Origins of Moral-Political Philosophy in Early China

Contestation of Humaneness, Justice, and Personal Freedom

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Contents

Introduction

This book is an attempt at a systematic presentation of the intellectual projects at the origins of moral-political philosophy in early China. The foundational period in Chinese philosophy, also known as pre-Qin (*xianqin*, 先秦), from the time of Confucius (traditionally 551–479 BCE) to the establishment of the first unified imperial dynasty of Qin in 221 BCE, has always been considered the single most creative and vibrant chapter in Chinese intellectual history. Works attributed to Confucius, Mozi, Mencius, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Xunzi, Han Feizi, and many others represent the origins of moral and political thought in China. As testimony to their enduring lure, in recent decades many Chinese intellectuals, and even leading politicians, have turned to those classics, especially Confucian texts, for alternative or complementary sources of moral authority and political legitimacy.[1]

Since the last decades of the twentieth century, the study of early Chinese texts has undergone major changes. A critical development is the fact that many texts sealed away in tombs from the Warring States and the early Han periods were excavated and have been made available for scholarly investigations. They have provided critical interventions to the study of early China, filling many gaps in our knowledge, unsettling some established scholarly orthodoxies, and provoking more scholarly debates. Furthermore, there has been an explosion of new and sophisticated translations by specialists of early Chinese texts, making them, including many excavated ones, much more accessible to a broader audience. All these efforts have produced a massive amount of new scholarship, vastly enriching as well as complicating our understanding of the early Chinese intellectual landscape. In all these scholarly advances we can start to discern the outline of an emerging new picture with respect to the development of early Chinese philosophy.

[1] Yü Dan 于丹 is a famous spokesperson for this popular Confucianism. Her book, *Insights into the* Analects 论语心得, which is based on her popular lecture on Chinese Central Television broadcast in 2006, sold millions of copies. As a representative of voices that mock and reject the trend to deify Confucius in contemporary China, Li Ling's 李零 books, *A Homeless Dog: My Reading of the* Analects 丧家狗：我读论语 and *Stripping away His Sageliness to Reveal the Real Confucius: Vertical and Horizontal Readings of the* Analects 去圣乃得真孔子：论语纵横读, are worth the read. Interested readers can get the gist of Li's writings in *Contemporary Chinese Thought*, vol. 41, no. 2 (Winter 2009–2010), which contains the translation of several key chapters in Li's two books.

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However, a good deal of Western scholarship on classical Chinese thought still tends to be rather historicist in orientation, with the result that the philosophical significance and the normative entailments of the classical texts remain underexplored, especially when compared with their Western counterparts. There is a structural reason for this: in the contemporary Western discourse on classical Chinese philosophy, there is a schism between the historicist orientation of Sinology and the presentist orientation of mainstream contemporary Western philosophy. Such divergent disciplinary norms have put scholars of Chinese philosophy in a difficult position. On the one hand, they have to defend the philosophical nature, or even the philosophical worthiness, of classical Chinese texts to contemporary Western philosophers who are more interested in the philosophical integrity of ideas than in their historicity. At the same time, scholars of Chinese philosophy, when dealing with Sinologists, need to justify the basic premise of their philosophical approach to the classics due to the historical ambiguity and compositional instability of these early texts.

Therefore, in this Introduction, before sketching out the new narrative about classical Chinese philosophy, I would like to take a closer look at the structural issue facing Chinese (and other non-Western) philosophy in the contemporary Western academy and offer some solutions to such a problem which has threatened the very legitimacy of Chinese philosophy in the academy.

§1. Chinese Philosophy in the Western Academy: Between Sinology and Philosophy

At a workshop on classical Chinese philosophy at Princeton University on February 22, 2014, Mark Csikszentmihalyi recounted a fascinating exchange with Herbert Fingarette when they were on a panel discussing the formation of the *Analects* at Berkeley in October 2013. Csikszentmihalyi was making the case that the *Analects* is a multivocal text and that reading it that way provides an interesting perspective on a diverse and dynamic period in the formation of Confucianism. Surprisingly, Fingarette was not at all willing to entertain this approach, claiming that philosophers would not be interested in it. Csikszentmihalyi wanted to find ways to convince scholars like Fingarette that they should be interested in such claims.

This exchange points to a critical issue lurking beneath the contemporary project known as "Chinese philosophy," namely the disciplinary chasm or mountain between Sinology and philosophy within the Western academy concerning the interpretation of early Chinese texts, especially "philosophical" texts such as Classics (*jing* 經) like the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) and the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語) as well as texts attributed to various Masters (*zi* 子) like the *Mozi* (墨子) and the

Laozi (老子). In other words, the study of (pre-modern) Chinese philosophy[2] within the contemporary Western academy is straddled between Sinology and philosophy, with the former dominated by historians and the latter remaining almost exclusively Western. As a result, scholars of Chinese philosophy in the West have to engage both Sinologists and philosophers. Conforming to two disciplinary norms is never an easy task, and one of the unfortunate consequences of the contemporary discourse of classical Chinese philosophy in the Western academy is that for the most part it remains a marginalized field in both Sinology and philosophy.

The tension between philosophical and historical inquiries has been a perennial problem. Within the modern academy, the disciplines of philosophy and history are protected by their respective institutional norms and practices, without much need for interaction. However, Chinese philosophy, sandwiched between Sinology and philosophy in the Western academy and lacking institutional support, has encountered extraordinary challenges from both Sinologists (most of whom are historians) and (Western) philosophers. As Holmes Welch observed more than half a century ago when dealing with the dating and the interpretation of the *Daodejing*,

> the book presents two classes of problems under one cover. The first class is philological; the second is philosophical. To solve the first requires a thorough grounding in Chinese studies, which make the most crushing demands on memory and patience. If there is any *metier* designed to smother the imagination, it is Sinology. Yet imagination above all else is what is required to solve the second class of problems, the philosophical. (Welch 1957, 192)

Welch's dismissiveness of Sinology as stifling in the interpretation of Chinese classics is reflective of an earlier era when the philosophical approach to the classical texts was more dominant than the Sinological approach. It is fair to say that the fortune between the two approaches has since been reversed. For Welch, the philosophical approach, driven by imagination, provides a better and more attractive alternative than the "dull" Sinological approach. If anything, the struggle identified by Welch might have worsened, likely attributable to the fact that there are now more scholars engaged in the study of Chinese classical texts than ever before, bringing with them deeply entrenched disciplinary norms.

[2] I am limiting the scope of classical Chinese philosophy here to the Masters texts (*zi* 子) and some Classics (*jing* 經), following Carine Defoort (2006, 627). Some scholars prefer the category of Masters Literature to Chinese philosophy when describing those early texts since the former is an indigenous category in the Chinese tradition which was coined in the Han soon after the period under discussion, whereas the latter appeared under the influence of the Euro-American traditions and practices, e.g., Denecke (2011, 32). While such a practice is perfectly sensible, it is clearly Sinological in nature, different from the philosophical approach adopted in this book.

The availability of newly discovered texts has also added to the fuel, despite the occasional calls for interdisciplinary or post-disciplinary approaches (e.g., Valmisa 2019).

Much of the difficulty facing Chinese philosophy in the Western academy has to do with the fact that Chinese philosophy as an academic discipline is relatively new, as a result of the encounter between the West and China in modern history. In many ways, Chinese philosophy is a modern invention. A recent book, *Learning to Emulate the Wise: The Genesis of Chinese Philosophy as an Academic Discipline in Twentieth-Century China*, provides a comprehensive look at the origins of the discipline of Chinese philosophy in early twentieth-century China. Chinese intellectuals at the time tried to reconfigure the way Chinese classics were studied in their struggle to counter the overwhelming Western challenge in the intellectual discourse which was part of the overall Western dominance of China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As a result of that effort, Chinese intellectuals, often learning from their Japanese counterparts, categorized traditional texts as philosophical or historical in order to align them with established disciplines in the Western intellectual discourse. As John Makeham observes in his introduction to *Learning to Emulate the Wise*,

> it is well known that Chinese intellectuals introduced a new "language" or "grammar"—academic philosophy—into China soon after the turn of the twentieth century, subsequently leading to the institutional incorporation of the discipline "Chinese philosophy" (*Zhongguo zhexue* 中國哲學) alongside Western philosophy. This was one of many responses to an "epistemological crisis" in which China found itself in the closing decades of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). Western philosophy provided key conceptual paradigms, vocabulary and technical terms, bibliographic categories, and even histories and periodization schemes essential to the demarcation, definition, and narration of the discipline of Chinese philosophy. This was not, however, a simple case of the blanket inscription of Western philosophy upon a Chinese *tabula rasa*. Nor was the process by which Western models of knowledge categorization were introduced into China a passive one in which the "foreign" was imposed on the "native." Rather, it was an ongoing process of negotiation and appropriation initiated and conducted by Chinese protagonists, in which traditional categories of Chinese knowledge were "translated" into the new academic category of *zhexue*. (Makeham 2012, 2–3)

Put briefly, the birth of *zhongguo zhexue* is the fruit of intense intellectual negotiations between traditional Chinese categories of knowledge and Western philosophy, with the result that Chinese philosophy is, strictly speaking, neither traditional Chinese nor Western, but something new.

However, *Learning to Emulate the Wise* deals with Chinese philosophy almost exclusively within the Chinese (and some Japanese) context, with its focus on key figures in the "invention" of Chinese philosophy in the China of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It does not tackle the state of affairs of Chinese philosophy within the Western academy, which is vastly different from the Chinese context. Despite the relatively recent birth of Chinese philosophy, it is a firmly established discipline in the Chinese academic world. Almost all Chinese universities that have a philosophy department include Chinese philosophy as one of the subject areas. Except for periodic disputations among Chinese scholars about whether or not China has a philosophical tradition, sometimes as a nativist way to claim uniqueness from the West (e.g., Ouyang 2012), the legitimacy of the discipline of Chinese philosophy is by and large taken for granted and institutionalized in the way philosophy departments are set up in Chinese universities.

By sharp contrast, the status of Chinese philosophy is much more perilous in the Western academy. Its viability is still very much a question mark. Institutionally, there is no disciplinary home for Chinese philosophy. The arguably natural disciplinary home for Chinese philosophy is the philosophy department, but there are few faculty positions on Chinese philosophy in the leading mainstream Anglo-American Ph.D.-granting philosophy departments.[3] Some scholars of Chinese philosophy are housed in area studies (East Asian studies or Asian studies) dominated by Sinologists. This means that many scholars of Chinese philosophy need to engage scholars who might have little, if any, interest in philosophical approaches to Chinese intellectual traditions. Furthermore, it also means that many students pursuing their doctorate in Chinese philosophy are trained in non-philosophy programs, depriving them of the opportunity to engage with their natural (or maybe not so natural, after all) disciplinary partner, namely Western philosophy, and making them less desirable for potential hires by philosophy departments. This is clearly a vicious cycle concerning the institutional viability of Chinese philosophy in the Western academy.

Furthermore, the disciplinary and institutional split between religion and philosophy in the modern Western academy adds to the complication in the study of Chinese intellectual traditions: even if we accept philosophy and religion as broadly applicable categories to the Chinese intellectual traditions, a split between the religious and the philosophical did not take place in Chinese

[3] The Philosophical Gourmet Report (PGR), which has come to dominate the ranking of philosophy programs in the Anglo-American world, has created powerful incentives for top philosophy departments to compete for prominent philosophers in the ranked areas so as to boost their rankings. Since Chinese philosophy, along with other non-Western philosophical traditions, is not one of the primary ranking categories, there is very little institutional incentive for top philosophy programs to invest in it.

intellectual history the way it did in the West. The categorial ambiguity is institutionally reflected by the fact that many scholars of Chinese philosophy in the Western academy are housed in a religious studies department rather than a philosophy department. When situated within religious studies, the disciplinary acculturation pulls these scholars of Chinese philosophy in the direction of engagement with scholars of other world religions with their own distinct theoretical frameworks and canonical foundations,[4] which might be of little direct scholarly interest to either philosophers or Sinologists.

The institutional diffusion (or, rather, homelessness) and vulnerability of Chinese philosophy in the West reflects a skeptical attitude that Sinologists and philosophers harbor toward the very project of Chinese philosophy. For a Sinologist, a work on classical Chinese philosophy tends to be historically inadequate[5] in that it does not illuminate the *historical* complexities of a text or its context; on the other hand, for a (Western) philosopher, a work on Chinese philosophy is likely to be too involved in the intricacies of historical and cultural contexts—not to mention the linguistic complexities with regard to key terms and names—that are hard to keep track of, unless one is already familiar with them. Put differently, if a work is too embedded in the Sinological discourse, it would lose the audience on the philosophy side; if it is too philosophically focused, Sinologists would not be interested in it. If it tries to appeal to both, instead of attracting audience from the two camps, it can easily end up losing readers from both sides, falling through the proverbial interdisciplinary cracks instead of serving as a bridge to bring the two together. The asymmetric power dynamics and divergent disciplinary norms in the Western academy involving Chinese philosophy means that scholars of Chinese philosophy have to be acquainted with both Sinological and Western philosophical discourses, whereas such efforts are, more often than not, unreciprocated from the other directions, some notable exceptions notwithstanding.

So far, the debate about the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy has been mostly addressing challenges from (Western) philosophy, especially the applicability of the category of philosophy to Chinese intellectual traditions.[6] Challenges from scholars of (Western) philosophy have been treated extensively in the scholarly discussion and I will not repeat those discussions at length here. Instead, I will briefly examine some of the more recent development on the philosophical

[4] For example, works by Max Weber, Emile Durkheim, Clifford Geertz, Jonathan Z. Smith, and others are critical to scholars of religious studies, whereas they are of little interest to philosophers, who have their own canons in works by Plato, Aristotle, David Hume, Immanuel Kant, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and John Rawls, etc.

[5] For a recent example, see Nylan 2013.

[6] Defoort 2001 and 2006 provide a helpful summary of the debate.

discourse of Chinese philosophy later in this Introduction when we look at the politics of Chinese philosophy in the Western academy.

By contrast, not as much attention has been given to challenges from Sinology.[7] I will focus on the Sinological challenge, as it has received less attention in the scholarly discussion, using the lens of authorship to look into a particular aspect of Sinological challenges to the project of Chinese philosophy. I argue that Fingarette's refusal to engage with the Sinological discourse on the authorship of classical Chinese texts reveals the underappreciated high stake of authorship in the philosophical project. I explore philosophical implications for interpreting texts whose authorship is in doubt and develop an alternative model of authorship and textuality, so that a more robust intellectual space for the discourse on classical Chinese philosophy can be carved out from the dominant Sinological discourse within the Western academy.

My argument is that philosophical and Sinological approaches to Chinese classics have divergent scholarly objectives and follow different disciplinary norms. To clarify such divergence, I propose an interpretative model to distinguish two sets of scholarly objects operative in Sinology and philosophy that are related and at times overlap, but often are irreducibly distinct, i.e., original text versus inherited text, historical author versus textual author, and authorial intent versus textual intent, with the former in the pairs belonging to Sinologists and the latter to philosophers.

§2. Sinological Challenge Concerning Classical Chinese Philosophy

Sinological challenge to Chinese philosophy is particularly salient with pre-Qin classical texts, which happen to be the primary interest of most scholars

[7] The Sinological challenge to the project of Chinese philosophy has garnered some scholarly attention in China. For example, Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢 has tried to grapple with some aspects of this challenge in several of his more recent works (e.g., Liu 2007 and 2008). He uses Zhu Xi's 朱熹 commentarial method as an example to articulate two orientations in hermeneutical practice: restorative construction (*sigou* 似構) and creative construction (*chuanggou* 創構). The former refers to an interpretative effort that attempts to recover the original text and its historical context as much as possible, whereas the latter is a hermeneutical exercise that is more geared toward addressing contemporary concerns of the interpreter. Accordingly, the restorative construction of a text has an "objectivist orientation" that deals with the text in its historical vicissitudes, whereas the creative construction has a more "subjectivist orientation" that pertains more to the interpreter's appropriation of traditional resources in her deliberations on contemporary issues. The former is a typical Sinological approach and the latter philosophical. Liu makes a persuasive case that these two interpretative orientations need to be evaluated differently as they have different objectives. As the reader will see in the following, our approaches share similar concerns, but I frame the problems differently and proposes different solutions. I would like to thank Yong Huang for directing my attention to Liu's methodological reflections.

of Chinese philosophy in the West right now. Pre-Qin classical texts are the favorites of Western scholars of Chinese philosophy (including Chinese scholars working in the West), and it is precisely those texts whose textual ambiguities are the greatest given their early dates. Herein lies one of the central problems in the philosophical approach to classical Chinese texts, namely the problem of authorship, crystallized in the exchange between Fingarette and Csikszentmihalyi.

2.1. The Problem of Authorship in Philosophical Interpretations

Most scholars of classical Chinese philosophy, both in China and in the West, acknowledge the Sinological consensus on the multivocal nature of many of these early texts. That is, most, if not all, of the early texts are the results of collective efforts by people across several generations, even though they are usually attributed to a single person as the "author," whether that person is a historical figure, a fictional character, or some mixture of the two. However, the problem of authorship pertaining to the early texts is even more serious since the very concept of authorship was still at a very early stage during the pre-Qin period.

Mark Edward Lewis, in *Writing and Authority in Early China*, traces the early development of text and authorship, using the *Analects* as the paradigmatic example. According to Lewis,

> the master began to figure as the author of his own text only in the fourth century B.C. In the earliest philosophical writings, he appeared as a figure whose words were addressed to followers or political figures, and recorded by an implied scribe. The texts were produced by those who shared a common master, and reproduced within themselves the factional splits or debates among these followers. As object rather than subject of writing, and as an object offering a ground for disputed narratives, the master acquired distinctive characteristics that had a formative impact on later Chinese writing practices. In order to accommodate the multiple agents speaking through him over the centuries, the master appeared not as a consistent philosophic voice speaking in the form of binding universals, but rather as a set of individual propositions whose underlying principles, or lack thereof, had to be deduced by the reader. (Lewis 1999, 83)

In other words, many of the early texts were the result of group effort (reflecting factional interest and lineage stake), and the master to whom a text was attributed or dedicated was the very product of the text. The emergence of the idea of author as an isolated and individual voice gradually took place when the textual

authority shifted to the "classic" (Lewis 1999, 63). Lewis identifies the breakthrough of authorship in the construction of Qu Yuan (屈原, 340–278 BCE) as the author of the lead poem in the *Chu Ci* 楚辭, "Li Sao" 離騷:

> The appearance of the proto-*Chu ci* under the name of Qu Yuan was a crucial step in the invention of authorship in the late Warring States or early Han. A set of themes and images, probably defined by generic conventions, was redefined as the expression of an individual's response to his experiences. The mutual echoes and resonances of the poems that appeared when they were read together were explained by reference to a single author, and ultimately each poem was linked to a specific stage in the writer's life. The author was thus effectively invented out of the anthology, just as Confucius was created within the collected sayings of the *Lun yu*. However Qu Yuan, the figure of isolation, had no disciples and was thus credited with personally composing the poems. (Lewis 1999, 186)

What is especially compelling here is the fact that the idea of a single author is an interpretative invention, demonstrating its attractiveness and effectiveness in textual exegeses. Lewis calls Qu Yuan "the first author to be identified for an individual, poetic voice, and as such he became the archetype for later Chinese poet" (1999, 186). Once such an identification took place, Qu Yuan became fundamental to the interpretation of "Li Sao": "The text was bound to the narrative of a presumptive author's life and understood as a record of his experiences, so no reading of the poem could escape reference to the poet" (Lewis 1999, 186). In contrast to Confucius, the "author" of the *Analects*, Qu Yuan was not portrayed as addressing his followers in the "Li Sao" and in fact had no known disciples. This means that under such a construction Li Sao represents a singular voice, that of Qu Yuan, who supposedly composed the poem in isolation, instead of a group effort. This is the dominant paradigm of authorship we take for granted today.

Indeed, Sinological scholarship has vastly enriched our understanding of authorship of early Chinese texts, while historicizing it to such an extent that the value of traditional exegetical approach is thrown into question. One of the most significant Sinological conclusions about early Chinese texts is the fact that (almost) all of them were systematically edited in the imperial library during the Western Han period. The most famous editors/redactors were Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BCE) and his son Liu Xin 劉歆 (c. 46 BCE–23 CE) who worked as bibliographers in the imperial library.

Because traditional exegeses are largely premised upon an original single author for a text, their value is rather limited in helping us understand the historical specificities of the text they comment on. Given their primary philosophical interest, in order not to get caught in the complex Sinological discourse on

authorship, many scholars of classical Chinese philosophy have defaulted to a strategy of acknowledging the Sinological consensus at the outset of their works before going on to philosophize those texts, largely in disregard of the historical complexity involving textuality and authorship. In other words, the multivocality of classical texts is not *philosophically* integrated into the contemporary philosophical interpretations.[8]

[8] It is often challenging to accommodate the multivocality of classics in the philosophical approach to these texts. Edward Slingerland, one of the most creative contemporary interpreters of classical Chinese philosophical texts, has acknowledged in several of his reviews of recent books on Sinological discussions of classical texts that in his own philosophical works he has only paid lip service to the discussions about the heterogeneity of classical texts (Slingerland 2000, 137) and that scholars of Chinese philosophy, including him, have tended to ignore materials outside the standard account of early Chinese philosophy (Slingerland 2018, 475). Slingerland's candid admissions can be seen as a revealing cue about the challenges facing scholars of Chinese philosophy in integrating at least some of the Sinological discoveries into the philosophical discourse. Interestingly, some Sinologists at times have also found it difficult, if not impossible, to simultaneously deal with the historicity of authorship while engaging in the study of a text. This challenge is vividly demonstrated by Martin Kern and Dirk Meyer in their introduction to the collection of essays on the studies of the *Book of Documents* (Shangshu 尚書):

> But what if the text is not of that era? What if it dates centuries later or is not at all a unified artifact but a compilation of disparate sources from different times? This is not merely a text-critical or text-historical question (important as these are); to trace the early Chinese development of political and legal philosophy, it matters greatly whether our text is informed by, and thus to some extent reflects, the practices and ideas of 1000 BCE as opposed to those of 300 BCE. This is obvious wherever a later text misconstrues an earlier reality; here, correctly dating the text is a crucial step toward getting to the facts of history. More complex, and more interesting, is a different scenario, one that seems to fit at least parts of the Shangshu: a very late text may well contain substantial strata of much earlier knowledge and may accurately, if only partially, capture the realities of a much earlier time; as such, even a belated composition may be more historically precise than other, older ones. But there is yet another reality at play, and this is the reality of the text itself. A chapter that is a contemporaneous witness to the events it describes has a fundamentally different purpose and meaning compared with one that describes the same events from a retrospective perspective centuries later. The latter, regardless of its accuracy, is an artifact of memory and as such plays an important political and cultural role not for the time it signifies but for its own time of signification. But its function and nature as an artifact of memory do not invalidate its claims for fidelity any more than the function and nature of a contemporaneous witness do. Both are purposefully composed and hence also compromised in their own but different ways. It is one of the major scholarly fallacies at the core of traditional Chinese philology that "early" gets equated with "reliable" (which too often then inspires an ardent desire to "prove" that something is early) and that, in turn, the demonstrable accuracy of a text is taken to prove its status not only as "true" but also as a "truly early," if not contemporaneous, witness. (Kern & Meyer eds. 2017, 7–8)

Kern and Meyer here highlight the importance of what they call "the reality of the text itself" and dispute the commonly shared assumption by Sinologists that "early" equals "reliable." They call on scholars to *study* the early texts, not just to *use* them to mine historical information (ibid., 7). It is fascinating to see that they are willing to "trade false certainty for more interesting and productive questions and possibilities" (ibid., 8), even though their conclusion might have been different from that of the philosophers. Indeed, an endeavor guided by the desire to dive into interesting and productive questions can open up new territories for scholarly inquiry. Such observations by the two prominent Sinologists with regard to the value of the early texts would be enthusiastically embraced by philosophers, differences between them notwithstanding. Clearly Sinology as a field is by no means monolithic. In fact, early China is one of the most, if not the single most, hotly contested fields in the study of China.

This makes the exchange between Csikszentmihalyi and Fingarette particularly noteworthy, given Fingarette's outright refusal to acknowledge the Sinological consensus on the multivocal nature of classical texts like the *Analects*, unlike most scholars of Chinese philosophy. Fingarette is a Western philosopher who has taken a keen interest in Chinese philosophy, especially Confucianism, and is the author of the now classic philosophical interpretation of the *Analects*, i.e., *Confucius: Secular as Sacred*. Since he is not a Sinologist, his disagreement with Csikszentmihalyi does not suggest that Fingarette necessarily disputes Csikszentmihalyi's point about the multivocality of the *Analects* on the Sinological ground. Rather, his refusal to engage Csikszentmihalyi on the Sinological discourse of authorship points to Fingarette's keen awareness of the philosophical stake in assuming Confucius as the single author of the *Analects*. Here I am attempting to scrutinize Fingarette's refusal on philosophical grounds, in terms of how philosophical discussions of a classical text can be seriously undermined, if not outright nullified, by the Sinological discussion of its historicity.

In the following, I will use the *Zhuangzi* as a case study by taking a close look at the contemporary debate on the stratification and authorship of the *Zhuangzi*, especially the Inner Chapters, and examine what is at stake in this debate. It will become clear that what is hanging in the balance is nothing less than the very viability and integrity of the philosophical approach to classical Chinese texts.

2.2. A Case Study of Authorship: Contemporary Debate on the *Zhuangzi*

The *Zhuangzi* is a brilliant but difficult text, both textually and conceptually. It is generally believed to originate in the Warring States period (476–221 BCE), although scholars disagree on when the chapters were put together, as some date it as late as the Western Han Dynasty (202 BCE–9 CE). The received text, consisting of thirty-three chapters, is divided into three parts, seven Inner Chapters (*nei pian* 內篇), fifteen Outer Chapters (*wai pian* 外篇), and eleven Miscellaneous Chapters (*za pian* 雜篇). The *Zhuangzi*'s textual and conceptual heterogeneity has led to many fruitful studies of its composition, revealing stylistic differences and conflicting historicity of ideas and terminologies that are unlikely the work of a single person.

Historically, two important Chinese sources have shaped the scholarly discussions on the *Zhuangzi*, namely Sima Qian's (司馬遷 138–86 BCE) brief biographical note on Zhuang Zhou in the *Shiji* (史記) and Guo Xiang's (郭象 d. 312 CE) redaction of the *Zhuangzi*. The former is our only source for biographical information about the historical Zhuang Zhou, while the latter is the earliest

extant and complete version of the text that has been adopted by almost all subsequent editions of the *Zhuangzi*. According to Sima Qian, Zhuang Zhou was a minor official in the state of Song 宋. He was devoted to Laozi's ideas, ridiculing Confucians and Mohists of his time, and harboring no interest in higher office. This portrayal of Zhuang Zhou has provided critical historical contexts and clues for interpreting the *Zhuangzi*. On the other hand, the *Zhuangzi* text we have now comes from Guo Xiang, who supposedly had a larger collection of the text available to him but decided to keep only some of the text and divide them into Inner, Outer, and Miscellaneous Chapters in order to make it more coherent.[9] Given the complex textual history of the *Zhuangzi*, there are textual references and citations scattered in Chinese literary works and historical records,[10] but Sima Qian's biographical note and Guo Xiang's redacted text are the most important historical sources that have provided the foundation for subsequent discussions on Zhuang Zhou the person and *Zhuangzi* the text.

Modern scholars, both in China and in the West, have more or less coalesced around a position that accepts the Inner Chapters as the core of the text written by the historical Zhuang Zhou portrayed in the *Shiji*. According to this conventional wisdom, the Outer Chapters and Miscellaneous Chapters, due to their lack of textual coherence and integrity, mostly represent later additions by those who either followed or shared at least some of the historical Zhuang Zhou's philosophical outlook, although these chapters may contain misplaced fragments from the Inner Chapters representing the authentic voice of the historical Zhuang Zhou.

The most prominent representatives of this prevailing view in contemporary scholarship are A. C. Graham and Liu Xiaogan. Graham, writing in English, and Liu, writing in Chinese, have reached a similar conclusion about the *Zhuangzi* independently, especially the view that the Inner Chapters are the writings of the historical Zhuang Zhou, although they differ on how fragmented the Inner Chapters are and how the Outer Chapters and Miscellaneous Chapters should be classified and sorted.

Graham, in his 1986 article, "How Much of the Chuang Tzŭ Did Chuang Tzŭ Write?," starts with a high-stakes question:

> Can we take for granted the common authorship of the *Inner chapters*? There have been attempts to deny Chuang-tzŭ some of them, notably Fu Ssŭ-nien's ascription of *Equalizing things* 齊物論 (chapter 2) to Shen Tao 慎到—a proposal

[9] Some scholars have credited the preservation and commentary of the *Zhuangzi* to Xiang Xiu 向秀 (d. 272) and even thought that Guo Xiang plagiarized Xiang Xiu's works on the *Zhuangzi*. Without access to Xiang Xiu's own works, which have not survived, such claims are impossible to adjudicate.

[10] For example, the *Hanshu* 漢書 lists the *Zhuangzi* as containing fifty-two chapters with no other detail.

> as unsettling as it would be to credit Bacon with *Hamlet* while leaving the rest of the plays to Shakespeare. (Graham 1986, 283)

Indeed, the assumption of Zhuang Zhou as the author of the Inner Chapters lies at the heart of contemporary scholarly attempt to philosophize the *Zhuangzi*. Questioning such an assumption might jeopardize this philosophical project, as we will see later in the Introduction. Graham tries to provide some relief to the concern that denies Zhuang Zhou the authorship of the Qi Wu Lun chapter (Graham 1986, 284), even though he does not really make a case for it. Instead, he devotes a significant amount of effort to reassigning some parts of the Miscellaneous Chapters to emend Chapter Three, regarded by Graham as the most mutilated chapter due to its conspicuous brevity. His masterful translation, *Chuang Tzu: The Inner Chapters*, rearranges much of the fragmentary Outer and Miscellaneous Chapters under the categories of the School of Chuang Tzu (Zhuangzi), primitivist, Yangist, and syncretist. Graham's translation largely keeps intact the chapters that are single essays, such as the Inner Chapters, the Yangist and Primitivist chapters, as well as Chapters Fifteen, Sixteen, and Thirty-three.

Liu Xiaogan's book, *Classifying the Zhuangzi Chapters* (1994), is a translation of the first three chapters of his Chinese book *Zhuangzi zhexue jiqi yanbian* (庄子哲学及其演变, 1987). Liu's book is a much more sustained effort to make an argument for Zhuang Zhou's authorship of the Inner Chapters and its chronological precedence over the Outer and Miscellaneous Chapters. He tries to establish "objective differences" from within the text itself in order to differentiate the Inner Chapters from the others and appeals to intertextual references to date these strata of the text. Liu surveys the occurrences of certain key terms in the Inner Chapters, like *dao* 道, *de* 德, *ming* 命, *jing* 精, *shen* 神, and finds that these terms are shared among many texts of the mid-Warring States period. Their compounds, like *daode* 道德, *xingming* 性命, and *jingshen* 精神 that appear in the Outer and Miscellaneous Chapters, occur in texts like *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 and are indicative of a later composition, likely right before the Warring States ended in 221 BCE. Accordingly, Liu argues that the *Zhuangzi* was likely composed and compiled by 240 BCE. Liu also devotes a significant amount of effort to discussing different threads of ideas that dominate the Inner Chapters versus the Outer and Miscellaneous Chapters, dividing the latter into groups like the "Transmitters" (*shuzhuang pai* 述莊派), the "Huang-Lao School" (*huanglao pai* 黃老派), and the "Anarchists" (*wujun pai* 無君派) as interpretative frameworks to organize materials that have received less scholarly attention.

The most serious and sustained challenge to this prevailing consensus on the *Zhuangzi* in recent Western scholarship is offered by Esther Klein in her article, "Were There 'Inner Chapters' in the Warring States? A New Examination

of Evidence about the *Zhuangzi*." Klein takes a cue from a Chinese scholar Ren Jiyu's 任繼愈 claim that the Inner Chapters are the works of later Zhuangists and challenges the established consensus on the composition and authorship of the *Zhuangzi*, at least the Inner Chapters. The most significant findings in Klein's article are the following two points:

> First, the "core *Zhuangzi*" in Sima Qian's time and before did not include the seven inner chapters: either they were not a significant unit distinct from other proto-*Zhuangzi* materials, or they did not exist in their received form.
>
> Second, there may be a "core *Zhuangzi*," suggested (albeit tentatively) by citation patterns and excavated texts. Regardless of who actually composed this set of texts, the *impression* they give of their author as a person and a thinker dovetails far more closely with Sima Qian's characterization of Zhuang Zhou than with the Zhuang Zhou of the "inner chapters" that philosophers know and love. (Klein 2011, 301, original italics)

One of the keys to Klein's questioning of the scholarly consensus on the Inner Chapters being authored by the historical Zhuang Zhou is Sima Qian's biographical note on Zhuang Zhou, which mentions the titles of several of the *Zhuangzi* chapters, namely "The Old Fisherman" (*yufu* 漁父), "Robber Zhi" (*daozhi* 盜跖), "Rifling Trunks" (*quqie* 胠篋), and "Kangsangzi" (亢桑子) that is likely the variant of "Gengsang Chu" (庚桑楚) in the received text. However, these are not among the beloved Inner Chapters. Klein argues, sensibly, that the lack of reference to the Inner Chapters in Sima Qian's account of Zhuang Zhou's works, though inconclusive in terms of its implications, should at least call into question the almost universal acceptance of the Inner Chapters being the core *Zhuangzi*, authored by the historical Zhuang Zhou portrayed in the *Shiji*, considered to be chronologically prior to the other chapters.

Klein has assembled an impressive array of historical sources to make a powerful case about the unsettled nature of the received *Zhuangzi* and the problems with the prevailing opinion on what constitutes the core *Zhuangzi*. Her questioning of the attribution of the authorship of the Inner Chapters to the historical Zhuang Zhou portrayed in the *Shiji* and the canonical status accorded to the Inner Chapters by scholars of classical Chinese philosophy is worth further studying.

However, the implication of Klein's finding to the project of classical Chinese philosophy is profoundly troubling. So far in modern philosophical interpretations of the *Zhuangzi*, the Inner Chapters have provided the foundation for scholars to construct some versions of the Zhuangist philosophy, with the other chapters playing supplementary roles. The destabilization of the authorship of the Inner Chapters can put such philosophical projects in jeopardy. That is,

without being able to attribute the authorship of the Inner Chapters to a single person known as Zhuang Zhou, the philosophizing enterprise might become groundless and objectless. This conundrum has to do with critical, but often implicit, roles that authorship plays in our philosophical interpretation of a text. Let us take a closer look at such roles.

2.3. Multiple Roles of Authorship

Authorship is much more than a matter of whether or not someone is the actual author of a text. Rather, the assumption of a single author makes possible a particular interpretative strategy. That is, when we approach a text, the implicit or explicit assumption of its being composed by a single author sets the boundary of interpretative strategies, in terms of its textual unity and coherence, grounded in the unity of authorial intent and agency, however nebulous they turn out to be. For example, the advantage of anchoring the Inner Chapters to the historical Zhuang Zhou is that scholars of classical Chinese philosophy can use the person of Zhuang Zhou depicted in the *Shiji* as an interpretative linchpin to approach the Inner Chapters by attributing authorial intent, often implicitly, to their interpretation of the text, however problematic the idea of authorial intent is *when it is made explicit*.

The problematic nature of appealing to the authorial intent in textual exegesis was addressed by W. K. Wimsatt Jr. and M. C. Beardsley in their influential 1946 article "The Intentional Fallacy." Wimsatt and Beardsley dismiss the relevance, desirability, and public availability of authorial intent to the interpretation of a text. This is known as the anti-intentionalist position, in contrast with the so-called intentionalist position that maintains the availability and relevance of the authorial intent in the scholarly discussions of a text. The practical difficulty with the access to the author(s)' intention can indeed be so intractable that it becomes a distraction to the scholarly interpretation of the text under discussion.

However, authorial intent is not so easily dispensed with in textual interpretations. Nor does it exhaust the role played by the author in the scholarly discourse on the works that bear his name. As Michel Foucault points out in his famous 1969 article, "What Is an Author?," "it is not enough to declare that we should do without the writer (the author) and study the work itself. The word *work* and the unity that it designates are probably as problematic as the status of the author's individuality" (1998, 208, original italics). Authorship establishes a boundary in the interpretation of texts deemed acceptable within the contemporary academic discourse, however porous and contested that boundary actually is. As Steve Coutinho admits, even though he is "skeptical that there can be such a thing as *the* interpretation with which the author would uniquely agree if

confronted with it," he still accepts that "such an idea may function as a regulative ideal for one possible, and very valuable, type of interpretative methodology" (Coutinho 2004, 34, original italics). It is indeed much more difficult to discard the often implicit but operative idea of authorship in our philosophical interpretation of a text than we realize, since to treat a text as an integral whole is to regard it as representing the voice of a unified authorial agent.

This critical role of the author in our interpretation of a text starts with the author's name, which is much more than a proper name. To quote Foucault again, an author's name

> performs a certain role with regard to narrative discourse, assuring a classificatory function. Such a name permits one to group together a certain number of texts, define them, differentiate them from and contrast them to others. In addition, it establishes a relationship among the texts. . . . The author function is therefore characteristic of the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses within a society. (Foucault 1998, 210–211)

In other words, an author is not just a historical person. S/he is also a critical function—Foucault calls it "author function"—that frames certain discourses.

This is clearly the case with Zhuang Zhou and the *Zhuangzi* in the Chinese tradition. First of all, the image of a hermitic, witty, playful, iconoclastic, and at time outrageous Zhuang Zhou was central to the production and redaction of the *Zhuangzi*. The multivocality of the *Zhuangzi* is indicative of the way its compilers and editors, Guo Xiang being the most famous, went about putting a diverse body of texts together under the titular umbrella of *Zhuangzi*, presumably guided by the image of Zhuang Zhou in the *Shiji*. Scholars have speculated that Guo redacted a larger and more heterogeneous body of the text available to him into its current shape by taking out some of the more incompatible texts from the corpus, presumably to preserve its textual integrity and the "authentic" voice of the historical Zhuang Zhou. Second, the poignant images and striking style of argument in the *Zhuangzi* have inspired and shaped a unique form of intellectual discourse and aesthetic sensibility distinct from others, like Confucian, in Chinese history. The figure of Zhuang Zhou is integral to the interpretation and transmission of the *Zhuangzi* and the tradition it has inspired. In other words, the Zhuang Zhou in Chinese history, as the figurehead of a particular intellectual discourse, is much more than the historical Zhuang Zhou who lived in the Warring States period and was the putative author of the *Zhuangzi*. In Foucault's words, "the author provides the basis for explaining not only the presence of certain events in a work, but also their transformations, distortions, and diverse modifications (through his biography, the determination of his

individual perspective, the analysis of his social position, and the revelation of his basic design)" (Foucault 1998, 214–215).

Furthermore,

> The author is also the principle of a certain unity of writing—all differences having to be resolved, at least in part, by the principles of evolution, maturation, or influence. The author also serves to neutralize the contradictions that may emerge in a series of texts: there must be—at a certain level of his thought or desire, of his consciousness or unconscious—a point where contradictions are resolved, where incompatible elements are at last tied together or organized around a fundamental or originating contradiction. Finally, the author is a particular source of expression that, in more or less completed forms, is manifested equally well, and with similar validity, in works, sketches, letters, fragments, and so on. (Foucault 1998, 214–215)

As Lewis's analysis of the invention of Qu Yuan demonstrates, the personal history of an author provides a useful anchoring structure in presenting a coherent picture of the works attributed to him by laying out a trajectory of ideas in them. This interpretative strategy is especially helpful when there are variations in the works. The shadowy presence of the author in our interpretation of a body of texts that bear his name sets up important boundaries for our philosophical analysis and construction such that textual differences can be attributed to the development of the author's thinking, rather than to other people's voices. Liu Xiaogan's argument, that we need to challenge the assumption that one thinker can have only one thought in our analysis of the *Zhuangzi* (Liu 1994, 26), very much echoes Foucault's observation here.

Clearly, authorship is not just an issue concerning the historicity of the authorial person but is also integral to the viability of the philosophical discourse of a text that bears an author's name. Philosophers rely on the idea of author in their philosophical analysis and construction, rather than problematizing it, since the latter can easily lead them down a different line of inquiry away from philosophical explorations. Therefore, to question Zhuang Zhou as the author of the *Zhuangzi*, while valuable as a Sinological project in bringing to light the historicity of multiple voices represented in the text and the contexts of its compilation and transmission, can threaten the philosophical project built on an image of Zhuang Zhou that is the very creation of the *Zhuangzi*, its internal tensions notwithstanding.

If scholars of Chinese philosophy can no longer build their philosophical project on the Sinological discourse of authorship, they need an alternative philosophical model of authorship that can serve as the foundation for philosophizing a text, especially when confronting conceptual incoherence or contradictions,

without having to endlessly historicize an issue. What is needed here is the development of new conceptual resources to deal with the problem of authorship and the related issue of textuality that can accommodate the philosophical approach to classics like the *Zhuangzi* while respecting the findings of Sinological scholarship. This is what I will do in the next section. I will examine some of the disciplinary differences between Sinology and philosophy on the problem of authorship and the related issue of textuality, especially when dealing with textual tensions, and will try to articulate the operative models of authorship and textuality in Sinology and philosophy so as to accommodate the integrity of both discourses on Chinese classics.

2.4. Sinology and Philosophy on Authorship and Textual Coherence

A text, especially an ancient text with its ambiguous compositional history, has tensions or even contradictions within itself, to a greater or lesser extent. When scholars approach such a text, those tensions and contradictions need to be explained, especially the obvious ones. Implicit in this scholarly endeavor is the notion of coherence. That is, instances of incoherence need to be problematized in order to examine how they originated so that the incoherence can be accounted for, whereas a coherent text needs no special explanation to account for its very coherence.

There are at least two kinds of coherence at stake in the discussion of a classic like the *Zhuangzi*, namely textual and conceptual. A textually coherent work is one that is stylistically and linguistically consistent; a conceptually coherent text is one that does not contradict itself (and if it does, there should be sensible reasons). Although both philosophers and Sinologists deal with both kinds of coherence, Sinologists are much better equipped to deal with textual (in)coherence, while philosophers are more excited about the conceptual kind. However, it is on the subject of conceptual (in)coherence and contradictions that Sinologists and philosophers often diverge in their approaches, and the gap of disciplinary norms between Sinology and philosophy becomes most striking.

When scholars try to explain conceptual contradictions in a text, if the text is presumed to have a single author, the apparent contractions become either intentional or unintentional. This is crucial since intentional contradictions provide a fertile ground for philosophizing, whereas unintentional contradictions might simply be cases of intellectual sloppiness and confusion in the author's thinking. Ludwig Wittgenstein is said to have observed that certain conceptual self-contradictions in some texts are simply too obvious to be simple mistakes. This can only apply to intentional self-contradictions. Put simply, the

single-author premise allows philosophers to construct a philosophical system that can account for the obvious tensions within a text. For philosophers, there are at least two ways to account for conceptual tensions in a given text or body of texts, once the singularity of the authorship can be established or assumed: either such tensions are only apparent but not real upon further philosophical probing, or they might reflect a deeper structure of potentially incompatible elements in reality, rationality, or a value system that needs to be accounted for through vigorous philosophical analysis and construction. Both lines of inquiry are appealing to philosophers.

On the other hand, if the text is taken to be the work of multiple authors, those apparent contradictions can often be more easily attributed to the fact that it represents the voices of many people whose intents were simply in conflict with one another. This line of inquiry is more exciting to a Sinologist whose first inclination, when faced with textual tensions, is to investigate whether such tensions are the product of the historical vicissitudes in the origination and transmission of the text, namely, the result of multiple authorial and/or editorial persons addressing different audiences, interests, and issues through a prolonged period of time. An analysis of textual incoherence provides a Sinologist a potent tool to deal with conceptual incoherence historically (as opposed to philosophically) as such tensions are often manifested as the linguistic and stylistic inconsistencies of the text. Studying those tensions allows a Sinologist to probe into the textual history that can reveal the complexity of the larger social, cultural, and intellectual history reflected in the way the text is produced, redacted, and transmitted.

In a word, a Sinologist historicizes a text to reconcile tensions within a text by constructing a historical narrative to provide a better understanding of its historical context, whereas a philosopher philosophizes the tensions involved by speculating on their implications on the nature of the natural and human worlds without necessarily looking into the historicity of the tensions involved. Put differently, a Sinologist is primarily interested in studying the history of a particular period and a particular region within which a text was produced, preserved, and transmitted, whereas a philosopher is more interested in the conceptual world that is the product of the text, however the text was put together historically (the boundaries in the scholarship are often not as sharply drawn as is portrayed here, but the "ideal types" I am conceptualizing can help to clarify what is at stake disciplinarily).

Consequently, we have two methodological approaches to achieve conceptual coherence of a text when confronted with internal tensions: philosophical/synchronic and historical/diachronic. Philosophical interpretations of a classical Chinese text always involve some kind of conceptual construction to produce a coherent philosophical system in order to encapsulate the philosophical complexity involved in the text and find a philosophically compelling

way to accommodate its conflicting elements within a larger system.[11] This is viable only when the text is assumed to have a single author.[12] By contrast, Sinologists are much more interested in constructing a historical narrative about the vicissitudes of the particular social, cultural, and intellectual contexts of a particular region and/or a particular period in accounting for textual tensions within a text. A Sinologist's training and interest more likely incline her to treat the conceptual incoherence as representing voices of different people under different contexts, hence historicizing away the tensions involved. Put simply, in approaching classical texts, philosophers tend to build on the idea of a unified authorial agent, whereas Sinologists tend to problematize that very idea. Clearly, historicizing a text and philosophizing it can be at odds with each other such that the former can deprive the latter of the opportunity to engage philosophically a text that has a complicated compositional history.

In dealing with such a challenge, many scholars of classical Chinese philosophy have, often by default, adopted the strategy of discussing a classical text on Sinological grounds in order to establish their Sinological *bona fides* before engaging the text philosophically. Essentially their strategy is to target two distinct, though at times overlapping, audiences in the hope that Sinologists would be satisfied with their Sinological knowledge and philosophers would be happy with their discussion of ideas in the text. The Chinese version of Liu Xiaogan's book on the *Zhuangzi* is representative of this approach, wherein Liu plays the roles of both a Sinologist and a philosopher. The scholarly reception of this book in the West is rather instructive of the scholarly interest in the contemporary study of Chinese classics within the Western academy. The Chinese version of his book has a large segment on Zhuangzi's philosophy, but it is Liu's discussion about the *Zhuangzi* on Sinological grounds that has captured scholarly attention, as reflected in the way his book is translated and cited in Western scholarship. This is indicative of the center of gravity in the current Chinese *philosophical* discourse within the Western academy that tilts heavily in the direction of Sinology.

However, quite often Sinological and philosophical *discourses* do not really engage each other as they have different scholarly objectives and follow different disciplinary norms. Nor is the historicist Sinological discourse always helpful to the philosophical interpretation of Chinese classics, as we have seen previously.

[11] This does not mean that a scholar always has to interpret an entire text. She can, of course, focus on some parts of the text, a passage, a few sentences, or even several phrases in her philosophical interpretations. Still, her understanding of the entire text lurks in the background within which her interpretation of those selected parts of the text is situated. Otherwise, there would be little or no constraint on the interpretation of those parts with troubling consequences. For example, without some, at least general and implicit, understanding of the *Zhuangzi* in its entirety, a scholar would be free to interpret Zhuangzi as a Confucian based on some selected parts of the text without having to reconcile such an interpretation with many other parts of the text wherein Zhuangzi makes a mockery of the Confucians.

[12] Or an editor who aimed at making the materials coherent through redaction.

Therefore, the tension in the strategy adopted by many scholars of Chinese philosophy—to target two distinct though sometimes overlapping audiences in Sinology and philosophy—needs to find a better solution so that philosophers can be allowed to focus on ideas in Chinese classics more freely without having to engage in the Sinological dance that is not always integral to the philosophical project. This is precisely the sentiment Fingarette expressed in his exchange with Csikszentmihalyi.

What we need is a much clearer understanding of the fact that scholars are engaged in the construction of scholarly objects when they engage in scholarly inquiries guided by their respective disciplinary norms and practices. In other words, scholars actively construct the very objects they study, instead of simply investigating some given objects, especially when dealing with immaterial artifacts of historical and cultural significance. Disciplinary norms and practices play a decisive role in those constructive endeavors such that scholars of different disciplines often talk past each other since their scholarly objects are seldom perfectly aligned with each other. In the following I will articulate two sets of scholarly objects operative in the study of classical Chinese texts so as to better appreciate the divergent disciplinary approaches.

2.5. Two Sets of Scholarly Objects: Sinological versus Philosophical

In order to ease the disciplinary conflict in the interpretation of Chinese classics between Sinology and philosophy, I propose that we distinguish between historical author and textual author. A historical author is a person who has left behind traces in historical records, in addition to the text traditionally attributed to him, which support the claim of authorship (the ambiguity and complexity of the concept notwithstanding), whereas a textual author is the personality who has been credited as the author of a classic in a tradition. The boundary between these two concepts is not always sharply drawn and they often overlap with each other, but they are distinct enough to warrant a conceptual differentiation in order to articulate the discrete scholarly objects of the disciplines involved.

A historical author does not have to be the "writer" of his text, given the ambiguous status of early texts whose production often presupposes a dialogical or instructional context, an invisible scribe of the conversation, and other voices speaking through the texts (Lewis 1999, 83). In those cases, a historical author can be understood to be an, or even the, originator of the text, but all such claims, including the evolution of the very concept of authorship, require historians' investigation by carefully combing through historical records. On the other hand, a textual author is an authorial personality that is primarily the product of a text,

whether through traditional attribution or created by the text itself. For example, the textual author of the *Zhuangzi* is Zhuang Zhou who has been traditionally credited as the author and who emerges from the text as someone who is hermitic, witty, and iconoclastic, internal tensions notwithstanding. Historical author and textual author can coincide when the authorship is not disputed, e.g., Sima Qian and the author of *Shiji*, but the two diverge when authorship is in doubt, e.g., Zhuang Zhou and the author of the *Zhuangzi*.

Correspondingly, we can also differentiate authorial intent from textual intent, aligning the former with historical author and the latter with textual author. The concept of textual intent allows an interpreter to make use of the authorial personality created by the text, the textual author, by attributing intention to it in the interpreter's effort to understand the totality of the text and to construct a coherent conceptual universe available in the text. The pair of historical author and authorial intent has more to do with the historicity of the person(s) of author and his (or their) intent(s), whereas the pair of textual author and textual intent emphasizes the integrity of the text itself that is the source of various interpretative constructions in relative independence of the historical author and his intent.

Textual author and textual intent are postulated on two basic premises. First, the two concepts are grounded in the fact that a historically influential text has created an authorial personality that possesses a distinct character and intention of its own, whatever the historical author's intent was. Second, the text has been treated as presenting a largely coherent body of ideas by the tradition within which it has exerted significant historical impact through successive generations of commentators and critics, regardless of whether or not such coherence is apparent from a modern scholarly perspective. If the study of Chinese philosophy is a way to study Chinese culture, it is important to study the conceptual resources available to Chinese intellectuals over the ages. Importantly, however, textual author and textual intent are not given, but rather are constructed by exegetes in order to *achieve* conceptual coherence of the text within specific interpretative contexts, whether historical or contemporary, without presupposing the singularity of the historical author or even privileging the author(s) as necessarily the best interpreter of his/their own text.

Differentiating between historical author and textual author and between authorial intent and textual intent can help to preserve the integrity of a text that has taken on a life of its own. Regardless of how a classic was put together and whom it has been attributed to, it has been read as a single text in a culture and has created a distinct conceptual universe that has shaped the worldview of people in that culture. This means that there is some degree of conceptual coherence *that can be accomplished and has been accomplished* within the tradition, even if such

coherence is not apparent, *prima facie*, from a more critical contemporary scholarly perspective.

If historical author is the prerogative of historians and authorial intent is largely inaccessible and hence a problematic, if not illegitimate, object of scholarly inquiry, textual author and textual intent can offer an alternative framework for the philosophical discourse as they provide a new foundation for philosophical constructions of the classics. That is, scholars of classical Chinese philosophy can bracket the issue of historical author and its corollary authorial intent, and instead philosophize on the ground of textual author and textual intent, since the scholarly object of classical Chinese philosophy is precisely those influential received texts, and the conceptual universe they create, that have continued to shape the Chinese intellectual landscape.

Let us call such historically influential texts "inherited texts," as opposed to "original texts" that emerged at a particular historical juncture, to further illuminate the disciplinary divide between Sinology and philosophy in terms of their scholarly objects.[13] Put simply, the scholarly objects operative in Sinology and philosophy are different when it comes to treating the Chinese classics: the discourse on "original" Chinese classics is the prerogative of Sinologists, whereas most philosophers are more interested in "inherited" Chinese classics. The former focuses on the historicity of the texts, the circumstances of their production and circulation, etc., whereas the latter places much more emphasis on studying the conceptual resources contained in the inherited classics available to Chinese intellectuals over the ages and on constructing those ideas as a potential conceptual resource in dealing with issues of contemporary significance, often in dialogue with Western philosophy.

By training and inclination, Sinologists are much more responsive to archaeological discoveries of newly available texts since they give Sinologists better access to the original texts without the intervening centuries of textual mutations, whereas philosophers are much more interested in exploring new ways to read the inherited texts, sometimes in dialogue with Western philosophers. Inherited classics are invaluable to philosophers precisely because it is they that have exerted influence on the tradition under study, not the original classics. A case in point: the Sinological approach to the *Zhuangzi* emphasizes the historical, cultural, and intellectual contexts of its production, as well as the vicissitudes of its redactions and its historical reception (e.g., Klein 2011). On the other hand,

[13] I am borrowing the terms from the two leading views in interpreting the American constitution, the one advocating that the constitution is a living and evolving document versus the other arguing that its interpretations should be based on the original meaning of the text. The title of the book by E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks, *The Original Analects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), is also an inspiration in my coining the terms "original texts" and "inherited texts." The reason the term "inherited texts" is adopted, instead of "living texts," is to avoid adjudication of whether classics like the *Mozi* are living texts or not.

the philosophical approach to the *Zhuangzi* is more interested in explaining why the conceptual apparatus available in the text is philosophically compelling from a contemporary perspective and can be fruitfully appropriated as a conceptual resource for contemporary philosophical discourse on metaphysics, ethics, and politics, etc. (e.g., Huang 2010a, 2010b). Clearly, projects that interest philosophers and historians are quite different, and such differences should be accommodated in the pluralistic modern academic discourse. Fingarette's exchange with Csikszentmihalyi crystallizes what is at stake for scholars of classical Chinese philosophy.

However, can the notion of textual author be applied to texts whose historical authorship is in even greater doubt than the *Zhuangzi*? For example, Western Sinology has long reached a strong consensus that there is little, if any, historical connection between the Laozi 老子 depicted in the *Shiji* and the author of the *Daodejing* 道德經 and that the text was not the work of a single person within a short span of time. The gap between textual and historical authors in the case of the *Daodejing* is one of the biggest among the inherited texts since there might be no overlap between the two at all. I will examine some of the controversies and complications concerning Laozi and the *Daodejing* in Chapter 3, especially in light of the excavated manuscripts. Still, the text has been treated as a single work in Chinese history since at least the early second century BCE (the time of the internment of the Maowangdui tomb, which has preserved two versions of the earliest complete *Laozi*) and likely earlier, and the conceptual universe generated in the text has exerted a powerful impact in Chinese intellectual history. In this regard, it makes perfect sense to discuss the conceptual world available in the inherited text of the *Daodejing* by relying on the notion of textual author to *construct* a coherent conceptual framework that can be construed as the textual intent. Put differently, as long as it still makes sense to talk about a philosophical vision contained in the *Daodejing*, the notions of textual author and textual intent are useful in the philosophical interpretation of the text. In fact, textual author and intent are especially useful for philosophical explorations of texts that have dubious historical authorship.

In many ways, contemporary scholars of classical Chinese philosophy are not unlike some of the traditional commentators of the classics over the ages in that they both treat the texts as an integral whole in order to appropriate ideas for their own contemporary audience. As Liu Xiaogan demonstrates, traditional commentators like Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) are creative thinkers in appropriating the Confucian classics to construct a coherent and cogent philosophical system when they engage in contemporary debates of their time, even though Zhu's commentaries on the Confucian classics are not necessarily the most useful ones if our goal is to understand those classical texts in their originating historical contexts (Liu 2007, 2008). In this respect, the differences between traditional

and modern interpreters of the classics are better understood in terms of the vast chasm in the contexts and audience of their interpretations, traditional versus modern, as well as Chinese versus global.

2.6. Three Roles of Sinology in Chinese Philosophy: Preparer, Challenger, and Jailbreaker

Generally speaking, Sinology has played three kinds of roles in the contemporary Western philosophical discourse on Chinese classics. First, it has provided invaluable and important historical, intellectual, and linguistic contexts to the texts, and let us call this the "preparer." Second, it has questioned the premise of the philosophical approach by challenging the coherence and the authorship of the texts. This is the role of a "challenger," the focus of this introduction. Third, and somewhat ironically, it has sometimes also offered scholars of Chinese philosophy an easy escape when faced with difficult conceptual tensions in a text, and let us call this the "jailbreaker." That is, Sinological maneuvers can produce a useful or even convenient tool when scholars of Chinese philosophy are confronted with philosophically difficult issues since they can always appeal to Sinological specifics, like historical vicissitudes of the text, to dodge the problems. The latter two roles played by Sinology can potentially undermine the integrity, or even legitimacy, of the philosophical approach to Chinese classics, and scholars of Chinese philosophy need to have a clear-eyed view of the stakes involved.

It is, however, important to recognize the constructive role of Sinology in the project of Chinese philosophy, as the preparer. That is, Sinological knowledge prepares the necessary historical, intellectual, and linguistic contexts for the philosophical approach to Chinese classics. It is neither possible nor desirable for scholars of Chinese philosophy to ignore Sinological scholarship (despite the fact that many Sinologists have been rather oblivious to scholarly works in Chinese philosophy). Due to the peculiar status of Chinese philosophy within the Western academy, situated between Sinology and philosophy, there is no escape from Sinology if one wants to study the classics philosophically with proper cultural and intellectual sensibility, even though a scholar of Chinese philosophy does not have to engage in the historicist Sinological *discourse* per se. The more Sinological knowledge a scholar of Chinese philosophy has, the more culturally rich and grounded her philosophical interpretations of Chinese inherited texts can be. In fact, this is exactly the approach adopted in the book, incorporating relevant Sinological discussions on the historicity of the classical texts, various controversies concerning their authorships, and the new materials made

available through recently excavated manuscripts, in order to properly contextualize the philosophical analysis of the inherited texts.

However, scholars of Chinese philosophy should not keep their eyes off the primary objective of their endeavors, namely the philosophical integrity and implications of a large body of classical texts whose conceptual universes have shaped Chinese cultural and intellectual outlooks.[14] If Plato and Aristotle still have relevance in contemporary intellectual life, so do Confucius and Zhuangzi, not because they are timeless, but because they are "repeatedly timely" (Stalnaker 2020, 69). Given the dominance of historicism in Western Sinological discourse, scholars of Chinese philosophy need to carefully weigh historical evidence against the potentials for philosophically creative explorations of the early texts so that philosophical interests are not completely marginalized by Sinological concerns when it comes to the interpretations of Chinese classics.

§3. The Politics of Chinese Philosophy in the West: Some Recent Developments

In addition to the Sinological challenge to the project of Chinese philosophy in the Western academy, there is another major challenger, primarily coming from Western philosophers. There the focus is on the definition of philosophy and whether it is applicable to Chinese intellectual traditions. However, it has become increasingly clear in some of the more recent developments of this discussion that what is at stake in this particular debate is no longer a scholarly musing about what is or is not philosophy. Rather, it has an unmistakably political dimension that has crossed into a more charged question of cultural or even racial identity, Western versus Chinese.

As Carine Defoort observes, the definition of philosophy has always been opaque and fluid in the history of Western philosophy and is not consistently applied by those who reject Chinese philosophy (2001, 407). She proposes that it might be more fruitful to consider various philosophical traditions as a case of family resemblance that shares the family name of "philosophy" and to think of

[14] Mercedes Valmisa, in her article 对中国哲学的"汉学挑战": 一个从后学科角度出发的回应 (The "Sinological Challenge" to Chinese Philosophy: A Response from a Post-Disciplinary Perspective), discusses my approach in this Introduction, which was initially published as an essay, "The Problem of Authorship and the Project of Chinese Philosophy: Zhuang Zhou and the *Zhuangzi* between Sinology and Philosophy in the Western Academy," in the *Dao* (Jiang 2016). Valmisa argues that my proposed methodology is rather conservative since it limits the role of Sinology in the project of Chinese philosophy (Valmisa 2019, 24). We had a fruitful and in-depth exchange on this point. It is clear that Valmisa is quite optimistic about the possibility of overcoming disciplinary divisions that have shaped the scholarly discourse on Chinese philosophy in the West, whereas I am far less sanguine about it. Both of us want to overcome or at least accommodate the division between Sinology and philosophy to the extent possible, but we disagree on precisely the extent of that accommodation.

Chinese philosophy as an "adopted" child of the family, with all the promises and difficulties therein (Defoort 2001, 407–409). Rein Raud, a scholar of Japanese philosophy, echoes much of Defoort's sentiment about the debate on non-Western philosophy. That is, a very narrow definition of philosophy would exclude many prominent philosophers in the history of Western philosophy, such as Socrates, Diogenes, or Nietzsche (Raud 2006, 619). Few Western philosophers would go as far as to question those prominent figures as worthy of being called philosophers, so the exalted standard of what is and is not philosophy used to reject non-Western texts as philosophical in nature is not consistently applied to Western canons themselves.

A more serious problem for Raud is the two self-contradictory premises assumed by many Western philosophers that philosophy is "both universal and Western at the same time" (Raud 2014, 17), hence masquerading a larger context that is not always philosophical in nature. As the leading Chinese intellectual historian Ge Zhaoguang (葛兆光) suggests, the label "philosophy" is less about definition than about history and identity, and the question of whether or not there is Chinese philosophy is a pseudo-question (Ge 2001). Anne Cheng, a French Sinologist, asked, a bit tongue in cheek, in her inaugural lecture as the Chair of Intellectual History of China at Collège de France on December 11, 2008: "Can China think?" (Cheng 2013). The deliberate absurdity of such a question shines a bright light on the problematic underlying political dynamics in the treatment of Chinese philosophy within the Western academy.

3.1. An Uproar in America

A recent public flare-up in the United States has exposed the sharply political nature of the debate about whether or not there is philosophy in the Chinese and other non-Western intellectual traditions. On May 11, 2016, a column, "If Philosophy Won't Diversify, Let's Call It What It Really Is," coauthored by Jay Garfield and Bryan Van Norden, was published in *The Stone*, a philosophy forum in the *New York Times*.[15] In the column, the two authors, who are specialists in Mahāyāna Buddhist philosophy and classical Chinese philosophy, respectively, call on colleagues in leading Anglo-American philosophy departments to either expand their curriculum to cover non-Western philosophical traditions or to rename their departments to "department of Anglo-American philosophy." Van Norden, one of the authors, has expanded the column into a book, *Taking Back Philosophy: A Multicultural Manifesto* (2017), to make a more sustained, and

[15] https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/11/opinion/if-philosophy-wont-diversify-lets-call-it-what-it-really-is.html (accessed on November 3, 2019).

often more polemical, argument for multicultural approaches in Western philosophy curriculum.[16] The *Stone* column and the subsequent discussions ignited a fierce storm in the philosophy blogosphere.

One of the constant refrains in this increasingly acrimonious debate is that many Western philosophers believe that China (and other non-Western cultures) only has a wisdom tradition, but not a philosophical one. But Garfield forcefully pushes back such a characterization in his foreword to Van Norden's book:

> We have departments of philosophy because we value philosophy as an activity. Those departments are resolutely Eurocentric because we take European philosophy as the default, or paradigm, case of philosophy, conceived . . . as reflective rational investigation of an argument about the fundamental nature of reality, or, as Sellars so perfectly put it, the attempt "to understand how things in the broadest possible sense of the term hang together in the broadest possible sense of the term." We don't have departments of "wisdom traditions," because we don't value what we take them to be—nonrational exercises in mythopoetic thinking, or something like that. To praise Kongzi and Candrakīrti by putting them in that category is to justify ignoring them as sources of reflection, consigning them to the status of the objects of anthropological research. (Garfield 2017, xvii–xviii)

Indeed, to conveniently classify non-Western traditions as wisdom traditions has the effect of rendering them non-objects for philosophers, effectively defining them out of existence for philosophical inquiries. As we have seen previously, scholarly inquiries construct the very objects that are investigated, guided by disciplinary norms and practices. Consequently, classifying non-Western traditions as wisdom traditions has the practical effect of not allowing philosophical inquiries of those traditions to get off ground at all and foreclosing any opportunity for scholarly engagement within the Western academy.

What is especially troubling for those who advocate the classification of non-Western traditions as wisdom traditions is that, in contrast to Sinologists who are experts on Chinese texts in a given area, many of those philosophers who reject Chinese philosophy as philosophy have openly admitted that they do not know much about the Chinese tradition and tend to base their assertions on select memories of some out-of-context readings of the *Analects*, *Daodejing*, and perhaps some Chan/Zen Buddhist texts. It is rather astonishing that these scholars could have felt so comfortable in making a scholarly judgment on a

[16] Van Norden published another piece, "Western Philosophy Is Racist," on October 31, 2017, in *Aeon*, an online digital magazine (tps://aeon.co/essays/why-the-western-philosophical-canon-is-xenophobic-and-racist, accessed on November 4, 2019).

subject about which they admit having no expertise. When claims are based on (often admitted) ignorance, they clearly have no scholarly merits. But the power dynamics in the Western academy means that those who profess (maybe even proudly at times) ignorance in non-Western philosophy are often in the position of (structural) authority, and scholars of non-Western philosophy really have no choice but to engage them, ad nauseam.[17]

The rather astonishing lack of self-awareness and self-critique, often exhibited among some Western philosophers, signals something deeper at play in the fierce resistance against recognizing the philosophical nature of texts from outside the Western canons, including the Chinese texts. Garfield calls out the institutional racism that permeates leading Western philosophy departments, although he is careful in pointing out the structural nature of such a form of racism, as most Western philosophers are probably not racists as individuals:

> But there is a distinction to be drawn between individual and structural racism. A social structure can be racist without any individual who participates in it being racist when it serves to establish or to perpetuate a set of practices that systematically denigrate—implicitly or explicitly—people of particular races.
>
> Philosophy as it is practiced professionally in much of the world, and in the United States in particular, is racist in precisely this sense. To omit all of the

[17] Amy Olberding, in one of her responses to a blog discussion on expanding the Western philosophy canon, conducted on Daily Nous on May 11, 2016 (http://dailynous.com/2016/05/11/philosophical-diversity-in-u-s-philosophy-departments, accessed on November 4, 2019), offered this gem of a summary about the degree of ignorance or hostility toward non-Western philosophy pervasive in the Western academy:

> The conversation will then go on with the following ingredients, mixed in various proportions and orders:
>
> a) someone will simultaneously profess not to know non-western sources and express skepticism that the sources are philosophical; b) someone will offer argument that—hey!—there are some good things out there and here's a list of some (which, if ensuing future iterations of nearly identical blog conversations are indication, most everyone will ignore); c) someone will make claims along the lines of "I once read something in that area and it wasn't very good" and thereby ostensibly settle the matter for us all; d) someone will offer incredibly condescending remarks purporting to explain what philosophy is (once and for all! in a blog comment!) and, well, there it is, non-western stuff just, alas, doesn't fit (not that there's anything wrong with that!); e) someone will offer patronizing paths toward normality for the deviant folk studying non-western traditions (e.g., if you could just justify yourselves to us with reference to forms and styles we find completely familiar and won't overtax us, then you could belong too); f) someone will claim as unexceptional fact that philosophy isn't western at all but cosmopolitan, universal, objective, physics-like (pick your own wildly ambitious poison here) and so must for its own good purity eschew things bearing cultural labels; g) someone will play precision-mongerer and take issue with some minutiae in any proposed expansion and insist that change ought stop dead in its tracks till we sort out this tiny detail; h) someone will point out that as mere mortals with limited budgets, we can't be expected to do everything (or presumably even anything where non-western traditions are concerned); i) the entire conversation will expire under the weight of all of this until next time someone resurrects it like, zombie-like, to "live" all over again in our consideration with all of the points a)-h) to be repeated.

> philosophy of Asia, Africa, India, and the Indigenous Americas from the curriculum and to ignore it in our research is to convey the impression—whether intentionally or not—that it is of less value than the philosophy produced in European culture, or worse, to convey the impression—willingly or not—that no other culture was capable of philosophical thought. These are racist views. (Garfield 2017, xix–xx)

Indeed, it is long overdue that such structural and institutional racism be exposed in the Western academy, especially as it pertains to the rather pernicious resistance against recognizing non-Western traditions as philosophically worthy. Despite philosophy's proud claim of universalism, it is one of the most conservative, ethnocentric, and parochial humanities disciplines in the Western academy. As Van Norden (2017) declares, it is time to take back philosophy and move it in a multicultural direction.

3.2. A Controversy in Europe

We see a somewhat different dynamic in the recent debate about Chinese philosophy in continental Europe. Earlier in the twentieth century there were heated discussions about whether or not China had a philosophical tradition, similar to what we see in the American academy. Martin Heidegger and Jacque Derrida are usually considered the representatives of that position, even though they sometimes regarded the lack of philosophy in the Chinese tradition as an advantage, rather than a deficiency, in their critiques of the European obsession with *logos*. However, a more recent controversy in Europe has to do with a particular way Chinese philosophy is articulated in some prominent corners of the European academy, i.e., the othering of China.

At the epicenter of this controversy are François Jullien, who is a prominent French Sinologist and philosopher at the University of Paris VII, and his chief antagonist, Jean-François Billeter, who is a Swiss Sinologist and a scholar of Chinese intellectual history. The disputation between the two sides is so heated that Billeter devotes an entire book (albeit a short one, with just over one hundred pages in the print edition), titled *Contre François Jullien*, to rebuking Jullien's particular way of constructing and articulating Chinese thought.

François Jullien is no ordinary scholar. He has almost celebrity status on the French intellectual scene, fueled by extensive media coverage of his works. He is widely regarded as *the* interpreter of Chinese thought to the French public, and, with translations of his works into many languages, including English and Chinese, his audience is increasingly global. Jullien's outsized influence can be attributed to the extraordinary popularity of his over twenty books and the

accessibility and seductiveness of his writings in constructing an alluringly exotic and radically different China with its distinct way of thinking. English readers might be familiar with some of Jullien's works that have been translated into English, e.g., *Detour and Access: Strategies of Meaning in China and Greece*; *In Praise of Blandness: Proceeding from Chinese Thought and Aesthetics*; *A Treatise on Efficacy: Between Western and Chinese Thinking*; *The Propensity of Things: Toward a History of Efficacy in China*; and *On the Universal: The Uniform, the Common and Dialogue between Cultures*. Many of his works have also been translated into Chinese and have attracted quite a bit of attention from the Chinese scholarly world as well as the reading public.

In his *Contre François Jullien*, Billeter hopes to bring to the attention of Jullien's vast readership what Billeter considers to be the harm caused by Jullien's scholarship to the understanding of China. Billeter calls for a more responsible scholarly approach to China and Chinese thought, especially for someone with Jullien's influence (Billeter 2006, 7). Billeter challenges one of the central premises of Jullien's approach to Chinese philosophy, what he calls "the myth of the otherness of China" (2006, 9), which has a long history in Europe. Billeter thinks that Jullien has brought this myth back in fashion by giving it a respectable scholarly form while obscuring the political significance of such a practice. Furthermore, according to Billeter, when Jullien is criticized by Sinologists about his approach, Jullien hides behind the Sinology-philosophy divide by claiming that "he does not consider himself a Sinologist, but as a philosopher who uses China as a 'theoretical convenience' to lead us to consider from outside our own intellectual universe and, by this detour, 'make us think' " (Billeter 2006, 17).

In Billeter's eyes, despite such a disclaimer by Jullien, Jullien's works do construct a China and a Chinese philosophical tradition with which the European tradition is contrasted and compared. Jullien's China is that of radical alterity from Europe. Such a China is radically immanent and changeless. This is the China that has the widest currency in the French public due to the extraordinary popularity of Jullien's works. Billeter accuses Jullien of being irresponsible in creating an ahistorical, imagined, and changeless China that functions as a thought experiment for the musing of a European philosopher, even though it is unclear why Jullien's works should only be used to understand China but not on the nature of philosophical reasoning more generally.

In his response, Jullien dismisses Billeter's broad characterization of his approach to Chinese philosophy. Jullien defends his approach as one that is not premised upon radical otherness in principle (Jullien 2007, 85). He makes a distinction between otherness/alterity and elsewhere/heterotopia:

> Note that I said exteriority (*extériorité*) and not otherness (*altérité*) (as J. F. Billeter continually applies to me): exteriority is given by geography and by

> history, and can be observed; while otherness, if there were indeed otherness, is constructed. China is "elsewhere" (*ailleurs*), and I do not yet know, at this stage, whether it is "other." . . . Nor do I say at the outset that China is different, and or "so different" (because it is so distant), since I do not have a common framework where I can establish the opposite sides right away. (Jullien 2007, 34)

However, due to the nebulousness of heterotopia in Jullien's works and the vagueness of the conceptual distinction between heterotopia and alterity, such an apologia is perhaps more convenient than convincing. Nevertheless, Jullien dismisses Billeter's critique as not even worth responding to (2007, 19). As some commentators have pointed out (e.g., Keck 2009, 74), Jullien mentions Billeter's name exactly once in his response and uses the initials of JFB throughout the response. The personal nature of this controversy is manifestly clear.

Interestingly, there is quite a bit of discussion on what this controversy is actually about. According to Thorsten Botz-Bornstein, the debate is essentially about a long-standing discussion of two distinct scholarly approaches to classical texts, philosophical versus philological (Botz-Bornstein 2014, 220ff.), whereas Ralph Weber regards the core issue in the controversy to be about the very meaning of "China" (Weber 2014b, 234). Other French and European scholars outside of the field of Sinology have also weighed in on this debate.[18] For example, Frédéric Keck makes an interesting observation about Jullien's Sinological approach, echoing Billeter's criticism of Jullien:

> Sinology is not, in the eyes of François Jullien, a science endowed with its own objects and methods, but the starting point of a critical approach to Western thinking, for the following reason: It is not an object like any other, but it is, for the West, cultural "otherness" par excellence. Because it has an intellectual tradition of several millennia that borrowed nothing from the West, China offers a mirror in which it can see all its categories distorted, recognizing itself only at the end of an alienation which constitutes a real thought experiment. The sinologist's fright at the immensity of the block of thought he has to study is therefore the occasion of an intellectual exercise that makes this irreducible alterity the engine of a work on oneself, which defines the "human sciences" as a critical activity. (Keck 2009, 64–65)

However, Keck provides another dimension to the whole Jullien-Billeter affair, in addition to the personal aspect of the controversy, pointing to its deeply political nature:

[18] Ralph Weber offers a useful, albeit brief, summary of the more recent follow-ups in this controversy (Weber 2014b, 228–229).

> Jean-François Billeter's criticism targets France as much as China, sharing in his eyes a climate of post-Maoist restoration of which François Jullien's work is the most visible expression. The idea of a "Chinese thought" radically other than "Western thought" maintains both the schizophrenia of French intellectuals, fascinated by a system that "works" while keeping their liberal prejudices for themselves, and the aggressiveness of a China which refuses Western freedom in the name of a tradition entirely reinvented. (Keck 2009, 71)

What is especially fascinating in this controversy, compared with earlier expressions of such a sentiment toward Chinese philosophy, is an increasingly clear recognition on the part of many French and European intellectuals that what is really at stake in the sparring between Jullien and Billeter is no longer just scholarly or academic in nature, but rather unmistakably political, having to do with the self-understanding of the West itself, particularly France and Europe.

Keck concludes his essay by criticizing the kind of Sinology practiced by both Jullien and Billeter, namely the privileging of Chinese texts as the way to understand China, albeit interpreted under very different ideological registers, alterity for Jullien and imperialism for Billeter (Keck 2009, 76). Instead, Keck, who is trained in both philosophy and anthropology and has published works on the history of French anthropology in its relations with philosophy, tries to make room for the anthropology of ideas (Keck 2009, 77). As Weber acutely observes about the Jullien controversy, "In France, the affair has largely been interpreted as one about sinology, or about philosophy, or about politics far and away beyond the disciplinary concerns of each" (Weber 2014a, 230). In other words, it has become a kind of proxy battle about the West itself within the French academy and beyond.

It is clear from this snapshot of some recent developments in the American and the European academies that the contemporary debate about Chinese philosophy in the Western academy is increasingly political and is driven by identity politics. However, many scholars of Chinese philosophy in the West are still interested in the possibility of engaging Chinese texts in contemporary philosophical discussions within a more globalized context, whether as a way to explore multicultural resources in philosophical reasoning (e.g., Van Norden 2017), as an alternative resource for advancing some progressive public policies like the paid family leave (e.g., Cline 2015), for advocating particular virtues like civility, sorely needed in contemporary politics (e.g., Olberding 2019), or as a way to engage in critical reflections on certain prevailing Western norms and practices concerning the nature of the self and the ideal of flourishing (e.g., Ames 2011; Ivanhoe 2017) or on expertise and hierarchy (e.g., Stalnaker 2020), etc. For all these scholars, the Chineseness of Chinese philosophy is its very attraction.

So, what is exactly Chinese about Chinese philosophy? Our discussion here may provide one useful way to think about this question without essentializing it as the uniqueness of some "epistemological nativism."[19] The Chineseness in Chinese philosophy can refer to the fact that for Chinese intellectuals, texts like the *Zhuangzi* are inherited classics that have shaped and will continue to shape Chinese intellectual outlook. Accordingly, what makes a text like the *Zhuangzi* a text of Chinese philosophy is, aside from its composition in Chinese, the fact that it has exerted significant impact in shaping the Chinese intellectual landscape by providing foundational vocabularies, arguments, imageries, and other conceptual resources for Chinese intellectuals over the centuries. The scholarly object of Chinese philosophy is precisely the conceptual resources available in inherited Chinese classics that can be rigorously critiqued and appropriated, through fruitfully dissecting and constructing the textual author and the textual intent within various interpretative contexts, for contemporary philosophical discourses and explorations.

§4. Origins of Moral-Political Philosophy in Early China

This book retells the story of the origins of moral-political philosophy in early China from the fifth century to the late third century BCE when "various masters and hundred schools" (*zhuzi baijia* 諸子百家) flourished. The origin of a philosophical tradition was never the result of a single act of creation attributable to one person or one work. Nor did it follow any single route. Rather, it was the result of a prolonged, complex, and often opaque process of formulation, contestation, reformulation, transcriptions, canonization, redaction, and transmissions participated by several generations of people, most of whom are and will likely remain unknown to modern scholars.

There has been a great deal of debate among Sinologists with regard to the authenticity of many of the inherited texts. The main issue is whether those texts were the products of the pre-Qin thinkers in the traditional accounts or were so significantly redacted in the early imperial period, especially during the Western Han dynasty (206 BCE–9 CE), that they were essentially the products of Han. Archaeological excavations in the twentieth century have provided many critical interventions in the scholarly interpretations of the early texts, although they have hardly settled many of the contentious points in the ongoing debate about

[19] John Makeham (2012, 347) defines it as "the idea that the articulation and development of China's philosophical heritage must draw exclusively on the endogenous paradigms and norms of China's indigenous heritage."

those texts, i.e., their historical formation, authorship, and putative dates.[20] In the course of this book, I will address some of these issues when they are relevant to the discussion.

However, the broad context and the major themes of the early Chinese philosophy are never in doubt. The collapse of the normative Zhou order, which had represented the ideal of peace and prosperity, was the backdrop of all classical thinkers during the pre-Qin period. Almost all classical thinkers were trying to reconstitute such a lost order by appealing to ritual (or tradition), (human) nature, objective standards that included moral and penal codes, or some combination of these, in order to imagine, conceptualize, and construct a new world that was morally compelling and/or politically alluring. This book aims at offering a new interpretative framework by identifying an arc of intellectual development of the mainstream moral-political project, as well as some notable outliers, and by articulating the philosophical stakes in the Chinese philosophical debate at its very incipience, in order to chart the trajectory of core philosophical values in the classical period and beyond. I make the case that the philosophical dialectics between the partialist humaneness and the impartialist justice formed the fundamental dynamics underlying the mainstream moral-political project during the classical period, with the musing on personal freedom as the outlier.

4.1. Contestation of Humaneness, Justice, and Personal Freedom

In this book I use the categories of humaneness, justice, and personal freedom to remap the intellectual landscape of classical Chinese philosophy and to recast the narrative of its origins. For the purpose of this book, I will employ thin or baseline definitions of humaneness, justice, and personal freedom in order to, on the one hand, schematize what I see as competing normative values operative in the moral-political project during the classical period while, on the other hand, leaving room for variations on these broad underlying values among different inherited texts and the thinkers they are attributed to.

[20] Liu Xiaogan, in his defense of the more traditional Chinese dating of the *Laozi* that places the text to the time of the historical Confucius in the sixth century BCE, argues that "archaeological findings in the twentieth century have proved that the records of antique literature are more reliable than the speculation and hypothesis of skeptical scholars about the authors and dates ancient texts" (Liu 2003, 342). On the other hand, as Sarah Allan observes, "Western sinology still tends to be built upon the challenges to the transmitted tradition first launched by the Doubt Antiquity movement, most obviously in the continuing prevalence of a skeptical attitude toward both the authenticity of transmitted pre-Qin texts and intellectual frameworks that provide relatively early dates to such texts" (Allan 2015, 317).

Accordingly, humaneness is understood in this book as the moral norm that is agent/recipient[21] relative, namely our natural inclination to be partial toward those who are close to us, especially our family/kin members; justice is defined here as the moral norm that is agent/recipient neutral, namely our exercise of impartial judgment on the merits of persons and states of affairs, especially in lieu of articulated and publicized standards and codes, irrespective of their relations to us. In other words, humaneness is partialist in nature, whereas justice is impartialist. Humaneness is understood in relational terms, whereas justice is non-relational by contrast. More importantly, precisely because of the relational nature of humaneness, agent and recipient cannot be switched or substituted, whereas in justice agent and recipient are switchable and substitutable.[22] Personal freedom is understood as the appreciation and cultivation of personal space wherein one can be left alone and enjoy the company of like-minded friends without being entangled in the sociopolitical world.

The terms of humaneness, justice, and personal freedom are used in this book more as organizing frameworks to bring these ideas into the contemporary discussions of Chinese philosophy, rather than terms "with one-to-one correspondence in Chinese" (Ing 2017, 10). Therefore, these terms play an interpretative role in this book, working to "not only accurately describe the texts but also to render them intelligible within contemporary discourses" (Ing 2017, 10) of Chinese thought.[23] Needless to say, I am writing about early Chinese philosophy, but for a contemporary audience in a way that produces new understandings and opens up new possibilities for contemporary philosophical engagement without misconstruing the native terms and the conceptual apparatuses in those texts.[24]

I make three key points in retelling the story about classical Chinese philosophy. First, the central intellectual challenge during the Chinese classical period was how to negotiate the relationships between the personal, the familial, and the political domains (sometimes also characterized as the relationship between the private and the public) when philosophers were reimagining and reconceptualizing a new sociopolitical order, due to the collapse of the old order. Consequently, philosophers offered a dazzling array of competing visions for that newly envisioned order.

Second, the competing visions can be characterized as a contestation between partialist humaneness and impartialist justice as the guiding norm for the newly imagined moral-political order, with the Confucians, the Mohists, the Laoists, and the so-called *fajia* thinkers being the major participants, constituting the

[21] I would like to thank Karyn Lai for pointing out the recipient aspect of humaneness and justice.
[22] I want to thank Karyn Lai for her suggestion here.
[23] In this respect, my approach is similar to Michael Ing's interpretative strategy in his book *The Vulnerability of Integrity in Early Confucian Thought*.
[24] I am echoing Michael Ing's point (2017, 10) here.

mainstream intellectual project during this foundational period of Chinese philosophy. In this connection, it is especially important to see the *fajia* (often translated as Legalist) thinkers, often marginalized in the standard narrative about classical Chinese philosophy, as central players instead of as an embarrassing anomaly, as they have often been portrayed. That is, those *fajia* thinkers were grappling with the same tension between partialist humaneness and impartialist justice in their effort to negotiate the intractable relationship between the familial and the political, similar to other mainstream thinkers during the classical period.

Third, I argue that Zhuangzi and the Zhuangists were the outliers of the mainstream moral-political debate who rejected the very parameter of humaneness versus justice in the mainstream discourse. Zhuangzi and the Zhuangists were a lone voice advocating personal freedom. For them, the mainstream debate about humaneness and justice was intellectually banal, morally misguided, and politically dangerous.

A. Humaneness and Justice

The clearest expression of the partialist humaneness in the classical context was the famous Confucian moral-political paradigm, known as the cultivation-regulation-governance-pacification (*xiu qi zhi ping* 修齊治平, hereafter *XQZP*) model, most succinctly articulated in the *Great Learning* (*daxue* 大學). The *XQZP* model integrates the personal, the familial, and the political domains through cultivating one's personal virtues (*xiushen* 修身), regulating the family/kin (*qijia* 齊家), governing a (feudal) state (*zhiguo* 治國), and bringing peace to all under the Heaven (*ping tianxia* 平天下[25]). In fact, the classical moral-political debate can well be seen as a series of efforts to defend, modify, critique, or repudiate this *XQZP* ideal, even among the Confucians themselves, with thinkers lining up differently in their efforts to engage various aspects of this moral-political model.

The *XQZP* ideal is based on two premises, both of which were challenged during the classical period. First, politics is grounded in or derived from moral virtues of political actors. Second, *XQZP* is extensionist in nature, operating on the assumption of a seamless continuum between the personal, the familial, and the political domains. In many ways, this book is a study of the classical moral-political debate wherein ancient Chinese philosophers examined all of the constitutive parts and their relationships in the *XQZP* ideal. I will argue that the operating moral principle in this Confucian moral-political model, in its attempts to accommodate the familial/private and the political/public domains, is humaneness that is partialist in its orientation. Furthermore, in the norm of

[25] *Tianxia* 天下 refers to Zhou king's realm in pre-imperial China, although it is usually translated as "under the Heaven" or simply "the world."

humaneness, framed primarily in relational terms, agent and recipient are not switchable or substitutable due to the particularity of relations involved.

Against the *XQZP* model and its operating norm of partialist humaneness was the ideal of impartialist justice, most forcefully represented by the Mohists, the Laoists, and the *fajia* thinkers under different, but sometimes overlapping, conceptual and ideological registers. In the classical Chinese philosophical context, justice was heavily tilted toward impartiality, understood as the non-discriminatory treatment of people and the state of affairs by applying the same standard and code, irrespective of their status or relationship with the moral, political, or legal authority. Justice is framed in non-relational terms in the classical Chinese philosophical context, which means that within the framework of justice the agent and the recipient are switchable and substitutable, pointing to the impersonal and impartial nature of justice.

The concept of justice has had an overwhelming importance in the history of Western philosophy, with philosophers from Socrates to John Rawls deliberating its meaning, nature, scope, and relationship with other values. I will not be able to engage the infinitely rich and complex Western discourse on justice in this book, as it is not meant to be explicitly and thematically comparative. Instead, I will limit the use of the term "justice" to a relatively "thin" content so that it can be more easily adapted to the classical Chinese context.[26] More specifically, I will

[26] Erin Cline's book, *Confucius, Rawls, and the Senses of Justice* (2013), reconstructs a sense of justice discerned in the *Analects*, given her acknowledgment of the fact that there are no terms for "justice" in the *Analects* (Cline 2013, 150–151), and engages with John Rawls in teasing out various entailments in the two formulations of justice. In her book, Cline emphasizes the role of moral cultivation in discussing the Confucian sense of justice and clearly regards justice as a personal virtue, among many others, that Confucius appreciates. In this connection, Cline lists the virtues touted by Confucius in the *Analects* as expressing the sentiment of justice, such as *yi* 義 (rightness), *shu* 恕 (reciprocity), *bu bi* 不比 (not partial or biased), and *zhou* 周 (associate widely), etc. (Cline 2013, 152–153).

Cline's book has made an important contribution to recognizing the significance of justice in Confucius's teaching, especially the judicial aspect of personal virtues that a committed Confucian should cultivate and strive for. However, her book does not address the conceptual tension between her own justice-centered interpretation and the more traditional humaneness-centered interpretation of the classical Confucian project. In fact, Cline includes humaneness as one of the expressions of justice in the *Analects*, without looking into the tension between the two. On the contrary, Cline devotes a great deal of effort to explaining away the tension in *Analects* 13.18, wherein Confucius famously claims that an upright son should cover for his father if his father commits theft (Cline 2013, 157–167), as we will see in the following. While sympathetic to the underlying principle of charity that is clearly at play in Cline's interpretation of *Analects* 13.18, I think Cline perhaps defers too much to Confucius's defense of Upright Gong. As a result, her discussion of the classical Confucian perspective on justice, though admirably nuanced and sophisticated, is unnecessarily apologetic.

My book adopts a different interpretative strategy from Cline's. That is, instead of trying to explain away the apparent tension in the text, I will problematize that very tension and use it as a lens to look into the conflicted moral universe presented in the *Analects*. I will make the case that, from the very beginning, the Confucians struggle with the tension between what I call humaneness and justice in its conceptions of ideal person, family, and polity. I will argue that the central problem in this effort is not so much that there are no terms for justice in the *Analects* or other classical Chinese philosophical texts, but rather the way in which certain key concepts are framed, interpreted, and translated, as well as the way the underlying interpretative frameworks are understood and constructed.

highlight the aspects of impartiality, objective standards, and agent/recipient-neutrality, especially in the engineering of an elaborate state bureaucracy, when articulating the operative principle of justice in the classical Chinese context that includes a cluster of concepts like impartiality (*jian* 兼), impartial care (*jian ai* 兼愛), public or fairness (*gong* 公), and standards or legal codes (*fa* 法), etc.

It is important to note that both humaneness and justice are universalist values. The distinction between them, in the classical Chinese debate, had to do with whether or not differential treatments accorded to a family/kin member and someone unrelated could be justified and on what ground, especially when the two treatments were in conflict. What was the proper way to treat our family/kin members when they were at fault was at the heart of the contestation between humaneness and justice in early Chinese philosophical discourse. From the perspective of humaneness, impartialist justice can be inhumane since it flattens all our relationships and disregards the critical differentiations among those relationships that are constitutive of who we are as humans; however, from the perspective of justice, partialist humaneness can be unfair since it favors those recipients who are close to the adjudicating agents of the state and it breeds nepotism in politics under the pretense of humaneness.

B. Tensions between the Familial/Private and the Political/Public

The contestation between partialist humaneness and impartialist justice can be seen in terms of the clash of norms that govern the familial/private and the political/public domains. That is, if we take humaneness as the default governing norm in the familial domain and justice in the political, the key issue in the disputation among classical philosophers was this: should there be an overarching norm that governs both the familial and the political domains? Classical Confucians, with important variations and tension among them notwithstanding, leaned toward exploring humaneness as the unifying norm to encompass both the familial and the political domains; on the other hand, we see a powerful development in the justice wing of Chinese moral-political philosophy that questions the value or relevance of humaneness in political governance, with the Mohists separating the familial and the political domains and focusing heavily, though not exclusively, on the political, and the *fajia* thinkers privileging the political while denigrating the familial as often antithetical to or even subversive of the interest of the state.

In this respect, two famous anecdotes would help to put into sharp focus the wide gap in moral sensibility between classical Confucians and Mohists. The first anecdote is from the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), a record of sayings and teachings traditionally attributed to the historical Confucius and some of his disciples:

> The Duke of She said to Confucius, "Among my people there is one we call 'Upright Gong' (*Zhi Gong* 直躬). When his father stole a sheep, he reported him to the authorities."
>
> Confucius replied, "Among my people, those who we consider 'upright' are different from this: fathers cover up for their sons, and sons cover up for their fathers. 'Uprightness' is to be found in this." (*Analects* 13.18, Slingerland's trans.)

The second one is recounted in *The Annals of Lü Buwei* I/5.5 (*Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋), a large collection of texts that was composed and compiled toward the end of the Warring States period under the patronage and supervision of Lü Buwei 呂不韋 (d. 235 BCE), a prime minister under the young Yingzheng 嬴政, the king of Qin who would unify China in 221 BCE and become the first emperor:

> The Mohist leader Fu Tun resided in Qin. His son murdered a man. King Hui of Qin said, "You, sir, are too old to have another son, so I have already ordered that the officials not execute him. I hope, sir, that you will abide by my judgment in this matter."
>
> Fu Tun replied, "The law of the Mohist order says: 'He who kills another person shall die; he who injures another shall be punished.' The purpose of this is to prevent the injuring and killing of other people. To prevent the injuring and killing of other people is the most important moral principle in the world. Though your majesty out of kindness has ordered that the officials not execute my son, I cannot but implement the law of the Mohist order." He would not assent to King Hui's request and proceeded to kill his own son.
>
> A son is what a man is most partial to. Yet Fu Tun endured the loss of what he was most partial to in order to observe his most important moral principle. The Mohist leader may properly be called impartial. (Knoblock and Riegel 2000 trans., 75, with slight modification)

These two narratives, to the extent they represent typical Confucian and Mohist moral instincts, vividly capture two drastically different moral sentiments and the underlying principles of humaneness and justice, respectively.

However, before we hasten to characterize the moral norms embraced by the Confucians and the Mohists based on the preceding two anecdotes, as illuminating as they might be, let us take a look at yet another famous passage that is also attributed to Confucius and has been enshrined by the Confucian tradition, exhibiting a rather different moral sentiment from the Upright Gong passage in the *Analects*:

> When the Great Dao prevailed, the world was just. People were selected for their virtues and talents, and people were trustworthy and good-neighborly. Therefore, people did not only treat their own parents as parents, not only treat their own children as children. The elderly received proper care toward the end of their lives, the physically strong were properly employed, the young were brought up properly, widowers, widows, the parentless, the childless, the sick, and the disabled were all properly provided for. Men had their professions while women had their families. People loathed to leave wealth wasted and unused, and yet did not have to store them in private; people loathed to leave their strength unused, and yet did not have to exert it to serve themselves. Therefore, scheming was thwarted before it could develop; theft, robbery, rebellion, and betrayal did not arise, therefore one left home without closing the door. This was Grand Unity. Nowadays the Great Dao has fallen into obscurity, the world is treated as a matter of family inheritance. People respect only their own parents, caring for only their own children, horde wealth and exert strength for their own benefit.[27]

This is from the famous Liyun (禮運) Chapter of the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), the Confucian classic of rituals whose canonical status was evident in its inclusion as part of the *Five Classics* (*wu jing* 五經) in the Confucian tradition—or, more appropriately, the state-sponsored official learning (Nylan 2001, 2)—during the Western Han dynasty in late second century BCE.[28] *Liji* was likely compiled, from independently extant ritual texts, and redacted in the Han dynasty, even though much of its content dates back to the Warring States period or even earlier. The authorship and dating of Liyun, one of the most famous chapters of the *Liji*, has long been a topic of intense debate among scholars. The contemporary consensus is that it was an evolving text through the hands of generations of Confucians from mid-Warring States period to Western Han.[29] What interests me is how Confucius is portrayed, regardless of its accuracy in representing the historical Confucius.

In the passage, Confucius is seen as offering a rather detailed description of a lost golden age, a utopian Grand Unity (*datong* 大同), when the Great Dao

[27] This is my translation, based on the text in 禮記正義, 卷二十一, (漢) 鄭玄 注, (唐) 孔穎達 疏, 龔抗雲 整理, 王文錦 審定. 北京大學出版社, 2000, 769–771.

[28] Hsiao Kung-chuan (1979, 126) notes that the authenticity of Liyun to be representing the vision of the historical Confucius has been called into question ever since the Song dynasty. However, the fact that it was taken to reflect Confucius's view of a lost ideal world throughout much of Chinese history is itself rather telling with respect to the evolving image of Confucius and what it signals in the development of Confucianism.

[29] Cf. Wang E's 王锷 *Liji chengshu kao* 《礼记》成书考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju 中华书局, 2007, 239–246); Yang Chaoming's 杨朝明 "'*Liyun*' *Chengpian yu xuepaishuxing deng wenti*"《礼运》成篇与学派属性等问题, in *Journal of Confucian Philosophy and Culture* 儒教文化研究 (2005), 13–35.

(*dadao* 大道) prevailed in the world and lamenting its decline in his own days. In the passage, *gong* 公, which literally means public, is used as the opposite of family (*jia* 家). The contrast is clearly drawn between what is impartial and what is partial, hence my translation of *gong* as "just." It is striking that the ideal(ized) world described here does not give priority to one's own family at all, in sharp contrast with the Upright Gong story in the *Analects*. Rather, the idea of justice is front and center in this Liyun passage.

The contrast in the moral sentiments expressed in the *Analects* and Liyun passages is rather striking. In the *Analects* passage, Confucius is adamant about the priority of family relationship over other considerations, and he defends the family relations and interest even at the expense of other people adversely affected by the actions of one's own family members. However, in the Liyun passage, we find another Confucius, who laments that very prioritization of family interest over the broader sociopolitical order expressed in the *Analects* passage. Instead, the Confucius in the Liyun passage recalls (or more likely imagines) a world wherein the young and the old were properly taken care of, irrespective of the relationships involved. In such a world, family relationship did not enjoy a privileged status. This implies that what constituted an ideal world for the Confucians evolved from the fifth century, the time of the *Analects*, to the third century BCE, the time Liyun was compiled.

An obvious question is this: what happened during the years that separated the *Analects* passage from the Liyun passage? The Mohists, who represented the most serious challenge to the Confucian moral-political project during the classical period, could have come up with a similar depiction of the ideal society touted in the Liyun chapter.[30] We will see that during the intervening period the Confucians engaged in heated and often fierce debates among themselves, as well as with their intellectual peers, most notably the Mohists and other less organized thinkers, especially the Laoists and the so-called *fajia* thinkers. It is highly possible, even likely, that the Mohist (as well as the Laoist and the *fajia*) challenges contributed to the evolution of the Confucian *imaginaire* of an ideal society as a result of the vigorous intellectual cross-pollination during the classical period.

C. Changing Conceptions of Heaven and Its Relations with Humans

One fascinating component of this story about the origins of Chinese moral-political philosophy is the fact that changing conceptions of Heaven and the

[30] Hsiao Kung-chuan (1979, 126) has noted that a Qing scholar Yao Jiheng (Yao Chi-heng 姚際恆) already took notice of Mohist elements in the Liyun chapter even though Yao believed that Liyun was the work of the followers of Laozi and Zhuangzi, attesting to the syncretic nature of the Confucian vision of an ideal world enshrined therein.

evolving relationships between Heaven and humans were at the heart of much of the philosophical disputation. In this connection, there were roughly speaking two different understandings of Heaven during the classical period: caring/anthropocentric and indifferent/naturalist. Confucius's and Mozi's thoughts were operating under a Heaven that cared about and was involved in human affairs. In the excavated bamboo-slip texts that have given us some rare glimpses into the world between Confucius and Mencius, we find a Heaven that, while still in charge of the world, was increasingly naturalized in terms of both its constancy and its capriciousness. In Mencius's thought we can see an intense struggle to hold on to the idea of a caring Heaven, but the hold was rather tenuous, as Mencius was rather critical of Heaven for its failure to bring forth a sage who could save the chaotic world. This tenuous hold and the increasing naturalization of Heaven would eventually give way to a radically new idea of Heaven that was indifferent to human affairs, and the paradigmatic figure here was Laozi. In Laozi's thought we can see a Heaven that is completely detached from care for human well-being. Most of the best-known thinkers from the mid- to late Warring States period, such as Shen Dao, Zhuangzi, Xunzi, and Han Feizi, shared the Laoist view of Heaven.

However, we also witness some rather drastically different proposals about how humans should respond to the Laoist conception of Heaven among the last group of thinkers. Laozi still advocated sagely emulation of Heaven, similar to Confucius and Mozi, even though the Laoist Heaven was indifferent to human affairs, unlike the Heaven of Confucius, Mozi, and Mencius. By contrast, Xunzi elevated the ancient sage-kings to be the partners of Heaven (and Earth), instead of simply being its followers or emulators, and made sage-kings the new foundation of the ritual system, almost in defiance of the naturalized Laoist Heaven that did not particularly care about human well-being. In the hands of *fajia* thinkers like Shen Dao and Han Feizi, Heaven would be further transformed from a supernatural *agent* to a naturalist *system*, and they advocated modeling a political system after such a new model of Heaven, with fixed standards and impartial enforcement of standards, laws, and regulations, so that the political system could operate like the naturalized Heaven. In so doing, they sought to reduce the role of any single person in governance, including even the ruler, who is partial to, and hence can be easily manipulated by, those in their proximity.

D. Personal Freedom

Against the backdrop of the mainstream moral-political discourse in early China we find a remarkable text, the *Zhuangzi*. One of the major challenges in the scholarship on classical Chinese philosophical discourse is how to deal with the *Zhuangzi*. This text is arguably the single most fascinating and unusual one in the entire Chinese intellectual history, certainly during the classical period,

in terms of its unrivaled literary quality, its playful wit and humor, as well as its penetrating philosophical analysis. The *Zhuangzi* is simply unlike any other text, and its difference from other texts far exceeds the differences among Confucian, Mohist, and *fajia* texts. Although it has some resonance with the *Laozi* and shares the Laoist view on Heaven and Dao, the Zhuangist vision about personhood, nature, and politics is strikingly different from the Laoist one.

Such an interpretative difficulty or cognitive dissonance when dealing with the *Zhuangzi* has to do with our implicit but problematic assumption, seldom articulated, that Zhuangzi was engaged in the same philosophical project as everybody else during the period. However, in this book I will make the case that in order to better appreciate the singularity of the *Zhuangzi*, it is better to see it as engaging in the kind of intellectual project that is radically different from the mainstream philosophical debate dominated by the Confucians and Mohists and participated by many others, including the Laoists and the *fajia* thinkers. The mainstream moral-political project is characterized in this book as a contestation between partialist humaneness and impartialist justice as the governing norm of the sociopolitical world. Zhuangzi was skeptical and critical of such a project, deeming it as arrogant, baseless, and even harmful.

I argue in this book that the primary intellectual pulse in the *Zhuangzi* is its musing of personal freedom. Therefore, I interpret the Zhuangist philosophical project as that of personal freedom, unlike any of his peers during the classical period. Zhuangzi just wanted to be left alone, enjoying the company of friends and natural wonders. The Zhuangist personal freedom is framed in terms of cautiousness, or even anxiety, toward human entanglement mediated by the concern for humaneness and justice. Being wary of any political entanglement, Zhuangists are portrayed as those living at the margin of the political world or in the interiority of their heartminds, even though we also find cases wherein certain Zhuangist paragons lived in the midst of the political world, aided by their extraordinary discernment and skills. As such, the Zhuangist personal freedom is ultimately outside the parameters of humaneness and justice that characterize the mainstream moral-political discourse in early China. This approach to Zhuangzi's philosophy can offer a fresh perspective on the Zhuangist critique of knowledge, especially its alleged skepticism and relativism.[31] It can also have profound implications in making sense of the project of personal freedom in premodern Chinese political and intellectual history, which I will explore briefly in the Conclusion of this book.

[31] Among contemporary scholars, Chad Hansen (1983, 2003) interprets Zhuangzi as a skeptic and a relativist, and David Wong (2006) considers Zhuangzi as a constructive skeptic and a pluralistic relativist, even though Hansen and Wong have rather different interpretations of Zhuangzi's thought. On the other hand, Philip J. Ivanhoe (1993, 1996) rejects treating Zhuangzi as a skeptic or a relativist.

E. A Note about Translating *Xin* 心 as "Heartmind"

Throughout this book, I will translate the Chinese word *xin* 心 in the classical texts as "heartmind," instead of heart, mind, heart-and-mind, or heart-mind, as adopted by other translators. "Heartmind" is obviously not an English word, but a neologism coined to capture the widely shared scholarly consensus that the ancient Chinese language did not differentiate between heart and mind the way contemporary English does. Since this book deals with classical Chinese texts that are translated into contemporary English for contemporary Western readership, it makes sense to highlight the way the word *xin* is translated. For me, the attraction of "heartmind" as a single term is precisely its ambiguity, much like *xin* in different texts and contexts. Since it is not yet an extant English word, we get to define "heartmind" in such a way that runs the gamut of the emotive, cognitive, evaluative, calculative, voluntary, and whatever other functions *xin* performs in classical Chinese texts, with different texts leaning toward different aspects. In other words, the fact that pre-modern Chinese thinkers allowed *xin* to perform such a wide range of roles without feeling the need to clarify which one suggests the underlying assumption of its unity. The term "heartmind" has the added advantage of being both familiar and strange, not unlike *xin* in all its complexity and ambiguity in various Chinese texts through the ages.

4.2. Summary of Chapters

The central theme in the new narrative offered in this book is that the origins of Chinese moral-political philosophy can be fruitfully understood as the contestation of humaneness, justice, and personal freedom in the early Chinese effort to negotiate the relationships among the personal, the familial, and the political domains, under drastically different conceptions of Heaven and its evolving relationship with the humans. This new narrative provides an alternative paradigm on the peculiar configuration of classical Chinese philosophical landscape and helps to chart a new course in systematically presenting the motivating issues underlying much of the Chinese moral-political debate at its very inception.

The book is divided into three parts. Part I, "Humaneness-cum-Justice: Negotiating Humans' Relationship with Heaven," containing Chapter 1, is devoted to the discussion of Confucius and his teachings in the fifth century BCE. We will see that Confucius struggled with the tension between humaneness and justice in his effort to deal with the relationship between Heaven and humans, setting the stage for the subsequent development of Chinese intellectual discourse. Part II, "Humaneness versus Justice: Grappling with the Familial-Political Relationship under a Naturalizing Heaven," including Chapters 2, 3, and 4, takes on Mozi, Mencius, Laozi, and the early *fajia* thinkers. In all these

philosophical projects, the concerns for humaneness and justice diverged, accompanied by shifting evaluations of the norms operative in the private and the public domains, as well as the increasing bureaucratization of the state. We will see that the rich and nuanced philosophical deliberations during this period unfolded under an understanding of Heaven that was naturalizing, with profound implications on the Heaven-human relationship. Part III, "Personal Freedom, Humaneness, and Justice: Coming to Terms with the State under a Naturalized Heaven," consisting of Chapters 5, 6, and 7, highlights three thinkers toward the end of the Warring States period, i.e., Zhuangzi, Xunzi, and Han Feizi. They are portrayed as representing three distinct voices, i.e., personal freedom, humane justice, and statist impartiality, as the classical period drew to a close with the eventual unification of China under the powerful but short-lived universal state of Qin. This development in the classical moral-political philosophy was accompanied by new models of Heaven–human relationship and human agency under a completely naturalized Heaven.

In Chapter 1, I start with Confucius (551–479 BCE), who has long been regarded as the baseline of the Chinese moral-political deliberations to which all subsequent philosophers had to respond, one way or another. Confucius endeavored to salvage the once powerful normative ritual system, whose regulative power encompassed the personal, the familial, and the political realms, by grounding it on the newly formulated idea of *ren* 仁, humaneness-cum-justice, the consummate moral virtue for Confucius. In so doing, Confucius laid the groundwork for the *XQZP* model that connects sages' moral virtues with familial regulation and political governance, even though the model itself does not appear in the *Analects*.

However, Confucius clearly struggled with the tension between humaneness and justice in his articulation of *ren*, reflected in his appropriation of familial virtues as the foundation for *ren* on the one hand, and his appeal to the Golden Rule in some of his iterations of *ren* on the other. Confucius's solution was to invoke the moral judgment of a cultivated gentleman or sage who alone could weigh the particularities of a complex situation when making decisions. Confucius's project set up the intellectual agenda for the subsequent philosophical debate about humaneness and justice, while his faith in a moral virtuoso's ability to negotiate the tension between the two normative values heightened the stake of self-cultivation in the ensuing Confucian moral-political project. In fact, self-cultivation remained a powerful premise and commitment, seldom challenged among most early texts, with interesting but also problematic consequences that I will explore in the Conclusion of this book.

The first chapter concludes with an examination of some excavated bamboo-slip texts with a focus on the Guodian Confucian manuscripts in order to study the state of the Confucian discourse between the time of Confucius and that

of Mencius. I look into the idea of Heaven, its mandate, and their relationship with the concept of human nature, which would become central to Mencius's and Xunzi's moral-political philosophy. We will also see that the excavated texts promote the unity and integration of core Confucian virtues as a way to cultivate one's heavenly endowed nature while also signaling tensions among those virtues, indicative of the effort by thinkers to negotiate different contexts wherein distinct virtues were required.

The fermentation stage of classical Chinese philosophy would witness a full-blown exploration of the more latent tension between humaneness and justice in Confucius's moral-political project. In Chapter 2 we see the tension between humaneness and justice dramatically heightened in the hands of Mozi (and the Mohists) and Mencius, so much so that it would result in what I call "the Great Divergence" between the two values in the post-Confucius moral universe. Mozi (c. 470–c. 391 BCE) was a radical moral thinker during the classical period in his advocacy of impartial care, promotion of uniform moral standard, and rejection of differential treatment. Mozi and the Mohists were the pioneers of universal justice in Chinese intellectual history. They were the main rival of the Confucians in early China.

By contrast, I argue that Mencius (c. 372–c. 289 BCE) was more on the humaneness end of this humaneness-justice spectrum, even though the real picture is much more complex. He appealed to human nature, or incipient moral inclinations (*xing* 性), to construct a world that was more conducive to human flourishing and advocated the ideal of benevolent governance that appealed to the humane inclinations of a ruler to be compassionate toward his subjects. Meanwhile, Mencius downplayed the role of the institution of ritual (he internalized ritual into the virtue of propriety), with the result that his project was based more on moral intuitions and sentiments than on articulated rules.

Importantly, however, we will see that although family plays an important role in Mencius's moral philosophy, its place in his *political* philosophy and the relationship between the familial and the political are much more complicated and ambiguous than commonly assumed. In this connection, I examine two related assumptions about Mencius's philosophy, one concerning the role of family and the other the unity of virtues. I argue that, despite his assertion to the contrary, there are indeed two roots in Mencius's philosophy, the family root and the general sympathy root. These two are sometimes in conflict within his framework, exposing a deep tension therein. To make the case, I distinguish two distinct strands in Mencius's thought, the "extensionist," which has been regarded as normative, and the "sacrificialist," which is more radical and less appreciated. While the extensionist Mencius operates on the assumption of congruity between the personal, the familial, and the political domains, the sacrificialist Mencius recognizes the conflict between the norms of humaneness and justice

that govern familial and the political domains that is sometimes irreconcilable under certain circumstances, and he embraces the necessity for self-sacrifice in order to protect the familial.

Chapter 3 covers an enigmatic figure in this period, Laozi, who was the alleged author of the *Daodejing* (fourth century BCE). We will see that the significance of the *Daodejing* in classical Chinese philosophy was its radical transformation of Heaven from one that cared about and was deeply involved in human affairs to one that was fundamentally indifferent. The *Daodejing* signaled a dramatic shift in the philosophical discourse during the fourth century BCE, what I call the "naturalist turn," supported by several excavated texts from the similar period. The corollary development of this naturalist turn was the realignment of values within a cosmos wherein the primacy of the Heaven was eclipsed by the Dao as the ultimate cosmic source. This resulted in the naturalization of justice and the rejection of humaneness within the political domain in the *Daodejing*. In so doing, Laozi naturalized the idea of justice/impartiality in early Chinese moral-political philosophy and completely abandoned the central ideal of *ren* which was promoted by both the Confucians and the Mohists, albeit under different moral and ideological registers. As a result, justice and impartiality become the Heavenly attribute, beyond the reach of human effort. In so doing, Laozi rejected the universalist projects of both the Confucians and the Mohists. We will see that later classical thinkers all had to grapple with this naturalist cosmology in their own projects, often with unexpected developments.

Chapter 4 discusses the writings of what came to be known as the early *fajia* 法家 (often translated as Legalist) thinkers against the background of the increasing concentration of power in the monarchy and the accelerating bureaucratization of the state in the mid-Warring States period. We look at three prominent political theorists in the fourth to early third centuries BCE, Shen Buhai, Shang Yang, and Shen Dao, in this chapter. I argue that in the hands of these early *fajia* thinkers, classical Chinese political philosophy took a decidedly bureaucratic turn that saw the institution of the state as a domain that had its own operating principle, irreducible to other domains. They embraced the value of impartiality, first formulated and defended by the Mohists and reformulated by the Laoists, as the most important institutional virtue, and ruthlessly instituted it in the state bureaucracy, meticulously mapping the state apparatus onto the Heavenly processes such that the state apparatus could function by itself without constant intervention from the ruler, as if it were the operation of Heaven. Such an approach to the state would bring the problem of the state to the forefront of the classical moral-political discourse.

In the culmination stage of classical Chinese philosophy, all thinkers had to confront the question of how to deal with the increasingly powerful state, conceptualized and engineered by the early *fajia* thinkers and politicians.

Chapter 5 deals with the first thinker in this culmination period, Zhuangzi (late fourth century–early third century BCE). Zhuangzi was simply an extraordinary figure in Chinese intellectual history. His fierce advocacy for personal freedom made him the singular outlier in the moral-political projects of the classical period dominated by the contestations between humaneness and justice. He ridiculed the misguided character of such projects and warned against their potential for inhumanity and injustice, the very opposite of what was intended by the participants of the mainstream discourse. However, the Zhuangist attempt to offer an alternative framework that foregrounded personal freedom and valued pluralism was severely compromised by their aversion to a more active engagement with the state. As we will see, the Zhuangist musing about personal freedom would have a lasting impact on the subsequent development of this ideal in Chinese intellectual and political history, i.e., its marginalization and internalization, as well as its lack of institutional impact in the imagination and construction of an ideal Chinese state.

Chapter 6 deals with the last major Confucian thinker in the classical period, Xunzi (active 298–238 BCE), whose philosophy operated on the premise of a Laoist or naturalist cosmos that did not particularly care about human affairs. Xunzi's philosophy exhibited a spirit of defiance against the naturalist and indifferent Heaven by valorizing human effort in the formation of a flourishing human society. His philosophical project focused on revitalizing the inherited, but increasingly discredited, ritual system. For him the traditional ritual system that regulated the personal, the familial, and the political domains was the result of the cumulative efforts of generations of sage-kings in response to Heavenly patterns and conditions on the ground. Xunzi used ritual as a way to reconcile the tension between humaneness and justice by making sage-kings the co-creator of order in the human world in collaboration with Heaven and Earth. The cult of sage-kings provided critical components of humaneness in the human world under an otherwise impartial and indifferent Laoist cosmos, resulting in the norm of humane justice that is mediated by ritual in Xunzi's political thought.

Chapter 7 focuses on the last *fajia* thinker, Han Feizi (c. 280–233 BCE), who was a grand synthesizer of many aspects of all classical Chinese moral-political discourse in his effort to perfect the operation of the impartialist state. We will see that his political project explicitly rejected the *XQZP* model by problematizing its every aspect. In sharp contrast to Xunzi's cult of sage-kings, Han Feizi sought to minimize the role of any individual person, including even the monarch. Like the earlier *fajia* thinkers, Han Feizi sought a model that provided the intellectual foundation for a system of impersonal and uniform bureaucratic machinery capable of dispensing reward and punishment automatically with as little interference from the ruler as possible. Even though Han Feizi's project might have been motivated by a desire to stabilize and strengthen the state so that it could survive

the precarious domestic and international environment, its goal of instituting a set of impartial, transparent, and uniform administrative and legal codes and standards in governing the state, often in defiance of the interests of powerful aristocratic families, points to the principle of justice operative in his statist project. Unfortunately, Han Feizi was not able to solve the core tension between the monarch and the monarchy, dooming his *fajia* project of building a lasting and impartial political order.

The book concludes by a reflection on the tragic fate of the Zhuangist idea of personal freedom in Chinese intellectual and political history. More specifically, I will scrutinize the widely shared premise of self-cultivation, what I call the "regime of self-cultivation," among most classical thinkers including Zhuangzi, and will explore its constraint on the development of personal freedom in the mainstream moral-political discourse, as well as in the building of political institutions. Interestingly, in this respect, it was the *fajia* thinkers who built their theories on the givenness of ordinary human dispositions, instead of on the promissory note of moral transformation. I will reflect on a path that was not taken in Chinese history, i.e., the integration of the Zhuangist idea of personal freedom into the mainstream moral-political project in conceptualizing a polity that can accommodate the ideal of personal freedom institutionally.