and directly relevant 孝經: 故母取其愛而君取其敬, 兼之者父也

³⁷(50) 友、君臣: The crucial punctuation here is suggested by [21], p. 160.

5.7 On two subtypes of elective relations: the hierarchical versus the horizontal

君臣、朋友，其擇者也。

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

One notes the abstract focus of this proposition which is not in fact on the content of the relations between ruler and ministers or on the content of the relations between friends, but on a abstract formal contrast between these relations.

If [17]’s (p. 161) transcription of the following is correct, we may even have a remarkably sensitive conceptual analysis of the nature of power.



slip 87

5.8 On two alternatives left to those under the sway of power

權 *³⁸, 可去, 可歸 *³⁹。

As for power(?), it may be avoided, and it may be turned to/sought refuge with. [slip 101]

This may be taken to be a subtle analysis of a keyword in political analysis, as in the translation. The essence of political power is that there is no way of remaining neutral with regard to it. Either one seeks refuge under its tutelage, or one makes sure one remains beyond its reach.



slip 101

But if one assumes, for a moment, that *quán* 權 is here used as a technical term for contingency, one might try to translate: “For the contingent it is possible that it leaves and that it returns.”

³⁸(63) 權 [22], p. 197 suggests our present reading of the bamboo graph with the *jīn* (金) radical for the wood radical in 權.

³⁹(64) 歸 [22], p. 197 reads this character as 徙 “move”.

5.9 On the vexation associated with the joys of life

食與 *40 色 *41 與疾。

... food and sex are associated with vexation. [slip 110]

This provocative and enigmatic blunt statement lists the main human concerns, those for food and sex (cf. the proverbial Mencian 食色性也 “(Desire for) food and sex are a matter of inborn nature.”), but it does not just classify them as natural. It focusses on their association with jí 疾 “urgent concerns, vexations”.



slip 110

As in the case of wáng 亡, we have a significant problem of assignment of pronunciation here, a problem which has nothing to do with logic, but which has important philological consequences. Lù Démíng 陸德明 glosses this kind of nominal 食 as *yīn sì* 音嗣 “pronounced as *sì*” throughout, as in 民以食為本 “The people regard food as basic.” (十三經注疏 vol. 21, p. 417b7, 經典釋文 p. 317/23a 3), and in particular he regularly glosses 食 in 疏食 “coarse food” again as *yīn sì* 音嗣. (There is no need to discuss in detail other Sòng dynastic phonetic glosses to the same effect.) Our point is worth noting because it is one of many examples where the early evidence in 經典釋文 is disregarded in all the leading dictionaries, including 漢語大詞典, 漢語大字典, and 王力古漢語字典. Since 經典釋文 is by far the best and the most well-documented source we have on the pronunciation of early texts such omissions are remarkable. One would like to know by what standards lexicographic choices of this kind were made, and where they are critically argued for, and - in particular - how it is justified that everyone dismisses the best evidence on the pronunciation of a character like 食. In any case, I find at least 50 cases of 食 “food; rice” in pre-Buddhist literature, all of which I take to be currently misread as *shí* in accordance with the best dictionaries we have. It is also interesting to note that the reading *sì* 食 “to feed” is unattested in the authoritative *Guǎng yùn* 廣韻 dictionary of AD 1007, having first entered the rhyme dictionaries in the somewhat later and much less authoritative *Jí yùn* 集韻 dictionary.

⁴⁰(70) 與: [17], p. 161 reads this bamboo graph as 邪: 食邪色邪. 疾 “Good food is of evil, beautiful women are of evil. These are (like) diseases.”

⁴¹色: I follow Qiú Xīguī in reading this difficult graph as 色, as do a number of other scholars. [21], p. 196 interprets 疾 as “猛烈, 急迫”. [18], p. 45-46 as 生病.

6. THE (OFTEN PARADOXICAL) NATURE OF MORAL ACTION

6.1 On the impossibility of managing to do what one makes a point of doing

為 *⁴²孝，此非孝也。為悌，/此非悌也。不可為也，/而不可不為也。為之，/此非也。弗為，此非也。 *⁴³

If one makes a point of showing filial piety, then that is not filial piety; if one makes a point of showing brotherly love, then that is not brotherly love. These things one cannot make a deliberate point of practising (they must be spontaneous), and yet they must not be left unpractised. If one deliberately makes a point of practising them, this is not it(right); and if one refuses to practise them, that is (also) not it(right). ... [slip 55-56, slip 57-58]

This important text is not about filial piety and brotherly love: the text merely takes these as examples. The text is about the virtues in general.

When being filial, one's concern must be with one's parents or ancestors, not with the virtue of filial piety.

The pattern is carried through all the virtues. Even to rectitude, in the next proposition. (See [9])



slip 55-56



slip 57-58

The use of 弗 is significant. Here as regularly elsewhere it is not enough to take it to be equivalent to *bù zhī* 不之. *Fú tīng* 弗聽 is not “happen not to listen” but “refuse to follow advice”. This specific force of the word was already noticed by Bernhard Karlgren in *Grammata Serica Recensa*: “could not; would not”.

⁴²[24, 25] comes close to understanding the 為 as 人的有意的作為. [21] understanding it as 做作 “pretend” is far off the mark.

⁴³[12], p. 165 explains: 不能刻意去做, 又不能不做. 刻意去做不對, 但不做也不對, which gets none of the logical excitement of the phrase.

6.2 On the impossibility of doing what is right by setting out to practise rectitude

義亡能為 *⁴⁴也。

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

When acting in accordance with rectitude, what one aims for is not the virtue of rectitude. One's action must be directed towards what is right in the particular situation.



slip 53

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

有察善，亡為善。 *⁴⁵

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

In this proposition, the generalisation is consummated: the issue has been all along that of what is good.

Quite generally, goodness or excellence one may investigate, but one may not make a point of being good or simply set out to be good. One must simply “be (naturally) good”, if one wants to be good. Otherwise one will be pretending to be good.



slip 84

If one tries to be good that will be exactly because one is not really good.

The generalisation is exquisitely apt.

⁴⁴[21] interprets 為 as 偽 which would make this a statement about faking or pretending.

⁴⁵(52) [21], p. 195 interprets this as 故意、做作.

6.4 On the impossibility of setting out to be the person one is

人亡能為。*46

“The person one is” one can in no way deliberately make a point of being. [slip 83]

This astounding proposition rises to a new level of abstraction: being the person one is is not a deliberate act through which one aims to be the person one is. Hence the importance of being oneself in the manner of *wú wéi* 無為, the being *zì rán* 自然, naturally oneself, without artificially trying to be oneself. That is the true art of living.

One can, of course, avoid addressing this challenging proposition by a trivialising conjecture and rewrite the text as 仁亡能為。 This suggestion, which has been commonly made to me, shows up the inherent dangers of the methodological liberties we so much enjoy in transcribing excavated texts: I have been unable to find other places where it would be plausible to read *rén* 人 as *rén* 仁 in the excavated literature.



slip 83

6.5 On action as considered choice, and failure to act in accordance with one's choice as weakness of the will

正其然而行，治焉爾也。 / 正不達文*47，生乎不達/其然也。學 (or: 教)，學 (or: 教) 其 (斯) 也 *48。

If considering it correct to do such-and-such one goes on to act accordingly, then that is simply sorting things out. If considering it correct, one does not reach elegant execution this arises from one not reaching the “acting accordingly”. To study (or: teach) is to study (or: teach) this (to act according to what one considers as correct). [slip 59-60 and slip 61]



slip 61



slip 59-60

⁴⁶(51) 人亡能為: [21], p. 192 interprets 為 as 偽.

⁴⁷[17], p. 164 takes 文 to refer to 典法. [21] takes it as 文治.

⁴⁸學 (or: 教) 其 (斯) 也: The reading of the graph I read as 斯 is highly controversial. Some read it as 己, for which the ancient simpler graph like for the standard graph 其 is sometimes added at the bottom,

The subject of this complex organised set of propositions is conceptual analysis. The subject is abstract generalised deontology. There is no moral sermonising.

The abstract concept concerned is that of properly ordered conduct of one's affairs *zhì* 治.

The concept is explicated in terms of other, simpler concepts: that of *zhèng* 正 “consider something as the correct thing to do” (or perhaps even *dāng* 當 “what one must do”, according to some), and *rán* 然 “act accordingly”. And the result of properly ordered conduct is said to be *wén* 文 “dignified action”.

7. VIRTUES

7.1 On the very nature of the concept of morality

仁義為之臬 (?). *⁴⁹

As for (humanheartedness-and-rectitude >) morality one takes it as a target > norm. [slip 93]

This proposition deals not with the virtues of *rén* 仁 and *yì* 義 as many interpreters seem to assume. The binome *rén yì* 仁義 has a generic meaning including all the virtues like 忠 and 信 as well, and one might try to translate it as “moral virtue”. What the proposition analyses is nothing less than the nature of moral normativity as such. Norms are not things like chairs or tables, neither are they just abstract things like the roundness of a circle or the squareness of a square. They are, quintessentially, “target concepts”. *Rén yì* 仁義 is what one aims for. That is what differentiates values or norms from ordinary abstract terms. And that is what the present proposition focusses on, analyses and defines, if we understand it correctly.

What worries one about this interpretation is the problematic identification of the surprising character *niè* 臬.

Compare Aristotle, in the beginning of the Nichomachean Ethics I.3 on the nature of the Good: “Shall we not, like archers who have something to aim at, be more likely to be right.”



slip 93

as a phonetic element. Compare the fascinating 尊德義 slip 5: 學非改倫也, 學己也. “Studying is not a matter of changing the ethical standard, it is causing oneself to learn.”

⁴⁹(58) The last character here is controversial. Huáng Dékuān and Xú Zàiguó interpret it as 枉 in the meaning 邪曲. We follow [16], p. 536. [17], p. 164 suggests the possible reading of this graph as 歸.

7.2 On the ontogenesis of humanheartedness

喪，仁之端也。

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

None of the proposition shows more clearly the links to conventional traditionalism of *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1 than this one, which is very much in a Mencian tradition of reflection on the emotional starting points of virtues. To call this traditionalism Confucian seems arbitrary. These conventions around the extraordinary emphasis placed on funeral practices were wide-spread and not in any way the privilege of any particular school. (Quite apart from the fact that the concept of a school of thought, let alone a philosophical school was not well-established in Warring States times.)



slip 98

Funeral practices being the manifestation of *xiào* 孝, and *xiào* 孝 “loving concern for one’s forbears” being recognised as the psychological ontogenetic source of *rén* 仁 “humanheartedness in general”.

The connection with Mencius’ discourse on *duān* 端 is not any argument for this piece being “Confucian” in any narrow institutional sense.

7.3 On the very essence of humanheartedness

愛善之謂仁。

Love of the good, this is called humanheartedness [slip 92]

This proposition defines the cardinal virtue of humanheartedness not as a moral achievement but as a moral aspiration.

Compare the Greek philosophical focus on the “love of wisdom” as an intellectual aspiration rather than the achievement of wisdom. In intellectual circles, the Seven Sages of Greece were outrun by the “lovers of wisdom”.



slip 92

7.4 On the symmetry of the notion of good faith, and its failure to suggest equality

上下皆得其所之謂信。信非至齊也。

When those above and below all take up their proper places that is called good faith. Good faith does not get to the point of being a matter of perfect equality. [slip 65-66]

The customary construal of the concept of *xìn* 信 is as “good faith towards superiors” and by extension towards friends.

This proposition insists on the universality of the application of the term *xìn* 信, which enjoins all moral agents to devote themselves to the obligations imposed on them by the social relations they find themselves in.

The devoted commitment to obligations being the same for all, this does not imply perfect equality among those who share the value of that devoted commitment to obligations.



slip 65-66

7.5 On affection-generating versus respect-generating virtues

[厚於仁，薄]於義 *⁵⁰，親而不尊。
厚於義，薄於仁，尊而不親。

[If one emphasises humanheartedness and one deemphasises] rectitude, then one will be affectionate but not reverent; If one emphasises rectitude and one deemphasises humanheartedness, then one will be reverent but not affectionate. [slip 77, slip 79 and slip 82]



slip 79



slip 82



slip 77

⁵⁰[厚於仁，薄]於義: The conjectural addition in brackets suggested by [23], p. 9 is adopted in [13], p. 25, note 47, where he quotes 禮記, 表記: 仁者, 人也。道者, 義也。厚於仁者薄於義, 厚於義者薄於仁, 尊而不親。 On the basis of the bamboo evidence, Chén Wéi considers that 道者, 義也. should be read as 義者, 道也.

Humanheartedness is an intimate virtue mainly concerned with subjective attitudes, whereas rectitude is an external virtue mainly concerned with objective performance.

7.6 On endogenic versus exogenic virtues humanheartedness and rectitude

仁生於人，義生於道。或生於內，或生於外。

Humanheartedness arises from (within) a person, rectitude arises (outside) from the Way. The one arises from within, the other arises from without. ... [slip 22 and slip 23]

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

The second proposition does NOT say the obvious, namely that 仁生於內，義生於外. It lifts the discourse onto a more abstract analytic level. Some virtues/values have their origin outside, others inside.



slip 23



slip 22

7.7 On the endogenic versus the exogenic virtues

由中出者：仁忠信。由【外入者：禮樂刑。】

As for those that emerge from the inside/the endogenic ones : these are humanheartedness, devoted effort, and good faith. As for those [which enter from the outside these are ritual propriety, music, and punishments] [slip 21]

Throughout ancient Chinese literature, a common subject is that of virtues, ritual, music, and punishments. This proposition takes a provocative inverted perspective: the issue is not now these virtues and these social practices. The issue is distinctly more abstract. The issue is what is endogenic and what is exogenic. In current philosophical jargon, this proposition is not about the virtues etc, but rather about the general theory of philosophical anthropology.



slip 21

Humane concern for others, devoted commitment to values, devoted commitment to other persons, these are endogenic. Ritual practices, musical practices, as

well as penal practices are exogenic, one confidently predicts the missing text will have said.

7.8 On the double origin of man's superior status in the world

天生百物，人為貴。人/之道也，或/由中出，或由外入。

When Heaven originated all kinds of creatures man counted as the noblest of these. As for the Way of man, in some cases it emerges from the inside/is endogenic, in other cases it enters from the outside/is exogenic. [slip 18 and slip 19-20]

Heaven originated the *bǎi wù* 百物, “all kinds of things”. (The individuals, one might go on to make things over-explicit, are produced by Earth according to the order decreed by Heaven.) The idea of man being the nobles of the creatures is commonly expressed in early Chinese literature.



slip 18 and slip 19-20

The nobility of man consists in man having a Way. This much is uncontroversial. The intellectual core of this complex proposition is in its second part: this Way is not homogeneously external or internal. This Way is diversely composite in that some constituents of the Way are external and others internal in origin. This analytic point was of major concern in *Yúcóng* 語叢 1.

7.9 On the precarious fragility of determination and good faith

決與信，器也。各以譖 *⁵¹ /詞毀也。

Determination and good faith are (like) vessels. Each in their own way can be destroyed by loose talk. [slip 107-108]

This proposition is hard to be sure of. Determination and devoted commitment/good faith are instrumental in that, like vessels, they both derive their value from what they are directed towards and what thus gives them content. But these important things may lose their value on the basis of mere talk (concerning the objects of the determination and of the good faith).

The proposition remains enigmatic, and my interpretation remains particularly tentative and speculative at this point.



slip 107-108

⁵¹(68) 譖: In our interpretation of the bamboo graph, I follow [26].

8. RITUAL, MUSIC AND PUNISHMENTS

8.1 On constraints on the deviation from prototypes: the case of ritual propriety

禮不同，不豐 *⁵²不殺。

Ritual propriety does differ, but (it should be) neither too multifarious nor too scanty. [slip 103]

The text takes up the major challenge that ritual practices do differ across different societies as they were known in ancient China. But the important uniting philosophically relevant feature across cultures is claimed to be this: that these ritual practices are neither excessive nor insufficient so that everywhere they show a proper balance.



slip 103

The difference in customs has been noticed and problematised above all by the Taoists, traditionally. But what the present text focusses on is not the relativist position undermining the normative function of the ritual propriety. The decisive point is taken to be what is construed as the defining feature of proper balance common to all differing cultural modes.

8.2 On the nature of conceptual origination regarding music and punitive coercion

其生也亡為乎! 其刑 *⁵³/生德，德生禮，禮生樂，由樂/知刑。

The engendering is a matter of non(-intentional) action! The (outward) punishment engenders (inward) virtue, (inward) virtue engenders (outward) ritual propriety, ritual propriety engenders music, and from the music one understands the (overall purpose of) punishments. [slip 62 and slip 24-25]



slip 24-25 slip 62

The concept of *shēng* 生 is ambiguous between an action verb reading and a

⁵²(66) 豐 we follow[10], p. 71 reading as 豐 the bamboo graph which the Wenwu editors read as 害. 殺: The Wénwù editors read the bamboo graph as 妨. We follow Chén Wěi's reading on the basis of 禮記, 禮器: 孔子曰: 禮不豐不殺.

⁵³The case of the graph for 刑 is comparable to the graph we transcribe as 知 in that ancient epigraphy prefers 型 for 型 and 智 for 知. although 型 and 刑 appear to have always been homophonous.

process verb reading: 1. to act so as to produce or engender; 2. to function so as to cause to arise.

As a process verb, *shēng* 生 does not involve any initiative by an agent, or any deliberate action: it is a matter of *wú wéi* 無為.

But the effects involved in *shēng* 生 relate the inward to the outward, and the outward to the inward in such a way that in the end also the inward connection between the outward music and the outward punitive measures is properly understood.

The presence of exclamatory particle 乎 is surprising and needs careful consideration. Can one really construe this as an intellectual outburst? Surely not!

8.3 On the logical primacy of ritual propriety vis-a-vis punitive coercion

知禮然後知刑。

Only after one properly understands propriety does one properly understand what is to be punished; ... [slip 63]

The primacy of ritual propriety is not primarily a matter of Confucianism versus other schools of thought. The logic of the matter is here declared to be that what is sanctioned by punishment is in fact the failure to conform to what ritual propriety prescribes.

In order to understand the role of punishments one must understand not only the laws but the rules of ritual propriety.



slip 63

The records of punishments being meted out to those whose offence is a ritual failure are many in Warring States literature.

It is important to realise that this proposition is not marked off by any punctuation mark.

8.4 On the nature of punitive coercion

刑非嚴也。*54

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

This proposition may well be the continuation of the preceding: punitive measures are not a matter of any show of personal formidable severity. It is merely a matter of enforcing propriety, not of asserting personal authority by a ruler.

Some might well want to insist that this openly addresses “legalist” claims to the contrary. but the style is more of analytic distancing than of doctrinal school polemics.



slip 64

8.5 On the contingency of ritual propriety on the basic nature of others and its moderating impact

禮因人之情而為之/節 *55 文者也。

Ritual consists in basing oneself on basic human sensibilities and for the sake of these bringing moderation and meaningful pattern to these. ... [slip 31]

This problematizes the notion of ritual propriety which is given a central place in what precedes.

The analysis focusses on ritual propriety being based on the essential sensibilities of others, and on two crucial general elements of ritual: 1. moderation; 2. dignified elegance.



slip 31

Guānzǐ 36.1.35 writes: 義者，謂各處其宜也。禮者，因人之情。 “Rectitude refers to getting things right in each situation; ritual propriety conforms to the sensi-

⁵⁴刑非嚴也: the graph I read as 嚴 is troublesome. My reading follows [15], p 107. ([15] and [28–30]).

⁵⁵The graph for 節 is controversial. [26] doubts whether the *ji* (即) he sees should be read as *jié* (節) or as *cì* (次).

bilities/instincts of man/others”. It stands to reason that *rén zhī qíng* 人之情 are not just human sensibilities *rén qíng* 人情 but the sensibilities of others. But this needs very detailed argumentation.

The analysis here distances itself from traditionalist notions of ritual propriety as defined by the ancestors or ancestral heroes. It also distances itself from any thought that the propriety of ritual propriety rests in itself, as it were.

義亡能為 “Rectitude no one can deliberately go about practising” [slip 53] does not, I believe link up with slip 54, but I repeat it here for the convenience of the reader who might want to disagree with my judgment on this point which does deviate from that of the first editors of the text.

8.6 On the essence of worthiness as the ability to sort things out in patterns

賢者能理 *⁵⁶之。

A worthy man is able to sort out things in proper proportion. [slip 54]

The proposition is distancing itself from the notion of a mere *fāng shì* 方士 “specialist” avant la lettre being able to sort things out in their proper proportionate order. What is needed for such sorting is *xián* 賢 “worthiness > moral worth and talent”.

There is no way of telling for sure whether what is being sorted here is or is not *shàn* 善 “what is good” or *yì* 義 “rectitude”.



slip 54

The the non-anaphoric (“the aforementioned”) and non-cataphoric (“the following”) use of the pronoun *zhī* 之 to mean “things” is common indeed, albeit little recognised in grammars of classical Chinese. But the question is whether this is or is not a case in point. [26]: 200, note 11 wonders whether slips 53 and 54 should not be read together.

The general issue is important: can reference go across the punctuation marks of the text of *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1? For the philosophical interpretation of text this principle can often be of crucial importance. More generally, the question is what we are entitled to regard as the unit of composition in our bamboo texts.

And the fact that a text continues after punctuation on the same bamboo is in fact no guarantee that it was composed as one and the same unit. The distribution on bamboos may be a matter of scribal economy and convenience rather than of authorial composition.

⁵⁶The graph 里 for 理 is regular: compare 性自命出: 里理其情, and also the following slip 32.

8.7 On the ontogenetic primacy of goodness vis-a-vis music

善理而後樂生。

It is only after what is good is laid out properly that music arises. [slip 32]

This a pregnant pointed use of *lè* 樂 “music” as “music deserving of its name, true music”. The proposition distances itself from the natural idea that goodness/excellence as such gives rise to music. There is an analytically crucial constituent that is needed: *lǐ* 理 “the sorting things out appropriately/proportionately > elegantly”.

Of course, when what is so sorted out is not good, no proper music arises either. *Lǐ* 理 and *shàn* 善 must work together to produce music.

There is nothing like a Pythagorean specification of that proportionate sorting, but the general idea of regularity of arrangement is clearly present.



slip 32

8.8 On ritual and propriety and music, compared

禮生於莊 *⁵⁷, 樂生於度 *⁵⁸。禮齊 *⁵⁹樂靈, 則戚 *⁶⁰; 樂繁/禮靈 *⁶¹, 則慢。

Ritual propriety arises from being serious; /music arises from proper measure. When ritual propriety is even-handed, and when music is taken to have its magical power, then there is communal feeling; when the music is over-elaborate and the propriety is taken to have the magical power, then there will be mutual disrespect. [slip 33-34 and slip 35]



slip 35



slip 33-34

⁵⁷Lǐ Ling’s suggestion that the graph 莊 with and without the heart radical should both be read as 莊 seems universally accepted. ([17])

⁵⁸Lǐu Zhào’s suggestion that the graph 毫 should be read 度 is tempting but remains conjectural. ([21])

⁵⁹Qiú’s reading 齊 of the bamboo graph is contested. ([26])

⁶⁰[11] argues that the bamboo graph for 戚 should be read 𠄎 “ill at ease”. ([13])

⁶¹[11] argues that what Liú Zhào reads as 靈 should be interpreted as 零 “sparse”. ([13])

This complex punctuated proposition analyses ritual as resulting from a peculiar trait in human behaviour: the fact that certain forms of behaviour naturally involve a higher degree of moral and emotional seriousness *zhuāng* 莊. This elevated seriousness must be compared with the elevated aesthetic dimension *wén* 文. Such seriousness is here plausibly declared to be the source of ritual propriety: ritual propriety becomes relevant only where human behaviour rises above the purely pragmatic. There is no ritual propriety for picking one's nose or for behaviour in the toilet, because nothing is ever in this elevated sense “serious” about those kinds of behaviour.

Music, having been linked to *lǐ* 理 elsewhere, is now linked a little more specifically to *dù* 度 “proper measure”.

For ritual propriety to be performed felicitously, it must be evenly adjusted, for music to be performed felicitously it must have its magical efficacy.

When there is this felicitousness of performance, there is commonality of sentiment and attitude. The text goes on to specify infelicity conditions: When the music is goes beyond the proper measure *dù* 度 so as to become over-elaborate, and when it is the ritual itself which is - mistakenly - to have this magical power, then the result is *màn* 慢 “indiscipline”.

There is every reason to consider the possibility that *dù* 度 “measure” refers to the proportionality of tones which so much exercised the Pythagoreans in ancient Greece.

8.9 On the taxonomy of necessary conditions for knowing what one is doing

知己而後知人，知人而後 / 知禮，知禮而後知行。

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

This proposition distances itself from current ideas that moral *xìng* 行 “action” comes from understanding the sages; instead it puts reflexive understanding of oneself at the heart of all moral action, and it aims not at ritual propriety but at *xìng* 行 “(proper) conduct”.

It is by analogy with oneself that one understands others, by the virtue of *shù* 恕 which is the virtue by which one extrapolates from oneself to others. Understanding of ritual propriety, again, presupposes such understanding of other persons.



slip 27



slip 26

8.10 On the essential function of the presence of visiting guests

賓客，清廟之文也 *⁶²。

Visiting guests are adornments of the Temple of Purity. [slip 88]

This defines the role of official guests in temple ritual. The binome creates a generic noun phrase: *kè* 客 alone would not be explicitly generic and could by itself mean “the guest; the foreigner”. In the context of *Yǔcóng* 語叢 1, the proposition might seem uncharacteristically concrete and specific in its reference. But the theoretical point is fresh and original: in temple activities, it is the presence of invited formal guests that gives meaningful dignity *wén* 文 to proceedings.



slip 88

9. EDUCATION

If one is entitled to follow Liú Zhào’s transcription of the following proposition, there is also an important distinction between *tiān* 天 and *rén* 人 in ethical theory that is by no means trivial:

9.1 On heavenly social standards as opposed to human education

天生倫 *⁶³(?), 人生化 *⁶⁴(?)。

Heaven originates moral standards(?); man engenders education (inculcating these standards)(?). [slip 3]

Lún 倫 “moral standards” or *rén lún* 人倫 “moral standards of men” is the crucial feature that defines man, distinguishes him from beasts, according to current ways of speaking in Warring States times. But, and here comes the paradox, that quintessential quality, in fact, comes from Heaven. It is NOT man-made.



slip 3

⁶²清廟之文也: [17], p. 164 suspects 可能指麗容. [21], p. 195 glosses 紋飾, 裝飾.

⁶³The identification of the graph 倫 is widely accepted, whereas the reading of 化 must count as conjectural: Li Ling has come around to reading 末 “what is marginal as compared to the basic 倫” and 連劭名 reads 謀 “plans which should be in accordance with the standards of heaven”. The choice between these readings is difficult.

⁶⁴[21], p. 183 comments “化”指風俗、風氣.

What is man-made is the educational transformation *huà* 化 or *jiào huà* 教化 based on these principles of proper moral behaviour.

The general theme of *shēng* 生 “generation” is pervasive in *Yúcóng* 1 and thematically it does link this document to the rest of the *Guōdiàn* documents which are otherwise quite different from *Yúcóng* 1 and from each other.

It is the sage who consummately incorporates these principles:

MENG 4A 1 聖人，人倫之至也。“The sage is the consummation of human relations.”

MENG 6B 10 今居中國，去人倫，無君子，如之何其可也？“If, for example, in the central states, one gets rid of human relations, has no superior persons, who can that be acceptable?” 詩，大序：厚人倫，美教化，“It gave depth to human relations, beautified and educated (the people).”

LIJI 26/1/20: 故禮之教化也微。“Thus the education (and transformation) through ritual propriety is a subtle thing.”

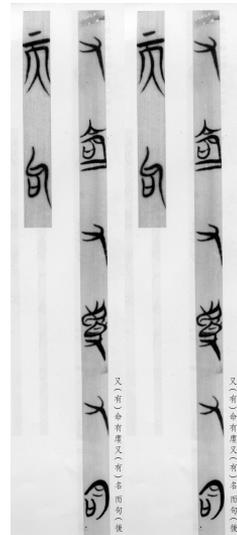
This notion of *jiào huà* 教化 became a central focus in *Xúnzǐ* 荀子, and the masters of the art of this moral transformation were the sage kings, as witnessed in XUN 18.6.3: 堯舜者、天下之善教化者也。“Yáo and Shùn were those who were best at educating (and thus transforming) others.”

9.2 On the conceptual basis of ordained fate and a necessary condition for social standards

有命有文，有名而後/有倫？。

There being ordained fate there is meaningful pattern, and only when there are names are there social standards. [slip 4-5]

This proposition again focusses conceptually on *wén* 文 as meaningful pattern in general and on *lún* 倫 as morally meaningful pattern: ordained fate, *mìng* 命, is a basis for meaningful pattern, *wén* 文, whereas names, the articulation of rules, are the necessary basis for the morally meaningful social standards, *lún* 倫. These standards may be from heaven, but they are no more “heavenly” than that their existence in the human world depends of the existence of names for them.



slip 4-5

Note the repeated logical pattern of “A serves as a basis for B, whereas C is the necessary condition for D”. The point of this proposition is not only in its new material message, but in its repeated logical form.

From a substantial but abstract point of view of conceptual analysis the concepts *mìng* 命, *míng* 名, *wén* 文, and *lún* 倫 are being systematically related.

From an even more abstract logical point of view one might say that what is at issue, and what is being demonstrated here through examples is the difference between a sufficient condition and a necessary condition. Fate ordained by Heaven is a necessary and sufficient condition for the existence of meaningful pattern, but names are a necessary condition for the existence of those social standards.

The repeated insistence on the crucial importance of names in *Yǔcōng* does place the text in a tradition which Sīmǎ Tán 司馬談 congenially dubbed *míng jiā* 名家 “School of Names” when he was inventing the idea of philosophical schools in ancient China.

Rhetorically, this proposition delights in the seemingly paradoxical truth that moral standards depend for their existence on a terminology which allows their efficient educational transmission.

9.3 On the need for abstract investigation as a basis for mass education

察天道 *⁶⁵以化民氣。

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

This proposition constitutes a moral justification of natural philosophy. The study of the Way of Heaven is for the purpose of the transformation of the vital energies of humans through education.

The transformation here is that through education: *jiào huà* 教化. And in order to perform this task the need is to ascertain the abstract values ordained or decreed by Heaven. Education must be according to the *tiān dào* 天道 which is what the *tiān mìng* 天命 specifies for mankind.



slip 68

The reference to *mín qì* 民氣 is original for the period: what is transformed is not overt behaviour of the people, *mín sú* 民俗, and also not their psychological attitudes: it is their dynamic dispositions to act.

From a rhetorical point of view one notes that this is yet another examples in *Yǔcóng* 1 of a proposition that delights in paradox: at first thought there seems to be

⁶⁵察天道: the graph I read as 察, according to Qiú Xīguī, is problematic.

no point in studying the Way of Heaven for purposes of popular education.

The pairing of *dào* 道 “the Way” with *qì* 氣 “vital spirits” is significant because it involves the shaping of the more concrete by the more abstract.

9.4 On intellectual coherence as a necessary condition for education

有物有由 *⁶⁶有尾 *⁶⁷(?) 而後/教 *⁶⁸生。

When there being things there are the wherefrom (of things) and the (tail >) end result (the things themselves) only then does teaching originate. [slip 10 and slip 11]

Wù 物 is very abstractly “(a kind of) thing”, even “subject” in this context. One notices that *yóu* 由 “from; origin” is written consistently with its redundantly complex graph. If with *Liú Zhào* one reads as *wěi* 尾 “tail” a graph that does remain puzzling, then the abstract focus in this piece is on the structural inner coherence of a thing or subject (which must have “head and tail”) as a necessary condition for that “thing” to become a subject for teaching. ([21])



slip 11

slip 10

“Teaching” then, in this instance, is not in fact - as often elsewhere - training people to do something but inducing them to understand a subject that has head and tail. And one can only induce others to understand a subject to the extent that one has shown it to have head and tail. This may sound plausible enough until one reflects on the fact that our interpretation, in this instance depends on the precariously conjectural reading of what we interpret as 尾, and on a problematic figurative reading of that characters which is natural enough for English, but not so plausible for classical Chinese.

⁶⁶The graph for 由 seems uncontroversial, although there is a suggestion that it should be read 謠 here. ([13])

⁶⁷[13] reads *hui* 纘 which refers to the embroidered “tails” of a piece of cloth.

⁶⁸Also the graph we transcribe as 教 is controversial. [26] acknowledges that what we see looks more like 諺 but “should apparently be read as 教”.

10. THE “CLASSICS”

10.1 On the purposes of the classics

詩，所以會古今之志 *⁶⁹/也。書，會... 者也。禮，交之行術 *⁷⁰也。樂，或生或教者也。易，所以會天道人道/也。春秋 *⁷¹，所以會古今之/事也。

The *Songs* are that wherein one has collected together the aspirations of all times. [slip 37-38] The *Documents* (are that wherein one has collected).... [slip 44] The *Rituals* are about the conduct and ordering(?) of human interaction. [slip 42] The *Music* is in one part about production (of music) and in another part about instruction (by music). [slip 43] The *Changes* are that wherein one has collected together the Way of Heaven and the Way of Man. [slip 36-37] The *Annals* are that wherein one has collected the (significant) events events [slip 40] of the past and the present. [slip 41]



slip 41 slip 40 slip 37 slip 86 slip 43 slip 42 slip 44 slip 39 slip 38

To start with, this extraordinary series of punctuated propositions shows that what came to be known as the six classics was focussed on in the fourth century B.C..

⁶⁹[26] is in doubt whether one should read 古今之志 or 古今之詩. [13] transcribes 古今之恃.

⁷⁰[21] reads the bamboo graph 述 as 術.

⁷¹[17], p. 168 notes that the bamboo graph 穆 is simply a mistake for 秋 and is gratefully followed in this by everyone.

This series sets out not to describe the content of the various kinds of classics but to analyse their systematic general purpose.

Thus about the *Songs* we are not told that they rhyme, or that they are collected from the various regions, or anything of that descriptive sort. We are told instead that this classic is about aspirations, as indeed the ancient Preface to the *Songs* does claim at the very beginning. Again, the ritual classics are not just said to be about personal conduct in accordance with ritual propriety, they are about human interaction.

In the case of musical classics, one part is about the production of music, the other about the education through music.

Three of the kinds of classics presented are explained in terms of what they *huì* 會 “collect” (perhaps four), and in the definition of the *Annals* the authors actually come close to giving a definition of “history”: the facts of history, *historia ipsa*, and not just *historia narrata* “narrated history”.

Gǔ jīn zhī shì 古今之事 “the affairs of the past and the present” is an important antecedent to Sīmǎ Qiān’s 司馬遷 famous phrase 古今之變 “changes past and present” in which the historian comes as close as he ever did to an abstract notion of history.

It is plausible to assume that in this text the terms *shī*, *shū*, *yuè*, *yì*, *chūnQīu* 詩, 書, 樂, 易, 春秋 refer generically to text types rather than to any concrete books.

One notes that the *chūnQīu* “Annals” attributed to Confucius and admired as a classic were not in any obvious sense about the *Yúcóng* “present”, i.e. the times when we may suppose that *Yúcóng* 1 was compiled. The text rises to a more abstract notion of history than merely that of the events of the past.

10.2 On the creation of the Songs

詩 *⁷²(?) 由敬作。

The Songs(?) are produced out of reverence. [slip 95]

The *Songs* were probably collected and compiled into a book for their ritual functions and their reverential moral content. Thus, the *Songs* are not mere entertainment, the outrageousness of songs of Zhèng 鄭 and Wèi 衛 constituting the scandalous exception that proves the conventional rule. They are not just any “songs”. They are of the songs those that were supposed to be revered for their ritual and morally instructive content, and to be expressive of deference to ritual conventions.



slip 95

⁷²(60) 詩: [21] suspects that the bamboo graph should be interpreted as 時 “altar to heaven”.

11. Concluding Remark

It is in the nature of the material discussed in this paper that its interpretation must always remain tentative even at those points where it sounds entirely convincing. In the end, one is tempted to concede that certain passages remain essentially enigmatic and even opaque to the point of remaining strictly speaking uninterpretable.

On the other hand I hope I have demonstrated that the fragments discussed in this paper do deserve - and to richly reward - much more intensely focussed philosophical and analytic attention than they have so far received in the superabundant literature about them that is listed for convenience below.

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将郭店楚简（语叢 1）作为早期中国分析哲学 和概念分析杰作的解读

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摘 要

这篇文章旨在给出名为“语叢 1”一书中的“郭店残本”详细的哲学释义。这些残本已经被按照纯物理标准被加以分类。值得注意的是，所有这些残本可以被解释为与概念分析问题相关的精致的论述。因此，语叢 1 可看作是具有某种分析哲学和逻辑分析意味的非墨家论述。语叢 1 中一个显著的特征也遍布着对逻辑悖论的兴趣。