

On the Dao
by
Zhang Xuecheng
(translation © Philip J. Ivanhoe, 2005)

Section One

1. [Dong Zhongshu said,] “The great source of the *dao* came from Heaven.”¹
[However, one might ask,] Did heaven actually “ordain it explicitly and in detail?”² My reply is that I am unable to know anything about the state of things before heaven and earth. However, when heaven and earth produced human beings, the *dao* existed, but it had not yet taken shape. As soon as there were three people living together in one house, the *dao* took shape, but it was not yet plainly evident. When there came to groups of five and ten and these grew to hundreds and thousands, one house could not possibly accommodate them all, and so they split into groups and separated into classes and the *dao* became evident. The concepts of benevolence and righteousness, loyalty and filial piety, and the institutions of penal and administrative laws, ritual, and music were all things that could not but arise thereafter.

2. (*When human beings came into being, there was the dao.*)³ <When human beings arose [in the world], the *dao* naturally came into being> However, because people were not aware of the *dao*, it did not yet take shape. When three people were living together in one house, then each morning and evening they had to open and shut the doors and gates and they had to gather firewood and draw water in order to prepare the morning and evening meals. Since they were not just one single person, there had to be a division of

responsibilities. Sometimes, each attended to his or her own work; sometimes work was alternated and each took a turn. This was indeed a situation which could not be otherwise, and there developed the principles of equality, peace, structure, and order. Then, fearing that people would quarrel over the delegation of responsibilities, it became necessary to bring forward the one who was most advanced in years to keep the peace. This also was an inevitable state of affairs and as a result the distinctions of old and young and of honored and humble took shape. When there came to be groups of five and ten and then hundreds and thousands and these were splitting into groups and separating into classes, it became necessary for each elder to have charge of his own group of five or ten. When these groups accumulated to hundreds and thousands, such a large number of people required management and direction, and so it was necessary to advance the one who was greatest in talent to order the complex relationship among them. The situation became complicated, requiring leadership to employ the people effectively, and so it was necessary to advance the one who was most vigorous in virtue to control the development of things. This also was an inevitable state of affairs, and the ideas appeared of setting up a sovereign and establishing teachers, of marking off fields and dividing up the country into provinces, along with the notions of the well-field,⁴ feudal investiture, and schools. The *dao* thus is not something the wisdom of a sage can [simply] manufacture, it is in every particular instance gradually given shape and manifested and inevitably develops from the nature of the state of things. Therefore, it is said to be “of Heaven.”⁵

3. The *Book of Changes* says, “The alternation of the *yin* and the *yang* is called the *dao*.”⁶ This indicates that the *dao* was already present before human beings existed. The

Book of Changes also says, “That which continues it is goodness, that which realizes it completely is human nature.”⁷ This shows that heaven is manifested in human beings and that the *li* is attached to *qi*. Therefore, those matters for which one can describe the form or name the name are all the detailed effects of *dao* but they are not themselves the *dao*.⁸ For the *dao* is that by which all things and affairs are as they are (the *soyiran* 所以然); it is not what they should be (the *dangran* 當然).⁹ However, all that human beings can see is what things and affairs should be (the *dangran*). From the beginning of humankind, to groupings of five and ten, on to hundreds and thousands, and up to the creation of a sovereigns and of teachers and the distinguishing of provinces and the marking off of fields, it appears always that, “There was first some need and then the meeting of it, first some anxiety and then the expression of it, first some abuse and then the remedying of it.”¹⁰ The institutions of the sage-emperors Fuxi, Shennong, Xuanyuan, and Zhuanxu were, in their first conception, merely like this.¹¹ Their laws accumulated and [over time] became good and perfect, and with the reigns of Yao and Shun the goodness in them was fully brought out.¹² The Yin dynasty inherited the Xia’s review of this tradition, and by the time of the Eastern Zhou, there was nothing to regret in [any detail] of it.¹³ It was like some water spilled from a goblet which gathers volume little by little and eventually becomes a great and mighty river, or like little mounds of earth which accumulate to form hills and mountains. This was simply due to the nature and logic of the situation these rulers were in. We cannot thereby conclude that the sageliness of Yao and Shun exceeded that of Fuxi and Xuanyuan, or that the spirit-like genius of Wen and Wu was superior to that of Yü and Tang.¹⁴ The later sages modelled themselves on the earlier sages, but they did not model the earlier sages themselves;

rather, they modelled that about them in which the *dao* gradually took shape and was manifested. The Three Sovereigns “exerted no effort and the world was transformed of itself.”¹⁵ The Five Emperors “explained things and accomplished undertakings.”¹⁶ The Three Kings “established institutions and transmitted a model to their posterity.”¹⁷ The differences in their ways of governing and in their transforming influence, which are apparent to men of later times, are only of this sort: When a sage at any given time created an institution, it was like wearing light cloth in hot weather and fur in cold weather. Their institutions are not instances of their giving reign to their fancy, saying, “I must do such-and-such in order to be different from men of former times,” or “I must do such-and-such in order that I may make my fame equal to that of the former sages.” These things were all necessary results of the alternation and revolution of the *yin* and the *yang*, but they themselves cannot be considered the *dao*, which is the alternation of the *yin* and *yang* itself. The alternation and revolution of the *yin* and the *yang* is like the wheels of a cart. The sage’s fashioning of institutions, just like the wearing of light cloth in hot weather and fur in cold weather, is like the tracks of such wheels.

4. The *dao* is what it is of itself, and the sage does what he does of necessity. [One might ask,] Are these things the same? My reply is that they are not. *Dao* does not act and is so of itself; the sage sees what he sees and cannot but do as he does. Therefore, one may say that the sage embodies the *dao*, but one may not say that the sage and the *dao* are one in body.¹⁸ The sage sees what he sees and hence he cannot but do as he does. The multitude see nothing, and so do what they do without being aware of it. [One might ask,] Which is closer to the *dao*? My reply is that to do as one does without being aware of it is

the dao. It is not [so much] that the multitude see nothing, but rather that the thing cannot be seen. Doing as he does of necessity is how the sage accords with the dao, but it is not the dao itself. The sage seeks the dao, but the dao cannot be seen. And so the multitude's doing as they do without being aware of it is what the sage relies upon to see the *dao*. And so, doing as one does without being aware of it is the trace of the alternation of the *yin* and the *yang*. It is the worthy who learns from the sage, and the superior person who learns from the worthy; but it is the sage who learns from the multitude. This does not mean that one studies the multitude in themselves; rather, it means that the *dao* must be sought in the traces of the alternation of the *yin* and the *yang*. [In the period of time stretching] from the beginning of heaven and earth down through the reigns of [emperors] Tang and Yu and the Xia and the Shang [dynasties], these traces were already numerous and in the course of historical adaptation, *li* had become complete.¹⁹ The Duke of Zhou, being a sage endowed by heaven with pure knowing and happening to live at a time when the accumulated wisdom of antiquity had been transmitted and preserved and *dao* and *fa*²⁰ were complete, was able to sum up, in his principles and policies, the “complete orchestra” of all past time.²¹ This came to be simply as a result of his position in time, it was not that the Duke of Zhou's sagely wisdom caused this to be so. As I see it, all sages from remote antiquity have studied the unself-conscious nature of the people, but the Duke of Zhou also had a comprehensive view of what the sages since antiquity had done of necessity and he understood their actions [as well]. The Duke of Zhou was of course a sage endowed by heaven with pure knowing, but [his unique accomplishment] was not something that his wisdom could cause to be so. It was caused to be so by his position in time. It is comparable to when there was an officer in charge of each one of

the seasons, Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter, but the Director of Winter announced the harvest for the entire year.²² This also was due to temporal circumstances and did not mean that the Director of Winter was superior in rank to the directors of the other three seasons. And so, while various periods of antiquity have been alike in having creative and illustrious sages, the position of summing up the “complete orchestra” of the past is the Duke of Zhou’s alone. This was so because his position in time happened to be what it was; the Duke of Zhou himself did not realize that this was the case.

5. Mengzi tells us that, “Kongzi may be said to have summed up the ‘complete orchestra.’”²³ Now I have said that it was the Duke of Zhou who summed up the “complete orchestra.” Would this not seem to contradict Mengzi’s claim? Well, the meaning of the expression “to sum up” is to collect together all of a group and unify it. From the beginning of heaven and earth down to the emperors Yao and Shun and the Xia and Shang dynasties, sages always had attained the position of emperor; their government and their care of the people derived from the working out of the *dao* as required by circumstances. The Duke of Zhou, in fulfilling the virtue of Kings Wen and Wu, happened to live at a time when the work of emperors and kings was complete and when one dynasty had profited from the experience of another to the point where nothing further could be added. And so, he was able to rely on this past in forming his own institutions and to “sum up” in the *dao* of the Zhou [dynasty] the “orchestra” of the ancient sages. This in fact is what is meant by “summing up the complete orchestra.”

Kongzi had virtue but lacked position.²⁴ In other words, there was no one from whom he could acquire the power to create institutions. He could not even take his place

as a single instrument, so how could he possibly sum up the complete orchestra? This does not mean that Kongzi's quality as a sage was in any way inferior to that of the Duke of Zhou; it is simply that the times in which he lived caused things to be like this. In saying that Kongzi "summed up the complete orchestra," Mengzi was actually comparing him to Bo Yi, Yi Yin, and Liuxia Hui.²⁵ Mengzi knew that these three men all were sages but he feared that his disciples could wonder if Kongzi's status as a sage was the same as theirs. When Gongsun Chou²⁶ asked if Kongzi was like these men, Mengzi had no satisfactory way to express Kongzi's complete perfection, which distinguished him from the limited excellence of these three. And so he compared the situation to a musical orchestra. Therefore, the statement about Kongzi and the "complete orchestra" applies only in regard to these three sages; it is not a thorough or adequate description of Kongzi. To take it as a thorough or adequate description of Kongzi would actually be to belittle Kongzi. Why? Because the Duke of Zhou, in summing up the complete orchestra of Fuxi, Xuanyuan, Yao, Shun, et. al, had actually studied these successive sages. Had the *dao* and *fa* of these sages not existed, he of course could not have come to be the Duke of Zhou that he was. Kongzi did not "sum up the complete orchestra of Bo Yi, Yi Yin, and Liuxia Hui [in this way], for he never studied Bo Yi, Yi Yin, and Liuxia Hui. Are we to say that had Bo Yi, Yin, and Liuxia Hui not lived, Kongzi would not have come to be the sage that he was? Mengzi's words make sense only when taken in their proper context. We must not "let language injure meaning."²⁷

A man from the village of Daxiang once said, "Great indeed is the philosopher Kong! His learning is extensive and yet his fame does not depend upon any [particular] accomplishment."²⁸ Modern scholars all are scornful of the villager for not

understanding Kongzi, but do they themselves understand the true basis of Kongzi's fame? They hold that a sage endowed by heaven with pure knowing may not be appraised in word or thought or be conceived to have one definite sort of greatness. Thus they invoke the notions of "heaven" and "divinity" and regard the sage as unknowable. How then does their view differ from that of the villager? [The *Doctrine of the Mean* says that,] "The greatness [even] of heaven and earth may be expressed in one statement."²⁹ Although Kongzi is great, he is not greater than heaven and earth. Is his greatness nonetheless not capable of being expressed completely in one sentence? Should someone ask [me], How may it be expressed in one statement? I would respond by saying, He simply studied the Duke of Zhou. [And were I further asked,] Did he study nothing else? I would say, There is no branch of learning in which Kongzi was not perfect. Since the Duke of Zhou summed up the "complete orchestra" of all the sages, it follows that outside of the Duke of Zhou there was no true learning [to be found]. The Duke of Zhou summed up the achievements of all the sages and Kongzi studied and grasped completely the dao of the Duke of Zhou. This one statement is sufficient to describe Kongzi completely. "[He] venerated and transmitted the dao of Yao and Shun"—and this was the Duke of Zhou's goal.³⁰ "[He] took as his paradigm kings Wen and Wu"—and this was the Duke of Zhou's life's work.³¹

At one point Kongzi said, "Since the death of King Wen, was not true culture lodged here within me?"³² On another occasion, he said, "Extreme is my decay! It has been a long time since I dreamed of seeing the Duke of Zhou."³³ [Kongzi] also said, "I study the rituals of Zhou which are now in use"³⁴ and "How elegant a culture! I follow the Zhou!"³⁵ When Duke Ai asked about government, the master said, "The government

of Wen and Wu is set forth on tablets of wood and bamboo.”³⁶ Someone asked, “Under whom did Kongzi study?” [To which] Zigong replied, “The doctrines of Wen and Wu have not yet fallen to the ground.”³⁷ The reference [of the lines,] “A transmitter and not a creator,” is the ancient statues of the Duke of Zhou.³⁸ [In the line,] “I am one who is fond of antiquity and earnest in seeking knowledge therein,” Kongzi refers to the records left behind by the Duke of Zhou.³⁹

The villager [from Daxiang] was Kongzi’s contemporary but did not understand him, and so he said that Kongzi had not won acclaim in any particular field of endeavor. Still, the villager was not completely without insight. Later scholars, who [are able to] read the writings [which Kongzi left behind] and still do not know what he studied, see less than the villager saw. And yet they ridicule the villager for his lack of understanding. How can those who flee a hundred paces laugh at those who flee fifty?⁴⁰ I conclude that since earliest times, sages, though alike in being sages, are not necessarily completely alike in those things that make them sages, for this is something determined by time and circumstances. None but the Duke of Zhou and Kongzi lived at a time when fa had so accumulated and dao was so complete that neither could be further added to. The Duke of Zhou put together all of these achievements in order to put this dao into practice, while Kongzi made a complete study of this dao in order to make his teachings shine forth clearly. Their two activities tally perfectly, as though they were the work of a single man. In no respect is there the slightest divergence between them. Why then do those who seek to honor Kongzi use the concepts of “heaven” and “divinity” to propound vague theories that can never be substantiated?

7. Suppose that someone were to say, I grant that Kongzi and the Duke of Zhou share a common *dao*, but are we to suppose that the Duke of Zhou “sums up the complete orchestra” while Kongzi does not? (*I would reply by saying, Kongzi’s “complete orchestra” is not that spoken of by Mengzi. As I see it, Mengzi, like the Duke of Zhou, summed up Fuxi, Shennong, Huangdi, Zhuanxu, Yao, Shun, and the Three Dynasties—not Bo Yi, Yi Yin, and Liuxia Hui.*)⁴¹ <I would reply by saying, Kongzi’s “complete orchestra” is neither that spoken of by Mengzi, merely with reference to Bo Yi, Shu Qi, Yi Yin, and Liuxia Hui, nor is it the same as the Duke of Zhou.⁴² Mengzi said that the summing up of a complete orchestra means that the metal bell begins the piece and the musical stone completes it.⁴³ I venture to apply this idea to the Duke of Zhou and Kongzi. May we not say that the Duke of Zhou is the “summing up” of the musical stone, and Kongzi the “summing up” of the bell? The Duke of Zhou sums up the *dao* and *fa* of Fuxi, Huangdi, Yao, Shun, and the later sages, having assimilated the best parts of institutions as they had evolved from one sage to the next in the period before his own time. Thus he is the musical stone that concludes things at the end. Kongzi completely assimilated the *dao* and *fa* of the Duke of Zhou, but being unable to put them into practice, he displayed them in his teachings. Even though a sage were to appear in later times, he would not be able to go beyond the scope of Kongzi’s teachings. Thus Kongzi is the metal bell announcing things at the beginning.>

When the functions of ruler and teacher separated and it consequently became impossible to keep government and doctrine united, this was the result of heavenly decreed destiny.⁴⁴ The Duke of Zhou “summed up the orchestra” of the tradition of government, while Kongzi displayed the highest excellence in regard to true teaching.

The achievement of each was determined by the nature of things and in neither do we have *(a case of a sage [intentionally] differing from those who preceded him.)* <...a case of a sage intentionally acting in a certain way in order to be different from those who preceded him.> This was the result of *dao* and *fa* deriving from heaven. Hence, prior to the Song, in schools equal reverence was paid to the Duke of Zhou and to Kongzi. The Duke of Zhou was regarded as the foremost sage, and Kongzi as the foremost teacher, presumably on the grounds that the fashioning of institutions is something characteristic of sages, while the establishing of teachings is something characteristic of teachers. This is why Mengzi says that the *dao* of the Duke of Zhou and Kongzi is one and the same.⁴⁵

However, if the Duke of Zhou and Kongzi were able to establish the epitome of government and teaching because of their times and circumstances, is it then to be supposed that the sage is in fact dependent upon time and circumstance? Zaiwo held that Kongzi was more worthy than Yao or Shun. Zigong maintained that since humankind first arose there had never been anyone like Kongzi. Youro, in comparing Kongzi to the sages of antiquity, said that he stood out above all others.⁴⁶ *(These three philosophers all ignored the Duke of Zhou and paid honor only to Kongzi. This is explained by Zhu Xi's remark that, "sages differ in respect to actions and achievements."*⁴⁷ *Nevertheless, in government there is a display of actual deeds, whereas teachings only pass along "empty words." Persons of later times accepted the remarks of the three philosophers and vigorously extolled Kongzi as superior to Yao and Shun and on this basis placed great value on "nature" and "fate" while slighting action and achievement. From that point on, the political achievements of all the sages came to seem inferior to the academic discussions of Confucian scholars.*⁴⁸ *Now there is no better way to honor Kongzi than to*

pay close attention to his character as a man. If people do not understand the reality of Kongzi and merely make it their business to revere and worship him, they will talk more and more vaguely and mysteriously about him until the term “sage” becomes simply an expression interchangeable with “spirit” and “heaven.” How will this add to our present understanding?

Therefore, Kongzi and the Duke of Zhou ought not to be compared as to their relative merit. Speaking metaphorically, Zhuangzi said [of the “spirit-like man”] that “from his dust and chaff one could mould a Yao or Shun!”⁴⁹ Surely Confucian scholars ought not to copy his ideas! Therefore, those who wish to understand the dao must first understand what it is that made the Duke of Zhou and Kongzi what they were.)

<Don’t these three philosophers seem somewhat partial in their preferences? I say that the words of Zhu Xi solve the entire problem. [He said,] “If it is a question of sagehood, then there is no difference among the sages. As for their actions and achievements, there is a difference.”⁵⁰ Nevertheless, in government we observe actual affairs, whereas teachings only pass along “empty words.” To say anything of lasting value, one must be true to Kongzi, but no one short of a great worthy can avoid partiality in what he says. As for Zaiwo, Zigong, and Youro, Mengzi quoted all of their statements, thinking that they had wisdom enough to understand a sage. Zigong’s words are indeed without fault. However, Zaiwo’s statement that Kongzi was more worthy than Yao or Shun and his saying that Kongzi was more worthy by far—these are not true, unless, along with Zhu Xi, we make a distinction between actions and achievements.

Now there is no better way to honor Kongzi than to pay close attention to his character as a man. Although it is true that in embodying the dao he could do only as he

did, yet he was still such a person as had never before existed in human history. The way I see it, the achievement of the Duke of Zhou's "summing up" rests in the earlier kings while Kongzi's achievement in making clear his teachings rests in all of subsequent history. To set the Duke of Zhou and Kongzi apart [from one another] and evaluate their relative merits is foolish. Therefore, if one wants to understand the dao one must see what it is that made the Duke of Zhou and Kongzi what they were.>

Section Two

1. Han Yü said, "Prior to the Duke of Zhou, sages were rulers, and so they are distinguished for the things they did. After the Duke of Zhou, sages were subjects, and so are distinguished for spreading their theories."¹ Now, it is by the spreading of theories that the dao is made clear, but it is also in this way that the dao is obscured. Kongzi assimilated the dao of the Duke of Zhou and made his teachings shine forth for all time. However, in doing this, Kongzi never devised theories of his own. He made clear the Six Classics and preserved the old statutes of the Duke of Zhou. This is why he said, "A transmitter and not a creator, I trust in and love antiquity"² and "There are, I suppose, those who act without knowledge, but I do not do so."³ "The things of which the master regularly spoke were the Odes, the History, and the maintenance of rites."⁴ This is what has been described as "Causing the dao of the ancient kinds to shine forth in order to guide people."⁵ It was not a matter of Kongzi exalting the former kings with the idea of humbly cultivating his own character, and so not creating anything of his own.⁶ Basically, there was nothing that Kongzi could have created. Having virtue but being

without position, Kongzi had no authority to create institutions, and he couldn't teach others with "empty words," for, as it is said, "without demonstration one will not be believed."⁷

The way I see it, the occupation of teaching already existed in the time of Fuxi and Huangdi. If we look at what is said in the *Great Appendix* of the *Book of Changes*, we will understand that the sages themselves served as models for proper conduct and established their teachings in response to actual affairs, and that outside of the conduct of government there were no "teachings" or "models" [to be found].⁸ Teaching, in the court of Emperor Shun, to be sure, was handled by special officers. Educational policies and institutions, from the dissemination of the lessons of duty by the Minister of Education and the instructions of the Master of Music,⁹ to the setting up of local schools, are common to administrations from [the time of] Emperor Shun down to the Zhou dynasty.¹⁰ The functions of such education officials as the Sicheng, Shishi, and Baoshi are explained in the Offices of the Zhou.¹¹ However, since these persons had positions in the ranks of the officials, what they taught was preserved in government records. What people studied was the dao of cultivating one's self, regulating one's family, governing one's state, and keeping peace in the world.¹² They took as teachers those who were responsible for public office or in charge of the law. Governing and teaching were not two things; the roles of official and teacher were united. How then could there be any who used "empty words" to maintain their own personal theories?

Scholars have paid honor to Kongzi in a way which seem to appropriate him as the founding teacher of their own particular group. In doing this they reveal that they actually do not understand Kongzi. Kongzi taught the ultimate perfection of the dao for

human beings; he cannot be said to have taught the ultimate perfection of the dao for scholars. When a scholar is someone of great worth who has not encountered an enlightened ruler to serve or found a position from which he can put the dao into practice, he then will spend his life preserving the dao of the ancient kings for people to study in later ages. This is a necessity imposed upon him by his situation. What the dao for human beings enjoins is broad and great. Surely it is not right for those who have not encountered an opportunity to serve in some official capacity to stick unwaveringly to this course of preserving the ancient way for posterity and avoid having anything further to do with human affairs. The *Book of Changes* developed from the trigrams of Emperor Fuxi, but we need not follow him in wearing straw clothing and living in the wilds.¹³ The *Book of History* begins with the “Canon of Shun,” but we need not weep and cry to heaven as Shun did.¹⁴ My point is that the domain in which the truth of these classics is to be applied always differs. How then can those who study Kongzi say that they will not attempt any active achievement, but will instead set their sights upon passing on the doctrine in an age when the Way is not practiced?¹⁵

2. The *Book of Changes* says, “What is above form is called the dao; what is within form are called qi æπ ‘actual things and affairs.’”¹⁶ The *dao* can no more be abstracted from the material world than a shadow can be separated from the shape that casts it. Because those in later ages who accepted Kongzi’s teachings obtained them from the Six Classics, they came to regard the Six Classics as “books which set forth the dao.” However, they failed to realize that the Six Classics all belong to the realm of actual things and affairs. [For example,] the *Book of Changes* is a book which explains things

and helps people to succeed in their undertakings. In the Zhou court the Grand Diviner was in charge of it.¹⁷ It is therefore clear that its use was the responsibility of a specific office and that it was classed as a government document. [Similarly,] the *Book of History* was the responsibility of the Historian of the Exterior; the *Book of Odes* was part of the charge of the Grand Preceptor; the *Rituals* derived from the Master of Ceremonies; for the *Book of Music* there was the Master of the Court Orchestra; and for the *Spring and Autumn Annals* of each state there was a State Recorder. In the three royal dynasties and in earlier times, the *Book of Odes*, *Book of History*, and other classical disciplines were taught to everyone. It was not, as in later times, when we find the Six Classics placed on a pedestal, treated as the special subject matter of the Confucian school, and singled out as “books which set forth the *dao*.” The reason, as I see it, was that students in ancient times studied only what was in the charge of state officials, the state’s doctrines of government, and they simply applied this learning to the ordinary problems of everyday human obligations. They saw what they found in the classics simply as things which had to be as they were. They never saw beyond this any “*dao*” set forth in these books. Kongzi, transmitted the Six Classics to instruct posterity, because he believed that the *dao* of the ancient sages and kings is something which cannot be seen, while the classics are the actual embodiment of the *dao*, which can be seen. He thought that people of later times, who have not themselves seen the ancient kings, ought to use these [records concerning] actual things and affairs, which they could keep and treasure, in order to grasp in understanding the invisible *dao*. And so Kongzi made clear the government doctrines of the ancient kings and the documents which the officials had kept in order to show them to others. He did not write theories of his own, which would have been to talk

about the *dao* divorced from the real world. When Kongzi explained why he wrote the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, he said, “I could have set forth my principles in *kongyan* 空言 ‘empty words,’ but they would not have been as trenchant and clear as they are when illustrated in [concrete] actions and events.”¹⁸ We see clearly then that there is no *dao* set forth in the classics apart from the documents illustrating political doctrines and the day to day functioning of human relationships.

The Qin dynasty forbade unauthorized discussion of the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of History* and decreed that those wishing to study the laws should be taught by officials.¹⁹ Qin’s only offense against antiquity was its interdiction against the *Book of Odes* and the *Book of History*. Its decree that those who wish to study the laws should take officials as their teachers was in complete accord with the principle that *dao* and actual things and affairs are united as one, and that the official and the teacher, governing and teaching, ought not to be split apart [and regarded] as two things. Government and learning in later times, having become separate, could not be recombined; this was something brought about by heaven. Government officials kept only the documents of their own particular time, while teachers of the classics passed on to their students the traditional commentaries on the classical texts. This state of affairs was simply the result of necessity. Nonetheless, the reason why the work of Confucian scholars has been maintained from age to age is that what they have preserved is the *dao* of the ancient kings. However, the Confucians who preserve these classics say that they are special books which “set forth the *dao*.” Is it ever, anywhere in the world, possible to talk about the *dao* apart from actual things and affairs, or to have a shadow without a shape to cast it? When they turn away from the actual things and affairs of the world, the day to day

working out of human relationships, and hold on to the Six Classics and speak only of “the *dao*,” then one certainly cannot talk with them about what the *dao* really is.

3. The *Book of Changes* says, “The humane person sees it (i.e. the *dao*) and calls it humanity; the wise person sees it and calls it wisdom; the masses use it every day but do not realize what it is.”²⁰ It is in this way that the *dao* becomes hidden.²¹ Now of course it is nobler to see it and say what it is, than to use it every day without realizing what it is. Nevertheless, when people do not recognize the *dao* the *dao* is preserved, whereas when it is seen and characterized it is destroyed. When the great *dao* becomes hidden, it becomes so not because of ordinary ignorance, but because of the confused views of the worthy and the wise. We may suppose that then the roles of official and teacher, of governing and instructing, were combined, all the most intelligent people in the world conformed to one standard. And so, as the *dao* was found preserved in actual things, people’s minds harbored no wayward thoughts. When official and teacher, governing and instructing, separated and intelligent and talented people no longer conformed to a [single] standard, then become the alternation of *yin* and *yang* produces partiality in one’s endowed nature, it was simply inevitable that each person took his own opinion as the inviolable truth.²² Now if the regulation of rituals and the control of music each has its own special officer in charge, even someone who had both the eyes of Lilou and the ears of Music Master Kuang could not but conform to the pattern [of ritual] and the scale [of music].²³ However, if, on the grounds that the official traditions have broken off, I say that I will make my teachings shine with the *dao* “Way” and *de* “Virtue,” then everyone will put forward his own conception of the “Way” and “Virtue.” Therefore, Kongzi

“transmitted but did not create,” and made clear the Six Classical disciplines, preserving the old traditions of the Duke of Zhou, not daring to discard actual things and affairs and speak of the *dao*. However, the [Zhou dynasty] philosophers, in their confusion, talked of *dao* readily enough. Zhuangzi compares them to the ear, eye, mouth, and nose.²⁴ Sima Tan distinguished six schools of philosophy,²⁵ while Liu Xiang classified them into nine traditions.²⁶ Each school considered that it possessed the absolute truth and envisioned reordering the world according to its own “*dao*.” However from an enlightened point of view, these various schools of thought are seen merely as descriptions based upon limited views of the Way. It was hardly the case that the *dao* had really become what they said it was.

Now the *dao* is revealed in the realm of actual things and affairs; it is not something named by human beings.²⁷ It was when there were people talking about the *dao* that the *dao* began to be labelled differently by different people. This is what is meant by, “The humane person sees it and calls it humanity; the wise person sees it and calls it wisdom.” When people follow *dao* in their actions, the *dao* could not be possessed by anyone. Only when people all preached their own conception of the *dao* and each acted according to his conception of it, did the *dao* come to be the possession of individuals. And so we speak of “the *dao* of Mozi,” or “the *dao* of Xuzi.”²⁸ The *dao* took form as soon as three people lived together and it attained perfect realization with the Duke of Zhou and Kongzi. The sages from age to age never singled it out and called it “the *dao*” just as the members of a household, when at home, do not use their surname among themselves. However, when the many schools of philosophy sprouted up and talked about “the *dao*,” [Confucian] scholars could not but pay honor to the sources of

their own tradition. And so, for example, one speaks of “the *dao* of Yao and Shun,” and another of “the *dao* of the duke of Zhou and Kongzi.” For this reason, Han Yü said that *dao* and *de* are *xuwei* 虛位 “open concepts.”²⁹ However, when *dao* and *de* become open concepts, this is their ruination.

Section Three

1. Among a gathering of people, one establishes the host in contrast to those who are guests. When doctrines arise in great numbers, one establishes one as true in contrast to those that are false. When the hundred philosophers confusedly began to talk about “the *dao*,” and thereby injured the *dao*, those within the Confucian school began to esteem the *dao* of Yao, Shun, the Duke of Zhou, and Kongzi as “our *dao*.” Originally, the *dao* did not belong to anyone, but people began to appropriate it as their own in order to distinguish it, to some extent, from those *daos* that were false. They did not realize that people regard as “our own” whatever it is they happen to have. In this way, a force of three divisions will be called “our army” in opposition to that of the enemy, but when not facing the enemy the members of each division will refer to their own unit as “ours.” Now the sages practiced the Six Classical disciplines in actual things and affairs and preserved the *dao*.¹ However, those who apply themselves to and practice the three schools of the *Book of Changes*² or the four schools of the *Book of Odes*³ cannot overcome their intense partisanship. They do not realize that as a matter of course, the ancients all practiced and mastered the Six Classical disciplines and no one was known for being a specialist in any one of them alone. Later scholars spend their entire lives and

all their energies on a limited aspect of one classic; even so, I fear that they don't get a single thing right. This is not because people today do not measure up to those of antiquity; it is [simply] because of [their different] circumstances.

In ancient times, the *dao* resided in actual things and affairs and the roles of official and teacher were united. People either studied the laws and institutions of the state or the activities of the civil authorities. People personally practiced (the *dao*). They did not have to work at seeking it out, and so it was easy for them to grasp. Later scholars have to seek out the *dao*. They have teachers [to help them] but no officials; their subject matter is second hand—not something they see for themselves. They must rely on commentaries instead of actual conversations, and so it is difficult for them to grasp the *dao*.

The Six Classical disciplines are equal in importance, one cannot hold on to just one of the classics. The guiding principles of the classics are vast and profound, one cannot be restricted to a limited aspect [of a single classic]. And yet scholars [today], in order to study just one limited aspect of a single classic, must exert twice as much effort as the ancients needed in order to have a thorough understanding of all the Six Classical disciplines. Because we are so far removed from the ancients, this should come as no surprise. However, [scholars today], having exerted every ounce of their intelligence and insight [in their effort to master just one limited aspect of a single classic] cannot help feeling that they alone have seen the greatest profundity in all the world. As a result, they proclaim themselves to be without equal on earth—such are human emotions! They do not realize that they can never glimpse the perfection of the ancients by paying attention to one limited aspect [of a single classic]. Textual commentaries, philosophical

explanations, and philological research—none of these alone can tell one about the *dao*. If one takes all three of these together and applies their combined strength to augment extensive efforts at searching out the *dao*, then perhaps one can come close. However, scholars of the classics heretofore have been unable to avoid confrontation with one another; moreover, their followers have each gone on to establish separate schools of their own. Now, we not only have external disputes, like those between Confucians and Mohists, we also have internal conflicts within the Confucian tradition itself.⁴

2. “In highest antiquity good order was maintained with the use of knotted cords [to keep accounts]. In later ages, the sages replaced these with written records. These were then used to maintain good order among the various officials and to guide inquiries among the people.”⁵ Now in regard to the use of writing, it was confined to maintaining good order and carrying out inquiries. The ancients never used writing to compose private works [of their own]. The use of writing to compose private works arose when the roles of official and teacher first became separated and the paths of governing and teaching parted. The master said, “I would prefer not to speak.”⁶ [However], one who prefers not to speak undoubtedly has something to say! Mengzi said, “Do you think that I am fond of disputation? No! I am compelled to debate!”⁷ If authors in later generations would compose their essays with the intent of faithfully recording the present in order to transmit it to those who are to come, and if they would also reflect upon the guiding principle of “preferring not to speak” and the sentiment of “being compelled [to debate]”, then they would come close! The words come forth from oneself, but the reasons one brings them forth do not come from oneself.

The *dao* is perfectly preserved within the Six Classics. While its profound meaning is hidden in what has gone before [them], textual commentaries are able to make this clear. However, the changing course of things and affairs emerge in what comes after [them], and the Six Classics cannot speak of this. Therefore, one must extract the essential guiding principle of the Six Classics and at all times use writing as a way to thoroughly investigate the great *dao*. “It is best to establish virtue; next best is to establish merit, and next is to establish words.”⁸ Establishing words and establishing merit share a common standard in that “there must first be some need and then the subsequent expression of it, some deficiency and then the subsequent remedying of it.”⁹ It is not that one merely makes some exaggerated sound and display in order to make a name for oneself. The *Book of Changes* says, “Through their spiritual sensibility the sages knew the future; through their wisdom they preserved the past.”¹⁰ To know the future corresponds to *yang*; to preserve the past corresponds to *yin*. The alternation of the *yin* and *yang* is the *dao*.¹¹ The purpose of writing essays is on the one hand to provide a record of affairs and on the other to make principles clear. The origin of affairs refers back to the past—this corresponds to *yin*. Principles make clear what is to come—this corresponds to *yang*. Ideally, in one’s record of affairs, principles are made clear and in one’s discussion of principles, affairs are given a proper model. Then one will maintain an appropriate view and one’s writing will be faithful to the *dao*. In the histories of Sima Qian¹² and Bangu¹³ and in the essays of Dong Zhongshu¹⁴ and Han Yü¹⁵ do we not find that in regard to words they display the spirit of “being compelled [to debate]?” Those who fail to understand the reason underlying the writing they do and simply indulge themselves in composition are not worthy of mention. As for those of superior

judgment who value literature as a way to make the dao clear, why must they take excessive emotional displays as [true] joy? These too are not the words of one who knows the dao. [Emperor Shun] governed through non-action¹⁶ and performed the Xunfeng Symphony.¹⁷ [King Wen] built his spirit terrace and delighted everyone with the sounds of bells and drums.¹⁸ Kongzi played the zither and hit upon the spirit of King Wen.¹⁹ Zengzi expressed his desire to take the air at the rain dance altar and return home chanting.²⁰ From these examples, we see that the rule of emperors and kings and the works of sages and worthies have never been without what delights the eye and pleases the heart. Can one say that in their use of writing, they have never allowed the expression of excessive emotion! However, to indulge oneself in writing as an end unto itself is to injure the *dao*.

3. Zigong said, “One can hear of our master’s cultural ornamentations, but one cannot hear our master talk about [human] nature and the Way of heaven.”²¹ Now [of course] everything the master talked about concerned [human nature] and the Way of heaven. And yet he never explicitly indicated what these were by saying, “This is [human] nature” or “This is the Way of heaven.” That is why Zigong did not say, “One cannot hear about [human] nature and the Way of heaven,” but instead said, “One cannot hear [our master] *yan* 言 “talk about” [human] nature and the Way of heaven.” Everything that [Kongzi] talked about concerned [human] nature and the Way of heaven, but [he] never explicitly said what [human] nature and the Way of heaven were because he feared that people would abandon actual things and affairs in their search for the *dao*. Kongzi could have talked about the rites of the Xia and the Yin dynasties but said that these were all unsubstantiated and one would not be trusted.²² And so we see that in

every case, the master [only] talked about those things which could be attested in [actual] things and affairs. He never vainly employed *kongyan* 空言 “empty talk” in order to explain the Way.

Zengzi truly exerted effort for a long time²³ and then Kongzi said to him, “One thread runs through it all.”²⁴ Zigong understood after engaging in extensive study²⁵ and then Kongzi said to him, “One thread runs through it all.”²⁶ Had they not “truly exerted effort for a long time” and “understood after engaging in extensive study,” then they would not have had any basis upon which to have “one thread run through it all.” Textual commentaries and philosophical research prepare one to seek the traces of the ancient sages, but excessive memorization and recitation of the classics is simply like piling up wares in the market place [without ever selling any of them]. When one engages in writing, it should be with a desire to make clear the minds of the ancient sages. To indulge oneself in an embellished style of writing is simply to amuse oneself with a kind of game. Heterodox doctrines and improper schools of study [each] regard their *dao* as the [true] Way and their *de* as [true] virtue, but they can never lead one to a correct understanding of the Way.²⁷ Learning based upon memorization and recitation of the classics and an elegant style of writing cannot but take the *dao* as their guiding principle, and yet when taken to the deluded extremes of excessive recitation and self indulgent amusement, they forget their very source.

Scholars of the Song rose up and attacked these tendencies saying that such efforts represented an obsession with actual things and affairs in the absence of an understanding of the *dao*.²⁸ Now as for those who become obsessed with actual things and affairs without having an understanding of the *dao*, it is proper to illustrate the *dao* to

them in actual things and affairs. Where the Song scholars went wrong was in trying to get people to abandon actual things and affairs and [just] talk about the *dao*. Kongzi taught people to “make an extensive study of literature,”²⁹ but scholars of the Song said, “Finding one’s amusement with things slackens one’s commitment.”³⁰ Zengzi taught people, “In one’s words stay far from what is improper,”³¹ but the scholars of the Song said, “To work at literature injures the *dao*.”³² As for what the Song scholars said, it is an excellent prescription for a desperate situation. However a prescription should only attach the disease that is infecting one’s vital organs. The ideas of the Song scholars seem to see the organs themselves as a disease and want to get rid of them entirely! In their search for “[human] nature” and “heaven” they de-emphasized recitation of the classics and suppressed writing. What is there to choose between two such extreme views?

Nevertheless, their great finesse in the analysis of principle and the sincerity of their practice far exceeded anything found in the scholars of the Han and Tang dynasties. Mengzi said, “Good order and right please my heart and mind just as the meat of grass and grain fed animals pleases my palate.”³³ Moral principles cannot be captured in “empty words,” they need extensive study to give them reality and literary embellishment to give them expression. When these three are combined together, then one is almost there!

Though the *dao* of the Duke of Zhou and Kongzi is far away, it is not conveyed merely by labored interpretations [of the classics]. In the present age, teachers of the classics hold deep animosity for one another, literary men have little regard for one another, and the various philosophers of “[human] nature” and “heaven” are divided into the competing schools of Zhu Xi and Lu Jiuyuan.³⁴ The followers of Zhu Xi and Lu

Jiuyuan attack one another while those who talk about “learning” and “literature” ape whatever fashion is in vogue without ever realizing their error. The [present] situation is just as Zhuangzi once said, “The hundred schools each goes off in its own direction without ever turning back. They can never be reconciled and brought together!”³⁵ Is it not sad!

NOTES

Section One

The title of this essay, *yuandao* 源道, means both to trace the *dao* or “Way” back to its source, historically, and to analyze the concept in an effort to describe what it essentially is. For Zhang, these projects were inextricably intertwined. Essays with the same title are to be found in the *Huainanzi* and in Liu Xie’s *Wenxin Diaolong*. For a selective translation of the former, see Evan Morgan, tr., *Tao the Great Illuminant: Essays from the Huai Nan Tzu* (London: K. Paul, Trench, Truber and Company, 1935); for the latter, see Vincent Yü-cheng Shih, tr., *The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959). Zhang’s essay, however, is most closely related to the famous essay by the same title written by the Tang author Han Yü 韓愈. For a translation, see Wm. Theodore de Bary, ed., *Sources of Chinese Tradition* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960): 431-4. [Philosophy 210 Note: We read this essay by Han Yu earlier in the course.]

1. Quoted from Dong Zhongshu (179-104 B.C.E.). See his biography in *Hanshu*, *juan 56* (KM 497.3).

2. *Mengzi* 5A5.

3. When we compare the *JYT* edition of 1822 and the *DL* edition of 1833, we find significant differences here and in three places in the concluding paragraphs of the first part of Zhang’s essay. In each of these cases, I have included translations of both versions of the text. The *DL* edition version appears in the main body of the translation. Sections that differ from the *JYT* text are highlighted by italics and appear within parentheses. In each of the places where the texts differ, the later variation from the *JYT* edition follows immediately, inside of pointy brackets.

4. The probably legendary ancient system of land allocation that divided a plot of land into nine squares of equal area. Each of eight families were to tend one of the squares on the perimeter as its own and all were to tend the central square together for the state. The

name of the system derives from the fact that the scheme of division is represented by the Chinese character for a well: *jing* 井 .

5. The Chinese word *tian* 天 means both Heaven and Nature. The second meaning evolves from the first via the idea, seen in texts like the *Mengzi* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*, that Heaven determines or endows the nature of each and every thing and also determines, in a broad sense, what happens in the natural course of events.

6. The *Great Appendix* to the *Book of Changes*, 1.5.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Zhang here paraphrases Wang Bi commentary to the opening lines of the first chapter of the *Daodejing*. For a translation and study of the *Daodejing* with Wang Bi commentary, see Richard John Lynn, tr., *The Classic of the Way and Virtue* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

9. For a discussion of the notions of *soyiran* and *dangran*, see A. C. Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers: The Metaphysics of the Brothers Cheng*, Reprint. (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1992).

10. David S. Nivison has pointed out that Zhang uses this expression to describe both "...the process of the evolution of civilization through the agency of the sage, and the process of literary creation or the production of original scholarship..." See his "Philosophy of Chang Hsüeh-ch'eng," *Kansai Asiatic Society, Occasional Papers*, 3 (Kyoto: August, 1955): 30. [This paper has been reprinted in Nivison, *The Ways of Confucianism* (Chicago: Open Court Press, 1993), p. 257.]

11. Four mythical cultural heroes of early China. Xuanyuan is better known as Huangdi. Zhuanxu is his grandson. Fuxi, Shennong, and Huangdi collectively are commonly referred to as the *San Huang* "Three Sovereigns."

12. Yao and Shun are the last two figures in a group of five exemplary emperors. The membership of this group is variously defined, but all versions include Yao and Shun.

13. The Xia was purportedly founded by Shun's successor, Emperor Yü, and would be China's first dynasty. It was followed by the Shang (also known as the Yin), which was founded by *Cheng Tang* "Tang the Successful." *Cheng Tang* is the first of three hereditary rulers collectively known as the *San Wang* "Three Kings." The other two members of this group included his son King Wen and his grandson, King Wu. The "time of the Eastern Zhou" refers to the establishment of the new capital at Loyang in 771 B.C.E.

14. See notes 11-13 above.

15. Paraphrasing the *Daodejing*, chapter 57. See also chapter 37.

16. The *Great Appendix*, 1.11.
17. This looks like a reference to some traditional source but I have not been able to locate it.
18. Footnote about the reference to “forming one body.”
19. Paraphrasing the *Great Appendix*, 2.2. This section of the *Great Appendix*, known as “The History of Civilization,” was a very important text for Zhang. Literally, the line reads, “*Li* 理 ‘principles’, which had evolved through a process of wearing out, transforming, adapting, and enduring, were perfectly complete. For this idea, Zhang’s early *Yuandao*, in the *Jiaochen tongyi*, simply has “principles were great.”
20. This antithesis between *dao* “Way” and *fa* 法 “models,” is prominent in Zhang’s essay, “On the Meaning of the Word ‘Historian’.” It is another expression of the related notions *soyiran* and *dangran* (see note 9 above).
21. The expression occurs in *Mengzi* 5B1.
22. See the *Zhouli* “Rites of the Zhou” 2.9a/3.4b (*SBBY*).
23. *Mengzi* 5B1.
24. *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 28. Cf. *Analects* 8.14 and 14.27. Cheng Yi invokes Kongzi’s “not gaining an official position” as the explanation for why he “transmitted but did not create.” (For the latter notion, see *Analects* 7.1.) Zhang adopts this explanation in section three of *Yuandao*. See also section 2, note 7.
25. Three early sages to whom Kongzi is compared and found superior in *Mengzi* 5B1.
26. One of Mengzi’s disciples and his interlocutor. See *Mengzi*, 5B1.
27. That is to say, we should not take the words so literally that we fail to appreciate their intent. This phrase is actually a loose quotation of *Mengzi* 5A4.
28. *Analects* 9.2.
29. A close paraphrase of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 26.
30. *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 30.
31. Ibid.
32. *Analects* 9.5.

33. *Analects* 7.5.

34. *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 28.

35. *Analects* 3.14.

36. *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 20.

37. *Analects* 19.22.

38. *Analects* 7.1.

39. *Analects* 7.19.

40. *Mengzi* 1A3.

41. Bo Yi 伯夷 was the elder brother of Shu Qi 叔齊 (see following note). The brothers were royal princes in a small state loyal to the Shang Dynasty. Shu Qi was designated as heir by his father, but, upon the latter's death, he deferred to his elder brother. However Bo Yi refused to contravene his father's wishes, and with both brothers mutually deferring to one another they decided to withdraw from the state and live in isolation at the foot of Mount Shou Yang. When King Wu subsequently defeated the Shang and established the Zhou Dynasty, the brothers refused to serve the Zhou, regarding it as an illegitimate regime established by brute force. As a consequence, they starved to death. They are regarded as paragons of propriety and right. Yi Yin 伊尹 was an able minister who served King Tang. According to some accounts, Yi Yin was working as a farmer when his talents were recognized, and he was promoted by the king. Others say that he attracted the king's attention through his cooking. Liuxia Hui 柳下惠 was a virtuous official of the *Spring and Autumn Period* (722-481 B.C.E.) who was particularly renowned for his ability to maintain his moral purity in the service of unscrupulous rulers. For references to him, see *Analects*, 15.14, 18.2, and 18.8 and *Mengzi*, 2A9, 5B1, 6B6, 7A28, and 7B15.

42. The younger brother of Boyi. See prior note.

43. *Mengzi* 5B1.

44. See section 2 for fuller development of this idea.

45. *Mengzi* does not say this in so many words, but does speak of "the *dao* of the Duke of Zhou and Kongzi," treating it as one tradition. For example, see his remarks concerning Chen Liang in *Mengzi* 3A4.

46. For these remarks, see *Mengzi* 2A2.

47. Actually a remark made by Cheng Yi which Zhu Xi quotes as part of his commentary on *Mengzi* 2A2. See *Mengzi zhangzhu*, 2.8b in *Sishu jizhu* (SBBY).

48. Here Zhang adds the following remarks, “Cheng Yi, in discussing Yü, Houji, and Yan Hui, said that Yü and Houji were crude in comparison to Yan Hui, and Zhu Xi (1130-1200) closely compared the good and bad points of the Cheng brothers with those of Mengzi and Yan Hui. It seems that ‘[Even] a worthy cannot eschew, [Presenting] a partisan point of view.’ This is a common failing of past and present times alike.” The rhymed couplet is apparently Zhang’s own creation. Cf. section 2, note 13. My translation is a close adaptation of a translation suggested to me by David S. Nivison. Cheng Yi (1033-1107) is the well known Neo-Confucian philosopher. For a study of his thought and that of his elder brother Chang Hao, see A. C. Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers*. Yü of course is the ancient emperor. Hou Ji was a minister of the exemplary ruler Emperor Yao. Yan Hui was Kongzi’s most talented and favorite disciple. Zhu Xi was the most influential Confucian thinker of the Song dynasty.

49. *Zhuangzi* chapter 1. Cf. Burton Watson, tr., *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968): 34.

50. See note 44 above.

Section Two

1. From Han Yü’s essay “On the Dao” in *Changlixianshengji* 11.4b (SBBY).

2. *Analects*, 7.1.

3. *Analects*, 7.27.

4. *Analects*, 7.17.

5. This looks like a quote but I have not been able to identify it yet: *ming xian wang zhi dao yi dao zhi*.

6. The word *zuo* 作 means both “to create” or “make” and “to write” or “compose.” Here it means both to devise social and political institutions and to set down one’s ideas about them in writing. Questions such as what constitutes a case of *zuo*, its value, and who could engage in such acts, were parts of a complex and fascinating debate that can be found throughout the Chinese tradition. For an interesting discussion of this set of issues among early Chinese thinkers, see Michael Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001).

7. *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 28. The thought is that if you put forward a new idea but do not put it into practice, in order to afford the people opportunities to observe it in action, they will not have confidence in you or take your proposal seriously. The

Doctrine of the Mean insists that to make innovations in tradition, one must be a ruler, someone with the proper position and authority to implement such proposals, and one must have “virtue,” the wisdom and charisma needed to realize one’s aim. If one lacks either qualification, one must do no more than carry on established traditions. From these ideas, Zhang draws the inference, basic to much of his philosophy, that a writer may not even propose new ways of doing things unless he has the right sort of “position.” To do so would be to use *kongyan* “empty words,” unfounded, speculative claims, to put forth one’s ideas, without any concrete and visible facts to illustrate them. See also note 24 of section one above.

8. Especially the chapter describing the history of civilization. See note 19 of section one above.

9. The reference to the Minister of Education is from the “Canon of Shun” section of the *Book of History*. For the text and a translation, see James Legge, tr. *The Chinese Classics, Vol. 3, The Shoo King*, Reprint (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970): 44. For the Master of Music, see *ibid.*, pages 47-8.

10. This claim is supported by a passage from the *Wangzhi* 王制 “Regulations of a King” chapter of the *Liji* 禮記 “Book of Rites.” For a translation, see James Legge, *The Li Ki: Book of Rites*, Volume 1, Reprint (New Hyde Park, NY: University Books, 1967): 230-4.

11. Zhou Guan.

12. The Great Learning, 4.5. For the text and a complete translation, see James Legge, tr., *Confucian Analects, The Great Learning, The Doctrine of the Mean, The Chinese Classics*, Volume 1, Reprint (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970).

13. Fu Xi’s invention of the eight trigrams as well as a general description of his early, proto-civilized age, can be found in the *Great Appendix* to the *Book of Changes*. For the text and a complete translation, see Z. D. Sung, tr., *The Text of the Yi King*, Reprint (Taipei: *Wenhua Tushu gongsi*, 1971): 309-13.

14. From “The Counsels of the Great Yü” section of the *Book of History*. See Legge, *op. cit.* Page 66. Compare *Mengzi*, 5A1.

15. Such as was the case in Kongzi’s age. See *Analects*, 5.7, 14.36 and 18.7.

16. The *Great Appendix* to the *Book of Changes*, 1.12.

17. The “facts” Zhang appeals to here and in the following remarks are set down in various passages in the *Zhouli* 周禮 “Rites of the Zhou” and in the essay or bibliography (originally by the Han court librarian Liu Xin) in the *History of the Former Han Dynasty*. See *Hanshu* 漢書 *juan* 30, (KM 432.3). Zhang’s point is that the basic classical texts were all official documents and are to be read as materials *showing* what

the *dao* of antiquity is rather than as books containing statements about the *dao*. This is what Zhang means by referring to them as “actual things and affairs.”

18. A quote attributed to Kongzi but not part of the present text of the *Analects*. See the *Shiji*, 史記 “Records of the Historian,” *juan* 130, (KM 279.3).

19. *Shiji*, *juan* 6, (KM 25.2).

20. The *Great Appendix* to the *Book of Changes*, 1.5. This phrase also occurs in section three of the *Yuandao* and the idea may be found in a number of Zhang’s essays. His central claim is that in ancient society, the *dao* was embodied in actual things, publicly performed actions, shared customs etc. It was evident and open to anyone’s observation and not a result of secluded or private speculation. Under these conditions, it was a simple matter for all to have the same understanding of the *dao* and so there were no “contending schools of thought.”

21. Compare the related but distinct idea found in chapter two of the *Zhuangzi*, “By what is the Way hidden that we have right and wrong?”

22. By “*yin* and *yang*” Zhang means both changing historical conditions and trends (see section one, above) and the contrary directions that individual tasters of interests may take (see section three, below).

23. Lilou is the paragon of sharp-sightedness and music master Zhuang the paragon of keen hearing.

24. The reference is to the discussion of different schools of philosophy in the final chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. *Zhuangzi* compares the various schools to the different organs of sense, each capable of perceiving only one aspect of reality and incapable of appreciating the others. For a translation, see Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968): 364.

25. *Shiji*, *juan* 130, (KM 278.4).

26. Liu Xiang was the father of Liu Xin. Father and son were jointly responsible for organizing the Han imperial library and writing the first Chinese bibliographical work. For the reference, see note 17 above.

27. The idea is first, that no fixed concept is adequate for the *dao* and second, that the truth is not the property of any one tradition. It is therefore not only wrong but also senseless to speak of “the *dao* of Kongzi” or “the *dao* of Mozi.” The Chinese word used here is *ming* 名 which means both “name” and “concept.” Compare chapter one of the *Daodejing*.

28. Xuizi 許子 also known as Xu Xing 行 . He is known for the view that a ruler exploits his subjects unless he works alongside them to provide for his own subsistence. His position is discussed and criticized by Mengzi. See *Mengzi*, 3A4.

29. The opening lines of Han Yü's essay "On the Dao." "Open concepts" (literally: "empty positions") are terms whose meaning-content is not a fixed or essential part of the terms themselves. In the case of such concepts, the meaning is filled-in differently by each thinker or school.

Section Three

1. Zhang's use of the term *liuyi* 六藝 "Six Classical disciplines" is unusual. It normally refers to the six arts of ceremony, music, archery, charioterring, literature, and mathematics. However, for Zhang, the Six Classical disciplines are pedagogical areas of learning associated with the six ancient classics: the *Book of History*, *Book of Odes*, *Book of Music*, *Book of Rites*, *Book of Changes*, and the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Following Liu Xin, Zhang believed that these different areas of learning were originally associated with distinct bureaucratic offices (see note 17 of section two above).

2. Three Han dynasty followers of Tian Wangsun's 田王孫 lineage of the *Book of Changes*. Each went on to found his own "school" of interpretation. The three are Shi Chou 施讎 , Meng Xi 孟喜 and Liangqiu He 梁丘賀 .

3. Four Han dynasty lineages of the *Book of Odes*. Shen Pei 申培 advocated the so-called Lushi 魯詩 text, which like the next version takes its name from the native state of its main proponent. Yuan Gu 轅固 followed a text known as the Qishi 齊詩 . Han Ying 韓嬰 propagated the Hanshi 韓詩 , which like the final version, takes its name from the surname of its main advocate. The Maoshi 毛詩 text came from Mao Heng 毛亨 (a student of Xunzi) and his son Mao Chang 毛長 . One of the main works associated with the Hanshi lineage survives, the *Haishi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 "Exoteric Commentary on the *Hanshi*." The *Maoshi* version of the text as well as two works of exegesis associated with this version of the Odes, the *Maoshi zhuan* 毛詩傳 "Commentary on the *Maoshi*" and the *Maoshi xu* 毛詩序 "Preface to the *Maoshi*," are still extant. The *Mao* version of the text serves as the standard today.

4. An interesting idea though not entirely true. The conflict between early Confucians and Mohists is the first known dispute concerning what the *dao* is, but there have always been "internal conflicts" among Confucians as well. One of the earliest known examples of the latter is the disagreement between Mengzi and Xunzi, but texts such as the *Mozi*, *Zhuangzi* and *Han Feizi* note different factions within the broad category of *ru* 儒 "Confucian" scholars.

5. The *Great Appendix* to the *Book of Changes*, 2.2.

6. *Analects*, 17.17.

7. *Mengzi*, 3B9.
8. *Zuozhuan*, 左傳, Duke Xiang, 24th year. For the text and a translation, see James Legge, tr., *The Ch'un Ts'ew with the Tso Chuen*, Vol. 5, *The Chinese Classics*, Reprint (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1970): 505-6.
9. See note 10 in section one.
10. The *Great Appendix* to the *Book of Changes*, 1.11.
11. The *Great Appendix* to the *Book of Changes*, 1.5.
12. Sima Qian 司馬遷 (circa 154-90 B.C.E.) wrote the *Shiji* 史記 “Records of the Historian,” the first official history of China. For a selective translation and study, see Burton Watson, tr., *Ssu ma Ch'ien: Grand Historian of China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963).
13. Bangu 班固 (32-92 C.E.) wrote the *Hanshu* 漢書 “History of the [Former] Han Dynasty.” For a selective translation and study, see Homer H. Dubbs, tr., *History of the Former Han Dynasty* (Baltimore, MD: Waverly Press, 1938-55).
14. Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 B.C.E.) was arguably the most important Confucian thinker of the Han dynasty. His influence was critical in convincing 漢武帝 Han Wudi to be the first emperor to recognize Confucianism as the state orthodox ideology. The importance of this has been exaggerated.
15. Quoting Han Yü. See the prefatory remarks to the notes on section 1 above.
16. *Analects*, 15.5.
17. Kongzi Jiayü 孔子家語 “Sayings of the Kong Family,” 8.3a (*SBBY*).
18. *Shijing*, *Mao* # 242. For text and translation, see James Legge, *She King*, pp. 456-7.
19. *Shiji*, *juan* 47, (*KM*: 162.1-2).
20. *Analects*, 11.25.
21. *Analects*, 5.13.
22. *Doctrine of the Mean*, chapter 28. Compare *Analects*, 3.9.
23. Zhang here draws upon Zhu Xi's commentary on *Analects*, 4.15. See *Sishu jizhu*, 四書集注 2.10b (*SBBY*). He even quotes Zhu Xi in his description of Zengzi as one who “truly exerted effort for a long time.” Zhu in turn was quoting from the first

chapter of the *Xunzi*. See *A Concordance to the Hsün Tzu*, HYIS, Supplement no. 22, 2/1/26-7.

24. *Analects*, 4.15.

25. Zhang here follows Zhu Xi's commentary on *Analects*, 15.3. See *Sishu jizhu*, 8.1a, b (SBBY). Zhang seems to accept Zhu Xi's opinion that this instance of the "one thread" formula concerns *knowledge* while the earlier occurrence in 4.15 concerns *action*.

26. *Analects*, 15.3.

27. Zhang is again referring to the opening lines of Han Yü's *On the Dao*, where *dao* and *de* are described as "open concepts." See note 8 of section 2 above.

28. Zhang's point is that Song scholars objected to what we might call the overly empirical tendencies of the preceding Tang dynasty. This account of the different scholarly character of these dynasties also illustrates Zhang's grand speculative theory of history. The Tang was an age in which literary tendencies waxed excessive. Such an age is followed by one in which philosophy gains a dominant position, which in turn is replaced by an age of philological speculation.

29. See for example, *Analects*, 6.27, 12.15, etc.

30. A remark attributed to Cheng Hao, 程顥 (1032-85). See *HNCSYS*, 3.1b (SBBY). Cheng Hao in turn was quoting the *Book of History*. See James Legge, tr., *Shoo King*, page 348. Cheng Hao's younger brother, Cheng Yi, also made use of this line to make a similar point. See note 32 below.

31. *Analects*, 8.4.

32. A close paraphrase of Cheng Yi, 程頤 (1032-85). See *HNCSYS*, 18.42b (SBBY).

33. *Mengzi*, 6A6.

34. Zhu Xi's 朱熹 (1130-1200) teachings, together with those of Cheng Yi (see note 30 above), became known as the "Cheng-Zhu School" and represented the orthodox wing of Neo Confucianism. Lu Jiuyuan 陸九淵 (1139-93) was a contemporary opponent of Zhu Xi who advocated a less intellectual and more intuitive approach to moral self-cultivation. His views were later associated with those of the Ming dynasty thinker Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472-1529) and together become known as the "Lu-Wang School."

35. From chapter 33 of the *Zhuangzi*. See *A Concordance to the Chuang Tzu*, HYIS, Supplement no. 20, 91/33/15. For a complete translation, see Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, page 364.