

Preliminary Plan (Last Update: March 8)

1. Introduction. “What are we reading?” and non-deductive argumentation.

One of the first questions that readers must ask themselves, regardless of their hermeneutic framework, is what they are reading. In Chinese philosophy, the question is not often raised, in part because of the longstanding but specious assumption that the eight classic philosophical texts were written by the great masters whose names they bear. Sustaining this fiction comes with serious interpretive costs. Most patently, it encourages a presumption of philosophical coherence where there may be scant historical warrant for it. More insidiously, it disregards the extent to which transmitters, redactors, and commentators shaped the text for their own audiences and purposes, whether by engineering new implications through new juxtapositions or by foregrounding the passages that appealed to them and mitigating—if not simply excising—those that did not.

Non-deductive argumentation: one longstanding criticism of Chinese thought is that it is not truly “philosophical” because it lacks viable protocols of argumentation. Thus it qualifies at best as “wisdom”: Confucius might provide valuable guidance, or thoughtful epigrams to savor, but nothing in the way of formal reasoning that would permit his audience to reconstruct and reconsider his arguments in any conceivable context. Such hand-wringing bespeaks the prejudgment that satisfactory argumentation must be deductive. Three general types of non-deductive argumentation in classical Chinese philosophy merit extended discussion: paradox, analogy, and appeal to example. Classical Chinese arguments that *can* be restated in terms of propositional logic leave no doubt that audiences were aware of principles of deduction, and thus suggest that Chinese philosophers crafted non-deductive arguments as a deliberate choice.

Reading: Goldin, *After Confucius*, 1-27. Optional:

Stephan Peter Bumbacher, “Reconstructing the *Zhuang zi*: Preliminary Considerations,” *Asiatische Studien* 70.3 (2016): 611-74.

Ke Mading 柯馬丁, “*Shiji li de ‘zuo zhe’ gainian*” 《史記》裏的“作者”概念, in *Shiji xue yu shijie Hanxue lunji xubian* 史記學與世界漢學論集續編.

David Schaberg, “Chinese History and Philosophy,” in *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, vol. I: *Beginnings to AD 600*, 394-414.

Yu Jiayi 余嘉錫, *Yu Jiayi shuo wenxianxue* 余嘉錫說文獻學.

Hanmo Zhang, *Authorship and Text-Making in Early China*.

2. The *Analects* 論語 of Confucius and his disciples.

Confucius 孔子 was apparently the first ritual master to have his teachings documented by his disciples, and emphasized the moral aspect of correct ritual practice to an unprecedented degree. The prime difficulty facing any reader today is that Confucius did not leave behind any written work. A modern reader, then, is faced with this task: using the *Analects* and perhaps a handful of other early texts, none of which was written by Confucius himself, to reconstruct the philosophy of a master who would have

preferred to teach you personally. Fortunately, careful reading of the *Analects* reveals a unique and consistent philosophical attitude. Confucius himself insists that although his teachings may appear disparate, there is “one thing with which to string [everything] together.”

Reading: Goldin, *The Art of Chinese Philosophy*, 31-53. Optional:

Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Confucius,” in *The Rivers of Paradise: Moses, Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad as Religious Founders*, 233-308.

Paul R. Goldin, “When *zhong* 忠 Does Not Mean ‘Loyalty,’” *Dao* 7.2 (2008): 165-74.

Yuri Pines, “Confucius’ Elitism: The Concepts of *junzi* and *xiaoren* Revisited,” in *A Concise Companion to Confucius*, 164-84.

Kwong-loi Shun, “*Rén* and *lǐ* in the *Analects*,” in *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, 53-72.

3. *Mozi* 墨子.

If we know frustratingly little about the historical Confucius, we know even less about Mo Di 墨翟, his first great philosophical rival. Mohists detested Confucian philosophy, which they regarded as partisan and conducive to nepotism: we should love everyone, not just the people closest to us. In addition, they regarded Confucian doubts about ghosts and spirits as impious, and struggled to offer rationally persuasive defenses of such beliefs. Historically speaking, Mohism failed: by the end of antiquity, there were no longer any avowed adherents; if Mozi was cited by other philosophers, it was in order to point out the errors of his teachings. In explicating Mohism, then, philosophers and historians part company: the former tend to ask what aspects can be salvaged and perhaps repurposed today, while the latter try to understand what it stood for in its own time, and why it was ultimately rejected.

Reading: Goldin, *The Art of Chinese Philosophy*, 54-78. Optional:

Carine Defoort and Nicolas Standaert, eds., *The Mozi as an Evolving Text: Different Voices in Early Chinese Thought*.

Chris Fraser, *The Philosophy of the Mòzǐ: The First Consequentialists*.

A.C. Graham, *Divisions in Early Mohism Reflected in the Core Chapters of Mo-tzu*.

Zheng Jiewen 鄭傑文, *Zhongguo Moxue tongshi* 中國墨學通史.

4. *Mencius* 孟子.

Mencius poses many of the same interpretive problems as Confucius. He did not write the surviving repository of his teachings, the eponymous *Mencius*, which was compiled after his death. Mencius is famous for having argued that human nature is good, but his position is complex and requires careful unraveling. All human beings are endowed by Heaven with what he called the “Four Beginnings” 四端 of virtue. Mencius’s proof is that when we are presented with a sudden and unforeseen moral crisis, and have no opportunity to calculate how we should act, we unthinkingly act with

compassion. But since no one can claim that he or she lacks the Four Beginnings, Mencius never tolerates false pretexts or mere velleities when it comes to the serious business of moral self-cultivation. If morality is your stated aim, you must pursue it with every ounce of energy; otherwise, you may as well acknowledge that you do not care enough to do more.

Reading: Goldin, *The Art of Chinese Philosophy*, 79-105. Optional: A.C. Graham, *Studies in Chinese Philosophy and Philosophical Literature*. Philip J. Ivanhoe, "Confucian Self Cultivation and Mengzi's Notion of Extension," in *Essays on the Moral Philosophy of Mengzi*, 221-41. David S. Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism: Investigations in Chinese Philosophy*. Bryan W. Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy* (first half).

5. *Laozi* 老子 and *Sunzi* 孫子.

Regardless of the intractable question of its authorship, *Laozi* marks a major philosophical turning point: the conceptualization of "the Way" (*dao* 道) as a cosmic principle. We cannot be sure that *Laozi* was the very first text to use the word *dao* in its radically new sense, but the text is representative of intellectual trends that emerged around the fourth century B.C. and whose significance was grasped almost immediately. This chapter lays out a centrist interpretation of the text on the basis of the Wang Bi 王弼 recension, then asks how much of this account needs to be adjusted in the light of the recently discovered Guodian 郭店 manuscripts, which present a vision that is already recognizable as a *Laozi* vision, only more disjointed and less compellingly phrased than the recension we have known for centuries.

Sunzi or *Sunzi Bingfa* 孫子兵法 (*Master Sun's Methods of War*) is a military treatise attributed to Sun Wu 孫武 (which means Grandson Warlike), an all too appropriately named general who is said to have transformed the harem of King Helu of Wu 吳王闔廬 (r. 514-496 B.C.) into a fearsome battalion in order to demonstrate his qualifications. But the vocabulary of the text is not in keeping with the world of 500 B.C. One specific anachronism is that *Sunzi* refers to crossbows and triggers, which were not widely used before the late fourth century. More generally, the philosophical lexicon suggests a milieu in which concepts such as Heaven and the Way had already become influential. Although the author or authors of *Sunzi* may have had real combat experience, one of its rhetorical purposes was to carve out a place for military affairs in philosophical discourse. *Sunzi* anticipates an audience well versed in classical philosophical literature, and argues that "the commander" (*jiang* 將) should be added to everybody's list of technical terms.

Reading: Goldin, *The Art of Chinese Philosophy*, 109-28 and 153-65. Optional: Denma Translation Group, tr. *The Art of War: The Denma Translation*. Andrew Meyer, "Reading 'Sunzi' as a Master," *Asia Major* (third series) 30.1

(2017): 1-24.

Bryan W. Van Norden, "Method in the Madness of the *Laozi*," in *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi*, 187-210.

Wang Zhongjiang 王中江, *Daojia xueshuo de guannianshi yanjiu* 道家學說的觀念史研究.

Yin Zhenhuan 尹振環, *Chongshi Laozi yu Laozi—Qiren qishu qishu qi yanbian* 重識老子與《老子》—其人其書其術其演變.

6. *Zhuangzi* 莊子.

Although virtually all serious scholars accept that *Zhuangzi* comprises layers of diverse origin and date, the commonplace notion that the so-called inner chapters are the most authentic is based on the dubious assumption that Guo Xiang 郭象, the redactor of the received text, would have been in a position to make such judgments, even though he lived some six centuries after Zhuang Zhou 莊周, and was himself relying on previous editions compiled by unknown hands applying unknown criteria. Accordingly, the discussion here refers to relevant passages from the outer and mixed chapters without embarrassment. Moreover, the inquiry is delimited by a necessary recognition: what we find in *Zhuangzi* are repeatedly revisited philosophical *themes* (rather than sustained and internally consistent philosophical *arguments*), including the relativity of perspectives, the need for a holistic vision of the cosmos, the limitations of language in communicating ideas, and the usefulness of uselessness.

Reading: Goldin, *The Art of Chinese Philosophy*, 129-52. Optional:

Judith Berling, "Self and Whole in Chuang Tzu," in *Individualism and Holism: Studies in Confucian and Taoist Values*, 101-20.

Hu Pingsheng 胡平生, "Fuyang Shuanggudui Hanjian *Zhuangzi*" 阜陽雙古堆漢簡《莊子》, *Chutu wenxian yanjiu* 出土文獻研究 12 (2013): 188-201.

Philip J. Ivanhoe, "Was *Zhuangzi* a Relativist?" in *Essays on Skepticism, Relativism, and Ethics in the Zhuangzi*, 196-214.

Esther S. Klein, "Reading the *Zhuangzi* Anthology," in *Having a Word with Angus Graham: At Twenty-Five Years into His Immortality*, 11-26.

Wang Shumin 王叔岷, *Zhuangxue guankui* 莊學管關.

7. *Xunzi* 荀子.

For most of imperial Chinese history *Xunzi* was a *bête noire* who was typically cited as an example of a Confucian who went astray by rejecting Mencian convictions. Only in the last few decades has *Xunzi* been widely recognized as one of China's greatest thinkers. Unlike the texts examined in previous chapters, the bulk of *Xunzi* probably consists of essays by *Xunzi* himself. *Xunzi* did not envision himself as a teacher whose sphere was limited to direct contact with his disciples; rather, he was a new breed of thinker, one who aimed, through writing, to influence readers across the land. Moreover, whereas earlier Confucians had made only the barest statements about the nature of the cosmos, and did not regard the study of cosmology as indispensable to moral self-

cultivation, Xunzi had a robust theory of the universe and its relation to moral philosophy. Indeed, Xunzi considered morality impossible without an understanding of the patterns of the cosmos.

Reading: Goldin, *The Art of Chinese Philosophy*, 169-200. Optional:

Eric L. Hutton, ed., *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Xunzi*.

T.C. Kline III and Philip J. Ivanhoe, eds., *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*.

T.C. Kline III and Justin Tiwald, eds., *Ritual and Religion in the Xunzi*.

8. *Han Feizi* 韓非子.

Although Han Fei is probably responsible for the lion's share of the extant *Han Feizi*, this does not permit readers to identify the philosophy of Han Fei himself with the philosophy (or philosophies) advanced in *Han Feizi*, as though these were necessarily the same thing. What Han Fei said varied with his expected audience, a point that scholarship has not always appreciated. Most of his chapters are addressed to kings and offer impersonal administrative techniques (called *fa* 法) to keep self-interested ministers in line, but at least one, "The Difficulties of Persuasion" ("Shuinan" 說難), is addressed to those same ministers, and advises them to dazzle their king with self-serving rhetoric. Throughout *Han Feizi*, what we read are statements not about truth, but about how truths can be profitably applied.

Reading: Goldin, *The Art of Chinese Philosophy*, 201-28. Optional:

Paul R. Goldin, "Persistent Misconceptions about Chinese 'Legalism,'" *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38.1 (2011): 88-104.

Paul R. Goldin, ed., *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Han Fei*. Chinese translation: Jin Pengcheng 金鵬程 ed., *Han Fei zhexue* 韓非哲學, tr. Feng Yanyan 馮艷艷.

Yuri Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire: Chinese Political Thought of the Warring States Era*.