

MANIFEST THE HIDDEN:  
*WEN* 文 AND *ZHI* 質 AS A CONCEPTUAL PAIR  
IN EARLY CHINESE THOUGHT

A Thesis

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis aims to explore the often-neglected conceptual pair of *wen* 文 and *zhi* 質 and their interconnectedness in early Chinese thought. Through a comprehensive survey of texts spanning from approximately the fifth or fourth century B.C.E. to the first century C.E., the study aims to shed light on the multifaceted meanings and implications encapsulated within the *wen-zhi* pair. A particular emphasis will be placed on analyzing the vocabulary utilized within this discourse. Employing a meticulous analysis that includes textual comparison and exploration of intertextuality, the research seeks to unravel how ancient thinkers engaged in a rich discourse, probing the moral and political dimensions of ritual practices within the framework of *wen* and *zhi* as an interconnected conceptual pair. This discourse encompasses a diverse spectrum of themes, ranging from the cultivation of individual character to intricate debates concerning differentiated and undifferentiated social orders, as well as the symbolic representation of dynastic authority.

**Keywords:** Intellectual History, Early China, Early Ruism/Classicism/Confucianism, Daoism, Chinese Religions, Chinese Philosophy, Chinese Political Thought, Naturalism, Intertextuality, Virtue Ethics, Ritual Theory.

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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## Introduction

Early China scholars have long debated whether early Confucianism should be approached as orthodoxy or orthopraxy.<sup>1</sup> Central to this discussion is the nature of the relationship between Confucian ethical ideals, such as benevolence (*ren* 仁) and righteousness (*yi* 義), and the traditional norms governing human conduct (*li* 禮). Herbert Fingarette argues that the meaning of actions rests solely in the acts themselves, with no direct connection to an individual's inner or psychological nature.<sup>2</sup> In contrast, Benjamin Schwartz posits that Confucius was more concerned with inner qualities and mental dispositions, placing particular emphasis on cultivating virtues.<sup>3</sup> Recent works however, by Robert Chard, Michael Ing, Roel Sterckx, and Thomas Wilson indicate a paradigm shift in Western scholarship.<sup>4</sup> Instead of relying solely on theoretical constructs like virtue ethics, they focus on studying the living practice of *li*, exploring its significance in Confucian thought.

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<sup>1</sup> Recent scholars have been contending the ambiguous nature of the term "Confucianism." For instance, Lionel Jensen calls into question of the term Confucianism that's familiar to us was the Jesuit's account to construct a universal category complementary to Christianity. Lionel M. Jensen, *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 5. Michael Nylan also discussed the problematic nature of the term "Confucianism." See Michael Nylan, *Five "Confucian" Classics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 3-5. Thus, the term Ruism has gained more currency for recent scholars. Mark Csikszentmihalyi argues that the use of "Ru" instead of "Confucian" is a positive step in terms of historical veracity, "when we talk about Ru instead of Confucians, we are being more accurate, but less precise." Therefore, for this paper, I will speak about Confucian ethical ideals or moral attributes when talking about specifics from the *Analects* assuming the possibility they are utterance of historical Kongzi and evoke Ruism when talking about a broader cultural phenomenon. Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China* (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2004), 18.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 3 of Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius--the secular as sacred* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972)

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 72-85.

<sup>4</sup> See Robert L. Chard, *Creating Confucian Authority: The Field of Ritual Learning in Early China to 9 CE*. Leiden: Brill, 2021; Michael Ing, *The Dysfunction of Ritual in Early Confucianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012); Roel Sterckx, *Food, Sacrifice, and Sagehood in Early China* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Thomas Wilson, "Spirits and Soul in Confucian Ritual Discourse," *Journal of Chinese Religions* 42 (2014) 2.

This thesis will therefore tackle the longstanding question in the field: Does ritual practice stand disconnected from morality? My answer to this question is: no, but specifically, I argue that it is possible to find, in the paired concept of *wen-zhi* 文-質, the articulation of an organic link between inner and outer, that is, inner moral quality and external performative excellence. By closely studying these passages and related concepts, I aim to present a fresh perspective on the scholarly debate surrounding the early Confucianists' focal point through an analysis of the *wen-zhi* pair as found in selected texts ranging approximately from the fifth or fourth century B.C.E. to the first century C.E.

Through this exploration, I aim to demonstrate that a sophisticated and extensive discussion on the nature of ritual existed during these centuries, addressing its cosmological and moral foundations, as well as its significance and role in maintaining societal stability. This intellectual and moral inquiry ultimately culminated in a form of resolution, as evidenced in the chapters “Cultivating Civil Virtue” (*Xiuwen* 修文) and “Returning to the Essence” (*Fanzhi* 反質) found in the first-century BCE *Garden of Eloquence* (*Shuoyuan* 說苑). These chapters therefore provide tangible manifestations of the achieved moral and intellectual synthesis regarding the concept of *li* 禮.

In the first chapter, I will introduce *wen-zhi* pair as portrayed in the *Analects*, specifically through examining passages 6/18, 15/18, 12/20, and 12/8. From this, I propose that *zhi* represents the underlying essence, the substance that exists beneath the surface of things. It conveys a notion of hidden or implicit inner substance that substantiates the observable attributes apparent to others. *Zhi* is consistently associated with ethical qualities such as *yi* 義.

On the other hand, *wen* denotes a form of outward display and signifies the external appearance or signs that facilitate the comprehension and interpretation of those things. It is linked to the outward performance of *li*. Although *wen* and *zhi* pertain to different realms—the inner and the outer—I argue that the *Analects* expresses a position wherein *wen* and *zhi* eventually coalesce to form a unified entity. One's *wen* is conditioned by one's *zhi*, which defines the essence of a thing, while one's *zhi* depends on one's *wen* to manifest itself in the observable realm.

This perspective suggests that the substance and the surface attributes are essentially the same entity, differing only in their modes of representation. Consequently, the relationship between *wen* and *zhi* indicates that for Confucius, neither ritual nor morality is a causal or derivative element—they fundamentally constitute a single act or entity. Thus, the debate regarding whether the discourse of the early Confucians centers around *li* or the cultivation of ethical attributes that are not necessarily tied to *li* is misguided. That is precisely because without *li*, one's ethical attributes cannot be manifested, and without ethical attributes, one's *li* would merely lack substance and fail to achieve its purpose.

In the *Analects*, the *wen-zhi* pair primarily pertains to the attributes or character qualities of individuals, specifically those associated with the ideal of the *junzi* 君子. However, during the Han dynasty, I will illustrate that the conceptual pair of *wen-zhi* found widespread usage within the intellectual milieu, particularly in the discourse surrounding the advocacy of a civil order (*wen* 文); i.e., a differentiated and hierarchical social order represented by *li*. To initiate

this exploration, I will examine the criticisms presented in the texts of *Huainanzi* 淮南子 and chapter of “Shan Xing” 繕性 of the text of *Zhuangzi* 莊子 in the second chapter

In the outer chapter “Mending Nature” (Shan Xing 繕性) of the text of *Zhuangzi*, it is asserted that “the forms extinguished the (primal) simplicity” 文滅質.<sup>5</sup> The text of *Huainanzi* further elaborates on this criticism, highlighting how the pursuit of *wen* has disrupted the natural balance, resulting in inherent transgression and destruction of *zhi*, which represents simplicity and the inherent nature. The authors of the chapter “Mending Nature” and *Huainanzi* critique the excessive ornamented and opaque ritual practices that cause individuals to lose touch with their inner nature and spontaneous authenticity. These texts demonstrate that the conceptual pair of *wen-zhi* held significant importance during the Han dynasty. They reveal an ongoing discourse wherein thinkers expressed their perspectives and judgments within the aforementioned debate. The *wen-zhi* pair serves as a crucial framework through which these thinkers engaged with the issues surrounding the civil order and social harmony.

Then I will introduce a separate discourse in the third chapter, where *wen-zhi* pair has become a prescriptive term to denote an institution as a complex of state rituals and that the early Confucians had begun to characterize socio-political institutions of past dynasties according to different rituals as described as *wen* and *zhi*. To elaborate further, I would devote a chapter to discuss how the *wen-zhi* pair serves as a political signifier. In particular, I would introduce the chapter of “The Three Dynasties’ Alternating Regulations of Simplicity

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<sup>5</sup> Guo qingfan 郭慶藩, annotated by Wang Xiaoyu 王孝魚, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (*Zhuangzi* with Collected Commentaries) (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2012), 551-554.

and Refinement” 三代改制文質 in the *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 where it describes how dynastic founder should alternate the regulation upon receiving the Mandate of Heaven.<sup>6</sup> It discusses in greater length how the regulations must alter as the calendar, the color of the court dress, the music to be composed or performed at court, the ceremonies to be watched, and etc..

I argue that *Chunqiu fanlu* not only adopts the *wen-zhi* framework established in the *Analects* but also emphasizes the Confucian perspective that the practice of *li* requires the integration of both the moral quality of actions and the proper execution of ritual procedures. Meanwhile, the discourse surrounding *wen-zhi* during the period were produced and contributed to the expansion and elaboration of the *wen-zhi* concept. The intellectual development as seen in *Chunqiu fanlu* was also influenced by Naturalism and the Han syncretism, which ultimately manifests as *wen-zhi* pair being used to construct a coherent ideological framework in *Chunqiu fanlu*. The conceptual pair of *wen-zhi* is thus assimilated into a larger cosmological framework that includes a theory elucidating the interactions between Heaven, Earth, and humanity. Consequently, *Chunqiu fanlu* exemplifies the complex interplay of historical, philosophical, cosmological, and political considerations that have converged to imbue the *wen-zhi* paradigm with profound significance.

In the last chapter, the focus will be on the text of *Shuoyuan*, specifically delving into an internal conflict found within the chapters titled “The Cultivation of Civil Order” 修文 and “Returning to the Essence” 反質. By closely examining the texts in these chapters, it

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<sup>6</sup> Su Yu 蘇與, annotated by Zhong Zhe 鍾哲, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2019).

becomes evident that there is a deliberate attempt to reconcile the tension between advocating the indispensable roles of ritual and music in maintaining social order, while also responding to critics who may perceive the differentiation in social order and emphasis on refinement as promoting excess and extravagance. Simultaneously, the importance of unadorned substance over mere refinement is emphasized.

The examination of the discourse surrounding *wen-zhi* reveals that the theoretical understanding of these concepts developed over several centuries. However, it was during the third and second centuries BCE that scholars made a deliberate effort to articulate and unify these ideas within a broader cosmological and ideological framework. By incorporating diverse viewpoints, these chapters aimed to present a comprehensive understanding of *wen* and *zhi*, emphasizing their interdependence and harmony. The concept of “Returning to the Essence” while “Cultivating Civil Virtue” in the *Shuoyuan* aligns with the notion of *wenzhi binbin* in the *Analects*, which emphasizes the need for a balanced relationship between *wen* and *zhi*. This conscious effort to synthesize different perspectives underscores the significance attached to the unity of *wen* and *zhi* within the intellectual context of that time.

In essence, I argue that despite the apparent duality of the *wen-zhi* pair, it ultimately represents a unified concept. While it initially defines the qualities of a *junzi* and serves as a signifier for political institutions and state rituals, it encompasses a broader scope that includes the *junzi*'s appearance, words, and forms of representation. This includes choices in clothing, accessories, gestures, and language, all of which form a performance embedded with the readable element of *wen* that inadvertently reveals inner intentions. In other words, it

goes back to the original question that has been posited: Does ritual practice stand disconnected from morality? After an extensive survey of various texts, the answer remains a resounding no. The idea of *wen-zhi* reveals the inseparability of inner virtues and outward expressions, implying that one's moral character is intricately intertwined with how they manifest their actions. This concept lies at the heart of Confucian thought and emphasizes that the ideal way individuals conduct themselves is a reflection of their inner virtues, creating a harmonious unity between ethics and ritual practice.

As we explore further, it becomes evident that this perspective holds a foundational place in Confucian thought. Interestingly, all subsequent uses of the paired concept of *wen-zhi* have had to grapple with either disregarding its profound implications or attempting to argue against its significance. The *Huainanzi*, for instance, may have questioned this linkage, driven by differing philosophical perspectives or motives. However, it does not stray far from the notion that ritual must ultimately reveal one's true intentions; thus, the underlying idea of the intimate connection between inner intentions and outward expressions remains present in their considerations. On the other hand, many have acknowledged and embraced this notion, refining and expanding upon it in their own interpretations of Confucian teachings. The enduring promise of "*wenzhi binbin*" remains unyielding over time. It stands as a testament to the enduring relevance of this principle, which continues to be the cornerstone of Confucian moral cultivation throughout the centuries.

While the fundamental essence of the *wen-zhi* construct remains intact, its connotation and implication have varied over time. However, just like other concepts that are still

available for us today, it is precisely the inclusive and ever-changing nature of the *wen-zhi* pair that allows for distinct articulations and applications throughout the centuries. My objective therefore is also to explore the relevance of this concept to modern scholarship and propose that the intricate interplay between inner and outer aspects of human conduct has profound and far-reaching implications. In my research, I have demonstrated that the early Confucianists' dedication to morality for the *junzi*, the exemplary individual, is evident in the inseparable connection between one's inner qualities and their bodily deportment. This raises an intriguing question: Is the modern divide between the performative act and the qualities, capacities, and intentions behind the act a recent assumption or problem, or was it indeed a central concern for the early Confucianists themselves? Further, if the emphasis is put on the discernment of *junzi* and one's physical or organic body is treated as a measure of worth, I wonder whether the scholarly divide noted above might be at least partly generated from our essentialization of what constitutes a being vis-à-vis a moral agent in early Confucianism. These questions would be a topic of my exploration in future endeavors.

Finally, I want to emphasize that the translation of the terms *wen* and *zhi* may vary depending on the context. My primary objective is to conduct a comprehensive survey of the meanings and multifaceted implications that the conceptual pair offers, instead of seeking a singular definition for the *wen-zhi* pair. The intention is to explore the rich diversity and nuances of this concept, appreciating the depth and breadth of its significance across different contexts and interpretations.

## Chapter 1

In the *Analects*, it is posited in passage 6/18: “When there is a preponderance of substance over ornamentation, the result will be churlishness. When there is a preponderance of ornamentation over substance, the result will be pedantry. Only a well-balanced admixture of these two can one become a gentleman 質勝文則野，文勝質則史，文質彬彬，然後君子。”<sup>7</sup> The passage introduces a pair of terms that would come to be interpreted in a number of important ways over the ensuing centuries; namely, *wen* 文 and *zhi* 質.<sup>8</sup> However, as indicated in the passage, the *Analects* holds out the possibility of the seemingly dichotomous opposition ornamentation and substance achieving harmony (*wenzhi binbin* 文質彬彬) in the behavior of the virtuous man.<sup>9</sup> The Qing commentators Liu Baonan 劉寶楠(1791-1855) and Liu Gongmian 劉恭冕(1821-80) argued that *junzi* connotes to people who could *jun* 君, and

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<sup>7</sup>For translation of this passage, the following editions were consulted: Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 61; D.C. Lau, *The Analects* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1979), 83; Edward Slingerland, *Confucius Analects: with Selections from Traditional Commentaries* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003), 160; David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius* (Albany, State University of New York Press, 1987), 145; Bruce E. Brooks and Taeko A. Brooks, *The Original Analects* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 35. Benjamin Schwartz had a brief discussion of *wen* and *zhi* and called *zhi* the “simple, undifferentiated stuff” and *wen* “differentiated, articulated pattern.” He translated the line as “when simple goodness prevails over cultivation you get the boorishness of the rustic. When cultivation prevails over simple goodness, you get the slick smoothness of the clerk. Only when simple goodness and cultivation are duly blended do you get the noble man.” Here Schwartz regards *zhi* as a kind of “untaught virtue” or a “simple goodness that was unfavored with learning and *li* but it can only be a disoriented goodness. Yet without this goodness as an ever-present foundation, one will only have the fraudulent player of the cultural game.” Thus, Schwartz seems to suggest that there is a disposition that is pointing toward goodness in the connotation of *zhi*. Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, 82.

<sup>8</sup> I take the *wen-zhi* pair in 6/18 as “ornamentation” and “substance” as *wen* can have various connotations and ornamentation suits better in the context of 6/18. Michael Loewe has noted that after elaboration of the term *wen*, scholars have chosen ‘pattern’ as the best compromise. He also includes a discussion on the appearance of the *wen-zhi* pair in the Han texts. See Michael Loewe, *Dong Zhongshu, a ‘Confucian’ Heritage and the Chunqiu fanlu* (Boston: Leiden, 2011), 275-286. In this chapter, I view the *wen-zhi* pair as *pattern/substance* only for heuristic purposes. In reality, the connotation of these terms constantly changes depending on the context. Personally, I believe there is no single English word that can fully encompass all the diverse connotations that *wen-zhi* carry in different contexts.

<sup>9</sup> Liu Baonan 劉寶楠, Liu Gongmian 劉恭冕, *Lunyu Zhengyi* 論語正義, (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 233-234. Amy Olberding’s study of the Analects argues that the Analects is best interpreted through an exemplarist lens. Amy Oldberding, *Moral Exemplars in the Analects: The Good Person is That* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2011), 10.

glossed *jun* to group (*qun* 羣) henceforth those who *qun* are: 羣天下之所歸心也 “those who group the hearts of all the common people to turn toward” in which the *locus classicus* is in *Analects* 20/1 天下之民歸心焉 “the heart of all the common people in the Empire will turn to you.” When a *junzi*’s *wen* overcomes *zhi*, or his *zhi* overcomes *wen*, although their names (*ming* 名) are *junzi*, their actuality (*shi* 實) renders them either (churlishness) *ye* 野 or (pedantry) *shi* 史. Therefore, Liu believed that Confucius was taking on a task of rectify the name of *junzi* by scrutinizing the proper understanding (*yi* 義). That is what he meant by a well-balanced admixture of these two as a prerequisite for one to be called *junzi* because they are those can make all the hearts of commoners (*min* 民) turn toward him, henceforth enabling him to implement his guidance to the commoners. If either his *wen* or *zhi* overcomes one another, then he has nothing to show to the commoners for them to take as exemplary model and imitate; then he is incompatible with his status and position.

Amongst early China scholars, there has been radical disagreement concerning the nature of the relationship between Confucian ethical ideals such as benevolence *ren* 仁, righteousness *yi* 義 and the certain traditional norms that govern human conduct or *li* 禮.<sup>10</sup>

Herbert Fingarette believes that the quality and meaning of the act are rooted in the acts

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<sup>10</sup> The problem is to either translate *li* as observance of ritual or ritual propriety as *li* is also part of the Confucian ethical ideals. Scholars have also addressed the concern about whether the term ‘ritual’ could capture what the *li* encompasses. Masayuki Sato in his thorough analysis of the development of the idea of *li* in Pre-Qin thought identified that recent scholarship addressing the interpretation of the notion of *li* has been over-simplified as “ritual” without sound textual evidence. He believes, “The implications of *li* are far too broad to be represented by any single word.” The central ambiguity which lies in the translation of *li* is further complicated by scholars who believe unlike ethical ideals, such as *ren* and *yi*, *li* cannot be entirely captured by theoretical constructs in abstraction from practical concerns. See Masayuki Sato, *The Confucian Quest for Order* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 163-179. For a recent study which offers a comprehensive discussion on the field of knowledge pertaining to *li* in early China, see Robert L. Chard, *The Field of Ritual Learning in Early China to 9 CE* (Leiden: Brill, 2021). In it, Robert Chard warned that “our theoretically-loaded concept of “ritual” should not overwhelm our understanding of *li* and that *li* includes range of meaning outside ritual, which need to be understood on their own terms, to avoid distortion in the lens of modern theoretical ritual studies.”

themselves as properties—they have nothing to do with any inner, psychological, or subjective nature of the individual. It is a “psychological bias” shared by modern scholars.<sup>11</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, on the other hand, contends that Confucius was concerned with qualities, capacities, and inner mental dispositions which we associate not simply with acts itself. Schwartz believes that one of Confucius’s true innovations is his emphasis on these inner qualities such as *ren*; even the use of metaphor “inner” to describe these realities is by no means alien to Chinese thought or to Confucius in particular. He is concerned with the inner life of the individual.<sup>12</sup> This further developed into an inquiry which questioned whether ethical ideals, which are believed to reside in the ‘inner sphere,’ bear any independent significance aside from their relation to *li*.

This disagreement remains active in the discourse among current scholars. According to Michael Ing, “a dominant paradigm of current scholars - particularly those utilizing a virtue ethics approach - focuses on the cultivation of the self and the ability of the moral agent to rectify circumstance where the rules of the rituals of the past are inappropriate for the present.”<sup>13</sup> Michael Ing called it ‘the inward turn’ which he identified as represented by advocates such as Edward Slingerland, who stated, “The Confucian response to an apparently capricious and often inexplicable fate is...a realistic and mature redirection of human energy toward the sole area of life in which one does have control—the cultivation and moral

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<sup>11</sup> See chapter 3 of Herbert Fingarette, *Confucius--the secular as sacred* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972).

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin Schwartz, in *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, 72-85.

<sup>13</sup> Michael D. Ing, *The Dysfunction of Ritual in Early Confucianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 74-78.

improvement of one's own self.”<sup>14</sup> According to Ing, other advocates of this ‘inward turn’ view are Philip J. Ivanhoe in his analysis of Mencius 2B13 and Mark Csikszentmihalyi who identified that in response to the challenge of non-Ru factions who were suspicious of Ru approach to training and ritual as being superficial or hypocritical, the Ru thinkers attempted to answer the question of what virtue is and identify a common ground to weigh the virtue of a person against each other; this resulted in, as Csikszentmihalyi puts it, “material virtue.” By using texts from the *Wuxing* text inscribed on bamboo slips in a tomb near *Guodian* 郭店楚墓竹簡五行篇 and comparing some of the notions from the transmitted text of Mencius, Csikszentmihalyi identifies that the notion of the “physiognomy and physiology of virtue” of the inner dimension of self-cultivation that involves actual physical transformation of the moral agents.<sup>15</sup> However, both Philip Ivanhoe and Mark Csikszentmihalyi’s works derive their conclusions mainly based on Mencius and related texts where concepts of internal self-cultivation are more evident, whereas Michael Ing’s criticism toward the ‘inward turn’ is based on his reading of the *Liji* 禮記 where he mostly explored ritual theory in the neglected classic.<sup>16</sup> Kwong-loi Shun justified his usage of certain psychological locutions in discussing Confucius and instead of aligning himself to either side of an instrumentalist or definitionalist interpretation of the relation between *ren* and *li*, he offered an alternative reading. He suggested that between A, the ethical ideal *ren*, and B, the observance of the traditional communal code, an “instantiation of B is both necessary and sufficient for the instantiation of

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<sup>14</sup> Edward G. Slingerland, “The Conception of *Ming* in Early Confucian Thought,” *Philosophy East & West* 46.4, (October 1996): 567-581.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China*.

<sup>16</sup> Philip J. Ivanhoe, “Confucian Self Cultivation and Mengzi’s Notion of Extension,” in Philip J. Ivanhoe and Xiusheng Liu, eds., *Essays on Moral Philosophy of Mengzi* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2000), 221-242.

A.” This is not because A and B are causally related. Rather, it is precisely because if B is what is conventional, it is therefore neither defined by the ethical ideal nor an instantiation of *ren*. Conversely, neither is A defined by B as our conception of A is the conception of an observance of some outward practice of *li*.<sup>17</sup>

While acknowledging this debate and the different lenses, from ritual studies to moral psychology, with which to approach Confucian thought, I would like to engage in a philological exercise of the text through close reading as the main source of thought. Thus, for the limited scope of this paper, I attempt to reconstruct the meaning of *wen* and *zhi* in the *Analects* with the hope of approximating what it means to posit *wenzhi binbin* as a prerequisite for a *junzi*.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, I am interested in the *Analects*' discussion of *wen* and *zhi* in relation to the quality of a person and the ideal state of harmony that Confucius envisioned for a gentleman. After elucidating the etymology of each term, I will trace which spheres *wen*

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<sup>17</sup> Kwong-loi Shun, ““*Ren* 仁 and *Li* 禮 in the *Analects*,” in *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, ed. Bryan Van Norden (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> I acknowledge the issue related to the *Analects* brought about by the critical textual scholars who take the revisionist position by pointing out the fluidity of the text, uncertainty of the origin and the compilers, and how the material form of the *Analects* invited rearrangement, addition and subtraction of individual bamboo slips such that Joachim Gentz proposed that the *Analects* does not contextualize or systematize the concepts that scholars focus upon that lend themselves to a coherent intellectual analysis. See Joachim Gentz, “Confucius and His Disciples in the *Lunyu*,” in *Confucius and the Analects Revisited: New Perspectives on Composition, Dating, and Authorship*, ed. Michael Hunter and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 116-153. Mick Hunter’s scholarship upon the dating of the *Analects* to be revised to the Western Han period (202 BC – 9 AD) is particularly important as it would have significant implication for our understanding of the text and its place in the development of early Chinese thought. In response to Mick Hunter’s challenge to use the *Analects* as a source for studying early Chinese thought, my suggestion is that the relatively later compilation does not change its value and my study is to analyze the context of the text: examine the teachings, values, and perspective expressed in the *Analects*, consider what possible historical, social context that has shaped the content of the text, and what are some possible implication of its reception and influence of the *Analects* specifically through the discussion of the conceptual pair *wen-zhi*. Michael Hunter, *Confucius Beyond the Analects* (Leiden: Brill, 2017).

For this discussion, the reason to use historically transmitted texts without qualification of dating of the formation of the text is that the notion of *wen* and *zhi* are important concepts in early texts merely because they occur in great quantity. The scope of this short paper is the transmitted text of the *Analects*, in which *zhi* appears in four passages and *wen* appears in 28 out of 516 passages, 5th chapter particularly has 5 out of 29 passages *wen*. Together, they appeared two times with only one character in between them. Therefore, from a quantitative analysis perspective, the notion of *wen* and *zhi* are worthy of evaluation.

and *zhi* are being attributed to by highlighting relevant passages that use those characters to begin with. In doing so, I will analyze the general features and qualities related to *wen* and *zhi* and discuss both their differences and connections. Next, I will attempt to discover the quality of *wenzhi binbin* with the understanding that the balance between these two concepts is far from a simple dichotomy—they are inextricably linked and mutually dependent. In fact, they are one and the same, constituting a unity in their outwardness and inwardness, an immediacy and mediation in the practical sense of cultivating one’s ethical ideals. Only then will I return to debates about the interpretation of the relationship between ethical ideals and the observance of *li*. In doing so, I do not intend to resolve the issues of whether early Ruists are preoccupied with a ritual core, or they concerned themselves with attributing characteristics that are not necessarily related to *li*. Rather, I argue that the understanding of the relationship between *wen* and *zhi* can shed new light into how we frame this polemic.

The earliest etymological dictionary *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (ca. 100 B.C.E), compiled by Xu Shen 許慎 (ca. 55 –ca. 149), defines the word *zhi* as “to pledge one person or thing as security (or collateral) for another.” (*yi wu xiangzhui* 以物相贅).<sup>19</sup> It was composed of two characters: the character “ax” (*jin* 斤) on top of the character “cowry shell” (*bei* 貝) with two slanted lines in between, signifying that the tools or objects (represented by the ax) have the equal value of money (represented by the cowry shell). According to Xu Shen, in the spring and autumn era, people would engage in trading one’s heir as a hostage to one’s enemy in

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<sup>19</sup> See Duan Yucan 段玉裁 (1735-1815) comm., *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字註 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1998), 6B. 281. According to Xu Shen, the denotative meaning is unadorned (*pu* 璞) and land (*di* 地). *Zhi* is glossed as completed (*cheng* 成) from “民之質矣，日用飲食” in *Shijing* 詩經, “Tian Bao” 天保.

order to strengthen the hierarchical relation between two states (this was frequently referred to as *jiao zhizi* 交質子). For instance, the story in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 used the word *zhi* as follows: “Wangzi Hu became a hostage in Zheng, and Gongzi Hu of Zheng became a hostage in Zhou,” 王子狐為質於鄭，鄭公子忽為質於周.<sup>20</sup> Aside from the use in political activities, in the chapter of *Diguan situ* 地官司徒 in the *Zhouli* 周禮,<sup>21</sup> *zhi* was used in the following passage:

Officials who are in charge of the commodity and price: control the pricing of commodity, peasants, oxen and horses, weaponry, chariots, and precious and rare goods. Whoever buys and sells, will be endowed a document of contract, for larger trade [such as buying things like oxen and horses] uses [the longer document] *zhi*, for smaller trade [buying things like weaponry, utensils, precious and rare goods] uses [the shorter document] *ji*.

質人：掌成市之貨賄，人民，牛馬，兵器，珍異。凡賣儻者質劑焉，大市以質，小市以劑。<sup>22</sup>

It follows that *zhi* was used as a token to denote ownership of the commodity being traded—in this case, using *zhi* (a document) to represents the value of the actual object (oxen and horses). The contract *zhi* is made by both parties as a mutual recognition of the actual commodities being traded. In both cases—using someone as hostage, or a contract to denote the transaction of properties—the *zhi* of a thing is an anchor for measuring worth, so *zhi* represents the inherent value of a thing. That is not to say that *zhi* isn't available for

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<sup>20</sup> Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳註 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1990), 29 (Yin 3).

<sup>21</sup> *Zhouli* 周禮 was originally called *Zhouguan* 周官 which was first mentioned in the *Shiji* under this title. It gained its present title, *Zhouli* 周禮 only in the Later Han, when it was placed at the head of the *Sanli* 三禮 by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127CE -200CE) in his commentary on these works (*Sanli zhu* 三禮註). Emdymion Wilkinson, *Chinese history: A New Manual* (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2013), 371.

<sup>22</sup> *Zhouli zhushu* 周禮註疏, annotated by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127-200) with a commentary by Jia Gongyan 賈公彥, in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經註疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (1764-1849) (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 2013), 15A. 226.

cognition. It's an invisible quality that adheres to a surface (like economic value), perhaps by social assignment. So it is an object of cognition, but not necessarily direct perception.

Substance in English consists of *sub* (up to, or under) and *stance* (to stand, make or be firm). It is derived from the Latin word *substantia*, which refers to being, essence, or material. Although defining the multivalent nature of the term *zhi* is indeed difficult, I would argue that substance best captures the connotation of *zhi* as one's being, essence, or material. However, the concept of substance is essentially a philosophical term of art. In such a framework, it is usually deemed as the foundational entity of reality that is independent and enduring. It is contrasted with properties that are seen as contingent and impermanent. Aristotle identified substance as, "in the truest and primary and most definite sense of the world, is that which is neither predicate of a subject nor present in a subject; for instance, the individual man or horse."<sup>23</sup> However, *zhi* as substance is not *a priori* to the properties as the it is the actual value of the thing. In other words, *zhi* does not appear naturally, nor does it stand independently. Rather, it was created artificially for the need of the early commercial and political activities in early Chinese society. It can be seen as a rhetorical device to discuss certain relationships. Therefore, when employing the term "inner" I am not evoking the Cartesian dualism or the idea of disposition (*xing* 性), but rather "innerness" in the scope of this discussion connotes the sphere of what is less available for human cognition.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Aristotle, *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 9.

<sup>24</sup> A.C. Graham, Roger Ames and David Hall have addressed how Confucius evaded the Western articulation of the mind/body and inner/outer dualism and explained that early Chinese thinkers held conceptual polarities with A and B each "requiring the other for adequate articulation." They believed that Western thought was dominated by pairs such as God/world, mind/body, reality/appearance, good/evil in which the former is transcendent in the sense that "the meaning or import of the latter cannot be fully analyzed and explained without recourse to A, but the reverse is not true." A.C. Graham, *Disputer of the Tao* (La Salles, Open Court Publishing Company, 1989),

As we turn our lens to the *Analects*, passage 15/18 explicitly manifests this connotation of *zhi*: “As for gentleman, he takes righteousness as his substance and by observing the rites puts it into practice, by being modest gives it expression, and by being trustworthy in word brings it to completion. Such is a gentleman indeed!” 君子義以為質，禮以行之，孫以出之，信以成之。君子哉。<sup>25</sup> *Yi* 義 in being the *zhi* of the action is what has been used as collateral vis-à-vis an inherent value or something that all parties mutually recognize as the substance. Therefore, on the literal level, *zhi* in the passage means the base or the inner quality that contains the notion of *yi* whereas notion of ritual *li*, modesty (*sun* 孫), and trustworthiness (*xin* 信) are all the attributes of a gentleman who possesses the inner quality of *yi*, and those attributes were illustrated by the deed. (I take the pronoun *zhi* 之 here as referring back to the inner quality *yi*). In other words, *yi* cannot be perceived and yet *li*, *sun*, and *xin* are readily observable in one’s action. Here *yi* refers to a general sense of propriety as the relationship between the notion of *yi* to the notion of *li*, *sun*, and *xin* is that *yi*

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25-30. David L. Hall and Roger T. Ames, *Thinking Through Confucius*, 13. This shows again why we shouldn’t regard substance *zhi* as prior or more fundamental. However, I reserve my agreement that the entirety of Western philosophy hold any coherent view regarding dualism.

*Zhi* is sometimes used with the notion of disposition (*xing* 性), for example, in the *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露, it is stated, “human nature has the inherent quality of goodness” (*xing you shan zhi* 性有善質). It shows that *zhi* is different from *xing* if the early thinkers believed there is an inner quality *zhi* in human nature *xing*. Therefore, I believe that innerness is not of concern in the discourse of the conceptual pair of *wen* and *zhi*. See Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 (Shanghai: Tushu jicheng yinshuju, 1897), 10.105.

I agree with Paul Goldin’s view that the concern about human nature (*xing* 性) is unimportant in the *Analects* as there is an absence of any probing discussion. See Paul Goldin, “Confucius and His Disciples in the *Lunyu*,” in *Confucius and the Analects Revisited: New Perspectives on Composition, Dating, and Authorship*, ed. Michael Hunter and Martin Kern (Leiden: Brill, 2018), 92-116.

<sup>25</sup> Liu Baonan 劉寶楠, Liu Gongmian 劉恭冕, *Lunyu Zhengyi* 論語正義, For translation, I edited based on translation from D.C. Lau, *The Analects*, 134.

Kwong-loi Shun translated the first half of the sentence as “the gentleman takes rightness as what is essential, and rightness into practice by observing *li*.” *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, 59. Michael Puett translated the entire passage as, “The master said: “The gentleman uses appropriateness to act upon the raw substance, uses the rites to practice it, use humility to bring it out, uses faithfulness to complete it. He is a gentleman indeed!” Michael Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 44.

encompasses all the other concepts by being the *zhi* for them; therefore, *yi* is the substance of those qualities (*li*, *sun*, and *xin*) that can be identified in action. Although *yi* is usually put together with the notion of *li*, *sun* or *xin*, *yi* has its own independent significance. To carry out such as *li*, a sense of *yi*, as the basis of an awareness of actively reflecting and abiding what is appropriate to the situation of the action, must be present for the act to be not a mere mechanical action, but a conscious act of one abiding the propriety of the conduct. And through observable ethical attributes such as *li*, the inner quality of *yi* can be manifested as cognizant to the viewers through the form of the practice of rituals, expression of modesty, and completion of a deed that is trustworthy.

Passage 12/20 also demonstrates this usage of *zhi*:

Zizhang asked, ‘What must a Gentleman be like before he can be said to have got through?’ The Master said, ‘What on earth do you mean by getting through?’ Zizhang answered, ‘What I have in mind is a man who is sure to be known whether he serves in a state or in a noble family.’ The Master said, ‘That is being known, not getting through. Now the term “getting through” describes a man who is straight by “nature” (*zhi* 質) and fond of what is right, sensitive to other people's words and observant of the expression on their faces, and always mindful of being modest. Such a man is bound to get through whether he serves in a state or in a noble family. On the other hand, the term “being known” describes a man who has no misgivings about his own claim to benevolence when all he is doing is putting up a facade of benevolence which is belied by his deeds. Such a man is sure to be known, whether he serves in a state or in a noble family.

子張問：士何如斯可謂之達矣？子曰：何哉，爾所謂達者？子張對曰：在邦必聞，在家必聞。子曰：是聞也，非達也。夫達也者，質直而好義，察言而觀色，慮以下人。在邦必達，在家必達。夫聞也者，色取仁而行違，居之不疑。在邦必聞，在家必聞。<sup>26</sup>

In this passage, Confucius juxtaposed *da* 達 and *wen* 聞. *Da* was defined as proceeding unimpededly (*xing bu xiangyu* 行不相遇).<sup>27</sup> Therefore, it also means thorough (*tong* 通),

<sup>26</sup> D.C. Lau, *The Analects*, 116.

<sup>27</sup> Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jeizi zhu*, 15B.783.

which has the connotation of extending out from the surface level, coming into the open, and penetrating through or beyond, whereas *wen*’ connotes to make heard, make known or repute (*zhi sheng ye* 知聲也).<sup>28</sup> Therefore, *da* connotes the process of the inner substance emerging out onto the surface and manifesting itself in the observable sphere, whereas *wen*’ connotes only the action on the surface so that certain qualities of an individual are conspicuous and can be celebrated by others. Qing commentator Liu Baonan 劉寶楠(1791-1855) explained *da* as “thorough in the way of associating with others and examining oneself; for this reason, wherever one goes there is nothing that obstructs. This is what is called ‘let his words be sincere and truthful and his actions honorable and careful’—such conduct may be practiced even among the barbarians.” 通於處人、處己之道，故行至無所違阻，所謂忠信篤敬，蠻貊可行。<sup>29</sup>

Confucius corrects Zi Zhang by claiming that those who are known in the state and in a noble family are men who are *wen*’ and not men who are *da*. Then Confucius goes on to argue that for a person to be *da*, the necessary conditions are that he is “straight by nature and fond of what is right, sensitive to other people's words and observant of the expression on their faces, and always mindful of being modest” 質直而好義，察言而觀色，慮以下人. The Eastern Han commentator Ma Rong 馬融 (79 –166) notes that those who are sensitive to people’s words and expressions on their faces would “know what one desires” 知其所欲. Therefore, those who are *da* are thorough in that they are attentive to the needs of others and humble about oneself; in this way, according to Liu, “although they do not seek fame and

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<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 12A.588.

<sup>29</sup> See Liu’s comments to *Lunyu* 12/20 in *Lunyu Zhengyi* page 507-508.

reputation, it will certainly return to themselves” 雖不求名譽，名必歸之。<sup>30</sup> Confucius believes those who are merely *wen*’ or “known” are those who “put up a façade of benevolence” 色取仁 and “contently settle in his fabrication without any self-doubt” (*ju zhi buyi* 居之不疑); therefore, the actual manifestation of his deed must be belied (*xingwei* 行違).

What is missing from “being known” to “getting through” lies precisely in the sphere of *zhi*. Confucius here explicitly condemns a kind of benevolence that is only apparent on the surface. This is the reason he explains how to be “getting through” with a description of a gentleman who must be upright in his *zhi* and have a predilection for propriety as the basis of being *da*. In this way, it is impossible for one to put on a façade, for the sphere of *zhi* makes his act authentic. If we look back to 15/8, it is evident that those who are *da* are the *junzi* who use righteousness as their substance. And it is such substance which is fundamental to their actions. It is because they are one and the same—observance of rituals, expression of modesty and completion of deeds are the perceptible part of one’s righteousness, that those who are non-*junzi* or *wen*’ fail in their actions even if they can forge a benevolent appearance. Another difference between *da* and *wen*’ is that *da* includes a step of letting one’s own inner substance of righteousness emerge to the surface level. Only then can one be “getting through” to others or be respected by others. On the other hand, being *wen*’ eschews the existence of the inner quality of righteousness but emphasizes only the proper conduct on the

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<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*.

surface. In other words, by pitching against *wen*, the uprightness of those who are *da* isn't a socially assigned value but in fact inherent to the person.

Passages 15/8 and 12/20 allude to what modern scholars would frame as a question about ritual and sincerity; in other words, is it possible that one can adhere flawlessly to ritual propriety and still be unconcerned about the rites? How can we distinguish virtuous disposition through observable actions, decorum, or affect? According to Mark Csikszentmihalyi, the non-Ru faction criticized the Ru approach saying that the training and rituals can be superficial and hypocritical.<sup>31</sup> Csikszentmihalyi identifies the response to the criticism that was found in the excavated text Guodian *Wuxing* where it distinguishes between authentic "virtue" *de* 德 and mere "goodness" *shan* 善.<sup>32</sup> It systematizes virtue into a "moral psychology" which locates the virtuous disposition as originating from one's mind requires that the cultivation of virtue involves an observable bodily transformation. As shown by Csikszentmihalyi, certain passages of the *Analects* directly rebut the criticism of moral hypocrisy by showing the possibility of gauging moral motivation through one's action.<sup>33</sup> Thus, it is possible that passage 12/20 also addresses this concern by distinguishing between a truly virtuous person versus a feigned one. The response that Confucius offered here is comparing proper decorum that is associated with an inner substance of righteousness to an empty code of conduct to discern an authentic virtuous action. He accomplishes this by emphasizing the sphere of *zhi*.

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<sup>31</sup> Mark Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue: Ethics and the Body in Early China*, 34.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 68.

However, what is different from texts like Guodian *Wuxing* and *Mengzi* seems to be that Confucius in passages 15/8 and 12/20 is unconcerned about the question of how virtues have been cultivated; rather, he is simply emphasizing that acting with the right attitude is essential. As we can see from both passages, Confucius is making a more explicit claim about identifying virtuous men. Similar to his differentiation between those who are *da* compared to those who are *wen*’, 15/8 can also be read that those who do not take righteousness as their substance and manifest it in their actions are therefore not *junzi*. In passage 12/20, he argues that for those who are *wen*’ in their actions, we can gauge whether they are authentic based on their external performance. It shows that the moral motivation for *junzi* is self-evidential—that one’s *zhi* is already and always integral and constitutive in one’s action. For those who are *wen*’ and non-*junzi*, their actions will not succeed because they lack this essential element of their deeds, and because they do not possess it, they take fabricated actions as real without any self-doubt. Their actions, therefore, are doomed to fail. Consequently, in articulating the notion of *zhi*, Confucius emphasizes the discernment of virtue as a given rather than cultivating virtue and transforming one’s external appearance; in other words, it focuses on being rather than becoming. By using the notion of *zhi*, these two passages integrate ethical ideals into action, treating them as one and the same without endowing more significance on either one’s act or one’s adherence to morality.

When tracing the different connotations of *zhi* in early texts, it is evident that *zhi* became gradually laden with more abstract meaning beyond merely denoting “a specific object or human being used as entitlement.” For instance, in the *Liji*, it is used as “the substance of

rules of propriety” 禮之質也, and “increase what is beautiful in his nature” 增美質<sup>34</sup> in the *Xunzi* 荀子, it is employed as “use loyalty and trustworthiness as substance” 忠信以為質.<sup>35</sup> However, what is at the center of the usage of *zhi* is the concept of an inherent worth, which derives from its etymology. It is noteworthy that in all appearances of the term *zhi* in the *Analects*, the term *junzi* or synonymous term *daren* 達人 always appears along with it. It is certainly not a mere coincidence that *zhi* is used to define or describe the quality of *junzi*. It has two functions. To begin with, it reveals a risk in assessing moral attributes: sometimes those who lack authentic virtue can be mistaken for those who possesses it. Therefore, it is because *zhi* expresses the concept of an “inherent value” that the notion of *zhi* in the *Analects* functions as a gateway to one’s otherwise imperceptible inner moral compass. Thus, *zhi* is utilized as measuring one’s worth. On the other hand, because one’s *zhi* is always integral and self-constitutive in *junzi*’s action, the method of gauging it is self-evident. Henceforth, *zhi* was also evoked to justify the status of *junzi*, as it was employed to identify virtuous men. There is simply no fault in the virtuous man’s action.

In his recent article, Mark Csikszentmihalyi identified that the relationship between Confucius and his disciples was read as a model for ruler and his ministers in light of his analysis of “the biographical texts accompanying illustration of Confucius and his disciples on the wooden frame and cover of a mirror stand excavated in 2015 from the Haihunhou tomb.” This shows that Confucius were significant in the Han due to the belief in his ability

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<sup>34</sup> *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, with a commentary by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 and Kong Yingda 孔穎達 (574 -648), in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經註疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 2013), 1A.14.

<sup>35</sup> Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, in *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 9.170.

of judgement of good character.<sup>36</sup> Therefore, the suggested chronology of the *Analects* and the cultural significance that was endowed to Confucius in the Han aligns with the theme of discernment that can be seen in 15/8 and 12/20 with the notion of *zhi* in gauging *junzi*'s inner moral compass on the one hand and justify the status of *junzi* in claiming their *zhi* is self-constitutive and integral to his action on the other. In fact, from a survey of pre-Han texts, the appearance of the *wen-zhi* pair was hardly found while there was a sudden burgeoning of the appearance of the pair in Western Han texts. It does not necessarily prove that *wen-zhi* was a Western Han concept as it is more likely that it has a more ancient root in pre-Han texts that allows the Western Han thinkers to draw upon rather than inventing this pair out of thin air. However, it does buttress a hypothesis that the *Analects* belong to the intellectual milieu of Western Han due to the affinity in connotation of concepts like *wen-zhi*.

On the other hand, Xu Shen 許慎 defines *wen* as a “criss-cross pattern” (*cuohua* 錯畫).<sup>37</sup> *Cuo* 錯 connotes to “inlay with gold silver, and jade” (*jin tu ye* 金涂也), thus a sense of embellishment;<sup>38</sup> *hua* 畫 connotes to “divide” (*jie ye* 介也).<sup>39</sup> The term *wen* in bronze

<sup>36</sup> Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “The Haihunhou Capsule Biographies of Kongzi and His Disciples,” *Early China* 45 (2022): 341-373.

<sup>37</sup> Duan Yucai, *Shuowen jeizi zhu*, 9A.425.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 14B.705.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 3B.117.

Lothar von Falkenhausen, “The Concept of *Wen* in the Ancient Chinese Ancestral Cult,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 18 (1996): 1-22. However, according to Martin Kern, “in Warring States and then Qin and Han times – *wen* becomes heavily laden with cosmological meaning and related to a great variety of changing and accumulating cultural practices.” Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transition of *wen* in Early China,” *T'oung Pao* 87 (2001), 43-91.

According to Cai Zongqi, “the term *wen* has so broad a semantic field that it practically covers the entire spectrum of traditional Chinese culture... *Wen* denotes or describe various essential elements of traditional Chinese culture: royal posthumous titles, ritual objects, rites and music, norms and statutes, dignified deportment, the polite arts, graphic cosmic symbols, eloquent speech, writing, rhymed writing, and *belle-lettres*.” See Cai Zongqi, “*Wen* and the Construction of a Critical System in *Wenxin Diaolong*,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*, 22 (2000): 1-29. However, the range of connotation of *wen* has shrunken precisely because it is paired with *zhi*, especially its inextricably mutual dependent quality with one another.

inscriptions, as identified by Lothar von Falkenhausen, functions largely as an epithet for deceased ancestors and rulers which appears to be distinct from the connotation of “pattern” but means something like “accomplished.” This is because the *wen* in the bronze inscriptions and *wen* which means ornament and patterns merely come to be written with the same character which he claimed to be a *fauxi-ami*.<sup>40</sup> However, according to Martin Kern, “in Warring States and then Qin and Han times – *wen* becomes heavily laden with cosmological meaning and related to a great variety of changing and accumulating cultural practices.”<sup>41</sup>

Therefore, *wen* in the context of the *Analects* connotes to the meaning of the ornamentation of things, and such outward embellishment of things are dissimilar from one another, allowing people to distinguish between them.<sup>42</sup> *Wen* therefore is always a form of display and the sign on the surface of things that ensures the understanding of that thing.

Martin Kern, in his thorough analysis of *wen* in early texts has shown that “deep into early imperial time, the capacious ideal of *wen* was primarily one of ritual order; it could embrace texts, but it was not restricted to them.” Kern argued that *wenxue* 文學 in *Analects* 11/3 relates to textual learning instead of an abstract sense of “culture” and “learning.” And “whatever the term *wenzhang* 文章 means something concrete, it relates to ritual forms

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In a recent talk by Han van Ess, he identified historical texts in which, in most cases, when someone has been endowed with a posthumous name *wen*, they were evoked in the *Analects*, there is a sense of a slightly negative connotation that such a person appears as being pedant and only have the ability to follow the decorum. He thinks Confucius is not against *wen*, but he thinks one’s *wen* and *zhi* should be balanced. Han van Ess, “The Confucian *Analects*: A Fresh Look at A Classic from Ancient China,” Elling Eide Center, October 27, 2022. For the discussion of the internal paradox of the connotation of *wen*, Wai-yee Li discusses how *wen* embodies both order and excess. See Wai-yee Li, “Between ‘Literary Mind’ and ‘Carving Dragons’: Order and Excess in *Wenxin diaolong*,” in *A Chinese Literary Mind: Culture, Creativity and Rhetoric in Wenxin Diaolong* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 193-225.

<sup>40</sup> Lothar von Falkenhausen, “The Concept of *Wen* in the Ancient Chinese Ancestral Cult,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews* 18 (1996): 1-22.

<sup>41</sup> Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transition of *wen* in Early China.” *T’oung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. 87, Fasc. 1/3 (2001), pp. 43-91.

<sup>42</sup> The function of *wen* to dispartate or distinguish from one another is taken from *Analects* 12/8.

(including a well-ordered way of speaking), and in particular ornament and military/ritual insignia on pennants and blazons.” Meanwhile, *wen* is the external sign that makes evident the “inner power of the sages” that others are able to recognize.<sup>43</sup> David Schaberg identified that “*wen* designates both the readable markings by which an object refers to things other than itself and the sumptuous quality of decoration by which the object signifies social status.”<sup>44</sup> That is to say, *wen* in early texts always denoted a non-superficial attribute. It cannot be understood as decontextualized from its substantial medium and specific context, whether it is one’s refined personal appearance, textile ornaments, ritual forms, or the embellishment of material objects. And the notion of *wen* is closely tied to the notion of ritual *li*.

Articulations upon theories of *li* in early Chinese societies are abundant. Michael Puett understands *li* as serving to create an “as if” or subjunctive space. And it is in this liminal space that *li* operates in disjunction of lived reality and imagined normativity.<sup>45</sup> Stephen Owen identifies in the *Book of Documents* (*Shang shu* 尚書) and the *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經), “everywhere attention is given to precedents and received customs, to what the Greek

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<sup>43</sup> Kern identifies that only in late Western Han times did the compound word *wenzhang* begin to refer to textual composition due to the transformation of the material ritualism into the canonization of written form of ritual rules and measures. Martin Kern, “Ritual, Text, and the Formation of the Canon: Historical Transition of *wen* in Early China.” *T’oung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. 87, Fasc. 1/3 (2001), pp. 43-91. Phillip J. Ivanhoe also included an extensive analysis of the commentarial tradition of the passage 5/13 where he discusses the different interpretations regarding *wenzhang*. Philip J. Ivanhoe, “Whose Confucius? Which *Analects*?” In *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, 119-134.

<sup>44</sup> David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Boston: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2005), 60.

<sup>45</sup> Michael J. Puett, “Ritual and the Subjunctive”, in *Ritual and its Consequences: An Essay on the Limits of Sincerity*. Michael J. Puett, Robert Weller, Adam Seligman, and Bennett Simon (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 17-42; “Ritual and Ritual Obligations: Perspectives on Normativity from Classical China.” *The Journal of Value Inquiry* 49.4 (2015): 543-550.

called *nomos* or the ‘received customs and rites from the ancients.’”<sup>46</sup> In quoting from the *Liji* 禮記, Michael Ing defines *li* as scripted performances which are “the figurative knots that hold society together.”<sup>47</sup> As for the ritual practices themselves, basic gestures such as bowing with hands joined at chest (*yi* 揖), bowing from the waist with clasped hands (*bai* 拜) and their complexities regarding various situations recorded in *Ceremonies and Rites* (*Yili* 儀禮) shows the actions were endowed with specific implication. It shows *li* is about physical actions visible in one’s bodily deportment. Meanwhile, facial expression and appearance are also a part of the action.<sup>48</sup> Chapter 10 of the *Analects* recorded how Confucius reacts to different situations with various facial and bodily expressions. Passages 20/3 and 8/8 of the *Analects* both referred to the posture of standing (*li* 立) which indicates *li* involves actions that are visible. Therefore, *li* can be seen as the expression of certain message that is conveyed through visible actions or display. That is not to say that diction (*ci* 辭) is not important. Rather, it is believed that diction has to be applied with the proper demeanor: “too much diction would lead to pedantry, too little [one’s message] would not get through” 辭多則史，少則不達。<sup>49</sup> In *Han Feizi* 韓非子, it is stated that rituals are used to express one’s disposition in the chapter “Explaining the *Laozi*” (*Jie Lao* 解老):

<sup>46</sup> Stephen Owen, *Rememberance: The Experience of the Past in Classical Chinese Literature*, (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1986), 8.

<sup>47</sup> Michael Ing, *The Dysfunction of Ritual in Early Confucianism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 38.

<sup>48</sup> Nai-Yi Hsu discussed extensively how Confucius saw people’s clothing, bodily comportment, facial expressions, and styles of speaking as having moral significance. Nai-Yi Hsu, “Sagely Presence: Appearance and Morality in Early Confucian Thought,” Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 2022.

<sup>49</sup> *Yili zhushu* 儀禮註疏, annotated by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 with a commentary by Jia Gongyan 賈公彥 (ca. 7<sup>th</sup> century), in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經註疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 2013), 24A, 285. David Schaberg, citing from the *Zuozhuan* that “words are the *wen* of the self,” and states that, “the choice of expression in clothing, accoutrements, gestures and words, is a performance that through the readable element of *wen* ineluctably reveal an inner intention,” and that “*wen* in the surface of an object or an utterance opens its

Ritual is used to express the actual properties. It is the adornment and display of various form of righteousness, the propriety of how ruler and subject, father and son interact, the different forms of respect, disrespect, virtuous or discrepant. From the innermost of one's heart/mind one holds the respect yet cannot notify, for this reason one scurried offer a formal salutation humbly. In one's actual heart/mind, one admires someone and the other person is unaware of, for this reason one uses well-meant words and profuse dictions to authentically express it.

禮者，所以貌情也，群義之文章也，君臣父子之交也，貴賤賢不肖之所以別也。中心懷而不諭，故疾趨卑拜而明之。實心愛而不知，故好言繁辭以信之。<sup>50</sup>

In other words, *li* is not merely empty comportment, display, or performance; it is always associated with certain meaning. Contrary to the term *yi*' 儀 which Robert Chard defines as “the outer appearance or expression of ceremony devoid of moral content,” performance without content is not *li*.<sup>51</sup> The relationship between *wen* and *li* is that *wen* concerns mainly the outward pattern, and it is associated with power of transformation through process of acculturation. As stated in the hexagram of Grace (*bi* 賁) in the *Book of Changes (Yijing 易經)*: “we look at the ornamental figures of the sky, and thereby ascertain the changes of the seasons. We look at the ornamental observances of society and understand how the processes of transformation are accomplished all under heaven” 觀乎天文，以察時變；觀乎人文，以化成天下。<sup>52</sup> Puett points out the patterning of the human realm or culture as defined by Confucius “consists primarily of patterns of ritualized behavior, based originally in the

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interior and its past to understanding.” David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography* (Boston: Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2005), 64.

<sup>50</sup>Wang Xianshen 王先慎, *Hanfei zi jijie* 韓非子集解, in *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1959), 6.97.

<sup>51</sup> Robert Chard, *Creating Confucian Authority: The Field of Ritual Learning in Early China to 9 CE*, 7.

<sup>52</sup> It is stated that “Grace brings success. However, it is not the essential or fundamental thing; it is only the ornament and must therefore be used sparingly and only in little things.” 賁，亨；柔來而文剛，故亨。分剛上而文柔，故小利有攸往 in the hexagram of “grace.” For English translation, see Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, tr. Cary F. Baynes (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), 244. *Zhouyi Zhengyi* 周易正義, annotated by Wang Bi 王弼 (d. 249), Han Kangbo 韓康伯 (ca. 4<sup>th</sup> century) with a commentary by Kong Yingda 孔穎達, in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經註疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 2013), 3B, 62.

patterns of heaven and true transmission is through the replication of patterns that were initially found in heaven.”<sup>53</sup> It follows that it is believed if one can grasp such patterning, one can thereupon fathom the proper conduct of human interaction and transform others into civilized beings. How, however, did *li* come to determine the judgement of a *junzi*'s quality of action and possession of moral attributes?<sup>54</sup>

Thus, going back to the *Analects*, in passage 14/12, *wen* is being used as follows: “Zi Lu asked about the complete man. The Master said, ‘A man as wise as Zang Wuzhong, as free from desires as Gongchuo, as courageous as Zhuangzi of Bian and as accomplished as Ran Qiu, who is further refined by the rites and music, may be considered a complete man.’”子路問成人。子曰：若臧武仲之知，公綽之不欲，卞莊子之勇，冉求之藝，文之以禮樂，亦可以為成人矣。<sup>55</sup> In this passage, Confucius explicitly states the relationship between the notion of *wen* and notion of *li* and *yue* 樂. For Confucius, *li* and *yue* makes a gentleman refined by adopting the proper observance of rituals in a society. Although *li* and *yue* are embellishments of human conduct, they are indispensable to be a complete man. Meanwhile, the process of transformation of a man to a complete man is worthy of contemplation: the aforementioned qualities before *wen* can be seen as one's own characteristics such as courage, wisdom, and freedom from desire. Being acculturated by *li* assists man in his

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<sup>53</sup> Michael J. Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China*, 50.

<sup>54</sup> According to Robert Chard, “by the Spring and Autumn period (722-468 BCE), probably from the early seventh century BCE, the word *li* has emerged as a wider designation for correct ritual practice, extending to the whole hierarchical ritual order in its many manifestations, a code of conduct governing formal behavior of all sorts.” He identified that this coincides with Lothar von Faulkenhausen's research upon the “Middle Springs and Autumn Ritual Restructuring” reflected in archeological record from around 600 BCE. Robert L. Chard, *The Field of Ritual Learning in Early China to 9 CE*, 25. See also, Lothar von Faulkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius (1000-250 BC)* (Los Angeles: Cotsen Institute of Archeology, 2006), 2 and 326-369.

<sup>55</sup> D.C. Lau, *The Analects*, 125.

transformation into a communal being. This is because cultural patterning in human life concerns the interaction between men. It shapes the members of the community by emphasizing power, function, and certain standards of interaction. Kern has shown that “ceremonial ornaments were not simply ‘ornaments’ - rather, they have the means by which the allocation of resources and prerogatives were expressed, enforced, and discussed.” In other words, the ceremonial ornaments in *li* or one’s daily comportment must accord with the embedded hierarchical relationships that properly reflect one’s status in the community and correspondence with others.

An example of a man who failed to abide the righteousness *yi* of *li* is articulated in Mencius 1B18. It is stated that those who violated the hierarchical relationship would strip away of all the social relationships that one was originally embedded in. This is because man is first and foremost a communal being, and social patterning makes man complete. But at the same time, it also makes the man subject to it, such that whoever violates the communal propriety is reduced to a singular entity or *yi fu* 一夫 which can be seen as exile.<sup>56</sup> It indicates that for Mencius, there is no such distinction between these two kinds of self: a communal or ceremonial self as opposed to a self in relation to one’s own nature. That is to say, if one destroys the most important virtue which is *yi*, a virtue that is more important than life, one therefore is deemed to have breached the most unbreachable rule or norm.<sup>57</sup> Yet such

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<sup>56</sup> See Mencius 1B8: “Then can a minister be allowed to slay his ruler?” “One who offends against humaneness is called a brigand; one who offends against rightness is called an outlaw. Someone who is a brigand; and an outlaw is called a mere fellow.” 曰：臣弑其君可乎？曰：賊仁者謂之賊，賊義者謂之殘，殘賊之人謂之一夫。 See trans. Irene Bloom, *Mencius*, ed. Philip J. Ivanhoe, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 22.

<sup>57</sup> See Mencius 6A10: “If I cannot have both of them, I will give up life and take rightness.” 二者不可得兼，舍生而取義者也。 *Ibid.*, 127.

unbreachable *yi* is first and foremost based upon the hierarchical relations such that once a subordinate (*chen* 臣) put his ruler (*jun* 君) to death, the subordinates outrages his *yi* and is reduced to a lone self that is alienated from any communal realms. Once a self has been deprived of any moral or ethical boundaries, one has become a singular existence; a self that exists only in one's own space.

In *Analects* 12/5, when Sima Niu was concerned that he had no brother, Zi Xia consoled him and said: "I have heard it said: life and death are a matter of Destiny; wealth and honor depend on Heaven. The gentleman is reverent and does nothing amiss, is respectful towards others and observant of the rites, and all within the Four Seas are his brother. What need is there for the gentleman to worry about not having any brothers?" 商聞之矣：死生有命，富貴在天。君子敬而無失，與人恭而有禮。四海之內，皆兄弟也。君子何患乎無兄弟也？

<sup>58</sup> In other words, in observing the proper patterning of *jing* 敬 and *li* 禮, man places himself as a subject of a community where all men are brothers. It is worth noting that Zi Xia starts out the sentence by asserting facts in one's life that are beyond one's control: life and death, wealth, and honor. However, what one is capable of is overseeing one's own comportment such that one can be a member of the community. And through observing the proper common code, one is benefited within the Confucian brotherhood in ways which everyone in the net of *li* becomes one's brother.

In *Analects* 5/4, Zigong asked Confucius: "What do you think of me?", "The Master said, 'You are a vessel.' 'What kind of vessel?' 'A sacrificial vessel.'" 子貢問曰：賜也何如？子

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<sup>58</sup> D.C. Lau, *The Analects*, 113.

曰：女器也。曰：何器也？曰：瑚璉也。<sup>59</sup> Most commentators have emphasized how Confucius teaches that *junzi* ought not to have limited capability; a true *junzi* is one who is not a mere specialist.<sup>60</sup> However, in the “*Liqi*” 禮器 chapter of the *Liji* 禮記, the author demonstrates that humans are meant to be shaped into ritualized vessels.<sup>61</sup> The metaphor of using the holy vessel in this ceremony for man shows that Confucius envisions that one becomes a *junzi* by virtue of his role in *li* because the vessels are sacred, not because of their usefulness but precisely because they are a constitutive element in *li*. *Hulian* 瑚璉 is a type of archaic and precious vessel that is used for holding grain for a bounteous harvest.<sup>62</sup> It is thus feasible to assume that in 6/18, Confucius also held in mind the metaphor of *junzi* as a sacred vessel—only because of a well-balanced admixture of the vessel’s elegant embellishment and the substance that it can hold can the vessel take proper part (*li* 立) in the sacred ceremony, and the same is for *junzi*. 6/18 also gives a clear definition of *junzi*: they are those who are the moral agents of ritually-governed actions, whose inner substance and outer refinement are harmoniously balanced.

Throughout the previous discussion, certain differences and relationships of *wen* and *zhi* can be discerned. To begin with, we have posited that *zhi* originally meant using some

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 76.

<sup>60</sup> Zhu Xi 朱熹, *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集註 (Beijing: Remin Wenxue chubanshe, 1983), 4.28.

<sup>61</sup> It was noted by the commentators that: “Lu said: “according to Zheng: ‘to use this to record the ritual, for man to become a proper ritual vessel. This is what Confucius meant by sacrificial vessel *hulian* to Zigong.” 陸曰：鄭雲：以其記禮，使人成器。孔子謂子貢瑚璉之器是也。” The text of *Liji* states that: “The rules of propriety serve as instruments to form men's characters, and they are therefore prepared on a great scale. Being so, the value of them is very high.” 禮器是故大備。大備，盛德也。The commentator Zheng Xuan elaborated this line as: “the rule of propriety, speech and ritual makes a man a proper ritual vessel, such as the employment of plows and plowshares. Human’s untaught disposition is used as the farmland, one applies oneself to ritual, this is what it means.” 禮器，言禮使人成器，如耒耜之用也。人情以為田，修禮以耕之，此是也。 See *Liji zhengyi* 禮記正義, annotated by Zheng Xuan 鄭玄, with a commentary by Kong Yingda 孔穎達, in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經註疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元(1764-1849), 23A. 449.

<sup>62</sup> See Liu’s comments to *Lunyu* 5/4 in *Lunyu Zhengyi* page 167-168.

substantial object to attach; thereafter, the notion of substance that is situated in the ‘internal’ sphere was created in order to understand the corresponding manifestation of what is on the surface. Furthermore, the sphere of *zhi* is where the ethical ideals such as *yi* reside, which Confucius regards as the quality of an action. Confucius emphasizes the importance of the existence of ethical ideals *ren* and *yi* to an observance of *li*. For instance, in passage 3/3, he said: “What can a man do with the rites who is not benevolent? What can a man do with music who is not benevolent?”<sup>63</sup> 子曰：人而不仁，如禮何？人而不仁，如樂何？ In other words, the truly ceremonial only take place when the individuals involved do it with seriousness and humaneness. *Wen* is what’s on the surface of an object which opens its interior to understanding. The sphere of *wen* is where *li* and *yue* reside in. And only through observing and practicing proper decorum in everyday activities can one be transformed into a complete man and a legitimate member of the community.

Finally, to attribute ethical ideals *yi* to the sphere of *zhi*, and *li* and *yue* to the sphere of *wen* means that *yi* substantiates *li* and *yue* by endowing *li* and *yue* those concepts with a concrete form, and at the same time *li* and *yue* are the outward manifestation or the mediated exemplification of the ethical ideal *yi*. Such manifestation is not teleological or causal, but rather appear simultaneously as two sides of the coin: one is visible to human cognition and the other is not.<sup>64</sup> Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179 -c. 104) in *The Luxuriant Dew of the*

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<sup>63</sup> D.C. Lau, *The Analects*, 67.

<sup>64</sup> Joachim Gentz elucidated the relationship between ritual and an invisible ideal order as physiognomical: “ritual is taken to be the visible manifestation and expression of an invisible ideal order which, as so often mentioned in the *Analects*, might be an inner quality of a person or some abstract category of order in any other realm and visible ritual action is the immediate manifestation of the invisible ritual value of the situation encountered.” See Joachim Gentz “The Ritual Meaning of Textual Form,” *Text and Ritual in Early China*, ed. Martin Kern (Seattle: University of Washington Press: 2005).

*Spring and Autumn Annals* 春秋繁露 explicated this kind of relationship in the chapter “Jade Cup” (*yubei* 玉杯): “The intention [of ritual] is the [inner] substance, while the objects [involved in ritual] are the [outward] form. The form [of ritual] manifests substance. If substance does not abide in the form, how will form give to that substance [an adequate] display? Only when both substance and form are complete can ritual be perfected.” 誌為質，物為文。文著於質，質不居文，文安施質？質文兩備，然後其禮成。<sup>65</sup> Thus, going back to 6/18, although *wen* and *zhi* might appear dichotomous as ornamentation and pattern, the mutual dependency is still embedded. That is precisely because without matching learned civilized conduct available for outsiders’ observation, one’s ethical ideals cannot be properly instantiated or manifested; without possession of corresponding qualities, one’s act of conduct would fail as it lacks integrity because it is artificial and unsubstantial. The quality of *junzi* is only achieved when these two sides are well-balanced.

Therefore, going back to the debate between Schwartz and Fingarette, it is evident that both hold valid positions—that Confucius concerns a sense of humaneness and ceremonial correctness required in the proper execution of ritual procedure. However, for Confucius, there is no division between the performative act and the inner qualities of the concrete act.

Passage 12/8 of the *Analects* made this point conspicuous:

Chi Tzu-ch’eng said, “The important thing about the gentleman is the stuff he is made of. What does he need refinement for?” Tzu-kung commented, “It is a pity that the gentleman (*fuzi* 夫子) should have spoken so about the gentleman. A team of horses cannot catch up with one’s tongue. The stuff is no different from refinement; refinement is no different from the stuff. The pelt of a tiger or a leopard, shorn of hair, is no different

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<sup>65</sup> Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒, *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 (Shanghai: Tushu jicheng yinshuju, 1897), 1.30. For English translation, see Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 80.

from that of a dog or a sheep.”

棘子成曰：君子質而已矣，何以文為？子貢曰：惜乎！夫子之說，君子也。駟不及舌。文猶質也，質猶文也。虎豹之鞞，猶犬羊之鞞。<sup>66</sup>

To begin with, *kuo* 鞞 means the “shorn pelt, depilated hide; leather”; that is the skin of the animal of which the hair has been removed. Zi Gong argues that the skin deprived of the hair of a tiger or a leopard is no different from that of a dog or a sheep. In other words, although the shorn pelts come from different animals, once deprived of the pattern from its hair, they become the same substance.<sup>67</sup> In other words, even though we have discerned concepts such as inwardness and outwardness for *zhi* and *wen*, from this passage, we are reminded that *wen* and *zhi* eventually constitute the same entity; the only difference is their methods of representation.

The nature of the debate between Fingarette and Schwartz reveals that we have not yet evaded the encumbering of a dualistic structure and its ensuing assumptions. Catherine Bell also warns how the category of “ritual” discloses less about ritual itself, but more about the preexisting assumptions of the thought-action dichotomy in our intellectual framework.<sup>68</sup> However, my question is whether the modern assumption or problem of separating the performative act from its qualities, capacities, and disposition is a valid concern or if the potential discrepancy between action and intention was already a fundamental consideration for the early Ruists. As shown in our reconstruction, if one's outward patterns of civilized conduct are always and already integral to one's adherence to ethical ideals, then the

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<sup>66</sup> D.C. Lau, *The Analects*, 162.

<sup>67</sup> Liu Xie 劉勰, *Wenxin Diaolong* 文心雕龍 (Hubei: Chongwen shuju, 1877), 7.64. For English translation, see Youzhong Shi, *The literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (New York: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2015): 370.

<sup>68</sup> Catherine Bell, *Ritual Theory and Ritual Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953).

questions remains: why is there even a *wen-zhi* distinction? In other words, if ritual and morality are conceived as one and the same, as shown in the text, then why is there an attempt to reintegrate them, implying that a possible differentiation existed prior to the argument? As we stated earlier, the *wen-zhi* discussion could answer directly to the suspicion of hollowness in ritual by attributing moral principles to one's bodily deportment. Indeed, conceptually, the defense of ritual as anything other than hollow inherently affirms the existence of an exterior and an interior, acknowledging a thoughtful consideration of duality even if aimed at establishing a relationship between the two. The next step would involve situating the *wen-zhi* duality in a larger intellectual milieu to examine the common ethos in which the suspicion of ritual arises, how different thinkers speak to each other to negotiate and adjudicate their views, and particularly how the early Ruists respond to their critiques.

## Chapter 2

The conceptual pair of *wen-zhi* was a recurring theme in the intellectual discourse of the Han. In fact, there was an ongoing discourse revolving around *wen-zhi* for thinkers to express their stance and adjudication within the debate for ritual or a differentiated and hierarchical social order as represented in *li*. Overall, I would like to argue that even though the *wen-zhi* pair appeared to develop from a term defining the quality of a *junzi* in the *Analects* to a signifier for political institutions and state ritual, its essential message was not lost. The concept of *wenzhi binbin* in the *Analects* in envisioning an ideal harmony of ethical attributes and observance of ritual was later reconstructed in the debate over whether aesthetics holds the social structure together. Specifically, it was reflected through the discussion wherein the Han thinker was actively debating and choosing the adherence of a political institution and a social order for their current state and the Ruists were elevating their status as specialist for rituals. Therefore, this intellectual discourse in the Han were not merely a rhetorical tool that is explanatory, but an embodiment of a proper social order associated with the moral and political meaning that are taken to constitute an aesthetic whole.

To begin with, in stark contrast with the usage of the conceptual pair of *wen-zhi* in the *Analects*, the outer chapter “Mending Nature” (“Shan Xing” 繕性) of *Zhuangzi* explicitly undermine the discussion of the mutual dependency of *wen* and *zhi*. It is stated that:

The time came, however, when Virtue began to dwindle and decline, and then Sui ren and Fu Xi stepped forward to take charge of the world. As a result there was compliance, but no longer any unity. Virtue continued to dwindle and decline, and then Shennong and the Yellow Emperor stepped forward to take charge of the world.

As a result, there was security but no longer any compliance. Virtue continued to dwindle and decline, and then Yao and Shun stepped forward to take charge of the world. They set about in various fashions to order and transform the world and, in doing so, defiled purity and shattered simplicity. The Way was pulled apart for the sake of goodness; Virtue was imperiled for the sake of conduct. After this, inborn nature was abandoned, and minds were set free to roam, mind joining with mind in understanding; there was knowledge, but it could not bring stability to the world. After this, “culture”(wen 文) was added, and “breadth” was piled on top. “Culture” extinguished the substantial (zhi 質); “breadth” drowned the mind; and after this, the people began to be confused and disordered. They had no way to revert to the true form of their inborn nature or to return once more to the Beginning.

逮德下衰，及燧人、伏羲始為天下，是故順而不一。德又下衰，及神農、黃帝始為天下，是故安而不順。德又下衰，及唐、虞始為天下，興治化之流，澆淳散朴，離道以善，險德以行，然後去性而從於心。心與心識知而不足以定天下，然後附之以文，益之以博。文滅質，博溺心，然後民始惑亂，無以反其性情而復其初。<sup>69</sup>

The text employs some of the terms used in the *Analects*, which on the surface level bear the same range of connotation yet were utilized to articulate an alternative view. For the author, the growth of differentiation in *wen* (i.e., the development of distinctions or differences of the society) represents a loss of the original unity; the proper way ought to be returning to the beginning of that process and the original condition or the basic stuff, *zhi*. The original condition is where unity *yi* 一, *xing* 性, and the complete *de* 德 or harmony (*he* 和) reside; in other words, a state of the original, undifferentiated unity that is opposed to human activity. Such human activity is culpable for the deterioration of *de* 德 when the ancient sages took administration of the world and introduced various methods to order and transform the world (*zhihu zhi liu* 治化之流). In doing so, the *wen* or the patterning of the world with administration and differentiation has extinguished the *zhi* or the basic stuff of the original

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<sup>69</sup> Guo qingfan 郭慶藩, ed. *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋 (*Zhuangzi with Collected Commentaries*) (Taipei: Lianjing, 1981), 551-554. For English Translation, I used Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 123.

condition. In other words, *wen* and *zhi* are no longer in congruity but are dichotomous and opposing each other. And the text is clearly extolling *zhi* over *wen* in promoting the original unity and the nature of things as superior and arguing that human action only leads to degeneration from the primordial simplicity and unity. In other words, the author sees the imposition of human-made systems and structures as detrimental to the inherent nature and harmony of the society. Thus, the author suggests that a way to return to the original condition and a solution to the chaos and moral deterioration of society is to return to the original condition of undifferentiated unity and the basic stuff.

A.C. Graham and Harold Roth state that it has been established by current scholars that the text of *Zhuangzi* was not a homogenous collection made by a single author, but one that contains a considerable amount of miscellaneous material.<sup>70</sup> According to Burton Watson, the outer chapters of the *Zhuangzi* were organized by Guo Xiang 郭象, who excluded several sections that he deemed to be of low quality and clearly false nature, and ultimately selected a text containing thirty-three sections. Guo Xiang divided these sections into three categories: seven “inner chapters,” fifteen “outer chapters,” and eleven “miscellaneous chapters.”<sup>71</sup> It is widely accepted that the “inner chapters” represent the fundamental ideas of what is taken as *Zhuangzi*’s philosophy. The outer chapters are regarded as dating from a period later (c. 200 B. C.) than that of the “inner chapters,” which include

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<sup>70</sup> Harold, D. Roth, “*Chuang Tzu* 莊子,” *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, ed., Michael Loewe (Berkeley: The Society for the Study of Early China and The Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, 1993), 56-67.

A.C. Graham, “How Much *Chuang Tzu* Did *Chuang Tzu* Write?” *A Companion to Angus C. Graham’s Chuang Tzu The Inner Chapters*, ed., Harold D. Roth, Monographs of the Society for Asian and Comparative Philosophy, no. 20 (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003), 58-104.

<sup>71</sup> Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, xviii.

several sections that are parallel to those in the *Daodejing*.<sup>72</sup> It is believed that this represents an effort of the “Laozi” wing of the Daoist school sought to merge the philosophical ideas of Zhuangzi and Laozi which are quite distinct in the first place. A.C. Graham suggests in his analysis of authorship of *Zhuangzi* that the chapter of “Mending Nature” appear to expound a philosophy resembling the Primitivist’s.<sup>73</sup> The term “Primitivists,” coined by A.C. Graham, represent a coherent and unified set of ideologies found in a portion of the *Zhuangzi*.

However, it is noteworthy rather than a cohesive group of people, the Primitivists are perhaps a partially cohering set of arguments spread across many diverse texts. Thus, just like the usage of Confucianism, while I would use the term Primitivists throughout the chapter, I do not suggest they are a singular, non-conflicting, and consistent tradition of thought within a group of people, rather a set of arguments that are cohesive which formed a tradition of thought.

Graham argues that the Primitivists’ philosophy is grounded in the concepts of *xing* 性 (nature) and *de* 德 (virtue), which arise from it, and its natural course that leads to alignment with the Way. In contrast, the Primitivists regard *wen* as incompatible with one’s innate nature. They contend that the presence of *wen* or civilized society complicates the simplicity of life and hinders individuals’ natural capacities through overstimulation and distraction to improper pursuit. The Primitivists idealize a tribal Utopia where humans live spontaneously without societal differentiation. The introduction of moral rules, beginning

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<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> A.C. Graham, “How Much *Chuang Tzu* Did *Chuang Tzu* Write?” *A Companion to Angus C. Graham’s Chuang Tzu The Inner Chapters*, 80-83.

with the era of the Yellow Emperor, has eroded innate instincts and disrupted the original harmony.<sup>74</sup>

Thus, in the earlier part of this chapter, the text of *Zhuangzi* stated that “when within there is purity, fullness, and a return to true form, we have when good faith is expressed in face and body and there is a compliance with elegance, we have rites. But if all emphasis is placed on the conduct of rites and music, then the world will fall into disorder.” 中純實而反乎情，樂也；信行容體而順乎文，禮也。禮樂遍行，則天下亂矣。<sup>75</sup> This passage seems to echo the key lines from Laozi 38: “Thus it was that when the Dao was lost, its attributes appeared; when its attributes were lost, benevolence appeared; when benevolence was lost, righteousness appeared; and when righteousness was lost, the proprieties appeared. Now propriety is the attenuated form of level-heartedness and good faith and is also the commencement of disorder.” 故失道而後德，失德而後仁，失仁而後義，失義而後禮。夫禮者，忠信之薄，而亂之首。<sup>76</sup> The text from the *Daodejing* shows a critique of civilization: the author believed that the emergence of civilization, defined by the co-emergence of rules and rituals, is a process of a movement away from *Dao* and towards *de*, *ren*, *yi*, and finally to *li*, a process of degeneration and a destruction of the natural and harmonious way. However, the critique of *li* in “Mending Nature” tends to target the malady of an overemphasis on the empty formality or “form for form’s sake” of *li* and *yue* 樂. To be specific, this text suggests that true rites are expressed through the sincerity of one’s action. A mere adherence to the

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> Guo qingfan 郭慶藩, ed. *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, 548-550. Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, 122.

<sup>76</sup> *Laozi Daodejing zhu jiaoshi* 老子道德經注校釋, with a commentary by Wang Bi 王弼(d. 249), annotated by Lou Yulie 樓宇烈 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 93.

formalities in the performance of rites and music is, in this case, the origin of disorder. In this sense, there seems to be some room for resolution between the *Analects* position and this strain of Zhuangzian critique of *wen*.

The position of *wen mie zhi* 文滅質 was further expressed in the book of *Huainanzi* 淮南子 where the theme of devolution from an early age of unity, simplicity, and harmony has been emphasized and explicated in greater details. The text's notion of a primordial unity was given various names, such as "Grand Purity" 太清 or "Grand One" 太一. It is also associated with spiritual illumination, identification with the *Dao* and the Potency with the term *Dao* and *de*, as used in the *Laozi* 老子. The virtues that are extolled more highly in the *Analects* such as *ren*, *yi*, *li*, and *yue* are treated as derivative and secondary qualities. The way the *wen-zhi* pair has been employed as followings: "The reign of grand purity was harmonious and compliant and thus silent and indifferent; substantial and true and thus plain and simple; contained and tranquil, it was not intemperate; exerting and shifting, it followed no precedents. Inwardly it accorded with the Way; outwardly it conformed to Rightness. When stirred, it manifests in *wen* (normative patterns); when moving unhindered, it is beneficial to all things." 太清之始也，和順以寂漠，質真而素樸，閒靜而不躁，推移而無故，在內而合乎道，出外而調於義，發動而成于文，行快而便於物。<sup>77</sup> *Zhi* here is associated with the grand purity (*taiqing* 太清); thus the basic stuff of the primordial unity,

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<sup>77</sup> He Ning 何寧, *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 555. For English translation, see Liu An; John S. Major; Sarah Queen; Andrew Seth Meyer; Harold D. Roth (eds.). *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 267.

and quality of harmony and tranquility. *Wen* arises out of this when the grand purity was stirred into motion; therefore, it is the secondary or derivative quality compared to *zhi*.<sup>78</sup>

However, even though passages *Huainanzi* might incline towards *zhi*, some passages indicate that it did not denounce *wen* altogether. In fact, the position toward *wen* is not at all clear in *Huainanzi* as the text could indicate multifaceted view that does not hold a singular strand when complied by a group of scholars. Some passages qualify the *wen mie zhi* position and suggests that what is harmful for the essence *zhi* are the kind of *wen* that are unnecessary and excessive ornamentation. And the relationship between *zhi* and *wen* is such that *zhi* is always prior to *wen*: “Thus, bells and drums, flutes and panpipes, shields and war hatchets, feather plumes and oxtail banners, all are means to express joy. Unfinished hempen garments, unbleached headcloths, and mourners’ staffs, and weeping, thrashing about, and restraint [on conduct] all are means to express sorrow. Weapon and leather [armor], feather plumes and oxtail banners, metal drums, battle-axes and pole-axes, all are means to express anger. First there must be the inner substance [of the emotion]; then one can make an outward expression of it.” 故鐘鼓管籥，幹鍼羽旄，所以飾喜也；衰苴杖，哭踊有節，所以飾哀也；兵革羽旄，金鼓斧鉞，所以飾怒也。必有其質，乃為之文。<sup>79</sup> Thus, we can see that even though *wen* and *zhi* are sequential, both are needed for the ritual to be completed to perform certain qualities such as the emotions are expressed properly.

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<sup>78</sup> However, even though *wen* was deemed as derivative and secondary in this passage. But it is unclear whether *wen* is regarded as negative from this passage as there is no clear notion of how *wen* was used.

<sup>79</sup> He Ning 何寧, *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋, 599-600. Liu An; John S. Major; Sarah Queen; Andrew Seth Meyer; Harold D. Roth (eds.). *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, 284.

*Huainanzi* is usually attributed to a group of scholars working under the patronage, and at the court of, Liu An 劉安 (ca. 179–122 BCE, r. 164–122 BCE), King of Huai-nan 淮南.<sup>80</sup> It can be seen as a portrayal of a kind of political utopianism and serves as a handbook to guide the enlightened ruler and his court. As a philosophical foundation for this program, the *Huainanzi* argues that political rule is bound by the same patterns that govern the natural world. Harold Roth suggests *Huainanzi* is a rich and complex doubling down on the fundamental teachings of the final or syncretic phase of the classical Daoist tradition.<sup>81</sup> Thus, it incorporates passages from pre-Han writings and creates new synthesis, making it an intertextual text. Building upon Michael Puett’s idea that the *Huainanzi* may have served as a textual sage, recent research by Tobias Zurn suggests that the intentional intertextuality within the *Huainanzi* creates an image of weaving, which is repeatedly used to depict the sage and the Way, establishing a homology between the Dao, the sage, and the “Liu clan’s scripture.”<sup>82</sup> The text itself extensively references its own content, with the image of roots and branches (*benmo* 本末) appearing in the organization of its cosmogonic chapters and serving as a conceptual framework that shapes its doctrines and overall worldview.

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<sup>80</sup> The work was originally divided into three parts, two of which- the “outer” (*waishu* 外書) and the “central” (*zhongshu* 中書) ones – are lost. The extant text, corresponding to the “inner” portion (*neishu* 內書), covers a wide variety of subjects, including cosmology, philosophy, the art of government, mysticism, mythology, hagiography, ethics, education, military affairs, music, and inner nature and vital force (*xing* and *ming*). The text generally embodies a fundamentally Daoist attitude by offering a synthesis of the *Daodejing* and the Zhuangzi, combining the former political leaning with the latter’s more contemplative tendency. For secondary scholarship on the composition, transmission, editions, and textual criticism of the *Huainanzi*, see Harold D. Roth, *The textual history of the Huainan zi* (Ann Arbor: The Association for Asian Studies, 1992).

<sup>81</sup> Harold D. Roth, *The Contemplative Foundations of Classical Daoism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2021), 14.

<sup>82</sup> Tobias Benedikt Zürn, “The Han Imaginaire of Writing as Weaving: Intertextuality and the *Huainanzi*’s Self-Fashioning as an Embodiment of the Way,” *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 79(2), 367-402. Michael J. Puett, “Sages, Creation, and the End of History in the *Huainanzi*,” *The Huainanzi and Textual Production in Early China*, eds., Sarah A. Queen, Michael J. Puett. (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 269-90.

The concept of *benmo* plays a pivotal role in the philosophical framework of *Huainanzi*. It aligns with the Primitivist position presented in chapter of “Mending Nature” of *Zhuangzi*. The concept of *ben* aligns with the concept of *zhi* whereas the concept of *mo* matches with the concept of *wen*. *Ben* is often translated as “root,” “basis,” “foundation,” “fundamental,” or “basic.” It represents the underlying essence that encompasses all aspects of existence. This concept suggests that there is a fundamental and universal source from which everything originates. In the cosmological view offered in the *Huainanzi*, the initial state of existence is undifferentiated and generative. It is akin to a seed from which a tree grows, or a foundation upon which a structure is built. As time progresses, this fundamental essence unfolds and expands, gradually assuming a more complex and intricate form. It branches out, ramifies, and individuates into various expressions and phenomena. The cosmos, therefore, evolves from the initial undifferentiated state to encompass the dynamic interplay of yin and yang, the Five Phases (*Wuxing*), and the diverse multitude of entities in the world. The cosmogonic perspective presented in *Huainanzi* also shares striking similarities with the cosmogonies found in the *Daodejing*. As Vincent Leung suggests, both the received text of *Laozi* and the *Guodian* version indicate a shared belief that the entire world has a single historical origin—a common creative substance that predates and continues to generate all things. This origin is referred to as the Way. Such a historical narrative suggests that aligning oneself with the Way offers protection against the detrimental effects of time. The enlightened sages, capable of harmonizing with the cosmogonic Way,

can perpetuate their flourishing existence indefinitely. This state of alignment with the Way represents the ultimate goal of these texts.<sup>83</sup>

In this context, “*wen*” in the *Huainanzi* refers to the cultural traditions passed down from the ancient sages and these are the “*mo*” 末 the branches. Support for *wen* is thus understood as support for the followers of Ruism and Mohism, who advocate following the textual precedents set in antiquity.<sup>84</sup> The second chapter, “Activating the Genuine” (俶真訓), has been studied by Andrew Meyer, Sarah Queen and Harold Roth, who argue for its alignment with the *Zhuangzi* which aligns with the three authorial voices in the *Zhuangzi*: Zhuang Zhou, the Primitivists, and the Syncretists identified by A.C. Graham. However, Meyer, Queen and Roth argue that the *Huainanzi*, in addition to commenting on the *Zhuangzi*, takes a step further than the Primitivist position and regards the stages in the decline of civilization as real steps in a cosmogonic process and seeks to specify the conditions of each stage.<sup>85</sup> This passage particularly resonates with the Primitivists' perspective on “*wen mie zhi*” mentioned earlier in the *Zhuangzi*:

Coming down to the house of Zhou, decadence dispersed simplicity; [people] deserted the Way for artifice; they were miserly with their Potency in conduct; and cleverness and shrewdness sprouted. When the Zhou house declined, the kingly Way was abandoned. The Confucians and Mohists thus began enumerating their Ways and debating, dividing up disciples, and reciting. From then on, broad learning cast doubt on the sages; elaborate deceit tyrannized the masses. They played and sang and drummed and danced, embroidering the *Odes* and *Documents* to purchase fame and praise in the world. They proliferated rituals of ascending and descending, adorned

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<sup>83</sup> Vincent S. Leung, *The Politics of the Past in Early China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 79-92.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-53.

<sup>85</sup> It is suggested that some of the *Zhuangzi*'s latest portions might be roughly contemporaneous with the *Huainanzi*. Liu An; John S. Major; Sarah Queen; Andrew Seth Meyer; Harold D. Roth (eds.). *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, 77-79. Harold D. Roth, “Who Compiled the *Chuang Tzu*?” *Chinese Texts and Philosophical Contexts: Essays Dedicated to Angus C. Graham*, ed. Henry Rosemont Jr. (La Salle: Open Court Press, 1991), 79-128.

costumes of aprons and caps. The assembled masses were insufficient for the extremes of their alterations; the collected wealth [of the world] was insufficient to meet their expenses.

施及周室之衰，澆淳散樸，雜道以偽，儉德以行，而巧故萌生。周室衰而王道廢，儒墨乃始列道而議，分徒而訟，於是博學以疑聖，華誣以脅眾，弦歌鼓舞，緣飾《詩》、《書》，以買名譽於天下。繁登降之禮，飾紱冕之服，聚眾不足以極其變，積財不足以贍其費。<sup>86</sup>

This passage describes in detail the *wen* or ornamentation that arise as a result of the deterioration from the Way and Simplicity (*pu* 樸) to artifice (*wei* 偽) and the diffusion of the Way because of the decline of the Zhou house. A solution is then offered readily: “For this reason, the learning of the sage: seeks to return nature to its origin and to set the mind to roaming in emptiness... Then one begins to pick at the wriggling and curling minutiae of things; moving and swaying with Humaneness, Rightness, and Music.” 是故聖人之學也，欲以返性于初，而游心於虛也...乃始招螻振繹物之毫芒，搖消掉稍仁義禮樂。<sup>87</sup> In other words, when the emphasis was on the ornamentation and superficiality of things which obscures one’s essential nature, the sage’s goal was to return (*fan* 反) to the original condition or the *ben*. The other passages make the mapping of the *wen-zhi* pair on to the *mo* and *ben* more conspicuous and further underscore this point.

To dress in brocades and embroidery and ascend the ancestral temple is to value (outer) refinement. To hold *gui* and *zhang* tablets in front of yourself is to esteem inner substance. (*gui* and *zhang* tablets are jade tablets that conferred the right to speak or perform certain duties at court), if your outer refinement does not overwhelm your inner substance, you may be called a superior man. Therefore, it takes a year to build a chariot, but if it lacks a three-inch long linchpin, you cannot gallop off in it. It takes a carpenter to frame up a door, but without a foot-long door latch, you cannot close it securely. Therefore when the superior Man acts, he thinks about the result.

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<sup>86</sup> He Ning 何寧, *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋, 138-139. Liu An; John S. Major; Sarah Queen; Andrew Seth Meyer; Harold D. Roth (eds.). *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, 99-100.

<sup>87</sup> He Ning 何寧, *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋, 140-141. Liu An; John S. Major; Sarah Queen; Andrew Seth Meyer; Harold D. Roth (eds.), 100.

錦繡登廟，貴文也；圭璋在前，尚質也。文不勝質，之謂君子。故終年為車，無三寸之鐻，不可以驅馳；匠人斫戶，無一尺之榱，不可以閉藏。故君子行斯乎其結。<sup>88</sup>

The passage conveys the idea that certain actions are performed by people naturally, without seeking rewards or personal gain. For example, a father's love for his son and a sage-king's nurturing of his people are not driven by utilitarian motives. The passage suggests that sincerity alone is sufficient in these cases. Therefore, when it comes to the discussion of *wen* the outward refinement or patterning in *li*, and *zhi* the inner substance, *zhi* is regarded as prior to *wen*. The examples that are used to manifest the concept of *zhi* was the usage of 圭 *gui* and 璋 *zhang*, on which the commentator noted: “to sacrifice with jade is substance. 以玉祭之者，質也。<sup>89</sup> On the other hand, the difference between the act of dressing in brocades and embroidery while ascending ancestral temples and holding tablets that confer certain status and duties in front of oneself is that the former place the importance solely on external appearances while the latter symbolizes the esteem given to the underlying significance of the tablets. Thus, *wen* should not overwhelm *zhi*. The examples offered highlight that in case of craftsmanship, even if things are meticulously crafted, its functionality and ability to perform ultimately depends upon its material rather than the embroidery or artistry. In this sense, the raw material is the *zhi* and directly influence the result or end (*jie* 結) of an action.

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<sup>88</sup> He Ning 何寧. *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋, 715. Liu An; John S. Major; Sarah Queen; Andrew Seth Meyer; Harold D. Roth (eds.). *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, 358.

<sup>89</sup> He Ning 何寧. *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋, 715. The association of *zhi* with jade is unclear of whether the point is that raw material, jade, is more important than the carving of it. However, the idea of the actual material is more important than the embellishment or artistry is prevalent.

Ultimately, the philosophical position of the *Huainanzi*'s use of the *wen-zhi* pair was expressed in the following passage of chapter 14 "Saying Explained" 詮言訓:

A drum does not absorb sounds; consequently, it can produce [various] sounds. A mirror does not retain forms; consequently, it can reflect [various] forms. Metal [bells] and stone [chimes] possess the ability to make sounds, but if you do not strike them, they will not sound. The flute and panpipes possess the ability to emit tones, but if you do not blow them, they will not sound. The sage internalizes what [should be] hidden and is not drawn out by things. When affairs arise, the sage regulates them; when things appear, the sage responds to them. Those who adorn their exterior harm their interior. Those who cling to their emotions injure their spirit. Those who manifest their outer refinement obscure their inner substance. Those who do not for a moment forget their worthiness will invariably obstruct their nature. Those who within a hundred paces do not forget their appearance will invariably encumber their bodies. Thus, when feathers and wings are beautiful, they injure the skeleton and marrow. When leaves and branches are beautiful, they injure the roots and stems. Of both being able to be beautiful, there is no instance in all the world.

鼓不滅於聲，故能有聲；鏡不沒於形，故能有形；金石有聲，弗叩弗鳴；管簫有音，弗吹無聲。聖人內藏，不為物先倡，事來而制，物至而應。飾其外者傷其內，扶其情者害其神，見其文者蔽其質，無須臾忘為質者，必困於性。百步之中，不忘其容者，必累其形。故羽翼美者傷骨骸，枝葉美者害根莖，能兩美者，天下無之也。<sup>90</sup>

Chapter 14, presented as a collection of gnomic sayings, primarily focuses on how sages embody the Way by avoiding external distractions that divert the mind, disturb one's nature, allowing them ultimately to return to the primordial state of perfect unity and nondifferentiation. The cosmogonic view presented in this chapter explains how the multitude of things emerge from the "Grand One" 太一 that is a state of "Cavernous and undifferentiated Heaven and Earth and the chaotic and inchoate Uncarved Block" 洞同天地，渾沌為樸，未造而成物 which have not yet been created or fashioned into distinct

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<sup>90</sup> He Ning 何寧. *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋, 1020-1021. Liu An; John S. Major; Sarah Queen; Andrew Seth Meyer; Harold D. Roth (eds.). *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, 559.

entities.<sup>91</sup> This view can easily draw on the traditional distinction between *zhi*, representing the content and raw material, and *wen*, representing the outer form and, in this case, artificiality. The central idea is that to attain sagehood or enlightenment, one must rise above the contrivance of civilization and not be entangled in the allure of the phenomenal world or become excessively attached to physical forms, *wen*. The passage suggests that attaching oneself to external ornamentation, emotions, refinement, and physical appearances can undermine one's inner substance *zhi*. In the closing line of the passage, we find the argument that it is essentially impossible to simultaneously perfect both external form and inner substance while maintaining harmony, which is tantamount to a direct rejection of the *Analect's* goal of *wenzhi binbin*.

This position stands in sharp divergence from texts like the *Xunzi* 荀子. For Xunzi, culture should be defined by ritual and morality. Thus, instead of emphasizing a return to the origin from which things were generated, Xunzi advocates for conscious activity (*wei* 偽). Unlike the text of *Zhuangzi* has indicated, Xunzi deliberately denounces nature: “the nature of man is evil, and goodness results from conscious activity” 人之性惡，其善者偽也。<sup>92</sup>

And:

Thus, I say that human nature is the original beginning and the raw material, and deliberate effort is what makes it patterned, ordered, and exalted. If there were no human nature, then there would be nothing for conscious activity to be applied to. If there were no conscious activities, then human nature would not be able to beautify itself. Human nature and deliberate effort must unite, and then the reputation of the sage and the work of unifying all under heaven are thereupon brought to completion.

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<sup>91</sup> He Ning 何寧. *Huainanzi jishi* 淮南子集釋, 991. Liu An; John S. Major; Sarah Queen; Andrew Seth Meyer; Harold D. Roth (eds.). *The Huainanzi: A Guide to the Theory and Practice of Government in Early Han China*, 536.

<sup>92</sup> Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, 434.

故曰：性者、本始材朴也；偽者、文理隆盛也。無性則偽之無所加，無偽則性不能自美。性偽合，然後成聖人之名，一天下之功於是就也。<sup>93</sup>

In other words, for Xunzi, human nature at birth is the basic stuff, but one needs to intervene and alter it with conscious activity, such that we are complete as humans. According to Puett, Xunzi develops a sophisticated version of the vision that appeared in the brief passages of the *Analects*: the sages' acts of creation involve not arbitrary inventions but the bringing to humanity of a normative order which is ultimately rooted in Heaven.<sup>94</sup>

In offering this vision, Xunzi emphasized the role of *li* as a means of enhancing the humane life through ornamentation (*shi* 飾) and refinement (*wen* 文). He believed that all rituals, whether meant to serve the living or honor the dead, were intended to add an aesthetic value and depth to the human experience. In his words, “All rituals, if for the service of the living, are to embellish joy; or if to send off the dead, they are to embellish sorrow; or if for sacrifice, they are to embellish reverence; or if they are military, they are to beautify the authority of [a ruler].” 凡禮，事生，飾歡也；送死，飾哀也；祭祀，飾敬也；師旅，飾威也。<sup>95</sup> Xunzi also believed that funeral rituals (喪禮) were a way for the living to adorn the deceased. He considered *wen* 文 as a form of ornamentation, as he contrasted the concept of *wen* with *yong* 用, stating that “Mozi was fixated on the useful and did not understand the

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<sup>93</sup> Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, 346. Eric L. Hutton, *荀子 Xunzi, The Complete Text* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 210.

<sup>94</sup> See Michael Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation; Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China*, 64-76.

<sup>95</sup> Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, 369. Eric L. Hutton, *荀子 Xunzi, The Complete Text* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 210.

value of pattern” 墨子蔽於用而不知文。<sup>96</sup> In the chapter “Discourse on Ritual” (“Li Lun” 禮論), Xunzi explained the role of ritual in nurturing and differentiating human society.

The gentleman not only obtains its nurturing, but also loves its differentiations. What is meant by “differentiations”? I say: It is for noble and lowly to have their proper ranking, for elder and youth to have their proper distance, and for poor and rich, humble and eminent each to have their proper weights. And so, in the Grand Chariot of the Son of Heaven there are cushions, as a means to nurture his body. On the sides are carried sweet-smelling angelica, as a means to nurture his nose. In front there is a patterned crossbar, as a means to nurture his eyes. The sounds of the attached bells match the tunes Wu and Xiang when proceeding slowly, and they match the tunes Shao and Hu when proceeding quickly, as a means to nurture his ears. There is a dragon pennant with nine tassels, as a means to nurture his ability to inspire trust. There are insignias of a crouching rhinoceros and kneeling tiger, serpent-decorated coverings for the horses, silk curtains, and dragon patterns on the chariot hooks, as a means to nurture his awe-inspiring authority. Thus, the horses of the Grand Chariot are repeatedly given training to be obedient, and only then will they be harnessed, as a means to nurture his safety.

君子既得其養，又好其別。曷謂別？曰：貴賤有等，長幼有差，貧富輕重皆有稱者也。故天子大路越席，所以養體也；側載翠芷，所以養鼻也；前有錯衡，所以養目也；和鸞之聲，步中武象，趨中韶護，所以養耳也；龍旗九旂，所以養信也；寢兕持虎，蛟韃、絲末、彌龍，所以養威也；故大路之馬必信至，教順，然後乘之，所以養安也。<sup>97</sup>

This passage discusses how maintaining the proper distinctions between different social classes and roles can lead people to internalize the proper social order. It uses the example of the Grand Chariot of the Son of Heaven, which is decorated and equipped in a way that nurtures different senses and abilities of the ruler, such as cushions for the body, sweet-smelling angelica for the nose, and dragon patterns on the chariot hooks to inspire awe. On the other hand, the elaborate ornamentation of the chariot serves as a display of power for the

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<sup>96</sup> Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, 393. Eric L. Hutton, *荀子 Xunzi, The Complete Text* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 226

<sup>97</sup> Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, 347-348. Eric L. Hutton, *荀子 Xunzi, The Complete Text* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 201-202.

observer, as the advent of the chariot signifies the presence of the Son of Heaven. The process of “nurturing” referred to in the passage is achieved through proper ornamentation, as such patterns mark and celebrate the inherited social order and its hierarchies.<sup>98</sup> Masayuki Sato suggests that aesthetic values, in other words, the refinement of rituals and the ornamentation of human society, are essential components of Xunzi's ethico-social theory, which emphasizes social order and the importance of distinguishing between social ranks and roles.<sup>99</sup> Overall, Xunzi believed that the purpose of establishing *wen* was to create a clear distinction between different social ranks and roles, which is necessary for maintaining social order. This distinction can be achieved by emphasizing the ornamentation of every individual who participates in rituals. Therefore, it is important to express these different social ranks with sophistication in public to maintain social order.

Compared to the concept of *wen* as central to Xunzi's thought and its theoretical significance, the pairing of *wen* and *zhi* is less obviously conscious. For instance, the pair is found in this line: “He has loyalty and trustworthiness for his substance, scrupulousness and honesty as his guiding principles, ritual propriety as his form.” 忠信以為質，端慤以為統，禮義以為文。<sup>100</sup> Separated by nine characters, and rendered into three phrases, it is not

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<sup>98</sup> According to Fredric Jameson: “ideology is not something which informs or invests symbolic production; rather the aesthetic act is itself ideological, and the production of aesthetic or narrative form is to be seen as ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal ‘solution’ to unresolvable social contradiction.” Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1981), 79. The term “Ideology” for Jameson is “a representational structure which allows the individual subject to conceive or imagine his or her lived relationship to transpersonal realities such as he social structure or the collective logic of History.” (*ibid*, 30). David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese historiography*, 256. This aligns with the function of ritual suggested by Michael Puett that *li* serves to create an “as if” or subjunctive space which operates in disjunction of lived reality and imagined normativity.

<sup>99</sup> Masayuki Sato, *The Confucian Quest for Order*, 387-390.

<sup>100</sup> Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, 256. Eric L. Hutton, *荀子 Xunzi, The Complete Text* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 139.

obvious that *wen* and *zhi* here constitute a pair; they simply align with how the terms appear in the *Analects*. *Zhi* is associated with inner qualities like loyalty (*zhong* 忠), and trustworthiness (*xin* 信), whereas *wen* is associated with *li* and *yi*. It shows that *wen* and *zhi* serve as a demarcation of Ruist virtues wherein qualities like loyalty and trustworthiness belong to different realms from ritual and propriety.

Beyond the Western Han, the terms *wen* and *zhi* come to play important roles in aesthetics and literary criticism. We can see in these later usages reverberations of the basic questions posed by the Warring States and Han discourse on the *wen-zhi* pair. Is there an ideal, harmonious balance of the two? How is it achieved? Or does the concern for such balance mark a tragic loss of natural purity and simplicity? In her analysis of *wen* in *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍, Wai-yee Li identifies *wen* in the text as “the manifestation of the Way in the world of appearance.” She emphasizes that *wen* is not merely external decoration (*waishi* 外飾) but rather the externalization of an internal necessity.<sup>101</sup> On the other hand, Cai Zong-qi suggests that Liu Xie (c. 465 CE–c. 521) demonstrate *wen* as inseparable from *zhi* is a re-embodiment to repudiate the embellishment reading of *wen* thereupon elevate the status of refined writing.<sup>102</sup> For instance, Liu Xie 劉勰 in *Wenxin Diaolong* provides a commentary on passage 12/18 in the *Analects*: “The ornamental pattern of a thing is of necessity conditioned by its essential nature. On the other hand, tigers and leopards, deprived of their patterns, would have the same kind of hide as dogs and sheep; and rhinoceros skins require red varnish

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<sup>101</sup> Wai-yee Li, “Between ‘Literary Mind’ and ‘Carving Dragons’: Order and Excess in *Wenxin diaolong*,” in *A Chinese Literary Mind: Culture, Creativity and Rhetoric in Wenxin Diaolong* (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 2001), 193-225.

<sup>102</sup> Cai Zongqi, “*Wen* and the Construction of a Critical System in *Wenxin Diaolong*,” *Chinese Literature: Essays, Articles, Reviews (CLEAR)*, 22 (2000), 3-4.

[when they are made into armor]. The essential nature of a thing also depends on its ornamental patterns.” 文附質也。虎豹無文，則鞞同犬羊；犀兕有皮，而色資丹漆，質待文也。<sup>103</sup> In doing so, Liu Xie reminds his audience that *wen* and *zhi* are never distinct; they constitute the same object. The only difference is their method of representation.

In contrast to Cai Zongqi’s suggestion that *wen* and *zhi* have undergone a process of disembodiment and re-embodiment in the text of *Wenxin Diaolong*, I do not believe that there is ever a likely separation between these two conceptual terms. Instead, they function together as a premise for expressing different ideas. While *wen* is more prevalent in the text of *Xunzi* and holds a central position in his thought, the usage of the *wen-zhi* pair suggests an intuitive understanding that doesn’t require explicit examination. The emphasis on *wen* thus does not imply a separation from *zhi* but rather an understanding that it is an inherent aspect of the overall moral framework. *Wen* and *zhi* in *Xunzi* are seen as complementary and interconnected, representing different facets of the observance of ritual vis-à-vis expression of virtue. In the “Mending Nature” chapter of *Zhuangzi* and the *Huainanzi*, on the other hand, the Primitivists singled out the term of *zhi* due to its connection with *wen* to contrast the Confucian moral and ethical discourse. Therefore, the contrasting perspectives on *wen* and *zhi* in *Xunzi* and the passages in *Zhuangzi* and *Huainanzi* do not indicate a potential separation but rather different emphases within their respective philosophical frameworks.

While *Xunzi* may emphasize the importance of external forms and rituals in cultivating

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<sup>103</sup> Liu Xie 劉勰, *Wenxin Diaolong* 文心雕龍 (Hubei: Chongwen shuju, 1877), 7.64. For English translation, see Youzhong Shi, *The literary Mind and the Carving of Dragons* (New York: The Chinese Univ. of Hong Kong Press, 2015), 370.

virtue, the Primitivists highlights the significance of inner commitment and personal cultivation. Both traditions recognize the interplay between *wen* and *zhi*, albeit with differing emphases, in their understanding of moral cultivation and ethical conduct.

Extensive scholarly work suggests that the texts such as *Zhuangzi*, *Huainanzi*, and *Daode jing* have their origins in the religious practices or experiences of mystics.<sup>104</sup> One prominent scholar, Harold Roth, has put forth the hypothesis that the *Daodejing* contains “philosophies directly derived from the experience of practicing mystics.” In doing so, he challenges previous scholarship that regarded the *Laozi* as a purely philosophical work produced by a school of philosophy and instead argues for the religious foundation of Laozi’s work. Roth specifically identifies the foundational texts of the Daoist tradition as products of one or more closely related master-disciple lineages.<sup>105</sup> These lineages focused primarily on learning and practicing specific techniques or *shu*. According to Roth, the essence of Daoist philosophy lies not in abstract metaphysical speculation but in elucidating the insights attained through inner cultivation practices and discussing their practical benefits. He maintains that works such as the *Guanzi* 管子, the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, and the

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<sup>104</sup> Isabelle Robinet in her examination of the syncretism of Daoism, has recognized that Daoism took shape through the syncretism of various trends of thought and religious practices. This integration occurred from the Warring States period onwards. Daoism inherited textual and conceptual frameworks from important works such as the *Daodejing* and the *Zhuangzi*, as well as from *Yin-Yang* and *wuxing* cosmology. Additionally, Daoism incorporated remnants of early myths and physiological practices dating from the same period. Robinet particularly identified how Daoism incorporates features from Han religious and intellectual syncretism which range from quest for longevity, diverse forms of learning and lore, and practices related to medicine, alchemy, cosmology, and astrology. See Isabelle Robinet, “Definitions; *daojia* 道家”, *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* Vol 1, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (London: Routledge, 2008), 5-8, 20-24.

<sup>105</sup> See Harold D. Roth, “The Laozi in the Context of Early Daoist Mystical Praxis,” *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi*, eds. Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 59-97. It is widely accepted by scholar that the term Daoism or *daojia* 道家 was not a school even though some features of Daoism can be found in the text of *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi*. However, it was not until late Han syncreticism as expressed in the text of *Huainanzi* that combine the thought of the *Daode jing* and the *Zhuangzi* with the philosophical thought of the Huang-Lao school.

*Huainanzi*, which were produced in the context of various courts, were collected teachings from a variety of Daoist and non-Daoist lineages. Overall, Roth's research highlights the religious underpinnings of Daoist texts, emphasizing their connection to mystical experiences and practical cultivation.

Many other scholars such as Wayne Proudfoot, Livia Kohn and Mark Csikszentmihalyi on the religious aspects of the *Laozi* all established a connection between the text and its practical application.<sup>106</sup> Csikszentmihalyi's earlier work connects the early Daoist communities specifically with Han mantic practice which he identifies as including classical divination techniques, as well as a variety of omenological and fate interpolation methods, dream interpretation and physiognomy. He suggests that *Dao* is a mystical thread believed by many to permeate the phenomenal world, encompassing the sum of the "techniques" (*shu* 術) employed to act in that world.<sup>107</sup> Thus, the text of *Laozi* can be best understood as a composite text structured around thematic principles, focusing on the diverse methods used to articulate the *Dao*. The primary objective of Daoist texts, according to proponents of the Dao, is to propose the existence of a transcendent Dao that underlies reality. This concept provides a basis for the sage ruler's capacity to directly access political

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<sup>106</sup> See Wayne Proudfoot, *Religious Experience* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), 127. Livia Kohn, *Early Chinese Mysticism: Philosophy and Soteriology in the Taoist Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 34. Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Mysticism and Apophatic Discourse in the Laozi," *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi*, eds. Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), 33-59.

<sup>107</sup> Mark Csikszentmihalyi, "Han Cosmology and Mantic Practices," *Daoism Handbook*. Handbook of Oriental Studies. Ed. Livia Kohn (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 53-74.

and moral knowledge, thereby challenging the ultimate authority of alternative traditions and texts dedicated to rulership and ethics, such as Confucianism.<sup>108</sup>

In this pursuit, Daoist texts encompass practices that are often regarded as mantic or occult knowledge and involve practices that are prevalent in the Han court. Consequently, two contrasting perspectives emerge. On one hand, a trend of thought referred to as the Primitivists by Graham and Roth which appears in text of the *Daodejing*, *Zhuangzi* and *Huainanzi*, presenting a kind of cosmological outlook and a discernible moral reality that sharply diverges from the conventional system of rituals and morality of the core Confucian tradition represented by the *Xunzi*. Within this tradition, the Confucian moral perspective is deemed artificial and prone to failure. On the other hand, Primitivism advocates for direct access to political and moral knowledge, as well as spiritual enlightenment, in order to attain imperial authority—an objective shared with Confucianism but pursued through different means, such as obscure occult arts and practices that are less readily understood today. In other words, the abovementioned texts from *Zhuangzi* and *Huainanzi* could share similar

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<sup>108</sup> The relationship between early Confucianism and Daoism is more nuanced and intricate than what can be perceived from our contemporary standpoint. Confucianism is built upon a set of beliefs that encompass specific behavioral ideals, emphasizing honor and propriety, which were shared among the ruling clans of various statelets during Confucius' time. These codes of conduct associated with the nobility were subsequently transformed by Confucius from a social ideal, accessible only to those of aristocratic status, into a moral ideal that any conscientious individual could cultivate and embody. Therefore, Confucians prioritize social responsibility as their foremost concern. Early Daoism, on the other hand, shared commonalities with early Confucianism in the sense that both philosophies advocated for the potential of personal development and self-transformation, ultimately contributing to the well-being of oneself and those around them. While Daoists may have displayed less interest in the existing social and political institutions of ancient China compared to Confucians, it is important to note that they did not outright denounce monarchy and aristocracy. Moreover, concepts such as modern-day egalitarianism or radical individualism would have been foreign and incongruous to their worldview. Russell Kirkland, "Taoism and Confucianism," *The Encyclopedia of Taoism* Vol 1, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (London: Routledge, 2008), 137-139. There has been extensive scholarship dedicated to the relationship between early Confucianism and early Daoism, much of which complicates the traditional view put forth by Sima Tan 司馬談 (d. 110 BC) in the "Essentials of the six *jia*" (*liujia zhi yaozhi* 六家之要旨). In particular, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi, Michael Nylan. 2003. "Constructing Lineages and Inventing Traditions through Exemplary Figures in Early China." *T'oung Pao* 90:59-99.

goal of imperial authority with the Confucian classics, but the methods for achieving such a goal could vary in these texts, in part because of the separation of the moral vocabularies from their original ritual texts. This contention becomes evident through attention to the *wen-zhi* thought in various texts, where the relational words and broader context used may stand in stark contrast to one another.

The polemic between the position expressed in *Zhuangzi*, *Daodejing*, and in *Xunzi* indicates that the kind of moral vocabularies prevalent in the *Analects* are widely acknowledged. However, a moral vocabulary that describes the ethical ideal gradually came to stand on its own devoid of their original ritual context. According to Mark Csikszentmihalyi, there are two major ways Chinese writers linked ritual to virtue: “social” and “individual” explanations of the ritual-ethics connection. He argues that ritual was linked to self-cultivation practice not just on the level of society but also on that of the individual and was at the heart of explaining its efficacy in forming dispositions to moral behavior. In specific, he argues that several attitudes such as sincerity (*cheng* 誠), reverence (*jing* 敬), and fear or awe (*wei* 畏) originate in descriptions of ritual performance; and the efficacy of sacrifice is contingent upon those attitudes. However, they gradually became important in non-sacrificial contexts, especially in case of individual moral practice, which Csikszentmihalyi identifies as a physical, material transformation in the body of the individual.<sup>109</sup> Thus, while the “Confucian classics” categorize the query about ethics as a

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<sup>109</sup> Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Ethics and Self-cultivation practice in Early China,” *Early Chinese Religion: Part One: Shang through Han (1250 BC-220 AD)* ed. by John Lagerwey, Marc Kalinowski (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 519-543.

means for imperial authority while also emphasizing the role of *li* in securing the hierarchical order, he argues that early Daoist texts typically show that the physical self-cultivation techniques are oriented to goals that are in some cases similar to those found in the “Confucian classics.” Thus, while the goal might be the same, the methodology between these traditions differs; the Confucians are more closely associated with forms of collective symbolic action, while the early Daoists as described by scholars such as Roth pursue individual forms of cultivation that do not lend themselves to public, state-sponsored ritual performance.<sup>110</sup>

The social and individual descriptions of how ritual connects to morality clearly map on to the distinction of *wen* and *zhi*. In the first chapter, we have established *wen* concerns mainly the social, visible life of individuals, whereas *zhi* concerns the inner commitment to one’s ethical ideals. Returning to the previous discussion of *wen* in the first chapter, we explained that *wen* patterning serves as a symbol or indication of embedded meaning within cultural artifacts. It distinguishes between the surface appearance and a deeper significance. In its broadest sense, *wen* encompasses any patterns on a surface that reveal information about what lies beyond, such as an individual’s moral character or the idealized social order of the Zhou. We have also identified specific passages in the *Analects* that address potential

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<sup>110</sup> This is not to preclude the existence of personal, inwardly-focused forms of self-cultivation within Confucianism. For example, *Mencius* is exemplary in this case of self-cultivation. He believes that people possess four germs and thus have the capacity to cultivate those natural incipient into ethical ideals: “Human beings have these four sprouts just as they have four limbs. For one to have these four sprouts and yet to say of oneself that one is unable to fulfill them is to injure oneself, while to say that one’s ruler is unable to fulfill them is to injure one’s ruler. When we know how to enlarge and bring to fulfillment these four sprouts that are within us, it will be like a fire beginning to burn or a spring finding an outlet.” 人之有是四端也，猶其有四體也。有是四端而自謂不能者，自賊者也；謂其君不能者，賊其君者也。凡有四端於我者，知皆擴而充之矣，若火之始然，泉之始達。 See trans. Irene Bloom, ed. Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Mencius*, 22.

criticisms of the Ruists approach to ritual, which can be seen as superficial and hypocritical by non-Ru factions like the Mohists and Daoists. Therefore, the *Analects* advocates for how the ritual and moral order of the Zhou, as the prevailing moral system, became a target of criticism and a motivation for individuals to turn inward and seek genuine commitment. This phenomenon is commonly observed in anthropological analyses.

For example, Mary Douglas in her book *Natural Symbols* explored various explanations for anti-ritualism, such as revolts against established hierarchical religious systems by the disenfranchised. She identified phases in the transition away from ritualism: first, there is a contempt for external ritual forms, followed by the private internalization of religious experiences. In Douglas's analysis, ritualism is characterized by a heightened appreciation for symbolic action and a belief in its efficacy. This aligns with the concept of *wen*, which encompasses the patterns and symbols that communicate deeper meanings within cultural artifacts.<sup>111</sup> *Wen*, as a social phenomenon, reflects the collective understanding and adherence to ritualistic practices in a civilized society. It emphasizes the importance of external forms and shared cultural expressions, serving as a means of communication and transmitter of cultural values. This perspective connects ritualism, *wen*, and the social aspect of human experience, as they all revolve around the significance of collective symbolic action and the maintenance of social order.

On the other hand, anti-ritualism, as analyzed by Douglas, represents a rejection of ritualism itself. It involves a shift towards the inner experience, intuitive knowledge, and a

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<sup>111</sup> Mary Douglas, *Natural Symbols* (London and New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2004), 7.

denigration of standardized expressions.<sup>112</sup> This rejection of external forms and standardized rituals corresponds to the concept of *zhi*, which pertains to the inner commitment to ethical ideals. *Zhi* focuses on personal ethical introspection and the cultivation of one's moral character. It recognizes the limitations of external rituals and emphasizes the individual's genuine commitment to ethical principles. In this sense, the concept of *wen* corresponds with ritualism in representing the social and external aspects such as the external enactment of the symbolic actions and the communication of cultural symbols and values through shared practice; on the other hand, the concept of *zhi* correspond with anti-ritualism by associating with individual and internal aspects which critique the superficiality of external forms and highlights the importance of personal ethical introspection.

This elucidates the shift away from Confucian ritualism towards the pursuit of individual cultivation. While the *Analects* acknowledge the significance of inner commitment in performing rituals, there remains an embedded emphasis on external forms and the importance of collective symbolic action as I have explicated in first chapter. These aspects serve as means to cultivate virtuous behavior, uphold social harmony, and reinforce hierarchical relationships. By the time of Xunzi, the concept of *wen* had been extolled as a method of communicating collective symbols and facilitating cultural transmission. In contrast, the Primitivists' argument takes an anti-Confucian ritualistic approach, primarily represented by its emphasis on *zhi* or personal internal commitment. These position thus critique the rigid adherence to external rituals and instead prioritize the cultivation of inner

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<sup>112</sup> *Ibid*, 21.

virtues, intuitive and immediate knowledge, and alignment with the natural flow of the Dao.

This perspective promotes a more individualistic and introspective understanding of the connection between ritual and morality. Within the tradition of Daoism, it focuses primarily on the inner experience, advocating for self-meditative practices and seeking to transcend external forms. It aims to establish a direct and immediate connection with the Dao.

Therefore, Daoism presents an alternative approach that diverges from Confucian ritualism.

The distinction in the employment and emphasis on *wen* and *zhi* in Daoist and Confucian texts illuminates the contrasting priorities of external rituals and collective symbolism versus personal commitment and inner cultivation. Thus, by understanding the significance of *wen* and *zhi* and how different texts employ the terms, we can get a glimpse on the divergent philosophical approaches and the varying perspectives on the relationship between ritual and moral development within Confucian and Daoist traditions.

Owing to the extensive utilization of the *wen-zhi* pair, diverse intellectual traditions have embraced distinct relational terminologies to interconnect *wen* and *zhi*. One such illustration is evident in the dichotomous portrayal of *wen-zhi* found in *Analects* 6/18: “substance prevails over ornamentation” 質勝文, and conversely, “ornamentation prevails over substance” 文勝質, which has garnered greater attention from subsequent scholars and thinkers. Within this framework, *wen* takes on the connotation of superfluous embellishment, standing in contrast to the essence of *zhi*. For instance, the *Shi ji* (Records of the Grand Historian) documents that “The Empress Dowager opines that Confucian scholars overly

emphasize embellishment while lacking substantive content” 皇太后以為儒者文多質少。<sup>113</sup>

Consequently, the conceptual duality of *wen-zhi* has evolved into a discerning criterion for evaluating the competence of officials in the imperial court, with *wen* being stigmatized as undesirable and unnecessary due to its association with gratuitous adornment.

This shows that there has been a hermeneutical contention regarding the *Analects*. This contention continued into the debate of current scholars, illustrated by the argument between Fingarette and Schwartz, upon whether the *Analects* concerns the act of *li* or the qualities, capacities and inner mental dispositions which we associate not simply with acts itself. As we have pointed out before, *li* was conceived as a somatic expression of the ethical ideals in the *Analects*. Thus, the reason to have a *wen-zhi* distinction in the time of Confucius was due to the concern of discerning virtuous men by gauging their inner intentions through outward performance. However, as the later texts have lost the original context of the *wen-zhi* thought in the *Analects*, and the ritual and moral discourse has appeared to be more distinct from one another and with the rise of Daoism in the intellectual discourse as a deconstruction of the prevailing Confucian moral universe, the differences in the valence or the positive or negative connotations associated with the conceptual pair *wen* and *zhi* provide valuable insights into nuances and shifts of the intellectual milieu. For example, in Confucian tradition such as the text of *Xunzi* where *wen* was often regarded as a positive quality, representing refinement, cultural attainment, and adherence to social norms. It was seen as an external manifestation of one's inner virtues and a means to cultivate moral character. On the other

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<sup>113</sup> *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 103. 3347.

hand, the valence of *zhi* took on a different tone. By emphasizing inner commitment, personal cultivation, *zhi* was viewed as prior and superior to *wen* such as the relation of *wen* distinguishes *zhi*, representing a direct access to the original condition. The positive or negative connotations attached to these concepts reflect shifts in philosophical priorities, critiques of prevailing cultural norms, and the emergence of alternative perspectives. Through the lens of *wen* and *zhi*, we can grasp the evolving dynamics of the philosophical landscape at that time, particularly in relation how ritual and moral relate to each other, the distinction of social and individual, and the broader zeitgeist wherein different tradition contend for how a state ought to organize itself and what it takes to achieve imperial authority.

### Chapter 3

In the chapter of “Biao Ji” 表記 of *Liji* 禮記, *wen-zhi* pair was being used as “The Master said, ‘The plain and simple (*zhi* 質) ways of (the dynasties of the line of) Yu and Xia, and the multiplied ornamentation (*wen* 文) of Yin and Zhou were both extreme. The ornamentation of Yu and Xia did not prevail over their simplicity, nor was there sufficient simplicity under Yin and Zhou to prevail over their ornamentation.’” 子曰: 虞夏之質, 殷周之文, 至矣。虞夏之文不勝其質; 殷周之質不勝其文.<sup>114</sup> This line clearly parallels *Analects* 6/18 with the idea of *wenzhi binbin*. In other words, it is to extol that the simplicity of the dynasties of Yu and Xia, and the ornamentation of the dynasties of Shang and Zhou are too the extreme; and yet they were still able to reach a balance between *wen* and *zhi*. Thus, even though there might be a focus on either *wen* or *zhi*, it does not entail a situation of *wen sheng zhi* 文勝質 or *zhi sheng wen* 質勝文. The context for why certain dynasties follow certain principle is elaborated earlier:

The Master said, “Under the Xia dynasty it was the way to give honour to the nature conferred on men; they served the manes of the departed, and respected Spiritual Beings, keeping them at a distance, while they brought the people near, and made them loyal; they put first the (attraction) of emolument, and last the terrors of power; first rewards, and then punishments; showing their affection (for the people), but not giving them honour. The bad effect on the people was, that they became stupid and ignorant, proud and clownish, and uncultivated, without any accomplishments (*wen* 文). Under the Yin dynasty, they honoured Spiritual Beings, and led the people on to serve them; they put first the service of the departed, and last the usages of ceremony; first punishments, and then rewards; giving honour (to the people), but not showing affection for them. The bad effect on the people was, that they became turbulent and were restless, striving to surpass one another without any sense of shame. Under the Zhou dynasty, they honoured the ceremonial usages, and set a high value on bestowing (favours); they served the manes and respected Spiritual Beings yet keeping them at a distance; they brought the people near, and made them loyal; in

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<sup>114</sup> Zhu Bin 朱彬, ed., *Liji xuncuan* 禮記訓纂 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 32.794.

rewarding and punishing they used the various distinctions and arrangements of rank; showing affection (for the people), but not giving them honour. The bad effects on the people were, that they became fond of gain and crafty; were all for ornamentation, and shameless; injured one another, and had their moral sense obscured.”

夏道尊命，事鬼敬神而遠之，近人而忠焉，先祿而後威，先賞而後罰，親而不尊；其民之敝：蠢而愚，喬而野，樸而不文。殷人尊神，率民以事神，先鬼而後禮，先罰而後賞，尊而不親；其民之敝：蕩而不靜，勝而無恥。周人尊禮尚施，事鬼敬神而遠之，近人而忠焉，其賞罰用爵列，親而不尊；其民之敝：利而巧，文而不慚，賊而蔽。<sup>115</sup>

The difference between *qin* 亲 and *zun* 尊 is explicated in a series of dichotomy:

“Here now is the affection of a father for his sons - he loves the worthy among them, and places on a lower level those who do not show ability; but that of a mother for them is such, that while she loves the worthy, she pities those who do not show ability - the mother deals with them on the ground of affection and not of showing them honour; the father, on the ground of showing them honour and not of affection. (So we may say of) water and the people, that it manifests affection to them, but does not give them honour; of fire, that it gives them honour, but does not manifest affection; of the ground, that it manifests affection, but does not give honour; of Heaven, that it gives them honour, but does not manifest affection; of the nature conferred on them, that it manifests affection, but does not give them honour; and of the manes of their departed, that they give honour, but do not manifest affection.

今父之親子也，親賢而下無能；母之親子也，賢則親之，無能則憐之。母，親而不尊；父，尊而不親。水之於民也，親而不尊；火，尊而不親。土之於民也，親而不尊；天，尊而不親。命之於民也，親而不尊；鬼，尊而不親。”<sup>116</sup>

Thus, to bring these concepts together, we can start by examining the distinction

between *qin* 親 and *zun* 尊 and the analogy of parental love aptly illustrates this juxtaposition.

*Qin* involves the notion of endearment, intimacy, proximity, and affection. Conversely, *zun*

derives its abstract signification of deference and esteem from its original context as a wine

vessel reserved solely for the esteemed and honorable.<sup>117</sup> In the context of parental love, *qin*

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<sup>115</sup> Zhu Bin 朱彬, ed., *Liji xuncuan* 禮記訓纂, 32.793. For translation, see James Legge, *The Li Ki (Liji) – Part I of the Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 376-377.

<sup>116</sup> Zhu Bin 朱彬, ed., *Liji xuncuan* 禮記訓纂, 32.791. James Legge, *The Li Ki (Liji) – Part I of the Sacred Books of the East*, 376.

<sup>117</sup> Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735-1815) comm., *Shuowen jeizi zhu* 說文解字註, 14. 752A.

signifies the innate emotional bond between a parent and a child. In the case of a mother who loves her children unconditionally regardless of their ability, it is characterized as *qin* but not *zun*; whereas in the case of father, whose affection toward his children is believed to be contingent upon the child's merit or ability, it is characterized as *zun* and not *qin*. The commentator noted that “the father stands for righteousness, distinguishing between good and evil; the mother embodies love and affection, unable to distinguish between good and evil.” 父立於義，分別善惡；母以恩愛，不能分別善惡也。<sup>118</sup>

Despite the inherent oversimplification, the dichotomy between *qin* and *zun* can be constructively incorporated into a syncretic system for characterizing the five phases and dynastic cyclicality. Together with the conceptual pair *wen-zhi*, they denote the basic patterns and tensions that define the relationship between the state and its ritual, power and authority, politics and culture in the ancient regime. *Zun* represents a normative order founded on authority and hierarchy thus it is associated with *wen*. It is the known law. While *qin* represents a simple and immediate ethical order rooted in the natural emotions of love and nourishment. It is associated with *zhi*. Thus, when applying this understanding to the system of the five phases, we observe that water, earth, and *ming* 命 (nature conferred on men, allotment) possess nurturing qualities, thus aligning them with the concept of *qin*. On the other hand, fire, *tian* 天 (Heaven), and *gui* 鬼 (the departed) wield formidable power and evoke intimidation, aligning them more closely with the concept of *zun*.

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<sup>118</sup> Zhu Bin 朱彬, ed., *Liji xuncuan* 禮記訓纂, 32.791

When examining the political orientation of dynasties demonstrated in these passages, the Xia Dynasty is distinguished by its adherence to the principles of allotment *ming* and the inherent endowment bestowed upon individuals.<sup>119</sup> The commentator notes that: “speaking of the governing principle of Xia, it is to respect the natural cycles of the four seasons and the mandate of governance and instruction, enabling them to be motivated to pursue their duties and find joy in their achievements.” 言夏為政之道，尊重四時政教之命，使人勸事樂功也。<sup>120</sup> The context of this passage implies, by adhering to *ming* which pertains to the predetermined course of events assigned to an individual and bringing people closer, the governing principle of Xia emphasizes the importance of respecting and valuing individual’s life and destiny.

The Han imagination of the dynasty of Xia was on the one hand structured around tribal communities, on the other represents the dawn of a civilized and hierarchical society in which succession through hereditary and feudalism were just beginning to take shape.<sup>121</sup> For instance, in the chapter of “Xia Benji” 夏本紀 (Basic annals of Xia) of the *Shi ji*, it is recorded that “Yu adopted the surname ‘Si.’ Afterward, his descendants were given surnames based on the states they ruled. As a result, there were the *Xiahou*, the *Hushu*, the *Nanshi*, the

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<sup>119</sup> In his analysis, Mark Csikszentmihalyi examines the popular belief of *ming* 命 and the concept of allotment by studying the deity known as the “Manager of Allotments” (*Siming* 司命). This deity was associated with determining one's lifespan and was already being worshipped through sacrifices as early as the fourth century B.C.E. Csikszentmihalyi concludes that the bureaucratic nature of this deity suggested that while individuals ultimately had little control over their lives, there were certain pathways through which they could exert influence. However, the inherent potential for errors within a bureaucratic system also meant that it contained elements of arbitrariness or capriciousness, similar to the idea of “casting lots” in Western metaphors. Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “Allotment and Death in Early China,” *Mortality in Traditional Chinese thought*, eds. Amy Olberding and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Albany, State University of New York Press, 2011), 177-191.

<sup>120</sup> Zhu Bin 朱彬, ed., *Liji xuncuan* 禮記訓纂, 32.792.

<sup>121</sup> Chao Fulin 晁福林, *Xia Shang Xizhou de shehui bianqian* 夏商西周的社會變遷 (Beijing: Zhongguo renmin daxue chubanshe, 2010), 201.

*Zhenxun*, the *Tongcheng*, the *Bao*, the *Fei*, the *Qi*, the *Zeng*, the *Xin*, the *Ming*, and the *Zhenguo* clans. 禹为姒姓，其后分封，用国为姓，故有夏后氏、有扈氏、有男氏、斟寻氏、彤城氏、褒氏、费氏、杞氏、缙氏、辛氏、冥氏、斟（氏）戈氏。”<sup>122</sup> And in *Lüshi Chunqiu* 吕氏春秋 (*Spring and Autumn Annals of Mr. Lü*), it is recorded “During the time of Yu, there were ten thousand tribes in the world. By the time of Tang, there were over three thousand tribes, but now, none of them remain.” 當禹之時，天下萬國，至於湯而三千餘國，今無存者矣。<sup>123</sup> In Chao Fulin’s account, the clan (*shi* 氏) in the early texts represents tribes and tribal groups in the ancient world.<sup>124</sup> Meanwhile, this account also shows that Xia dynasty displayed a system of feudalism whereby the descendants of Yu were granted fiefs. It is evident in the chapter of “Li Yun” 禮運 of the *Liji* that demonstrates this: “Now that the Grand course has fallen into disuse and obscurity, the kingdom is a family inheritance. Everyone loves (above all others) his own parents and cherishes (as) children (only) his own sons.” 今大道既隱，天下為家，各親其親，各子其子。<sup>125</sup> The consequence of following the aforementioned principles, as analyzed in relation to the concepts of *qin* and *zun*, is that it gives rise of *qin* but not *zun*: “Under the methods of (the dynasties of the line of) Yu and Xia, there were few dissatisfactions among the people.” 虞夏之道，寡怨於民。<sup>126</sup> Thus, the Warring States and Han authors imagine that people were more closely interconnected when certain rules and regulations are seen as more spontaneous in Yu and Xia. When applying the rule of *qin* to the judgement for the heirs for the hereditary ruling, the criterion is less about

<sup>122</sup> *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014),

<sup>123</sup> Xu Weiyu 許維適, *Lüshi Chunqiu jishi* 吕氏春秋集釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2016), 19.456.

<sup>124</sup> Chao Fulin 晁福林, *Xia Shang Xizhou de shehui bianqian* 夏商西周的社會變遷, 37.

<sup>125</sup> Zhu Bin 朱彬, ed., *Liji xuncuan* 禮記訓纂, 9.332.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.793.

the ability but more on the affective connection. The consequence is that there is a tendency for individuals to become uncultivated and uncouth (referred to as *ye* 野), as they mostly abide by the laws of nature and there are relatively fewer human regulation compare to later times. This adherence to natural law *qin* therefore manifests as *zhi*, characterized by its simplicity and immediacy.

In contrast to the Xia dynasty, which maintained a certain distance from spirits, it is believed by the Warring states and Han authors as indicated in the *Liji* that the Yin dynasty held the belief that spirits were omnipresent, leading them to honor and revere them: “The people of Yin venerated the spirits and led the commoners to serve the spirits.” 殷人尊神，率民以事神。<sup>127</sup> Thus, in the type of society of Shang dynasty which the spirits are honored, it is believed that spirits intervene the human affairs by punishing the transgressions and meting out the reward. In other words, justice equally attributed to everyone regardless of their status.<sup>128</sup> The result of this is *zun* but not *qin*. Thus, because they abide ethical norms that regulate human society albeit judged by the spirits, it is characterized by *wen*.

In this theory of history, the true flourishing of *wen* reached its peak during the Zhou dynasty, marking a significant milestone in the evolutionary view of Chinese civilization in the passage of “Biao Ji.” Unlike the preceding dynasties, the Zhou dynasty achieved a synthesis of the Xia and Shang cultures by venerating the spirits while maintaining a respectful distance. This approach ensured that the spirits would not directly interfere in

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<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.792.

<sup>128</sup> This idea is also demonstrated in the chapter of “Ming Gui” 明鬼 of *Mozi* 墨子: “the punishments of ghosts and spirits cannot be resisted by wealth, nobility, strength of numbers, daring, power, strong armor, or sharp weapons.” 鬼神罰，不可為富貴眾強、勇力強武、堅甲利兵者。Sun Yirang 孫怡讓, annotated by Sun Qizhi 孫啟治, *Mozi xiangu* 墨子閒詁 (Beijing: Zhonghuashuju, 2001), 8.244.

human affairs. Consequently, the Zhou dynasty witnessed the emergence of *li*, which can be considered an epitome of social order and civilization when compared to its predecessors. The underlying logic of the historical progression presented in “Biao Ji” brings out the allusion of *Analects* 2/23: “Zu-chang asked, ‘Can ten generations Thence be known?’ The Master said, ‘The Yin built on the rites of the Xia. What was added and what was omitted can be known. The Chou built on the rites of the Yin. What was added and what was omitted can be known. Should there be a successor to the Chou, even a hundred generations hence can be known.’ 子張問：十世可知也？子曰：殷因於夏禮，所損益，可知也；周因於殷禮，所損益，可知也；其或繼周者，雖百世可知也。<sup>129</sup>

The contrasting nature of a society characterized by *wen* or *zhi*, as outlined in the “Biao Ji,” becomes apparent in their respective qualities. In a society characterized as *zhi*, there is a lack of clear consciousness regarding distinction and order, rules governing punishment and reward, as well as a sense of morality and adherence to ritual propriety. Such a society operates without a comprehensive framework for regulating human behavior, and individuals may act without a consistent set of standards. In contrast, in a society characterized by *wen*, prevailing customs and traditions transform into known laws that regulate human conduct. People are less connected through natural affections as the distinction flourished, and more by adhering to principles of righteousness and moderation. These principles, deeply ingrained in the fabric of society, shape and guide individuals in

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<sup>129</sup> Liu Baonan 劉寶楠, Liu Gongmian 劉恭冕, *Lunyu Zhengyi* 論語正義, 71-74. D.C. Lau, *The Analects*, 30.

their interactions with one another. As a result, *wen* cultivates an environment conducive to order, morality, and ritual propriety.

The embedded historical narrative in the passage in “Biao Ji” reveal a genealogical view on how the past unfolds, with progress following a linear trajectory. It presents a narrative of societal development that begins with simplicity and progresses towards more refined and civilized manners, often accompanied by a gradual increase in excessive ornamentation and elaborate cultural expressions: “they became fond of gain and crafty; were all for ornamentation, and shameless; injured one another, and had their moral sense obscured. 利而巧，文而不慚，賊而蔽。”<sup>130</sup> Thus, the *wen-zhi* pair serves as a means of distinguishing a primitive society from an advanced or civilized one. This aligns with the view of the Primitivists in the previous chapter in employing *zhi* in signifying a tribal Utopia where humans live spontaneously without much differentiation and *wen* as a destruction of the primordial unity but movement toward civilization and social distinction. By utilizing the pair as a distinguishing factor, the historical narrative emphasizes the notion of societal progress and the belief that civilization advances.

However, the Primitivists offer a more radical perspective on the understanding of history, despite presenting a genealogical progression. Leung identifies that the Guodian *Laozi* text demonstrates an awareness of time, recognizing the historical gap between antiquity and the present, at the very least. However, this text takes a playfully self-destructive approach to deep history, aiming to undermine the meaningfulness of all other

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<sup>130</sup> Zhu Bin 朱彬, ed., *Liji xuncuan* 禮記訓纂, 32.793. For translation, see James Legge, *The Li Ki (Liji) – Part I of the Sacred Books of the East* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 376-377.

historical accounts, which are viewed as mere epiphenomena of the Way.<sup>131</sup> In essence, both the Primitivists and the Laozi text present a view of history that attempts to transcend and undermine the authority of historical knowledge across the ideological spectrum. Therefore, the goal of these texts is to denounce *wen* and extol the idealized simple past characterized by *zhi*.

The usage of *wen-zhi* pair in the “Biao Ji” mentioned above however, simply acknowledge how the society evolve from simplicity and uncouthness to more complexed and elaborate forms of organization and culture expression which often led to extravagance and hinderance for one’s morals. Although it acknowledges that social differentiation brought by the hereditary ruling initiates the fallen of the Grand course: “now that the Grand course has fallen into disuse and obscurity, the kingdom is a family inheritance,”今大道既隱，天下為家，<sup>132</sup> the *wen-zhi* pair possess a more neutral conception upon the authority of historical knowledge going back to the original quote: “The ornamentation of Yu and Xia did not prevail over their simplicity, nor was there sufficient simplicity under Yin and Zhou to prevail over their ornamentation.” 虞夏之文不勝其質；殷周之質不勝其文。<sup>133</sup>

There has been an enduring and widespread inclination towards venerating the past, evident in the pervasive use of antiquity rhetoric in literature since the late Warring States period. For example, the *Analects* regards the past to be a repertoire of cultural practices and moral ideals that need to be reevaluated so that it can be cultivated by individuals. Going

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<sup>131</sup> Vincent S. Leung, *The Politics of the Past in Early China*, 79-92.

<sup>132</sup> Zhu Bin 朱彬, ed., *Liji xuncuan* 禮記訓纂, 9.332.

<sup>133</sup> Zhu Bin 朱彬, ed., *Liji xuncuan* 禮記訓纂 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998), 32.794.

back to the line of “we look at the ornamental figures of the sky, and thereby ascertain the changes of the seasons. We look at the ornamental observances of society and understand how the processes of transformation are accomplished all under heaven” 觀乎天文，以察時變；觀乎人文，以化成天下, which the we are clearly the sages, the view on antiquity is that the sage-kings could understand the will of Heaven by observing the pattern, and therefore established human institutions in order to carry out the best order for the people.<sup>134</sup> The underlying concept is that the disorder and degeneration witnessed in the present era are outcomes of decline, necessitating a return to the adherence of cosmic patterns and the ways of ancient sages. Mu-Chou Poo claimed that the reverence of the past was not merely a reverence of an abstract idea of antiquity, but a conscious act that tried to uphold the authority that antiquity could bring as the wisdom of the ancients, i.e., ancient sages and Former Kings, could only be understood through the interpretation of one who possesses similar wisdom.<sup>135</sup> Thus, the idea of antiquity was widely accepted in society as a basis of authority for carrying out a political argument by the time of late Warring States and early Han period. Therefore, even though the authority of the past has been a shared consensus, it has been a matter of contention upon whether the authority of the past holds water. For instance, Michael Puett has pointed out that there are texts like the “Wide-Ranging Discussions” (“Fanlun Xun” 汎論訓) chapter of *Huainanzi* and portions of the *Taiping jing*

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<sup>134</sup> Vincent S. Leung, *The Politics of the Past in Early China*, 40-53. Zhouyi Zhengyi 周易正義, annotated by Wang Bi 王弼 (d. 249), Han Kangbo 韓康伯 (ca. 4<sup>th</sup> century) with a commentary by Kong Yingda 孔穎達, in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經註疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元, 3B, 62. Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, tr. Cary F. Baynes, 244.

<sup>135</sup> Mu-Chou Poo, “The Formation of the Concept of Antiquity in Early China,” *Perceptions of Antiquity in Chinese Civilization*, 85-102.

太平經 offered a view that one should not wish to return to antiquity as what worked in the past can never be guide to the present.<sup>136</sup> Along with texts such as *Laozi* and *Mencius* according to Leung, there are voices that express certain unease with granting too much authority to the teachings of the sages from the past.<sup>137</sup>

Dong Zhongshu on the other hand, offered that it is indeed true that those who are real kings reform their institutions, but the principle (*dao* 道) has remained the same: “The great principle of the Way originates from heaven. Heaven remains unchanged, and thus, the Way remains unchanged. Therefore, Yu succeeded Shun, and Shun succeeded Yao. The three sages inherited and upheld the same Way, which was a governance that aimed to eliminate harm and rectify deficiencies. Thus, it does not speak of its gains or losses.” 道之大原出于天，天不变，道亦不变，是以禹继舜，舜继尧，三圣相受而守一道，亡救弊之政也，故不言其所损益也。<sup>138</sup> In particular, Dong believed that while there had been no actual change away from the principle, there had been nominal changes in the emphasis on *zhi* and *wen* and of the institutions during the three dynasties of Xia, Shang, and Zhou. *Pian*. 23 of the *Chunqiu fanlu* “The Three Dynasties’ Alternating Regulations of Simplicity and Refinement” (三代改製質文) in particular, sought to tackle the problem of continuity and change with its theory of the *si fa* 四法. The conceptual pair of *wen-zhi* particularly stands out in his construction of cosmology which was dedicated for a discussion of an entire chapter:

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<sup>136</sup> . Michael Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 159-166.

<sup>137</sup> Vincent S. Leung, *The Politics of the Past in Early China*, 75-100.

<sup>138</sup> HS 56, 1191-1211.

What three grades did the Spring and Autumn recognize? The answer is: Those who rule as king take as their regulations [in sequence]: one Shang; one Xia; one Simplicity (*zhi* 質); one Refinement (*wen* 文); [those who follow] Shang and Simplicity take Heaven as their support; [those who follow] Xia and Refinement take Earth as their support; the Spring and Autumn [era] takes humankind as its support. Thus there are three grades [corresponding to Heaven, Earth, and human-kind].

《春秋》何三等？曰：王者以制，一商一夏，一質一文。商質者主天，夏文者主地，《春秋》者主人，故三等也。<sup>139</sup>

Dong Zhongshu expounded upon a sophisticated system that cyclically revolves around the interplay of *wen* and *zhi*. In this system, the Xia dynasty embodies the spirit of *wen*, the Shang dynasty adheres to *zhi*, and the Zhou dynasty once again embraces *wen*. The Shang dynasty's allegiance to *zhi* is characterized by the following statement: “Those who take Heaven as their support emulate Shang and rule as kings. Their ways embody recessive yang. They demonstrate affection towards those who are close to them, emphasizing humaneness and simplicity.” 主天法商而王，其道佚陽，親親而多仁樸。<sup>140</sup> Various practices exemplify the concept of *qin qin* 親親 or “affection towards those who are close.” For instance, “succession [to the throne] passes to the son, and [the heir’s] younger brothers from the same mother are treated generously. A concubine [who bears the king] a son gains an honorable thereby.” 故立嗣予子，篤母第，妾以子貴。<sup>141</sup> Thus, in a dynasty characterized *zhi* and *qin qin*, the affection and closeness within the family is emphasized. In the context of royal succession, the importance of bloodline and direct lineage is highlighted.

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<sup>139</sup> Su Yu 蘇與, annotated by Zhong Zhe 鍾哲, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2019), 7.179-180. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn* (New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 2016), 251.

<sup>140</sup> Su Yu 蘇與, annotated by Zhong Zhe 鍾哲, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 7.180. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, 225.

<sup>141</sup> Su Yu 蘇與, annotated by Zhong Zhe 鍾哲, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 7.181. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, 251.

For instance, younger brothers from the same mother are treated generously, indicating a recognition of their familial ties and a desire to maintain unity within the royal family; when a concubine bears a son for the king, she gains an honorable position as a result. This practice reinforces the significance of biological connections and the role of progeny in securing the lineage of the ruling family.

On the other hand, the Xia dynasty's adherence to *wen* is described as follows:

“Those who take Earth as their support emulate Xia and rule as kings. Their Way is that of advancing yin. They honor those who are honorable and possess an abundance of righteousness and moderation.” 主地法夏而王，其道進陰，尊尊而多義節。<sup>142</sup> Practices that manifest the principle of *zun zun* 尊尊 are such that “accordingly, the succession [to the throne] passes to the [king's] grandson, and sons of [the earlier] generation are treated generously. A concubine [who bears the king] a son does not gain an honorable position thereby.” 故立嗣與孫，篤世子，妾不以子稱貴號。<sup>143</sup> In contrast to *qin qin*, *zun zun* 尊尊 places emphasis on respect and honor for those who are deemed worthy based on their merits and qualities rather than simply their familial ties. Within the royal system, this means that the succession to the throne passes to the king's grandson, implying a generational shift in power. The practice of treating sons of the previous generation generously demonstrates the recognition of their position and contributions within the family, regardless of their direct line

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<sup>142</sup> Su Yu 蘇與, annotated by Zhong Zhe 鍾哲, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 7.183. *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 181. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, 253.

<sup>143</sup> Su Yu 蘇與, annotated by Zhong Zhe 鍾哲, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 7.183. *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 183. *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 181. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, 254.

of descent; a concubine who bears a son for the king does not automatically gain an honorable position solely based on that fact. This approach highlights the importance of personal merit and achievements rather than solely relying on biological relationships.

After the cycle of Shang and Xia, *wen* and *zhi* follows with the same line of logic: the cycle of *zhi* matches the cycle of Shang: “Those who take Heaven as their support emulate Simplicity and rule as kings. Their way is that of recessive *yang*. They show affection toward those who are close.” 主天法質而王，其道佚陽，故立嗣予子，篤母弟，妾以子貴。<sup>144</sup>

The cycle of *wen* matches the cycle of Xia: “Those who take Earth as their support Pattern and rule as kings. Their way is that of advancing *yin*. They honor those who are honorable and possess an abundance of propriety of pattern.” 主地法文而王，其道進陰，尊尊而多禮文。<sup>145</sup> This is what Dong deemed as the four models (*si fa* 四法) that he concluded:

These four models were cultivated throughout antiquity and originated with the former thearchs. Thus the Four Models [Shang, Xia, Substance, and Pattern] are like the four seasons: When the cycles are spent, they begin anew; when the cycles reach their end, they return to their root. All these four are modeled on Heaven. Heaven confers its auspicious Mandate, giving the models of kingship to those who are sages. The [sagely] nature and [Heavenly] Mandate took form in our ancestors and became ever more manifest when they became kings and lords.

四法修於所故，祖於先帝，故四法如四時然，終而複始，窮則反本。四法之天施符授聖人，王法則性命形乎先祖，大昭乎王君。<sup>146</sup>

Recall the chapter of “Biaoji” proposed that the Xia, Shang and Zhou dynasties adheres to allotment *ming* 命, spirits *gui* 鬼, and rites *li* 禮 accordingly. And that Yu and Xia

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<sup>144</sup> Su Yu 蘇與, annotated by Zhong Zhe 鍾哲, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 7.184. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, 253.

<sup>145</sup> Su Yu 蘇與, annotated by Zhong Zhe 鍾哲, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 7.185. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, 254.

<sup>146</sup> Su Yu 蘇與, annotated by Zhong Zhe 鍾哲, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 7.186-187. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, 254-255.

dynasty has reached the epitome of *zhi* while Shang and Zhou reached the epitome of *wen*.

Contrary to the linear progression perspective on the view of history, *pian* 23 of *Chunqiu fanlu* introduced a fundamentally cyclical system based on the model of nature. This cyclical framework aligns with the natural cycles where seasons repeat, cycle begin anew, and everything has a root from which it emerges and returns endlessly. It emphasizes the interconnectedness of human affairs with the larger rhythms of the universe, and that model of governance should model the cosmic.

Michael Loewe extensively explains the underlying rationale behind the question of alternating regulations or *gaizhi* 改制. For instance, if the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties deviated from the practices of their predecessors, the Han dynasty had to decide which model to emulate or adopt. They had to determine if it was permissible for the Han dynasty to make changes in order to accommodate its own needs, or if they were obligated to strictly adhere to the established practices inherited from the past. The question arose as to whether it was appropriate to modify the legacy left by exemplary rulers of the past in order to adapt to the conditions of the present. Loewe suspects that the conception of cyclical history and evolving practices can be attributed to the influence of later banned as ‘apocryphal’ materials (*chen wei* 讖緯), which offer a perspective on the temporal continuum of the past, present, and future as interconnected facets of a unified whole, wherein change is deemed an integral part of an everlasting cycle and, therefore, essential.<sup>147</sup> While Loewe only briefly touches upon this perspective that may have asserted influence on the concept of *gaizhi*, it is worth delving

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<sup>147</sup> Michael Loewe, *Dong Zhongshu, a ‘Confucian’ Heritage and the Chunqiu fanlu* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 152-156.

into the prevalence of this notion. In fact, Robin McNeal posits that the concept of *gaizhi* is intricately intertwined with the convergence of two pivotal factors. Firstly, there exists a pervasive belief in the profound interconnectedness between nature, its patterns, and events, and human political affairs. Secondly, calendars assume paramount significance as the primary platform for the manifestation of the interplay between politics and nature.<sup>148</sup>

In his scholarly article titled “The Development of Naturalist Thought in Ancient China: A Critical Review of W. Allyn Rickett's *Guanzi*,” McNeal delves into the intricate issue of scholastic affiliation and bibliographic classification of texts like the *Guanzi* and *Lüshi Chunqiu*, which were traditionally grouped under the *zajia* (雜家) - Miscellaneous or Eclectic schools of Sima Tan’s Six Schools.<sup>149</sup> McNeal contends that the intellectual position that underpins the structure and arguments of these texts cannot be fully apprehended solely through the lens of the Six Schools classification. He astutely identifies a discernible trend which he later calls Naturalism in works from the third and second centuries B.C., wherein nature is regarded as normative, and the authors argue that the structure and functioning of the state should be modeled after the inherent patterns and principles found in Nature. According to McNeal, Naturalist thought predates the earliest evidence of Yin-Yang correlative thinking and emerged independently from recognized schools of thought. The central argument suggests that the government should emulate the synchronous model of the regular seasonal processions, emphasizing rectification and uprightness in terms of *zheng* 正.

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<sup>148</sup> I have greatly benefited from the countless hours that Professor Robin McNeal dedicated to our seminars; specifically, his guidance has been instrumental in shaping the argument of this chapter.

<sup>149</sup> Robin McNeal, “The Development of Naturalist Thought in Ancient China: a Review of W. Allyn Rickett’s *Guanzi*,” *Early China* 28, 2003, 161-200.

On the other hand, McNeal points out that this intellectual trend has manifested particularly in the studies of calendars which serve as a prominent platform to illustrate the connection between politics and nature. For instance, in the beginning of chapter 23, Dong Zhongshu started out by claiming “The King rectified the month 王正月也” in order to “make clear that [the king] has not succeeded another person’s line but that he himself received [the Mandate] of Heaven. 明易姓，非繼人，通以己受之於天也。”<sup>150</sup> McNeal further explicates that the reason that the calendrical system and Naturalism intersect notably is that any calendar utilized by early civilizations would eventually encounter disorder due to astronomical phenomena that were not comprehensible at the time. The need for a new calendar, arising from the realization of disorder or inaccuracies in the existing calendar, potentially necessitated various political, social, and cultural “resets” thus gives rise to the idea of *gaizhi* 改制. This fundamental requirement opened the door for a range of arguments and perspectives regarding the timing, methods, and extent of *gaizhi*. Different positions could be taken on when and how to initiate *gaizhi*, as well as the extent of changes required to restore alignment between the calendar and natural phenomena.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> Su Yu 蘇與, annotated by Zhong Zhe 鍾哲, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 7.162-163. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, 241.

<sup>151</sup> According to Sarah Queen and Robin McNeal, *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露 and *Huainanzi* are representative of texts of this perspective that offer substantial insights into Yin-Yang and Wu Xing (Five Phase) 五行 theory. These texts manifest a fundamental intellectual stance that suggests all knowledge pertaining to political and administrative structures, warfare, ritual performance, agriculture, industry, trade, personal moral cultivation, and proper public behavior can be discerned within the patterns and cycles governing the progression of seasons and the myriad processes they engender. Notably, the work attributed to Dong Zhongshu stands out as the singular text showing a pronounced affinity towards numerology, prognostication, and other occult arts while also exhibits a direct and substantial influence from both Naturalist and Yin-Yang traditions, as well as Five Phases thought. This fusion of ideas allows the authors and compilers of the text to seamlessly incorporate elements derived from Yin Yang praxis. Robin McNeal, “The Development of Naturalist Thought in Ancient China: a Review of W. Allyn Rickett’s *Guanzi*,” 175. Sarah A. Queen, *From Chronicle to Canon: the Hermeneutics of the Spring and Autumn, According to Tung Chung-shu* (Cambridge, New York and Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Thus, this train of thought can be discerned particularly in Dong Zhongshu's construction on the conceptual pair *wen-zhi*. *Wen-zhi*, as a prominent Confucian concept widely utilized by scholars during the Han dynasty, served as a convenient tool for Confucian intellectuals to articulate a cosmology that was inherently rooted in the natural order. It allowed them to justify Confucian principles of governance and establish an imperial ideology. Sarah Queen suggests that due to the prevalent practice of competing traditions publicly expressing their perspectives on historical and contemporary matters, Dong Zhongshu felt compelled to incorporate references to doctrines or techniques popularized by various traditions, including a few key Huang Lao techniques.<sup>152</sup> Here to use Robin McNeal's analysis, all these texts shows the manifestation of the idea of Naturalism which was already an independent system of thought that serve as a premise for the argument in the idea of *Si Fa*. Therefore, under the trend of syncretizing systems of thought, *wen-zhi* pair became useful for Confucian scholars to construct a system of the *Si Fa* that is comparable to theory of Five Phases and Yin-Yang thought.

*Baihu Tong* 白虎通 elaborated further on the cyclicity of the conceptual pair of *wen-zhi*:

Why must a king adheres to the principles of substance and pattern accordingly? It is to align with the principles of Heaven and Earth and to follow the harmony of Yin and Yang. When the Yang principle reaches its extreme, it yields to the influence of the Yin principle, and when the Yin principle reaches its extreme, it yields to the influence of the Yang principle. Thus, two Yin and two Yang cannot succeed each

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<sup>152</sup> Sarah Queen qualifies the historian's frequent portrayal of Dong Zhongshu has a grand systemizer of Yin-Yang and Five Phase cosmology by pointing out that the systematization begin at least as the third century B.C.E when the philosophy Zou Yan 鄒衍 established a reputation based on his theories of the Five Phases. Also by 250 B.C.E., the work of *Lüshi Chunqiu* is another example of the integration of Yin-Yang and Five Phase correlation that come to define imperial Confucianism. Sarah A Queen, *From Chronicle to Canon: the Hermeneutics of the Spring and Autumn, According to Tung Chung-shu*, 2-3.

other. Substance governs the principle of Heaven and pattern governs the principle of Earth, hence Heaven represents the substance, while Earth receives and transforms it, nurturing and cultivating it, thus giving rise of pattern. As stated in the *Shangshu dazhuan*: “The king possesses one substance and one pattern, adhering to the principles of Heaven and Earth.” In the *Lisan zhengji*, it is mentioned: “The essence aligns with Heaven, and the refinement aligns with Earth.” When an emperor or king emerges, they must first possess the substance before displaying pattern, following the principles of the world, the sequence of cause and effect, and the order of precedence. Nothing can exist without first having its essential nature before its manifestation through pattern.

王者，必一質一文何？以承天地，順陰陽。陽之道極則陰道受，陰之道極則陽道受，明二陰二陽不能相繼也。質法天、文法地而已，故天為質，地受而化之，養而成之，故為文。《尚書大傳》曰：「王者一質一文，據天地之道。」《禮三正記》曰：「質法天，文法地也。」帝王始起，先質後文者，順天下之道、本末之義、先後之序也。事莫不先有質性，乃後有文章也。<sup>153</sup>

From this, we can see that the *wen-zhi* pair has been incorporated into the dual system of Yin-Yang 陰陽 and *tian-di* 天地 which established the legitimacy of the *wen-zhi* thought in its employment of governance by rooting it into Heaven and Earth. This reinforces the profound interplay between cosmic principles and human governance and elevates *wen-zhi* thought beyond a mere human invention, infusing it with greater philosophical and metaphysical significance. On the other hand, it highlights the hierarchical relationship between *zhi* and *wen*, aligning *zhi* with the principle of Heaven and *wen* with Earth. It asserts that *wen* emerges from *zhi*, suggesting a sequential and interconnected relationship between the two concepts. However, this does not diminish the importance of *wen*; rather, it underscores the essential principle that *wen-zhi*, like Yin-Yang and *tian-di*, are dichotomous yet mutually dependent and cyclically alternated. Neither *wen* nor *zhi* can exist in isolation. This perspective explicitly challenges the viewpoint put forth in the previous chapter by the

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<sup>153</sup> Chen Li 陳立, annotated by Wu Zeyu 吳則虞, *Baihutong shuzheng* 白虎通疏證, in *Xinbian zhuzi jicheng* 新編諸子集成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994), 8.368.

Primitivists, who argued that *wen* distinguishes *zhi* and advocated a return to the primordial *zhi* as the solution.

This coherent position can also be seen in couple passages in *Chunqiu fanlu*:

Music is something that flourishes internally before finding expression externally. Responding to a well-ordered age, the ruler institutes ritual and composes music to perfect the age. Perfection means that root and branch, substance and form, are fully present. For this reason, those who compose music must return to what first brought joy to the people of the world and takes this as their root.

樂者，盈於內而動發於外者也。應其治時，制禮作樂以成之。成者，本末質文皆以具矣。是故作樂者必反天下之所始樂於己以為本。<sup>154</sup>

This is why [the Spring and Autumn] states: “[Ritual] should not be empty applied.” This refers to the emphasis on one’s intention. The intention [of ritual] is the [inner] substance, while the objects [involved in ritual] are the [outward] form (*wen* 文). The form [of ritual] manifests substance. Thus if substance does not abide in the form, how will form give to that substance [an adequate] display? Only when both substance and form are complete can ritual be perfected. If practiced in isolation, neither form nor substance is worthy of its name. Yet in a case in which it is impossible for both to be complete and one errs on one side, it then is better to have substance and lack form. Although [Confucius] would not grant that [such a person was] competent in ritual, he would still approve to some extent. [The entry] “Jie Helü came” is a case in point. However, if one possesses [only] form and lacks substance, not only would [Confucius] not grant [that such a person was competent in ritual], but he also would disapprove to some extent.

故曰：非虛加之，重誌之謂也。誌為質，物為文。文著於質，質不居文，文安施質？質文兩備，然後其禮成。文質偏行，不得有我爾之名。俱不能備而偏行之，寧有質而無文。雖弗予能禮，尚少善之，介葛廬來是也。有文無質，非直不子，乃少惡之。<sup>155</sup>

In fact, *Chunqiu fanlu* provides a coherent perspective on the dichotomous yet interdependent nature of the *wen-zhi* pair, which is in alignment with the stance presented in

<sup>154</sup> Su Yu 蘇與, annotated by Zhong Zhe 鍾哲, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 1.17-18. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, 77.

<sup>155</sup> Su Yu 蘇與, annotated by Zhong Zhe 鍾哲, *Chunqiu fanlu yizheng* 春秋繁露義證, 1.23-24. Sarah A. Queen and John S. Major, *Luxuriant Gems of the Spring and Autumn*, 80-81.

the *Analects*. In this viewpoint, *li* is understood as an embodied virtue, where the external display of decorum and the quality of action are both indispensable for its completion. These two aspects are distinct but inseparable components of the same action. While the *Analects* does not explicitly differentiate between the inner and outer aspects, *Chunqiu fanlu* employs the terms “internal” (*nei* 內) and “external” (*wai* 外) to illustrate how the inner substance finds visible expression to the audience. Nevertheless, the concept of *wen fu zhi* 文附質 precisely indicates the construction of the *wen-zhi* pair in the *Analects*. It suggests that without a corresponding display of learned civilized conduct observable by others, one’s ethical ideals cannot be adequately instantiated or manifested. Similarly, without possessing the corresponding qualities, one’s conduct lacks integrity, appearing artificial and insubstantial. On the other hand, this passage associates *wen* with the idea of the branch (*mo* 末) and *zhi* with the root (*ben* 本), aligning with the characterization found in the *Huainanzi*. This perspective suggests that if one possesses *zhi* but lacks *wen*, Confucius would approve of it. Conversely, if one possesses *wen* but lacks *zhi*, Confucius would not approve. However, for the full realization of the act of *li*, both *wen* and *zhi* are required.

From this analysis, it becomes evident that *Chunqiu fanlu* not only embraces the *wen-zhi* framework established in the *Analects* but also underscores the Confucian perspective that the practice of *li* necessitates the integration of both the quality of the action and the proper execution of ritual procedure. Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize that the discourse surrounding *wen-zhi* during the period when works like *Huainanzi* and *Chunqiu fanlu* were produced contributed to the expansion and elaboration of the *wen-zhi* concept. Intellectually,

the embedded system of Naturalism exerted a discernible influence, alongside the Han syncretism aimed at constructing a coherent ideological framework. Moreover, response was also given to the criticisms surrounding *wen* and Confucian rituals. In a practical sense, various competing interests emerged within the court of Emperor Wu of Han which encompassed the perspectives of occult arts practitioners (*fangshi* 方士), Confucian ritual specialists, the commentarial traditions of *Gongyang* and *Guliang*, as well as the so-called *Huang-lao* 黄老 and *Daojia* 道家 specialists. The presence of these divergent factions prompted the compelling need for Dong Zhongshu to construct a comprehensive cosmology that could substantiate the Confucian principles of governance and establish an imperial ideology. It is worth noting that intellectual and practical factors are inseparable from one another. These multifaceted factors collectively shaped the intricate tapestry of *wen-zhi* thought as observed in *Chunqiu fanlu* wherein the conceptual pair of *wen-zhi* has been assimilated into a larger cosmological framework, accompanied by a theory elucidating the mutual interactions between Heaven, Earth, and humanity. As a result, *Chunqiu fanlu* exemplifies the complex interplay of historical, philosophical, cosmological, and political considerations that have converged to imbue the *wen-zhi* paradigm with profound significance.

## Chapter 4

*Shuoyuan* 說苑 (*Garden of Eloquence*) was compiled by Liu Xiang 劉向 (77-6 BCE) who is a scholar official of the late Former Han (206 – 9 BCE). As the chief collator of the Han imperial library, Liu Xiang compiled the *Shuoyuan* to create a definite version of canonic, philosophic, and poetic texts.<sup>156</sup> According to Christian Schwermann, *Shuoyuan* is a “Garden [i.e., Collection] of Illustrative Examples” that combines different types of argument, including exempla, to form an elaborate tapestry of argumentation in support of a proposition. Although Liu Xiang compiled *Shuoyuan* from an assortment of preexisting materials, Schwermann maintains that Liu Xiang is considered an author rather than a mere compiler, constructing a coherent ideological framework that is unambiguously Confucian in orientation.

Despite the *Shuoyuan's* political implications, including its aim to achieve enlightened government, there are internal conflicts within the text, such as the seemingly contradictory positions presented in Chapter (*juan* 卷)19 and 20, which advocate for cultivating hierarchical, differentiated civil order (*Xiu Wen* 修文) and returning to the essence (*Fan Zhi* 反質), respectively. However, upon close reading of the texts in these two chapters, it becomes apparent that there is a coherent agenda of resolving the tension between advocating the indispensable roles of ritual and music in maintaining an orderly society while responding to critics who might see such differentiation in social order and priority of refinement

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<sup>156</sup> Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2021), 8.

inculcating lavishness and extravagance, thus at the same time advocating the importance of unadorned substance over refinement.

The concepts of *wen* and *zhi* are central to the discussion in these two chapters, and the nuanced connotations of these terms reveal their fluidity and complementarity. *Wen*, which ranges in connotation from “embellishment” or “refinement” in chapter 20 to “embodiment” of virtue in chapter 19, and *zhi*, which ranges in connotation from “simplicity” to “substance” in both chapters, demonstrate the importance of balanced expression on the importance of ritual forms and music while maintaining simplicity and avoiding extravagance. Thus, as indicated by Scott Cook, the structural decision to have these two chapters appear back and forth to each other shows Liu Xiang's desire to inculcate the idea of the harmony of *wen* and *zhi*.<sup>157</sup> These two chapters from *Shuoyuan* being the richest sources on *wen-zhi* thought therefore have demonstrated that the discourse on the *wen-zhi* pair in pre- and early imperial China has been employed in conceptualizing the nature of ritual, consistent with the ritual core of the *wen-zhi* thought in the *Analects*, while its connotation has been complicated and expanded due to prolonged discourse on *wen-zhi* prior to the compilation of *Shuoyuan*. Liu Xiang's compilation of these two chapters of *Shuoyuan* reveals a clear authorial intent to synthesize the prevalent perspectives on *wen-zhi* thought as he undertook the task of superintending the collation and centralizing Confucian classics. In this endeavor, Liu Xiang sought to preserve the position outlined in the *Analects*, emphasizing the

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<sup>157</sup> Scott Cook, “Musical Cultivation in the ‘Xiu Wen’ Chapter of the *Shuoyuan*,” *Dao* 16, 389–416 (2017). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11712-017-9564-8>.

attainment of *wenzhi binbin* in his envision of statecraft manifest in the chapters of “Xiu Wen” and “Fan Zhi”.

Chapter 19 begins with a philosophical positioning on the role of ritual and music:

Whenever the Way prevails in the realm, ritual, music, campaigns, and attacks all issue from the Son of Heaven. Only when the great enterprise is completed, let us note, can ritual be established; and, only when rule is stabilized can music be made. Kongzi said, “Nothing is more effective than music in developing customs and altering habits; and nothing is more effective than ritual in making the ruler secure and reducing the populace to order.” This is why the sage-kings cultivated ritual and writing, established schools, and set out gongs and drums. The Son of Heaven had his circular lake-surrounded academies near Hao, the capital city; and the territorial lords had their semicircular moat-surrounded academies—these were the means by which virtue was inculcated in society. As is said in the *Odes*, “The jade-ring school of Hao; / From the west, from the east, / From the south, from the north, / None wish not to serve.” That refers to this matter.

天下有道，則禮樂征伐自天子出。夫功成制禮，治定作樂，禮樂者，行化之大者也。孔子曰：「移風易俗，莫善於樂；安上治民，莫善於禮。是故聖王修禮文，設庠序，陳鍾鼓，天子辟雍，諸侯泮宮，所以行德化。《詩》云：『鑄京辟雍，自西自東，自南自北，無思不服。』此之謂也。」<sup>158</sup>

To begin with, the passage quotes from *Analects* 6/12 and alludes to the sage kings, emphasizing the importance of the “son of heaven” in establishing a hierarchical order, securing legitimate rule, and influencing the customs and habits of the people through the establishment of rituals and music. Consequently, it highlights the indispensable role of ritual and music in statecraft. The passage concludes with a quote from the *Odes*, which extols the potency of the son of heaven in maintaining social order, where, through ritual and music, the vassal lords from all four directions would serve and consolidate the ruling of the son of heaven. Therefore, the central theme of this passage is the primacy of the son of heaven in

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<sup>158</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 476. For English translation, See Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑*, 1112-1113.

creating the one and only system of ritual and music. Although the main subject of the passage is not *wen*, it is the overarching theme. As analyzed earlier, *wen* contains the act of setting up ritual and music, putting the patterning of the social order in place. Therefore, this passage sets forth the primary focus of the entire chapter of “Xiu Wen” by philosophically positioning *wen* as the conceptualization of the action of the state setting forth ritual and music.

The other significant philosophical positioning of *wen* is in passage 19.2:

Favor, when it accumulates, evolves into love; love, when it accumulates, evolves into empathy; and empathy, when it accumulates, evolves into spiritual power. The reason Spiritual Tower was called “spiritual” was that it came into being through an accumulation of empathy. Spiritual power is the basis of heaven and earth and the origin of all things in the natural world. Thus, when King Wen first used *ren* in his relations with the people, there was then no one in the realm uninfused with this virtue; this is the epitome of civil virtue. Where virtue is not forthcoming, civility cannot be established.

積恩為愛，積愛為仁，積仁為靈，靈臺之所以為靈者，積仁也。神靈者，天地之本，而為萬物之始也。是故文王始接民以仁，而天下莫不仁焉。文，德之至也，德不至則不能文。<sup>159</sup>

Scott Cook has summarized that this indicates the central thought of the chapter of “Xiu Wen” as “form for form’s sake is meaningless, the entire purpose of ritual and music lies in inculcating the spirit of virtue infused with the basic human, and indeed cosmic, impulse of humanity.”<sup>160</sup> It is noteworthy that these passages are not purely about humanistic concern, but one that relates cosmic order into the human realm. Therefore, *wen* in the chapter of “Xiu Wen” does not simply points to a broader notion of culture but it has been deliberately

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<sup>159</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1987), 476. For English translation, See Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑*, 1112-1113. For the passage number, I follow Eric Henry’s ordering.

<sup>160</sup> Scott Cook, “Musical Cultivation in the ‘Xiu Wen’ Chapter of the *Shuoyuan*,” *Dao* 16, 392.

constructed to elevate the status of societal order such that cosmic harmony ultimately depends upon humanity, the form of ritual and music to secure the hierarchical order set forth by the son of heaven to be specific. This reinforces the idea that *wen* is not simply a formality or tradition, but an integral aspect of the social and cosmic order, and that only through practice of ritual and music that properly differentiates, the societal order and cosmic harmony can be achieved.

To begin with, a central historical allusion throughout the entire chapter is how the Zhou dynasty established a complex of sophisticated rituals which later called *li* especially under the rulership of King Wen of Zhou. In Masayuki Sato's reconstruction of the development of *li*, he alludes to the view among historians such as Kiyoshi Akatsuka 赤塚忠 and Shirakawa Shizuka 白川靜 that the state institution manifested as *li* were firmly established by the end of Western Zhou period, through inevitably incorporating the basis of Shang culture, Zhou dynasty has formed a kind of religio-political order through grand state ritual.<sup>161</sup> Akatsuka has shown that the grand state ceremony of Zhou capital aimed for the harmony in relationship between the ancestral spirits, the royal family, and the feudal lords. He specifically called this kind of religio-political order of the Zhou dynasty an "ethico-humanistic community (*jinrin kyodo tai* 人倫共同體)."<sup>162</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Masayuki Sato, *The Confucian Quest for Order*, 170.

<sup>162</sup> It is not the goal of this discussion to achieve the historical veracity for the Zhou dynasty as the sources that were used speaks concern not of the Western Zhou but of writers from the Eastern Zhou, Han, or later period. The focus thus is not to seek for the ancient root of the idea of *wen*, but specifically how later thinkers conceive of, contend with, and resolve the tension revolving the discourse of *wen* as a conceptualization of the nature of *li*. Shirakawa Shizuka: *Kinbun no sekai* (Tokyo: Heibonsha, 1973), 106. Kiyoshi Akatsuka, *Chūgoku kodai shisōshi kenkyū* (Tokyo: Kenbunsha, 1987), 68-69.

Thus, allusions upon Piyong 辟雍 (palace surrounded by water) which indicates a ritual for ancestral deities that were performed on a grand scale in the Zhou holy capital Fengjing 豐京 and *lingtai* 靈臺 (divine heights) is where the Zhou king prayed the spirits to descend and be guided to Piyong temple. In the beginning of this passage, it establishes that the development of moral cultivation as accumulative process from favor (*en* 恩), to love (*ai* 愛), to benevolence (*ren* 仁), and finally to spiritual efficacy (*ling* 靈). While it is widely acknowledged that favor and love lead to benevolence, from benevolence to spiritual efficacy shows a function for the moral attributes does not limit itself solely in the humanistic realm, but it also has a concrete ritual concern to be in communication with the spirits. Therefore, for the son of heaven to be *ren* in particular, it not only has the moralistic aspects of being humanistic, kind, love, compassionate, “authoritative humanity,” but also contains its goal of the son of heaven being able to connect with spirits, feudal lords, and commoners therefore his influence radiates all under heaven.

Yuri Pines suggests that the term *de* 德 in *Zuozhuan* 左傳 encompasses a range of qualities, including charismatic power, political potency, proper decorum, mildness, and kindness in both domestic and interstate affairs, as well as individual morality.<sup>163</sup> Therefore, within the context of the passage, the claim that *wen* only arises when *de* is at its utmost suggests that *wen* represents the kind of “ethical-humanistic community” modeled on the religio-political order of the Zhou dynasty, where ancestral spirits and feudal lords all centered around the son of heaven. In this sense, *wen* does not only refer to a form of culture

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<sup>163</sup> Yuri Pines, “De 德 in the *Zuozhuan* 《左傳》,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 48 (2):130-142.

that must be imbued with virtue, but it also highlights the potency of the Son of Heaven's moral virtue to affect spiritual, human, and natural beings, ultimately resulting in their absolute subjugation to the hierarchical order established by the son of heaven. Ter Harr's work on Confucianism further suggests that *wen*, as a concept of culture, civility, and harmony in human relationships, is predicated on violence. This is particularly evident when *wen* is paired with *wu* 武 (martial prowess) to form a conceptual pair, as patterning and civility is always about power and political efficacy.<sup>164</sup> Therefore, the concept of *wen* is not simply a matter of aesthetic or cultural refinement but is inextricably linked to political power and the maintenance of social hierarchy.

The subsequent content in the next passage elucidates an unavoidable pattern of cyclical transitions within dynasties which entails anticipated adjustments based on the calendar and consistent shifts in the nature of rituals throughout different dynastic eras.<sup>165</sup> This content clearly derived from the same source as seen in “The Three Dynasties' Alternating Regulations of Simplicity and Refinement” (三代改製質文), as discussed in the previous chapter. Notably, Liu Xiang concludes this passage with a quote from the *Odes*: “As is said in the *Odes*, “The surface is carved and smoothed, / The effect is that of gold and jade.” 《詩》曰：彫琢其章，金玉其相。<sup>166</sup> Liu Xiang explains that this refers to the beauty that arises from the harmony of pattern and substance. Therefore, while *wen* and *zhi* alternate

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<sup>164</sup> Barend ter. Haar, *Religious Culture and Violence in Traditional China*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2019).

<sup>165</sup> It is noteworthy that here I do not agree with Eric Henry's ordering of separating 19.2 and 19.3 because the construction of each passage are that starting with a general and philosophical statement, then goes on with elaboration, and finally concludes with a quote from a canonical sources.

<sup>166</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 478. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑*, 1117.

between dynasties, the ideal constellation is the harmony between them which again aligns with the position seen in *Chunqiu fanlu* and *Baihu Tong*. Liu Xiang's vision of the statecraft of his time is to balance the emphasis on either *zhi* or *wen* in a way that achieves an ideal harmony and a political order that ultimately unified and elevated from the experience of past dynasties.

At this stage, the discourse on the conceptual pair of *wen-zhi* has expanded its connotation upon more relevant issues such as the meaning of state ritual, statecraft, explaining the core spirit of past dynasties, and responding to the critics of *wen*. However, its core notion of *wenzhi binbin* is still in place in *Shuoyuan* such that it aligns with what has been established in first chapter that although *wen* and *zhi* might appear dichotomous, the mutual dependency is still embedded. The kind of *wen-zhi* harmony in Liu Xiang's envision is precisely that without *de* of the son of heaven political potency, ritual of the state cannot achieved its function; without proper execution of ritual and music, the *de* of son of heaven cannot radiates such that it will affect all beings under heaven. Thus, even the orientation has shifted from individual to statecraft, the same logic applies that the state ritual ought not to focus merely on superficial appearance or style, the purpose lies in inculcating virtue and consolidating the rulership by emphasizing the hierarchical order through state ritual.

The later passages of Chapter 19 of *Shuoyuan* have been has categorized by Scott Cook into fifteen kinds of rituals: (1) emblematic clothing and ritual demeanor; (2) capping ceremony; (3) marriage ritual; (4) ritual chambers of succession; (5) greeting gifts; (6) tributes of talent; (7) appointed citizens; (8) inspection tours; (9) seasonal ordinances; (10)

archery ritual; (11) funerary gifts and last respects; (12) mourning rituals; (13) rituals for disaster relief; (14) ancestral sacrifice and the fasting ritual; and (15) royal sacrifices.<sup>167</sup>

Despite the focus on the recording of ritual procedures in these passages, they also express certain philosophical positions. For instance, in passage 19.3, it is suggested that one's attire matches with one's possession of virtue, as expressed in the sentence "The more flourishing the wearer's virtue, the more brocadelike is his attire; the more cultivated the wearer's heart, the more resplendently patterned is his garb." 德彌盛者文彌縟, 中彌理者文彌章也。<sup>168</sup>

Similarly, passage 19.5 asserts the importance of a man of quality performing their roles with perfection, emphasizing the unity of form and content such that one's outward manifestation ought to be the proper expression of one's inner moral attributes through attire and demeanor. One's moral qualities always commensurate to their social status. Further, certain functions of maintaining a proper and respectful demeanor has been stressed: "the demeanor is that which enables a man to express respect to others"; the role of demeanor in pleasing others in 19.8; how it serves as a differentiation of different type of apparel and its associated virtue or value; that demeanor ultimately gives form to one's virtue in 19.9: "apparel conform to certain rules and measure, a man of quality wears clothes that accord with proper form and wears expression that suitable for the occasion, gives form to his virtue." 故君子衣服中而容貌得, 接其服而象其德; and representing one's transformation of man to complete man 成人 in which manners means cultivation of virtue and self-restraint for *junzi* in 19.10.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Scott Cook, "Musical Cultivation in the 'Xiu Wen' Chapter of the *Shuoyuan*," 392.

<sup>168</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 479. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑*, 1119.

<sup>169</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 481. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑*, 1118-1129.

Throughout various categories of ritual, a common theme emerges – that rituals were not arbitrary, but rather intentionally crafted with a purpose in every aspect. Take, for example, the hunting ritual discussed in passages 19.18 and 19.19.<sup>170</sup> Specific guidelines are set forth regarding when and how to hunt in different times, and what the dos and don'ts of hunting are. These guidelines emphasize the importance of aligning with the natural order of things, such as refraining from hunting in the summer and avoiding killing animals that are not fully mature or pregnant. Similarly, in the section on mourning rituals, the emphasis is on creating proper form for human circumstances and emotions. This is the ultimate basis of ritual - as stated in passage 19.21: “human circumstances were measured so as to create ritual forms, this was called having a reason for everything. this was the ultimate basis of ritual.” 度人情而出節文，謂之有因。禮之大宗也。<sup>171</sup> In other words, the purpose of ritual is not arbitrary but based on fundamental human conditions and emotions, such as the need to express sorrow during mourning. Passage 19.25 further emphasizes the importance of ritual in expressing emotions. It states that the *junzi* uses ritual to articulate his emotions by drawing them out and expressing them, highlighting the role of ritual in providing a concrete form for otherwise invisible human sentiments. Finally, passage 19.31 elaborates on the idea that rituals are the embodiment of one's emotions and provide a proper expression for them: “Ritual, when disembodied, consists of respect. Mourning, when not embodied in hepen garb, consists of sorrow. Music, when not embodied in sound, consists of joy. 無體之禮，敬

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<sup>170</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 481. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑*, 1144-1149.

<sup>171</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 481. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑*, 1154-1157.

也;無服之喪, 憂也;無聲之樂, 權也。”<sup>172</sup> It states that ritual, mourning, and music are all embodied in different ways - through respect, sorrow, and joy, respectively - highlighting the role of ritual in giving concrete forms to human emotions. In summary, throughout various categories of ritual, the emphasis is on creating intentional and purposeful forms that align with the natural order of things and provide a proper expression for fundamental human conditions and emotions.

In section 19.34, Liu Xiang concludes the discussion on ritual with an anecdote to promote a harmonious and moderate perspective of the balance of *wen* and *zhi* regarding ritual by emphasizing simplicity and avoiding excessiveness or extravagance. To begin with, alluding to *Analects* 6/1 and 6/2, this passage elaborates the laconic *Analects* dialogue between Confucius and Zhong Gong. The passage records and comments on the encounter between Confucius and Zisang Bozi, where Confucius is condemned by Zisang Bozi for having too much external refinement while Zisang Bozi is judged by Confucius for not having enough refinement such that “he wanted the way of men same as that of horses and oxen” 欲同人道於牛馬. The central disposition of the passage is: “Thus, it is said that one who cultivates both his essential nature, and his external refinement is a man of quality. To be sound in one’s essential nature but deficient in external cultivation is to be rustic and unrefined.” 故曰, 文質脩者謂之君子, 有質而無文謂之易野.<sup>173</sup> The concluding remarks was made by Zhong Gong who differentiates between the kind of simplicity that “hold

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<sup>172</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 497. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑*, 1166-1167.

<sup>173</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 498. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑*, 1166-1167.

oneself in reverence and to be simple in the measures one takes” 居敬而行簡 and “to be simple in the way one holds oneself as well as in the measures one takes” 居簡而行簡 in “ruling over the common people” 以道民. Zhong Gong therefore qualifies Confucius’ view on simplicity by adding a layer to one’s action of simplicity of whether one holds reverence to themselves as their inner substance.<sup>174</sup> Therefore, simplicity is a virtue only when one act with respect for oneself and others and is mindful of one’s conduct and behavior. Thus, the section on rituals in the “Xiu Wen” chapter stresses the importance of balance and moderation in the practice of rituals. It highlights the value of simplicity by cautioning against having too much mannerism to the point of pedant while emphasizing the need for respect for oneself and others in the execution of one’s code of conduct. This section particularly provides a nuanced understanding of the relationship between external refinement and inner substance with how to incorporate simplicity as a virtue in one’s conduct and behavior.

Although the various “schools” of thought including Ruist, Legalists, and Daoist have certain set of norms and principle that governs their overarching argument, but most of the concepts are widely acknowledged and discussed such as the concept of “non-action” 无为 but in different ways. This passage therefore can be seen as an example of the Ruists’ position on “non-action” or simple action in governing the common people. The compiler of the *Analects* as well as Liu Xiang clearly recognizes the position of other tradition, which emphasized simplicity and criticized the Ruist practice of ritual and music for being overtly

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<sup>174</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 498-499. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence*, *Shuoyuan* 說苑, 1170-1171.

refined and extravagant. However, by discussing simplicity, this passage not only incorporates simplicity as a virtue in ritual and music but also integrates it into the Ruist position that we discussed earlier that it is not just acting in the right way that is important, what is essential is acting with the right attitude. In other words, simplicity is a virtue only when it is done in such a way that one does not treat oneself with simplicity but is still able to act with the right attitude of reverence. Thus, this section shows the Ruists position on simplicity is not a rejection of refinement or *wen*, but an acknowledgment that it should not be pursued at the expense of the proper attitude and virtue. Thus again, this passage shows Liu Xiang's preoccupation to pursue a balanced position of *wen* and *zhi* such that a refined form should be infused with inner substance, a position that aligns with the *Analects*.

The second part of the "Xiu Wen" chapter concerns matter upon music that has been analyzed in great details by Scott Cook who separated into sections of authenticity and the nature of musical harmony, the transformative power of music, and music and the sagely channeling of human nature. In the first section, the origin of the musical system and its relationship to the cosmic and societal order has been highlighted: "In ages when a great sage comes to rule the realm, the vital essences of heaven and earth combine and create airs. On solstice days the sun energizes the winds and thus creates the twelve musical modes... When the winds and weather of heaven and earth are normal, the twelve modes all reach perfection. 大聖至治之世，天地之氣，合以生風，日至則日行其風以生十二律...天地之風氣正，十二律至也。"<sup>175</sup> In other words, music system is not arbitrary nor a mere human invention

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<sup>175</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 499-501. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence*, *Shuoyuan* 說苑, 1172-1175.

but one that is modeled upon nature of the cosmos, and it is necessary for human to derive from nature and “bring the incipient harmony of the cosmos to its ultimate fulfillment.” The second and third section highlights the significant impact of music on human emotions and its ability to shape customs and morals: “It works deeply on people’s feelings and readily causes customs and morals to evolve; therefore, the sages regarded the teaching of music as a matter of great importance. 其感人深，其移風易俗。故先王著其教焉。”<sup>176</sup> Therefore, the son of heaven must take responsibility for guiding people towards proper music forms that align with societal values, and away from negative forms that can lead to undesirable outcomes. This is precisely due to the powerful connection between music and emotion such that it is essential to create music that promotes positive emotions and values, such as honesty, sincerity, and kindness, to foster a peaceful and harmonious society. By recognizing the power of music and taking steps to guide its influence, the son of heaven thereupon can play a significant role in shaping the moral and cultural fabric of the society.

On the other hand, the chapter on “Fan Zhi” starts with an anecdote of Kongzi’s comments on the hexagram *bi*. It records how Kongzi was disappointed with the *bi* hexagram (adorned), that he is instead drawn to the essential, unaltered hue, and uncarved jade, *zhi* of these objects is so manifest as to reject all decoration:

Once, Kongzi was casting with the Yi and obtained the hexagram *bi*, upon which he looked up and heaved a sigh in a manner that showed dissatisfaction. Stepping forward, Zizhang raised his hands in respectful salutation and said, “I have heard that *bi* is an auspicious hexagram—why do you sigh?” “*Bi* is not a pure color—that is why I sigh,” replied Kongzi. “I am drawn to that which retains its essential, unaltered hue; white should be pure white and black, pure black. What good resides in the hexagram

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<sup>176</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 502-503. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence*, *Shuoyuan* 說苑, 1178-1179.

bi? I have also heard that no designs are added to cinnabar and lacquer, that white jade is never carved, and that precious pearls are never painted. Why is this the case? It is because the essential stuff of these objects is so manifest as to reject all decoration.”

孔子卦得賁，喟然仰而歎息，意不平。子張進，舉手而問曰：「師聞賁者吉卦，而歎之乎？」孔子曰：「賁非正色也，是以歎之。吾思夫質素，白當正白，黑當正黑。夫質又何也？吾亦聞之，丹漆不文，白玉不彫，寶珠不飾，何也？質有餘者，不受飾也。」<sup>177</sup>

The reason for Liu Xiang to choose this anecdote to start the chapter is that this anecdote is authoritative that it includes Confucius, the *Book of Change*, and a quote from Confucius about the importance of *zhi* 質. However, the issue remains as to why Confucius sighed over the hexagram *bi*, and what the significance of this anecdote is for the “Fan Zhi” chapter. Does it align with the previous chapter of “Xiu Wen,” or does it contradict it by showing a reservation towards the notion of ornamentation? Therefore, by examining the *Book of Changes*, we can see that the hexagram *Bi* starts off with the judgement of “grace has success. In small matter, it is favorable to undertake something. 賁：亨。小利有攸往。”<sup>178</sup> From this, we can infer that the core idea behind the anecdote is to emphasize the idea that substance *zhi* are essential for achieving success. And hexagram *Bi* while in relating to *wen*, represent merely the outward ornamentation without the idea of *wen* as a visible manifestation of the essential nature. Thus, while Confucius may have sighed over the hexagram *Bi*, it does not necessarily imply a rejection of ornamentation. Rather, it serves as a

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<sup>177</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 511. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑*, 1198-1199.

<sup>178</sup> *Zhouyi Zhengyi* 周易正義, annotated by Wang Bi 王弼 (d. 249), Han Kangbo 韓康伯 (ca. 4<sup>th</sup> century) with a commentary by Kong Yingda 孔穎達, in *Shisanjing zhushu* 十三經註疏, ed. Ruan Yuan 阮元 (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan, 2013), 3B, 62. For English translation, see Richard Wilhelm, *The I Ching or Book of Changes*, tr. Cary F. Baynes (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2013), 244.

reminder that even in matters of grace and elegance, there must be a solid foundation of substance. Thus, instead of contradicting the previous chapter, the anecdote augments it by showcasing the importance of balance and the need for a strong underlying foundation in matters of refinement and elegance.

The second passage discusses the real sources of good fortune by emphasizing the importance of genuine and sincere behavior over superstitious rituals and empty performance. It suggests that truly wise would focus on being kind and virtuous, rather than relying on superficial practices to obtain blessings or success. It condemns several behaviors in rituals: to begin with, “to believe in ghosts and spirits, 信鬼神,” or “believes in lucky and unlucky days” 信日, “respecting laws and holding achievement in high regard” 敬法令, 貴功勞, “perform sacrifices with a view to obtaining blessings” 以詞祀求福, “put one’s own interests first” 自專, regarding divination, “using perverse or evil methods to ensure one’s personal security” 以顛倒之惡, 而幸安之全. Instead, the passage indicates that the “truly wise and worthy are comprehensive in their knowledge; they can act without regard to time taboos and still obtain fine result” 夫賢聖周知, 能不時日而事利. And “those who in ancient times made divinations concerning auspicious days acted thus so as to supplement the Way and resolve uncertainties; they made what was foremost clear, did not dare to put their own interests first.” 凡古之卜日者, 將以輔道稽疑, 示有所先, 而不敢自專也.<sup>179</sup>

According to Li Ling:

During the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, the various schools of thought can be divided into two categories based on the category of their knowledge.

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<sup>179</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 511-512. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence*, *Shuoyuan* 說苑, 1198-1199.

One category revolves around the education of the nobleman, such as the *Odes* (*Shi* 詩), the *Documents* (*Shu* 書), rites, and music, and is the subject of debate between the Confucian and Mohist schools. The other category is based on practical skills such as numerology and divination, and includes the Yin-Yang 陰陽 and Daoist schools, as well as the Legalists that derived from Daoism. After the Qin and Han dynasties, Chinese indigenous culture is also divided into two major systems: Confucian culture and Daoist culture. Confucian culture not only preserves and promotes the teaching of the *Odes*, the *Documents*, rites, and music as its main goal, but also incorporates the learning of punishment (*xing* 刑), names (*ming* 名), and occult practices, and is closely combined with upper-level politics. Daoist culture is a knowledge system based on numerology, occult practices, and other techniques, with Yin-Yang and Daoist philosophy as its philosophical expression, folk beliefs as its social foundation, and the combination of the three has a great influence in folk society.

春秋戰國時期的諸子之學，從知識背景上講可分為兩大類：一類是以詩書禮樂等貴族教育為背景或圍繞這一背景而爭論的儒、墨兩家；另一類是以數術方技等實用技術為背景的陰陽、道兩家以及從道家派生的法、名兩家。而秦漢以後的中國本土文化也分為兩大系統，即儒家文化和道教文化。儒家文化不僅以保存和闡揚詩書禮樂為職任，還混雜進刑名法術，與上層政治緊密結合；而道教文化則以數術方技之學為知識體系，陰陽家和道家為哲學表達，民間信仰為社會基礎，三者結合而形成，並在民間有莫大勢力。<sup>180</sup>

Thus, in Li Ling's *Zhongguo fangshu kao* 中國方術考, he aimed to unearth the pragmatic culture of occult practices in early China that early Ruism is often juxtaposed against. Occult arts, or *fangshu*, are closely tied to a group of people called the *fangshi* 方士 or "masters of techniques." Gu Jiegang, in his book *Qin-Han de fangshi yu rusheng* 秦漢的方士與儒生, suggests that these two groups of people, the *fangshi* and Ruists were both employed in the court in Qin and Han, and have been in constant competition for the emperor's favor.<sup>181</sup> Li Ling notes that early Ruists are now well-known for their focus on humanistic cultivation. It is expressed in places such as *Analects* 7/21: "The topics the Master

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<sup>180</sup> Li Ling 李零, *Zhongguo fangshukao* 中國方術考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 11-13.

<sup>181</sup> Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, *Qinhan de fangshi yu rusheng* 秦漢的方士與儒生 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2005).

did not speak of were prodigies, force, disorder and gods. 子不語怪，力，亂，神。”<sup>182</sup> And in *Xunzi*, it is also stated: “Thus, the gentleman regards this as proper form, but the common people regard it as connecting with spirits.” 故君子以為文，而百姓以為神。<sup>183</sup> However, as Li Ling has alluded to, because Confucianism gradually became the orthodox ideology, the rich traditions based upon occult practices were lost to us or were appropriated by other traditions. The question is why the doctrines of Confucianism would be antagonistic to occult tradition such as what has been mentioned here those who “believes in lucky and unlucky days” 信日. According to Li Ling, the word *rizhe* 日者 was already in use during the Warring States period. For example, in the Mohist text “Guiyi” 貴義, *rizhe* was referred to those who specialize in observing and divining auspicious or inauspicious events based on the days and the times.<sup>184</sup> In the *Shi ji*, there is a section on the *rizhe* in the *liezhuan* 列傳. It begins with following line: “Since ancient times, those who received the mandate became kings, and the rise of kings was often determined by divination and auspicious signs. This was especially true during the Zhou Dynasty, and also during the Qin Dynasty. When the kings of the state ascended to the throne, they would entrust the decision to diviners. The position of the Grand Diviner arose during the Han Dynasty and onwards.” 自古受命而王，王者之興何嘗不以卜筮決於天命哉！其於周尤甚，及秦可見。代王之入，任於卜者。太卜之起，由漢興而有。<sup>185</sup> However, as the anecdote in the *Shiji* has indicated, people who practice the occult

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<sup>182</sup> Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯註 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1984), 372. D.C. Lau, *The Analects*, 95.

<sup>183</sup> Wang Xianqian 王先謙, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解, 316. Eric L. Hutton, *荀子 Xunzi, The Complete Text* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2014), 179.

<sup>184</sup> Li Ling 李零, *Zhongguo fangshukao* 中國方術考 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001), 15.

<sup>185</sup> *Shi ji* 史記 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2014), 127.3907.

knowledge as a career are not regarded highly in the intellectual discourse. When Song Zhou 宋忠 and Jia Yi 賈誼 visited Sima Ji 司馬季, a diviner in the Chu, they asked Sima Ji: “why do you live in such a humble place and engage in such a lowly job now?” 今何居之卑，何行之汙?<sup>186</sup> This shows that diviners or the *fangshi* were regarded as lowly at least among the well-learned scholars.

According to Marianne Bujard, in the 1st century BC, two models of imperial religion clashed: one favored by the specialists of ritual and traditional texts and learning, which demanded the centralization of imperial rites and the removal of heterodox deities, and another by the *fangshi*, who promoted older religious traditions and aimed at immortality.<sup>187</sup> The specialists of traditional texts centered their religious system on the worship of heaven, with the ruler as the Son of Heaven, and emphasized the sincerity and purity of sacrifices rather than the quantity or sophistication of the offering. They established altars in the capital and suburbs for deity’s worthy of membership in the imperial pantheon and meriting exclusive sacrifices by the emperor and officers of rites. The literati’s approach contributed to the centralization of political power in the hands of the ruler and his bureaucracy, and the mastery of the Classics became the foundation of social ambition, thereby promoting their status at court. This development of the new imperial religion contributed to the establishment of the ancient texts as an orthodox corpus by the end of the Western Han. On the contrary, there were the *fangshi* who combined various occult practices from all over the

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<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>187</sup> Marianne Bujard, “State and Local Cults in Han Religion,” *Early Chinese Religion Part One: Shang Through Han (1250 BC -220 AD)*, eds. John Lagerway and Marc Kalinowski, (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2009), 777-813.

country and integrated them into a religious system centered around the pursuit of immortality, with legendary divinities such as the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi) and Taiyi (the Great One) at the top. According to Bujard, the imperial religion alternated between following the religious plans developed by literati based on interpretations of the Classics and surreptitiously reintroducing specific cults maintained by their followers into imperial rites.

Liu Xiang would have been familiar with occult knowledge and practice himself, as he and his son Liu Xin 劉歆 compiled the *Bielu* 別錄 and *Qilüe* 七略 which are now lost to us but which were encyclopedic bibliographies that included knowledge of the occult practice. Marianne Bujard also mentioned that Liu Xiang himself was a supporter of the *fangshi*.<sup>188</sup> As Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 has alluded to, these two opposing groups were doctrines and ideas became blurry as they constantly tried to establish priority over the other tradition. This likely led to borrowing of each other's ideas and practices sometimes.<sup>189</sup> According to Burton Watson, “the courtiers of the Han were both Confucians and Daoists by turns, depending on which doctrine was appropriate to their particular activities or phase of life, and in this way they contrived, with considerable success, to enjoy the best of two superb philosophies.”<sup>190</sup> It is likely that Watson actually had in mind the *fangshi* here when he mentions Daoists. They were practitioners of the occult arts and specialized in areas such as divination, astrology, alchemy, and other esoteric practices, whereas the scholars of traditional texts and arts were primarily concerned with moral and ethical teachings and the

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<sup>188</sup> Marianne Bujard, “State and Local Cults in Han Religion,” *Early Chinese Religion Part One: Shang Through Han (1250 BC -220 AD)*, 777.

<sup>189</sup> Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, *Qinhan de fangshi yu rusheng* 秦漢的方士與儒生, 14-17.

<sup>190</sup> Burton Watson, *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 27.

study of the Classics as the guide for imperial rites. Thus, Liu Xiang's position in the chapter of "Fan Zhi" represents the position of most traditional scholars toward divination and other occult practice. On the one hand, they are living in a world where such practices are popular and some Confucian scholars might also engage in them themselves; on the other, the canonical sources from the Confucian tradition discourage such practices because the literati need to maintain their own status and knowledge of the Classics to be used in the court.

Under this context, because of the usage of the quote in the Classics and the moral lessons embedded in the second passage of the "Fan Zhi" chapter, it is Classicism in its Orientation.<sup>191</sup> Although it is not evident whether it is explicitly a criticism for the *fangshi* by the literati, the central message is clear that Liu Xiang discourages the sort of utilitarian view of ritual and sacrifice that is typical of the *fangshi*. He does so while still allowing for the efficacy of the spirits: "if one believes in the sentience of spirits and strives to serve them, but nevertheless turns his back on the Way and persists in wild and perverse behavior, then, when he performs sacrifices with a view to obtaining blessings, the spirits will surely flout his wishes." 以神明有知而事之，乃欲背道妄行，而以祠祀求福，神明必違之矣。<sup>192</sup> Thus, this passage does not oppose divination and achieving auspicious results from the spirits, and perhaps even the sentience of the spirits. However, it is emphasized that individuals do not

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<sup>191</sup> By using the terms "classicism" and "classict," I am invoking in an ideological sense people who study the model from the past especially in the Han court. It is important to note that what it meant to be a person to study the Classics or to call them Confucian in Liu Xiang's day might be different from other times, and in his day was variable from person to person or group to group. See Michael Nylan, "A Problematic Model: The Han 'Orthodox Synthesis,' Then and Now," in *Imagining Boundaries: Changing Confucian Doctrines, Texts, and Hermeneutics*, ed. Kai-wing Chou, On-Cho Ng, and John B. Henderson (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 17-56.

<sup>192</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 512. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑*, 1198-1199.

rely on superficial practices to achieve their goals, but rather rely on their ethical behaviors and fathoming the patterns of the world through their knowledge of the Classics. Rituals should not be directed toward personal gain, but toward supplementing the Way and, it turns out, resolving uncertainties in the state.

The passage goes on with the proper procedure of ritual: “Sons of Heaven sacrifice to heaven and earth, to the Five Sacred Mountains, and to the Four Waterways; the territorial lords sacrifice to the gods of the grain and of the soil; court officers carry out the five offerings; men-of-service sacrifice to the spirits of their households; and commoners sacrifice to their ancestors. Sage-kings, playing host to the heart of Heaven, establish ritual distinctions.” 天子祭天地、五嶽、四瀆，諸侯祭社稷，大夫祭五祀，士祭門戶，庶人祭其先祖。聖王承天心，制禮分也。<sup>193</sup> It describes the proper ritual norms which vary depending on one’s status. In other words, the relationship between ritual and hierarchy envisioned by the literati is such that ritual should be subordinate to hierarchy and be executed in ways that secure the foundation of hierarchy. Thus, it echoes back to the first passage of the “Xiu Wen” chapter which suggests “whenever the Way prevails in the realm, ritual, music, campaigns, and attacks all issue from the Son of Heaven. 天下有道，則禮樂征伐自天子出。” In other words, the proper execution of ritual practices is dependent on one’s social status within the hierarchy thus reinforces the social hierarchy. By following the established ritual practices, those who involved in it would be constantly reminded their roles and responsibilities within the society such that individuals would gradually internalize and

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<sup>193</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 512. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence, Shuoyuan 說苑*, 1200-1201.

finally became the role that they play in rituals. This has been the core of the Confucian tradition, as established in the first chapter, where becoming a complete man depends on learnedness in music and ritual.

On the other hand, the diviners and practitioners of the occult knowledge, or *fangshi*, who attempt to fathom the pattern themselves and aim for personal gain, thus violate the ritual norm and are therefore a threat for the hierarchy envisioned by the Confucian literati. They were not bound by the same moral and ethical teaching as the Confucian scholars; instead, they relied on their own mystical knowledge and esoteric practices, which were seen by Confucian literati as superstitious and lacking in moral values. This was a direct challenge to the Confucian belief that social and political order should be based on a system of moral principles that were grounded in the Classics and were instantiated by the ancient sages. On the other hand, the belief in a cosmos beyond human control is one that fundamentally differs from the Confucian moral universe, where the emphasis was on the individuals' moral cultivation and human agency, and the idea that man should strive to act in accordance with the ethical ideals seen in the Classics. Thus, not only are they practically in competition with the literati in the court, *fangshi* are also a threat to stability for the Confucian literati because what they are performing no longer conforms to the hierarchy wherein ritual distinctions are established and reproduced.

Thus, these two passages of the “Fan Zhi” chapter reveals a coherent agenda with the chapter on “Xiu Wen” that *wen* should not be an empty form or form for form's sake, rather, *wen* as a conceptualization of ritual should be combined with *zhi*, the inner substance, which

both chapters have emphasized this substance is the hierarchy. In other words, both chapters express a position that rituals should be promoted in such ways that is not only about external formality or appearances but should aim to cultivate virtues and strengthen the rulership by emphasizing the innateness of hierarchy through the state ritual.

The next two passages made the position on the *wen-zhi* pair more conspicuous. In 20.3, the relation of underlying substance to goodness has been discussed:

The nature of the masses is such that they are unable to overcome their desires and are prone to abandon substance in favor of empty showiness; it is this that gives rise to such misfortunes as poorly made pottery and quarreling and fighting over rights, and it is the rise of quarreling that leads to hooliganism. Why is this so? It is so because people depart from sincerity and adopt deception, and because they reject simple honesty in favor of falsity. They pursue the nonessential (*mo* 末) and never find a place to rest. If only a sage were to deemphasize all that is external and showy, and uphold the inner substance of things, then all in the realm would return to their genuine goodness.

民之性皆不勝其欲。去其實而歸之華，是以苦窳之器，爭鬪之患起。爭鬪之患起，則所以偷也。所以然者何也？由離誠就詐，棄樸而取偽也。追逐其末，而無所休止。聖人抑其文而抗其質，則天下反矣。<sup>194</sup>

Contrary to the chapter “Xiu Wen,” where a lot of passages can find their parallel in the extant text of the *Analects*, *Liji* 禮記, *Xiaojing* 孝經, and *Chunqiu fanlu* 春秋繁露, the chapter “Fan Zhi” has many parallels within the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, the *Mozi* 墨子, *Yanzi Chunqiu* 晏子春秋, *Huainanzi* 淮南子, presenting a clear contrast with the chapter “Xiu Wen.” In this passage *wen* is associated with concepts such as *hua* 華, *wei* 偽, and *mo* 末 whereas *zhi* is associated with concepts such as *shi* 實, *pu* 璞, and *ben* 本. This clearly resonates with the position seen in *Huainanzi* and the “Mending Nature” chapter of the

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<sup>194</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 516. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence*, *Shuoyuan* 說苑, 1202-1203.

*Zhuangzi*, which Graham and Roth deemed as the categories of “Primitivists” who believed that when the emphasis was on the ornamentation and superficiality of things which obscures one’s essential nature, the proper goal was to return (*fan* 反) to the original condition or the *ben*. This clear difference in textual affiliation and in turn, philosophical position needs more attention. Suppose Liu Xiang edited and composed these two chapters consciously as a pair as we have established in this chapter, the question remains as whether it is also a conscious choice to present two sets of sources and two different perspectives here, side by side. Does this act itself create some unity?

In this chapter, the concept of frugality emerges as another prominent theme. Michael Loewe discusses the expression of views by Liu Xiang, dating back to 16 BCE, regarding the protest against a building project at the site east of Chang’an known as Changling 長陵.<sup>195</sup> This project aimed to replace a tomb complex that had been under construction immediately after Chengdi’s accession at Yanling, located west of the capital city. Liu Xiang vehemently opposed this project and drew attention to the extravagance displayed in the burial of the First Emperor of Qin as also seen in passage 20.7.<sup>196</sup> He believed that such opulence could lead to various calamities, including the downfall of the entire dynasty. This incident highlights the deep-rooted concern among intellectuals regarding excessive expenditure and the potential negative consequences it could have on the stability and prosperity of a dynasty. Liu Xiang’s allusion to the First Emperor of Qin’s lavish burial reflects a broader sentiment that resonated

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<sup>195</sup> Michael Loewe, “Liu Xiang and Liu Xin,” *Chang’an 26 BCE An Augustan Age in China*, eds. Michael Nylan and Griet Bankeerberghen (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015), 372-373.

<sup>196</sup> *Shuoyuan jiaozheng* 說苑校證, ed. Xiang Zonglu 向宗魯, 516-518. Eric Henry, *Garden of Eloquence*, *Shuoyuan* 說苑, 1211-1217.

with many who believed in the importance of practicing moderation and restraint in all aspects of governance. Frugality, therefore, emerges as a significant ideological stance within the historical context discussed in this chapter. It not only represents a critique of extravagant projects but also serves as a reminder of the delicate balance between *wen* as ornamentation and *zhi* as simplicity, as well as the need for responsible and morally competent leadership. This underlying theme of frugality resonates throughout the narrative, revealing its influence on the political and social dynamics of the time.

The overall exploration of the discourse surrounding *wen-zhi* suggests that the theoretical dynamics of treating *wen* and *zhi* as a conceptual pair emerged over many centuries, but like so much of the intellectual heritage of this time, were only given careful, systematic articulation in the third and second century BCE as part of a broader attempt to formulate a coherent and unified cosmology and ideology out of diverse earlier tradition. These two chapters of *Shuoyuan* serve as a deliberate effort to synthesize various materials and perspectives on the concept of *wen-zhi*, aiming to create a coherent agenda. By incorporating diverse viewpoints, the chapters in the *Shuoyuan* strive to present a comprehensive understanding of *wen* and *zhi*, highlighting their interdependence and mutual harmony by reminding the readers to “Returning to the Essence” while “Cultivating Civil Virtue.” This endeavor once again aligns with the concept of *wenzhi binbin* found in the *Analecets*, which emphasizes the need for a harmonious relationship between *wen* and *zhi*. The conscious effort to synthesize different perspectives into a coherent agenda underscores the

significance attributed to the unity and balance of *wen* and *zhi* within the intellectual framework of the time.

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