Painting the Formless and Strumming the Soundless:

Yang Xiong's *Taixuan jing* as Expression of the Absolute

Jennifer Liu

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Ping Wang

Olga Levaniouk

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ABSTRACT

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Jennifer Liu

Chair of the Supervisory Committee:

David R. Knechtges

Department of Asian Languages and Literature

This dissertation is a study of Yang Xiong's (53 BCE–18 CE) *Taixuan jing* that attempts to incorporate philological methods with philosophical insights by situating the text within the intellectual and historical context of the late Eastern Han. Secondarily, it is a response to the modern suggestion that the *Taixuan jing* paved the way for Wei-Jin *xuanxue* movement, and thus seeks to probe the limits of the extent of this claim with an investigation into Yang Xiong's mentor Zhuang Zun (83 BCE–ca. 6 CE) and the Jingzhou school established under the auspices of Liu Biao (144-208). While most studies have taken the *Taixuan jing* as an imitation of the *Zhou yi,* I have argued that if we are to truly understand Yang Xiong's project we must break free of this preconception and look at it in its own right. That is, the *Taixuan* is not merely an imitation

of the *Zhou yi*, but that of a higher, transcendental truth which I have called the "absolute" that is expressed through image, parallel prose, and verse.

In §1 I will set forth the philosophical background by looking at the concept of *mimēsis* as it had evolved in meaning by the time of Plato; the historical and intellectual background that prompted this study; and a philological analysis of the usages of the word *xuan*. In §2 I will introduce Zhuang Zun and his only extant text, the *Laozi zhigui*, and discuss the concepts of *xuanmo* (profound quietude) and *xuande* (profound virtue) that may have informed Yang Xiong's intellectual endeavors. In §3 I will look at the historical times of Yang Xiong and trace a trajectory in the development of his thought through from his early and late *fu* to his more philosophical texts, the *Fa yan* and *Taixuan*. §4 is devoted to the *Taixuan* itself where I look at passages from the text that embody the three forms of expressions of the absolute (image, prose, and verse). Finally, in §5 I attempt to bring together the threads that may or may not connect Zhuang Zun, Yang Xiong, and their relation to *xuanxue*. A fully annotated translation of the "Preface" and "Li" commentary of the *Taixuan jing* is provided in the Appendices.

For My Family

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The rounded world is fair to see.
Nine times folded in mystery:
Though baffled seers cannot impart
The secret of its laboring heart.
Throb thine with Nature's throbbing breast,
And all is clear from east to west.
Spirit that lurks each form within
Beckons to spirits of its kin;
Self-kindled every atom grows,
And hints the future which it owes.

~Ralph Waldo Emerson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

NOTE ON TRANSLATIONS & ABBREVIATIONS

Throughout I have used the *pinyin* system with tone marks on words when their meaning is up for discussion. I have made exceptions for Chinese words which have become so common in Western literature including tao, yin, and yang, leaving these words un-italicized when they occur as proper nouns. When citing from older books that use the Wade-Giles system, I have changed them into pinyin. For names of scholars from Taiwan and Hong Kong, I have retained their spelling according to the system in that area. All English translations of Chinese passages are mine unless otherwise noted.

BSOAS	*Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*
DZ	*Daozang* 道藏
HYDCD	*Hanyu da cidian* 漢語大辭典
HS	*Han shu* 漢書
HYGZ	*Huayang guozhi* 華陽國志
JAOS	*Journal of the American Oriental Society*
JDSW	*Jingdian shiwen* 經典釋文
JS	*Jin shu* 晉書
LZZG	*Laozi zhigui* 老子指歸
MS	*Monumenta Serica*
SBBY	*Sibu beiyao* 四部備要
SBCK	*Sibu congkan* 四部叢刊
SGZ	*Sanguo zhi* 三國志
SKQS	*Siku quanshu* 四庫全書
SS	*Sui shu* 隋書
SWJZ	*Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字
TP	*T'oung Pao*
TXCM	*Taixuan chanmi* 太玄闡秘
TXJ	*Taixuan jing* 太玄經
TXJZ	*Taixuan ji zhu* 太玄集注
YWLJ	*Yiwen leiju* 藝文類聚
ZYZY	*Zhou yi zheng yi* 周易正義

§1 Prolegomena

κοῦφον γὰρ χρῆμα ποιητής ἐστιν καὶ πτηνὸν καὶ ἱερόν,
καὶ οὐ πρότερον οἷός τε ποιεῖν πρὶν ἂν ἔνθεός
τε γένηται καὶ ἔκφρων καὶ ὁ νοῦς μηκέτι ἐν αὐτῷ ἐνῇ:
ἕως δ᾽ ἂν τουτὶ ἔχῃ τὸ κτῆμα,
ἀδύνατος πᾶς ποιεῖν ἄνθρωπός ἐστιν καὶ χρησμῳδεῖν.[1]

1.1 Theoretical background

A proper study of any subject that is of intellectual significance to the whole of a culture cannot be done in isolation without some knowledge of other cultures and their intellectual history. Therefore, a new study of Yang Xiong's *Taixuan*, if it is to bring to light new features must require scrutiny not only under the usual lenses used by previous scholars who have for the most part remained in the theoretical vicinity of traditional Chinese methodology, but also under different sets of lenses that may help to bring to focus details otherwise invisible to the naked eye. I attempt such a new study with the following set of lenses: the Greek notion of *mimēsis* as it has evolved from mimetic enactment in Homer to a philosophically nuanced concept of imitation involving an original and its copy in Plato; and Plato's articulation of the "ancient quarrel between poetry and philosophy" in the *Republic*. I use the *mimēsis* lens to show how the view of the *Taixuan* as an imitation of the *Zhou yi* can expand and/or limit one's understanding of the text. My argument is that instead of beginning from the premise that the *Taixuan* is an imitation of the *Zhou yi* we should begin by reading the *Taixuan* as a creative response. The *Republic* lens is used to refocus, or filter, the *Taixuan* as Yang's response to the problem of

[1] Plato, *Ion*, 534b. "For a poet is an airy being, winged and holy, and he is not able to make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his mind and his intellect is no longer in him. As long as a human being has his intellect in his possession he will always lack the power to make poetry or sing prophecy." Translation, John M. Cooper, *Plato, Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 942.

image, word, and thought by imitating the absolute principle *xuan* in three corresponding modes of expression: in the linear image of the tetragram, in the poetic condensing of verses, and in the philosophical expansion in prose. The last two modes are however inextricably linked by virtue of the prevalent usage of parallel prose (which can be seen as a hybrid of verse and prose) and is a marked feature of literary composition. Without further ado, let us put on the first lens.[2]

1.1.1 *Mimēsis*

The word *mimēsis* is of Greek origin. In the field of Chinese literary studies, it is usually taken in the sense of 'imitation' precluding a relation between copy and original, or by semantic extension 'representation' in discussions pertaining to literary theory, such as poetic imagery.[3] The primary meaning of *mimēsis*, however, is 'dramatic reenactment' which means to pattern something on a model, as pertains to the early poetic and lyric tradition of Ancient Greece, for

[2] For citing lines from Plato's dialogues, I have included the standard Stephanus numbers in parentheses that correspond to the French scholar Henri Estienne's edited version (1578) of the Greek text. Translations are taken from John M. Cooper, ed. with introduction and notes, *Plato, Complete Works* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997). In discussions of Plato's dialogues, I refrain from assigning ideas to Plato himself for we can never be clear whether what is said in the dialogues are actual representations of his thoughts. I have thus simply used Socrates as the main speaker who presents these ideas in the dialogues, but this does not refer to the historical Socrates. I refer to Plato as the mastermind author behind these highly contrived dialogues.

[3] See for example amongst many others, Nicholas Morrow Williams, "The Brocade of Words: Imitation Poetry and Poetics in the Six Dynasties," Ph. D diss., University of Washington (2010); and Pauline Yu, *The Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987). Western studies of the concept of mimesis are too many to list, but one classic study, ambitious in scope, is that of Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature,* trans. Willard R. Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

example, that belonging to Homer. Such transmission, essentially performative in nature, is further complicated by what Gregory Nagy has described as *mouvance* and *variance* in his discussion of Homeric transmission: "*mouvance* is the process of recomposition-in-performance as actually recognized by a living oral tradition, where the recognition implies the paradox of immediate change without ultimate change."[4] The concept of *variance* refers to "continuity through variation" where the differences in oral transmissions are argued to be equally legitimate.[5] Thus every performance and each composition is essentially a recreation of a particular tradition in maintaining continuity through live *mimēsis*.

The epics of Homer have traditionally held an authoritative status for the Greeks not only as a source of entertainment through live performance at various events, but also as a kind of "encyclopedic handbook" that was read, memorized, and recited by educated Athenians.[6] Plato

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[4] Gregory Nagy, *Poetry as Performance: Homer and Beyond* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 25. The concept of *mouvance* was originally used by Paul Zumthor in his conception of medieval manuscripts not as a finished product, but as a text in progress. Nagy's rearticulation of *mouvance* in relation to *variance* is much more sophisticated and complicated than what I have hastily provided here. It involves the imagery of the song of Penelope as a nightingale in the Odyssey singing "at the onset anew of springtime, / and she pours forth, changing it around thick and fast, a / voice with many resoundings," as well as the etymological nuances in the word troubadour derived from the root *trep- meaning 'find, invent.' Underlining his. For his full argument, see ibid., 7-38.

[5] Nagy (1996), 37.

[6] John Bremer, "The Homeric Handbook," *Plato's Ion: Philosophy as Performance, Text, Translation, and Interpretation of the Ion* (North Richland Hills: Bibal Press, 2005), 185-215. For a general history of Homer, see amongst many others, Hermann Fränkel, *Early Greek Poetry and Philosophy: A history of Greek epic, lyric, and prose to the middle of the fifth century*, trans. by Moses Hadas and James Willis (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1962), 6-93. For a study of the evolution of the text and transmission of Homer, see the "twin books" of

himself quotes extensively from the *Odyssey* and the *Iliad* throughout his dialogues.[7] Homer's prestige is one that has come to form the basis of institutional, educational, and cultural dimensions. John Bremer has described this as such: Educationally, young men are expected to imitate the fierce courage of Achilles in battle, the leadership and determination of Odysseus. Culturally, insofar as the lines of Homer are memorized, the tales have formed a collective social memory, and insofar as it is recited it is also a living memory. The power of Homer resides in the fact that the epics not only dominate the human realm, but have also attained a divine status.[8] What began as an oral tradition sometime between the second to first millennium BCE had become standardized by the sixth century BCE, and with this fixed form in writing, or what Nagy calls "transcript," emerged Homer as a standard text, or again what Nagy coins "Homeric Koine."[9]

Gregory Nagy, *Homer the Classic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2009); and *Homer the Preclassic* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

[7] See for example a linguistic study on the quotes from the *Iliad* in Plato's dialogue *Ion*, Albert Rijksbaron, *Ion, or, On the Iliad* (Leiden: Brill, 2007); for a slightly different approach see also Nagy (2002). Nagy argues that the quotes from Homer's epics we see cited in Plato's dialogues are probably representative of what the lines of Homer looked like as they were performed at the Panatheneia festivals. See Nagy (2009), 354-6.

[8] Bremer, 185-215.

[9] "By transcript I mean the broadest possible category of a written text: a transcript can be a record of performance, even an aid for performance, but not the equivalent of performance. […] As for script, I mean a narrower category, where the written text is a prerequisite for performance. By scripture I mean the narrowest category of them all, where the written text need not even presuppose performance." Nagy (2009), 5. Underlining, his.

One of the periods of Homer according to Nagy's scheme that is of particular interest to us is the third period, which he explains "was a definitive period, centralized in Athens, with potential texts in the sense of transcripts."[10] Significant to this period is the Panatheneia standard for Homeric performances in Athens. During the Panatheneia festivals, rhapsodes would perform lines solely from the *Iliad* or the *Odyssey* in a "fixed sequence."[11] This is an example of a mimesis of Homer: the rhapsodic performances, or reenactments, of lines from the epics, an issue that was taken up by Plato in the *Ion*.[12] It is from this context that we should understand Plato's remarks about the imitations of Homer in his dialogues that are performed by rhapsodes, or recited and invoked as an authority.[13]

Plato uses the concept of *mimēsis* in two different dimensions: 1. in terms of content, as dramatic reenactment (or imitation) of the subject matter by the interlocutors; and 2. in terms of form, where the structure of the dialogue itself is the most truthful representation of the

[10] Nagy (2009), 4. A couple pages later, he clarifies that by "definitive is meant to convey the idea of an older standard version of Homer. This idea corresponds to what I call in this book the Koine of Homer." Ibid., 6.

[11] For more details on this subject, please see Nagy (1996), 69-71.

[12] The *Ion* features a comic conversation between Socrates and Ion, a rhapsode who has just performed at the Panatheneia contest winning first prize for his reciting of Homer. Here Socrates questions about the art (*technē*) of Ion in speaking well about Homer. The conclusion seems to be that Ion has no real knowledge of Homer or the things that Homer talks about, but that he is passively moved by divine inspiration (*enthousiasmos*), and thus cannot be properly said to have expertise (*sophia*) or skill in poetry. On this, see Javier Aguirre, "*Téchnē* and *Enthousiasmós* in Plato's Critique of Poetry," *Revista Porteguesa de Filosofia* 72.1 (2016), 181-198.

[13] As Nagy argues, the dialogue *Ion* is a specific example of Plato's "attempt to discredit the Panathenaic standard" which was an institution that did not allow for anything other than the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* of Homer, and moreover for no other variations of these epics. Nagy (2009), 373-92.

enactment of the subject matter.[14] Story-telling, or myth-making, is considered to be a kind of mimesis, but do these stories or myths (*muthos*) imitate some kind of truth about the world? The question pertinent for Plato is ultimately that of truthful representation, or accurate imitation, between copy and original, where the original refers to that original concept, or "idea/form," which is reproduced into a copy that is dependent on the original.[15] We can rearticulate this into the relation between form and substance, where substance (equivalent to Platonic "ideas/forms") refers to unchanging truths, entities that mysteriously exist somewhere separate from the corporeal world. There is a distinction between these unchanging forms/ideas (e.g. goodness, justice, unity) and the actual manifestation of these forms that are observable in objects (e.g. the good, just, unified). These observable objects and events are only images, or copies, of the original truth through a kind of participation (i.e. they enact out the forms of goodness, justice, unity by exhibiting themselves as good, just, unified). What then of literate images? Can language (speech and writing) reproduce accurate representations of truth? Are these images of truth reliable?

[14] On the dramatic reenactment of Plato's dialogues, see Ruby Blondell, *The Play of Characters in Plato's Dialogues* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

[15] Literature on Plato and his forms are too much to list. I will only mention two classical works for a general introduction on Plato, his dialogues, ideas, and significance, as well as bibliography: Richard Kraut, *The Cambridge Companion to Plato* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Paul Friedländer, *Plato: An Introduction*, trans. Hans Meyerhoff (New York: Harper & Row, 1964).

1.1.2 Plato's "Ancient Quarrel"

The *Republic* is arguably the most well-known and important dialogue of Plato's works. To say that the *Republic* holds great and timeless significance for philosophy, literature, and socio-political theory in terms of content, and is a unique specimen of high compositional complexity is an understatement. As we immediately see from the title of this dialogue, in Greek *Politeia* (literally "civil polity"), the primary concern is how to build a polis, and not just any polis, but a *just* polis. "On justice" is in fact the old subtitle for the *Republic*. In the inquiry for what may or may not constitute justice and Socrates' attempt to prove that the just life is happier than the unjust, the interlocutors find themselves opening new cans of worms pertaining to issues of human virtues, correct education, the best and worst forms of government, different kinds of human disposition, and most significant to the project at hand, a discussion of the function and effectiveness of poetry.

Socrates' examination of poetry begins in Book II and continues to Book III, where he discusses three styles of story-telling, or narration: pure narration with no imitation, where the speaker simply narrates events as they happened in prose; narration through imitation, where the poet hides himself speaking in the first person as though he were Achilles; and a mixed narration of the first and second kind, which we are to understand is the same kind from which the dialogue is constructed (392c-394c).[16] Poets like Homer and Hesiod belong to the second kind. Not only do their stories (*muthos*) contain suggestive content detrimental to the cultivation of good Athenian virtues, they are also "false" (*pseudos*). On the grounds that "falsehood in words

[16] Socrates and his interlocutors are trying to decide which kinds of narration to allow in the polis. The first kind seems to be most appropriate because no imitation is involved, though they agree that this is the less pleasurable style (398a-b).

is a copy of the affection in the soul" (382b) these kinds of stories and the poets that tell them ought to be banned from the city.[17]

Socrates and Glaucon then decide that they have concluded their account on education in music and poetry, Socrates adding, "Anyway, it has ended where it ought to end, for it ought to end in the love of the fine and beautiful." (403c) But it does not end here, for at the beginning of Book X, Socrates says that they must now resume the topic of poetry because they have not yet touched on the imitative aspects of it. "Now that we have distinguished the separate parts of the soul, it is even clearer, I think, that such poetry should be altogether excluded." (595a-b) It is also well into this last book, after they have supposedly concluded the discussion of poetry and banished it from the polis that Socrates mentions the apparent conflict between poetry and philosophy. "But in case we are charged with a certain harshness and lack of sophistication, let's also tell poetry that there is an ancient quarrel between it and philosophy, which is evidenced by such expressions as 'the dog yelping and shrieking at its master,' 'great is the empty eloquence of fools,' 'the mob of wise men has mastered Zeus,' and 'the subtle thinkers, beggars all'" (607b-c). This so-called "ancient quarrel" is unattested elsewhere, leading some scholars to suggest that this might be of Plato's own creation, although it is also possible that these may also be sayings current during Plato's times.

[17] On the topic of truth and falsity in Plato's dialogues see Christopher Gill, "Plato on Falsehood—not Fiction," 38-87, *Lies and Fiction in the Ancient World* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993); Marcel Deitenne, *The Masters of Truth in Archaic Greece* (New York: Zone Books, 1996); and Alexander Beecroft, " 'This Is Not a True Story': Stesichorus' 'Palinode' and the Revenge of the Epichoric," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 136.1 (Spring 2006), 47-69.

What exactly is this "ancient quarrel," and what is Socrates' problem with poetry? The problem touches at the heart of *mimēsis* as a mode of education. What we should keep in mind is that the primary project of the *Republic* is to build a just polis. The way to do so is by instilling justice into the souls of the guardians of the polis through education that is essentially imitative, i.e. by reenacting the deeds and behaviors of others. By this time, the works of Homer have already been engraved into the mindsets of the Athenians, as we have discussed above. The danger in poetic imitation, according to Socrates at least, lies in its capacity to "nurture and water [the emotions] and establish them as rulers in us when they ought to wither and be ruled" (606d) and its power to sway and transform our own emotions. When we read (or hear) about Achilles' lamenting sadness at the death of Patrocles we, too, feel sorrow, and when we read of his revenge against Hector we, too, feel anger. Socrates' objection to poetry seems not to be against poetry as an aesthetic form but against those kinds of poetry, such as Homer's, that do not teach the youth how to think for themselves, but rather simply allow these young men to imitate the actions of these heroes who are driven mostly by emotions. Imitating something without being able to judge the relation between good or bad is merely pure representation with no moral force.

Socrates is particularly skeptical at the practical usefulness of Homer when it comes to matters such as building a state. The most beautiful things that are described, including those of warfare, generalship, government, and education, have not made any cities better, nor humans more virtuous. Homer's epics imitate these things beautifully, but they do not imitate the most important and most beautiful thing of all—truth. An "imitative poet produces a bad constitution in the soul of each individual by making images that are very far removed from the truth and by gratifying the element in it that lacks understanding" (605b). It is for these reasons that, under Socrates' guidance, they should once again banish poetry from the polis—*unless* it can defend

itself in meter, or someone who is "*not a poet himself but a lover of poetry*" should be able to defend it "*speaking in prose on its behalf* and show that it not only gives pleasure but is beneficial both to constitutions and to human life" (607d-e). Perhaps that defender may be someone like Plato, whose dialogues move seamlessly between the metered works of the great poets and the unmetered prose of his interlocutors.[18] The *Republic* is not an attack against imitative poetry (which is the obvious reading), but an attack against the non-poetic, non-philosophical reading that allows the poet's work to remain passive imitation.

At this point, the reader may wonder: what happened to the other side of the quarrel, that of philosophy? Why and how should philosophy be juxtaposed against poetry without allowing it to speak? Socrates gives no treatment to philosophy the way that he did to poetry. Yet the entire dialogue itself, read from beginning to end, is a dramatic enactment of philosophy in both form and content on two levels: that the interlocutors are enacting out the subject matter of the dialogue, and that we as readers are involved in the dialectic process of philosophical examination. Both are imitations of justice, but unlike in Homer, here we do not blindly follow that kind of justice driven primarily by the passions but can execute justice weighed out by reason. It has also been argued that the Republic itself is a myth of Plato's creation that was meant to replace Homer.[19] Unlike Homer, Plato's dialogue takes the form of a mixed narrative, and in terms of content imitates the truth more effectively insofar as it teaches the right values

[18] This is a view that was argued by Robert Lloyd Mitchell, "That Yelping Bitch: On Poetry in Plato's Republic," *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 24.2 (2016), 69-90. See also Julia Sushytska, "On the Non-Rivalry Between Poetry and Philosophy: Plato's 'Republic' Reconsidered," *Mosaic* 45.1 (March 2012), 55-70.

[19] See Blondell (2002), 154-62; and Charles Segal, "'The Myth Was Saved': Reflections on Homer and the Mythology of Plato's Republic," *Hermes* 106.2 (1978), 315-36.

for a just polis, and insofar as those who participate in the dialogues – be it the fictional characters, or we as readers – reenact out the subject matter.

1.1.3 Hiatus

Before moving onto the historical background of the main subject of this dissertation, I will here summarize the significance of our discussion thus far:

- The conflict between poetry and philosophy is one that concerns accurate representation, or imitation, of truth; the power of poetry appeals to emotions, and that of philosophy appeals to reason, theoretically we can mix the two to have a balanced imitation.
- The value of poetry ought to lie in its didactic effectiveness, although this should not necessarily be incompatible with its aesthetic appeal. We see this in the openness of Socrates' banning of poetry (i.e. he does not fully reject its presence).
- Using the dialogue form as one exemplar, the most effective didactic style of speech/writing is a mixed style, balancing verse with prose (such as Plato has constructed his dialogues).

These points will serve as the theoretical underpinnings for a philosophical reading of the *Taixuan* in the following ways:

- The ideal circumstance that word (written and spoken) ought to imitate content can be reframed as name matching substance and is tied to the question of whether the truth can be represented by language.
- Yang Xiong will agree that poetic composition (which takes the form of the *fu* for Yang) – if not *all* composition – is for the primary purpose of moral education.

- While the ultimate truth is itself inaccessible, the image of truth can be observed and represented in word. This is the affinity of Plato's articulations of the problems with imitation to Yang Xiong's *Taixuan* as a response to the relation of image, word, and thought.

1.2 Intellectual historical background

Modern scholars have suggested that Zhuang Zun 莊遵 (83 BCE – 6 CE) and Yang Xiong (53 BCE – 18 CE) formed the intellectual foundation to *xuanxue* by providing the vocabulary and modes of expressions. Zhuang Zun is believed by some to be the first to take *Laozi* 老子, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, and the *Zhou yi* 周易 as a unitary system.[20] As his disciple, Yang Xiong took some of these ideas and formulated his own system in the *Taixuan*. Yang Xiong's *Taixuan* was used as a kind of supplementary textbook to the classical curriculum at the Jingzhou 荊州 school of Song Zhong 宋衷 backed by Liu Biao 劉表 (144-208). The methodological and theoretical basis of this curriculum might have traveled north with the displacement of scholars after the fall of Liu Biao into the court of Cao Cao 曹操 (155-220) and the subsequent new Wei 魏 dynasty (220-265). This has led some scholars to suggest a continuum from Zhuang Zun to Yang Xiong to Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249), or take Yang's synthesis of the *Zhou yi* and *Laozi* and the Jingzhou curriculum as major influences of *xuanxue* 玄學.

[20] Michael Nylan, "Legacies of the Chengdu Plain," *Ancient Sichuan: Treasures from a Lost Civilization,* ed. Robert Bagley (Seattle: Seattle Art Museum, 2001), 315.

1.2.1 The hunt for *xuanxue*: From Laozi learning to Wei-Jin xuan discourse

The precise nature and origin of *xuanxue* is not easy to unravel. The modern conventional construction of what is called *xuanxue* (translated variously as "profound/arcane/mysterious/dark learning") organizes its constituents into the following categories:

- Temporally, it is dated to the Zhengshi 正始 era (240-249) of the Wei 魏 dynasty (220-265) lasting into the Eastern Jin 東晉 (317-420) and Northern and Southern dynasties 南北朝 (420-589);
- Intellectually, it mostly surrounds the historical figures of He Yan 何晏 (189?-249), Wang Bi 王弼 (226-249), Guo Xiang 郭象 (252-312), and Xiang Xiu 向秀 (227-272), and their respective commentaries on the so-called "three *xuan*" 三玄 texts including the "Xi ci" commentary 繫辭傳 of the *Zhou yi* 周易, the *Laozi* 老子, and the *Zhuangzi* 莊子.
- Ideologically, it centers primarily on the concepts of "being" and "nothingness" (*youwu* 有無); the relations between image, word, and meaning (*xiang* 象, *yan* 言, and *yi* 意; the self-so-ness (or naturalness) of the entire realm (*ziran* 自然); and a carefree attitude of life (*xiaoyao* 逍遙).

As I have made an effort to qualify earlier, this is a modern construction. If we attempt to trace the historical genesis of this thing we call "*xuanxue*," it proves to be a cumbersome task, almost impossible, as some scholars today have begun to acknowledge. At best, we have a broad definition that, like the above, is somewhat historically grounded, but intellectually all-inclusive which can theoretically be applied to a major portion of the entire history of imperial Chinese thought. We can tweak this definition with multiple qualifiers and limit the scope temporally,

intellectually, and ideologically, but run the risk of rendering any definition meaningless due to its narrowness. But we should still push through before deciding what to do.

The rise of what has been called Lao-Zhuang thought as a conceptual reaction to Ru teachings is a general characteristic of the change from Han to Wei intellectual thought. With the decreased faith in the rigid conformity to Ru principles of ritual and propriety that many saw as hypocrisy in the disconnection between name and substance, the ideals of a carefree and spontaneous lifestyle detached from the court became more appealing. The eccentric figures of Ruan Ji 阮藉 (210-263) and Xi Kang 嵇康 (223-262) bear witness to an unconventional outlook on public norms and self-expression. It would be a mistake, however, to think of this reaction as an antithetical, or mutually exclusive opposition between the two "schools," that is, the schools of Ru (or inaccurately "Confucianism") and Tao. It is thus better to speak of thoughts of a particular text, e.g. that of the *Mencius*, of *Zhuangzi*, of *Laozi*, etc., than to lump these texts together in categories such as "Confucianism," "Taoism," "Legalism," etc.[21]

The general understanding of the historical antecedents of *xuanxue* is that they begin with the fall of the Eastern Han (27-220) with *qingyi* (pure criticism 清議). This was a movement where intellectuals criticized the hypocrisy and ineffectiveness of the Han court dominated by

[21] See for example H. G. Creel's discussion of the confusions associated with the collective nomenclature "Taoism." H. G. Creel, "What is Taoism?" *JAOS* 76:3 (1956), 139-152. What is called "Confucianism" has less to do with Confucius himself (for one, Confucius never wrote anything), and more to texts associated with his thought, such as the *Mencius, Xunzi, Lunyu*, etc., that are appropriations of Confucius' teachings by his disciples. The commentarial tradition adding various layers of interpretation further complicates the question of "schools." The figure of Ruan Ji, mentioned above, is also an example of someone who wanders between the borders of Tao and Ru thought. See Donald Holtzman, *Poetry and politics: The life and works of Juan Chi A.D. 210-263* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976).

Ru ideals. By the Wei dynasty, this socio-political critique took a more abstract turn utilizing ideas from the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* to form a particular outlook on life called *qingtan* (pure conversation 清談).

The earliest attested usage of *xuanxue* is probably in a story about Lu Yun 陸雲 (262-303) in the *Jin shu* 晉書 that was compiled in 648.[22] The almost supernatural account tells of a traveling Lu Yun staying the night at an unknown household, conversing with a young man on Laozi with "words that reached the far and distant" 辭致深遠. Later, he was told that no one lived within the range of some tens of li. After some investigation, he found out that the house he stayed at once belonged to Wang Bi. "[Lu] Yun originally knew nothing about *xuanxue*, but hereafter was able to converse about Laozi at an unsurpassable level."[23] I would like to draw attention to three points: this usage is quite late, some three centuries after the Zhengshi period; *xuanxue* designated the ability to converse in the difficult ideas of the *Laozi*, of which Wang Bi seemed to be the best of them all; and the almost overnight acquisition of the subject through oral conversation, as if he obtained sudden enlightenment. It is noteworthy that this passage, with the earliest extant mention of *xuanxue*, should contain nothing about Zhuangzi or the *Zhou yi*.

Early in the Han dynasty, studies on the *Laozi* were on the rise. It is generally understood that Laozi learning (*Laoxue* 老學) has some continuity with Wei dynasty *xuan* learning, taking a

[22] JS 54.1485-6. Curiously, the same story is also told about Lu Yun's brother Lu Ji. See Knechtges "Southern Metal and Southern Fan: The 'Southern Consciousness' of Lu Ji," 19-41, *Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement in Medieval Chinese Poetry* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015). For an introduction to and translation of Lu Yun's biography, see Sujane Wu, "The biography of Lu Yun (262-303) in *Jin Shu* 54," *Early Medieval China* 7 (2001), 1-38.

[23] 雲本無玄學，自此談老殊進. JS 54.1486.

more poetic form in the Jin, known today as "*xuanyan shi*" (poems of profound sayings), not to be confused with "*xuanyan*" (profound sayings). The term *xuanyan shi* is used today to refer to philosophical poems from roughly the late fourth to early sixth century with a mixture of ideas from the *sanxuan* texts, sometimes containing elements from Buddhist teachings.[24] The collection of verses from the famous Lanting 蘭亭 gathering at Wang Xizhi's 王羲之 (303-361) estate is known for its *xuanyan* themes.[25] Individual poets generally associated with *xuanyan*

[24] Nicholas Williams translates *xuanyan shi* as "metaphysical lyric" in his consideration of these poems as carefully crafted compositions filled with profound philosophical insights. See his "The Metaphysical Lyric of the Six Dynasties," *TP* 98 (2012), 65-112. For a historical and literary contextualization, see also Nicholas Morrow Williams, "The Brocade of Words: Imitation Poetry and Poetics in the Six Dynasties," Ph. D diss., University of Washington (2010).

[25] Wang Xizhi is one of the foremost calligraphers in Chinese history. The "Lan ting verses" 蘭亭詩 contains a total of forty-one poems compiled by various literati at a gathering on Wang Xizhi's estate in 353 in celebration of the Lustration Festival. It includes two prefaces by Wang Xizhi and Sun Chuo 孫綽 (314-371). Wang's preface has been distinguished in literary history as a refined calligraphic work of art. In it, he describes the events that took place on his estate including sending wine cups along the river stream, composing poems, and philosophizing on all matters *xuan* with some degree of intoxication. The poems were composed on the pretext of a literati drinking game, in which those who were unable to compose lines were penalized with downing three *dou* 斗 of wine, all in good humor. On the Lan ting verses, see Wendy Swartz, "Revisiting the scene of the party," *JAOS* 132.1 (April-June 2012), 275-300; "Trading Literacy Competence: Exchange Poetry in the Eastern Jin," 6-36, *Reading Medieval Chinese Poetry: Text, Context, and Culture*, Paul W. Kroll, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2014); and her "The Lanting Excursion and Poetry on the Mysterious," 158-183, *Reading Poetry, Writing Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2018). "Lan ting" is usually translated as "Orchid Pavilion," but as Professor Knechtges has noted in a published article, *lan* 蘭 did not refer to the orchid flower, nor did *ting* 亭 to a pavilion. On the contrary, *lan* was the name of a local river in Guiji 會稽, and *ting* referred to an administrative section and building

verse include Xie Lingyun 謝靈運 (385-433), Tao Yuanming 陶淵明 (364-427), and the Buddhist monk Zhi Dun 支遁 (314-366).[26] It is important to keep in mind that the term *xuanyan shi* was not used during the Six Dynasties period. Instead, it was called *xu yan shi* 虛言詩 (poems of vacuous words) or simply *xuan yan*, which seems to be a catch-all term for discourses on things of difficult nature in equally obscure language.

Alan Chan has drawn attention to the relative popularity of the *Laozi* by the end of the Western Han, and although we do not have much on the early history of Laoxue (Laozi learning), Chan believes that there are at least three texts that show us the nature of what Laoxue might have looked like: Zhuang Zun's 莊遵 *Laozi zhigui* 老子指歸; the Heshanggong 河上公 commentary to the *Laozi*; and the "Xiang'er commentary" 想爾注 uncovered amongst the Dunhuang manuscripts, dated sometime between 200 to 500 CE.[27] As he puts it, this "continuity

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beginning in the Han dynasty. Thus, *lan ting* should be more accurately construed as "Lan Commune" or "Lan Precinct." On this, see David R. Knechtges, "Jingu and Lanting: Two (or Three?) Jin Dynasty Gardens," in *Studies in Chinese Language and Culture: Festschrift in Honor of Christoph Harbsmeier on the Occasion of His 60th Birthday* (Oslo: Hermes Academic Publishing, 2006), 399-403.

[26] Literature on *xuanyan* verse is rather abundant, thus I list only a few here: Chou Ta-hsin 周大興, *Dong Jin xuanxue lun ji* 東晉玄學論集 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan, 2004); Hu Dalei 胡大雷, *Xuanyan shi yanjiu* 玄言詩研究 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007); and Wang Shu 王澍, *Wei Jin xuanxue yu xuanyan shi yanjiu* 魏晉玄學與玄言詩研究 (Beijing: Zhongguo shehui kexue chubanshe, 2007); and Seimiya Takeshi 清宮剛, "Gengenshi to Dōka shisō" 玄言詩と道家思想, *Yamagata Kenritsu Yonezawa joshi tanki daigaku kiyō* 37 (2002), 198-206. For more scholarship, please consult Knechtges and Chang, *A Reference Guide*.

[27] Alan Chan, "The Essential Meaning of the Way and Virtue: Yan Zun and 'Laozi Learning' in Early Han China," *MS* 46 (1998), 106.

of interpretation" is "characterized by a gradual shift of emphasis from politics to a type of religious self-cultivation aimed at the enrichment and preservation of life."[28]

The connection between *xuan* discourses and the *Zhuangzi* appears in a passage in the *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語, compiled under the auspices of Liu Yiqing 劉義慶 (403-444), describing Xiang Xiu's commentary of the *Zhuangzi* as "a subtle analysis of its marvelous contents [that] gave great impetus to the vogue of the *xuan*" 妙析奇致，大暢玄風.[29] The first mention of the "three *xuan*" texts appears in the sixth century in Yan Zhitui's 顏之推 (531-ca. 591) *Yanshi jia xun* 顏氏家訓. After giving a rather distasteful assessment of the ideas of Laozi and Zhuangzi, he writes, "Up to the Liang era, this vogue returned and expanded. The *Zhuangzi, Laozi*, and the *Zhou yi* were referred to as the three *xuan*."[30] We conjecture that *xuanxue* and *sanxuan* did not refer to some systematic entity until at least the Southern dynasties, and even then it is difficult to say whether these terms were widely recognized amongst the literati, or if there was a mutually understood connection between them.

It is unclear how the *sanxuan* texts established the core of *xuanxue*. There is no immediately apparent connection between the *Zhou yi, Laozi*, and *Zhuangzi*. In the bibliographic catalogue of the *Han shu* the *Zhou yi* attains its own categorical prestige as the "origin" (*yuan*

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[28] Ibid., 107.

[29] Xu Zhen'E 徐震堮, ed. and comm., *Shishuo xinyu* 世說新語 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2006), 1:111. Translation by Richard B. Mather, though he originally translated *xuan* as "mysterious." See his *A New Account of the Tales of the World* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1976), 100.

[30] 洎於梁世，茲風復闡。莊老周易，總謂三玄. *Yanshi jia xun* 顏氏家訓, Wang Liqi 王利器 ed. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1993), 187.

原) of the other five of the Six Disciplines 六藝 (*Yi* 易, *Shu* 書, *Shi* 詩, *Li* 禮, *Chunqiu* 春秋, and *Yue* 樂), which in turn are correlated with the five constants (*wuchang* 五常).[31] The *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* are grouped together under the school of Tao with the basic teachings of attaining "pure vacuity through keeping to oneself, base and pliable through holding to oneself" 清虛以自守，卑弱以自持.[32] As mentioned earlier some scholars believe that Zhuang Zun was the first to take these three texts as one unitary system, and that the Jingzhou school may have synthesized ideas in these texts into their curriculum. It is on these bases that they are argued to be intellectual threads for *xuanxue.* Of Zhuang Zun's thought, we only have half of his *Laozi zhigui*; of the Jingzhou school, we have even less. Using the *sanxuan* texts as one of the determining factors in identifying *xuanxue* can be misleading, for as Robert Ashmore, John Makeham, and others have shown, the so-called *xuan* thinkers of the Wei-Jin period did not restrict themselves to pondering the mysteries of these three texts.[33] The *Lunyu* was also a subject of interest, and both Wang Bi and He Yan had composed commentaries on this Ru classic. And yet, today we hardly think of the *Lunyu* to be xuan worthy. Alternatively, to define xuanxue based on its proponents can also be problematic, as it is easy to overlook writings of

[31] HS 30.1723.

[32] HS 30.1732.

[33] Robert Ashmore, *The Transport of Reading: Text and Understanding in the World of Tao Qian (365-427)* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010), 115-31; and his article "Word and Gesture: On Xuan-School Hermeneutics of the Analects," *Philosophy East and West* 54.4 (2004), 458-88; and John Makeham, *Transmitters and Creators: Chinese Commentators and Commentaries on the Analects* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003).

other figures who are not as well known. One of Wang Bi's contemporaries, Zhong Hui 鐘會 (225-264) is an example.[34]

In modern times, the most classic, authoritative, and highly influential study on *xuanxue* is done by Tang Yongtong 湯用彤 in a set of essays published collectively as "Discussions of Wei-Jin *xuanxue*" 魏晉玄學論稿 in the 1960s. Tang was one of the first to attempt to formulate a systematic and historical definition of *xuanxue* distinguishing it as the turn away from Han "cosmology or cosmogony" 宇宙之論 to an "ontology or theory of being" 存存本本之真.[35] In

[34] Like Wang Bi, he also composed a commentary on the *Laozi* and two pieces on the *Zhou yi* and wrote on matters pertaining to talent (*cai*) and nature (*xing*). Yet he was much more politically active than his peer, and this involvement would later cost him his life. See Alan Chan, "Zhong Hui's Laozi Commentary and the Debate on Capacity and Nature in Third-Century China," *Early China* 28 (2003), 101-59.

[35] Tang Yongtong 湯用彤, "Wei Jin xuanxue liubie lue lun," 魏晉玄學留別略論 in *Wei Jin xuanxue lungao* 魏晉玄學論稿, rpt. *Wei Jin sixiang* 魏晉思想, 2 volumes (Taipei: Liren shuju, 1995). English renditions are his own. In these essays, he seems to have changed his mind about how to construe *xuanxue*. In an article originally published in 1943, he explains in a footnote that he feels uncomfortable with the translation of *xuanxue* as "metaphysics."

> I do not like this translation because it easily leads to rather queer misunderstandings. We are accustomed to associate this term with religious problems, especially God and Heaven, a life after death, etc., but *xuanxue* has nothing to do with these conceptions. *Xuan* 玄, the 'beyond behind the beyond' means with Lao-tzu the border region of our world, where nothing further can be made out. It has never been populated by Heavenly beings. Its synonym *wu* 無, which I am translating by 'no-thing,' means that which is absolutely different from anything known. That at least has to be said first, when we speak of Taoist metaphysics. The subject that the Neo-Taoists were concerned with is our fate, which is intimately connected with that of the cosmos. Our luck is not steady; there seem to be ups and downs. Similar periods are seen in the cosmos in the alternation of light and darkness, of the seasons, of the moon periods. This

his words, *xuanxue* "no longer remained within the practical application of the movements of the universe, entering discussions about the original being of the myriad things of the universe."[36] The philosophical breakthrough of the Wei-Jin thinkers lies in the preoccupation with the relation of *you/wu*, unprecedented and distinct from Han cosmological thinkers such as Zhang Heng 張衡 and Yang Xiong, who, as Tang would have it, remained heavily influenced by theories of yin-yang and five phases. For Tang, the Wei movement was an abstraction from the more practical concept of *xuan* during the Han as that which was grounded in actual events that reflected the dynamics of the heavens, man, and earth.[37] Whether this is indeed the case remains open to further investigations and discussions of what constitutes "Han cosmology," frequently characterized as "correlative thinking," neither of which, as Nylan has correctly pointed out, is very clear.[38]

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seems to point to a rule. This rule, *Tao*, is the problem *xuanxue* is occupied with. I propose to translate the term by (Neo-Taoist) 'cosmology.'

T'ang Yung-t'ung, "Wang Pi's New Interpretation of The I Ching and Lun-yü," trans. Walter Liebenthal, *HJAS* 10:2 (1947), 127.

[36] Tang (1995), 47.

[37] Ibid., 48. Charles Le Blanc has an interesting argument on the opposite trend in the Western Han, that is, a "rationalizing" movement of ideas from the "abstract principles" and "formal concepts" in the *Zhuangzi* to more "concrete actualities" in the *Huainanzi*. See Charles Le Blanc, "From Ontology to Cosmogony: Notes on *Chuang Tzu* and *Huai-nan Tzu*," *Chinese Ideas about Nature and Society: Studies in Honour of Derk Bodde* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1987), 117-29.

[38] Michael Nylan, "*Yin-yang*, five phases, and *qi*," 398-414, *China's Early Empires: A Re-appraisal*, Michael Nylan and Michael Loewe eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010). She includes a helpful chart including all the different definitions of "correlative thinking" by modern scholars. See 410-4.

Subsequent studies of *xuanxue* have for the most part either remained in the ontological shadows of Tang's pioneering efforts, and/or investigated as philosophy through the lens of the Western tradition.[39] His son Tang Yijie 湯一介, for example, identifies *xuanxue* as a "learning of what is above form" 形而上學, a term that originates in the "Xi ci" commentary of the *Zhou yi*.[40]

[39] At the beginning of the twentieth century after China opened its doors to the West, there seemed a sudden need to justify the existence of a "Chinese philosophy" on par with the Western tradition, which traces its roots back to Plato and Aristotle. This is an extremely complicated, controversial, and politically loaded issue, and needless to say is beyond the scope of this dissertation, though it is something I had already addressed in my M.A. thesis. Jennifer Liu, "The problem of philosophy in Classical Chinese thought: the text *Zhuangzi* as case study," M.A. thesis, University of Washington (2016). Suffice to say for now, the question of whether there is such a thing as Chinese philosophy is quite meaningless. I do not think any serious reader of Chinese thought would have the audacity to deny the existence of philosophical dimensions, even if we cannot ascribe "philosophy" as a categorical designation, which as far as I am concerned has less to do with abstract Aristotelian metaphysics than the Socratic love for wisdom (and as such, a particular way of life). For more in-depth studies, see amongst many others: Carine Defoort, "Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy? Arguments of an Implicit Debate," *Philosophy East and West* 51:3 (2001), 393-413; D. C. Lau, "Chinese Philosophy," *The Philosophical Quarterly* 6:23 (1956), 169-73; John Makeham, *Learning to emulate the wise: The genesis of Chinese philosophy as an academic discipline in twentieth-century China* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2012). For philosophy as a way of life, see Pierre Hadot, *Philosophy as a way of life: Spiritual exercises from Socrates to Foucault*, trans. by Arnold Ira (Malden: Blackwell, 1995).

[40] "*Qian* and *kun* are completed and partitioned, and change is positioned in between. If *qian* and *kun* are destroyed, then there is nothing through which change can be seen. If change cannot be seen, then *qian* and *kun* will at once approach rest. Thus, that which is above form is called 'tao,' that which is below form is called 'vessel.'" 乾坤成列，而易立乎其中矣。乾坤毀，則无以見易，易不可見，則乾坤或幾乎息矣。是故形而上者謂之道，形而下者謂之器。ZYZY, 343-4.

He is quick to equate this particular quality as the Classical Chinese counterpart to Aristotelian "metaphysics," almost too eager to advocate the presence of Western (i.e. Greek) philosophy, using terms such as "first principles" and "the science of being as such."[41] Belonging to the same generation, Wing-tsit Chan uses "Neo-Taoism" and "Metaphysical school" variously to translate *xuanxue*, further characterizing, "[a]s a movement Neo-Taoism did not last long, but its effect on later philosophy was great. It raised the Taoist concepts of being and non-being to a higher level and thereby formed the bridge between Chinese and Buddhist philosophies."[42] Lou Yulie 樓宇烈 singles out Wang Bi as one of the primary creators of "idealism" (唯心主義) in *xuanxue* discourse.[43] Rudolf Wagner's translation of *xuanxue* as "the scholarly investigation of that which is dark," while attaining a somewhat romantic appeal, is imprecise.[44]

Since the turn of the second millennium we begin to see scholarly attempts that try to break through Tang's shadows. John Makeham explicitly questions the validity of Tang's definition of *xuanxue* musing, "[m]ight *xuanxue* have more to do with the types of philosophical literature that its 'exponents' wrote about rather than a style or topic of discourse or a paradigm shift?"[45] He poses an alternative: "If we adopt a broader, looser understanding of *xuanxue* to

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[41] Tang Yijie 湯一介, *Guo Xiang yu Wei Jin xuanxue* 郭象與魏晉玄學 (Hubei: Hubei renmin chubanshe, 1983), 2. These three terms in scare quotes are used in the English by Tang.

[42] Wing-tsit Chan, *Neo-Confucianism, Etc.: Essays by Wing-tsit Chan*, comp. Charles K.H. Chen (Hanover: Oriental Society, 1969), 380-381.

[43] Lou Yulie 樓宇烈, ed., *Wang Bi ji jiao shi* 王弼集校釋 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980), 1:3.

[44] Rudolf Wagner, *The Craft of a Chinese Commentator: Wang Bi on the Laozi (*New York: State University of New York Press, 2000), 1, 168.

[45] Makeham (2003), 32.

mean the 'discussion of abstract philosophical concepts,' such as 'initiating no action' (*wuwei* 無為), 'emptiness' (*xu* 虛), 'one and the many' (*yiduo* 一多), 'roots and branches' (*benmo* 本末), and 'the emotional responses' (*qing* 情) and 'pattern' (*li* 理)"—that is, perhaps He Yan's commentary on the *Analects* also count as *xuanxue*?[46] Wang Xiaoyi 王曉毅 calls for a more integrative approach by examining the relation between *xuanxue* and Ruist thought (probably closer than what is usually believed), Wang Bi, Huang-Lao thought, Buddhist teachings (probably more prevalent than what Tang suggested), and the socio-cultural conditions of the third century; and a close study of the terms and concepts of speech (語言), image (象意), and meaning (意義).[47] Alan Chan prefers to translate *xuanxue* as "profound learning" or "profound discourse," giving a more multi-dimensional précis without failing to note its difficulties:

> Although *xuan* does signify the 'dark,' 'mysterious,' 'secret,' it is not entirely satisfactory to render *xuanxue* as 'mysterious learning.' The subject under investigation may verge on the 'mysterious,' but the discourse itself does not. […] *Xuanlun* in this sense, is a type of discourse that addresses fundamental concepts not easily intelligible to the common people; it is a 'profound' discourse in that it seeks to lay bare the meaning of what is beyond common understanding.[48]

We remember Tang's definition of *xuanxue* as an "ontological turn" away from principles of the cosmos to the being of things, that is, to the concepts of being and nothingness

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[46] Ibid., 35. The *Analects*, of course, is not conventionally understood as belong to *xuan* discourse. The commentary of He Yan (who is associated with *xuanxue*) opens up new questions about what counts as *xuanxue*.

[47] Wang Xiaoyi 王曉毅, "Wei Jin xuanxue yanjiu huigu yu zhanwang" 魏晉玄學研究回顧與瞻望, *Zhexue yanjiu* 2 (2000), 57-62. This project was fulfilled in his *Ru shi Dao yu Wei Jin xuanxue xing cheng* 儒釋道與魏晉玄學形成 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2003).

[48] Alan Chan, *Two Visions of the Way: A Study of the Wang Pi and the Ho-Shang Kung Commentaries on the Lao-Tzu*, (New York: State University of New York Press, 1991*)*, 25.

(*you wu*). This turn, he suggests, began with Yang Xiong.[49] It is unclear whether Tang believes that Yang Xiong still belonged to the Han cosmological tradition, or if he helped to initiate this "ontological turn." For Tang, the relevance of Yang Xiong is that he may have partly formed the theoretical foundations to *xuanxue*. Tang had already suggested the southern origin to *xuanxue*. Ch'ien Mu also notes the beginning of Wang Bi's *xuan* interests in Jingzhou.[50] More recently, studies on the Jingzhou school and ancient Shu (modern Sichuan) have continued to support the geographic origins to be of a southern locality, and not an intellectual product of the prestigious north.

The problem with such definitions is that they are at best modern constructions of an ideological mosaic encompassing about eighty percent of the entire early intellectual history of ancient to medieval Chinese thought, and as such is not quite helpful in distinguishing *xuan* learning from all other kinds of learning. Such a definition – as a set of writings based on the ideas of *Laozi, Zhuangzi, Zhou yi*, and Buddhist teachings – becomes all-inclusive, for these thoughts influenced a good number of thinkers, including Jia Yi, Ruan Ji, Xi Kang, Xie Lingyun, and Tao Yuanming (and many others), and it becomes difficult to decide who does not belong. The list will only continue to grow, and soon becomes a meaningless mass of names. We should take *xuanxue* as a modern genre, and like all genres, keep in mind that while it can be helpful in identifying characteristics that may include a particular text, it is not the definitive means by which we can understand a text.

[49] Tang (1996), 47.

[50] Ch'ien Mu 錢穆, *Zhuang Lao tongbian* 莊老通辨 (Beijing: Jiuzhou chubanshe, 2011), 412.

1.2.2 The significance of Shu

There is a geographical dimension to locating the origins of *xuanxue* in the southern area of China away from the northern imperial capitals. This has in part has to do with the hypothesis that Yang Xiong's *Taixuan* formed a part of the classics curriculum in the Jingzhou school which in turn became influential to those scholars who eventually migrated north becoming the proponents of *xuan* discourse. Yang Xiong was in turn influenced by his mentor Zhuang Zun, whose only surviving work, the *Laozi zhigui*, contains many ideas that are found in *xuan* writings. Both Yang and Zhuang were natives of Shu, and so if we traced a route from Shu to Jingzhou to the Wei capital at Luoyang we can see a distribution of ideas from the south and moving eastward and back up to the north. As the rest of this dissertation will be devoted to the relation between Zhuang Zun and Yang Xiong, this section will look at how the Jingzhou school is an example of the rise of local institutions as an alternative to the imperial academy, and how its curriculum fits into the schema of new interpretations of the classics.

A land as tremendous in size as China is inevitably subject to directional divisions, for example what we today call "Northern China" corresponds roughly to the area northeast of the Yellow River, which constitutes a small area (maybe about 20 percent of the land), and "Southern China" corresponds to everywhere else. These geographic distinctions are not clear, and there is no definite boundary that divides each section. The historical distinction between north and south is even more complicated. We see this already in the time period referred to as the Northern and Southern Dynasties (*nanbeichao* 南北朝) after the fall of the Eastern Jin in 420 lasting until the establishment of the Sui dynasty in 589.[51] This period is marked by deep

[51] The term indicates a geographic division between those dynasties located in the north (Northern Wei, Eastern Wei, Western Wei, Northern Qi and Northern Zhou), and the south (Liu-Song, Qi, Liang, and Chen).

political fragmentation and disunity, which had already begun in the late Eastern Han when the authority of the emperor ceded to the warring factions of the eunuchs and consort families.

There was also a conceptual distinction that had less to do with geographic location than with an imagined Han elitist identity separating a civilized "us" from the savage "them."[52] The constructions of such an identity made its way into the compositions of the displaced literati who in some cases had to flee south, in which case the southern area they then inhabited was now reconceived as the "north." From these literati we catch glimpses of how they viewed themselves in the midst of socio-political instability. The conceived north and south divide did not begin in the Northern and Southern Dynasties, but arguably found its roots as early as the Western Han, where already we see notions of the prestigious north in contrast with the uncultured south.

For example, see how Ban Gu describes the land of the Chengdu Plain and its people:

> The Ba, Shu, and Guanghan commanderies were originally [populated by] the Southern Yi [barbarian tribes]. After [these areas] were annexed by Qin, they were made commanderies. The land is fertile and beautiful, possessing rivers to water the wilds and a bounty of mountain forests, bamboo and trees, vegetables, and edible fruit. To the south they purchase young slaves of Dian and Bo; to the west it is near the horse and yaks of Qiong and Zuo. The people eat rice and fish, and have no worry about famine years.

Around the same time, there were also a number of short-lived dynasties around the periphery referred to as the Sixteen Kingdoms (*shiliu guo* 十六國), and the so-called Five Barbarians (*wuhu* 五胡) ruled by non-Han peoples.

[52] For a collection of issues and medieval writings concerning the north and south divide, see *Early Medieval China, A Sourcebook*, ed. Wendy Swartz, Robert Ford Campany, Yang Lu, and Jessey J. C. Choo (New York: Columbia University Press, 2014), particularly Choo's chapter "Between Imitation and Mockery: The Southern Treatments of Northern Cultures," 60-76, and Ping Wang's "Literary Imagination of the North and South," 77-88. For an exploration of the construction of southern identity through literature see also the volume of essays in Ping Wang and Nicholas Morrow Williams, eds., *Southern Identity and Southern Estrangement* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2015).

> Since the common folk do not suffer hardships, they are easy-going and profligate, weak and mean.[53]

Ban Gu's description is somewhat derogatory, with the implication that the people are simple-minded. In the official histories, the south was not really a topic of interest and thus marginalized. It is only relatively recently with the excavations of Sichuan that there has been a renewed interest and a changing perspective on the importance of Shu in the building of China socially, politically, and intellectually.[54] J. Michael Farmer's study on the intellectual climate of early Sichuan and his focus on Qiao Zhou 譙周 (ca. 200-270 CE) as case study shows that contrary to a wide prejudice on the minor role of the south there were in fact many "talented" individuals who had helped shape intellectual discourses.

The land of Shu was as south as one could get during the early times of China, corresponding roughly to the Chengdu Plain in modern Sichuan. It was bordered by the Yangzi

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[53] HS 28.1645. J. Michael Farmer's translation, bracketed phrases are his additions. J. Michael Farmer, *The Talent of Shu: Zhou and the Intellectual World of Early Medieval Sichuan* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2007), 9.

[54] J. Michael Farmer's *The Talent of Shu* explores the intellectual climate of early Sichuan with a focus on Qiao Zhou as case study shows that contrary to a wide prejudice on the minor role of the south there were in fact many "talented" individuals who had helped shape intellectual discourses. For a historical study including summaries of findings from Sanxingdui see Steven F. Sage, *Ancient Sichuan and the Unification of China* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1992). See also Nakabayashi Shirō 中林史朗, *Chūgoku chūsei Shisen chihōshi ronshū* 中國中世四川地方史論集 (Tokyo, Bensei shupan, 2015) who gives a historical account of Shu from pre-Qin to later Han, including treatments of famous individuals associated with the area. On the origins of the name "Shu" see J. Michael Farmer, "What's in a Name? On the Appellative 'Shu' in Early Medieval Chinese Historiography," *JAOS* 121.1 (2001), 44-59. The following account is a summary from the aforementioned sources.

river to its south and the Min river to its west, with the Qinlin mountain range to its northeast.[55] Its neighbor was the land of Ba located to its east. There seems to have been a mixed Ba-Shu culture with infiltrated Chu influences. The early material culture of the Ba-Shu area is rich with decorated pottery and figurines, bronze weapons, and war drums. There is no evidence of writing, other than a few examples from Ba inscriptions. In the middle of the fourth century BCE the state of Qin took over the area of Sichuan and began a "trial run of sinification" including the instilling of Legalist policies. It was also a strategic move in Qin's efforts to conquer the state of Chu not only in terms of geographic location but also in providing Qin forces with human and land resources. Shu would continue to serve this function for Liu Biao's subsequent aims of claiming China for himself. After Liu Bang ascended the throne as the "Exalted Progenitor" of the Han dynasty 漢高祖, the Shu area remained under imperial control, but due to its far distance and secure isolation from its surrounding commanderies was still subject to the possibility of wandering from Han administration. Thus when Emperor Wu (r. 141-87 BCE) took over, he began making plans to update Shu in accord with imperial standards.

In 141 BCE near the end of the reign of Emperor Jing 景 (r. 151-141 BCE), Wen Weng 文翁 (fl. ca. 140 BCE) was sent to the south as the governor 太守 of Shu where he stayed into the rule of Emperor Wu.[56] According to the *Han shu* Wen Weng was widely influential and rather successful in his cultural and educational reforms during his residency. He taught the natives the

[55] For Ban Gu's description of the land see HS 28.1523.

[56] The official account of Wen Weng and his missionary efforts is found in HS 89.3625-7, with a brief mention in the "Di li zhi" 地理志 section on the Ba-Shu area, HS 28.1645. See also HYGZ, 152-3.

values of Confucius, and established a school (*xueguan* 學館) in Chengdu.[57] He would select small groups of promising young men and send them up to the capital to receive practical training along with local Shu handiworks for sale. The students were given courses that focused on the official history of Zhou and the interpretations in the *Chunqiu* commentaries, in which Wen Weng seemed to have been an expert. Needless to say, there was little emphasis on the local history of Shu. The agenda was political: to cultivate talented individuals who would act as extensions of imperial power after they returned to Shu with official posts. There was also an establishment of a student hostel (文學精舍) in Chengdu where aspiring young men from surrounding counties would come for instruction in the Classics before heading to the imperial capital.[58] J. Michael Farmer has pointed out the overall characterization in the narrative of Wen Weng as "a culture hero, or, more literally, the bearer of Central Plains culture to the backward southwest."[59] While Wen had acquired the status of a worthy Ru scholar, the natives that he sought to educate somehow retained a certain rusticity beneath the facades of erudition.

Ban Gu includes in his list of the famous literary talents of Shu Sima Xiangru, Yang Xiong, Wang Bao, and Zhuang Zun, praising "their writings were above [everyone else in] the

[57] For a reconstruction of the history of Wen Weng's school see J. Michael Farmer, "Art, Education, and Power: Illustrations in the Stone Chamber of Wen Weng," *TP* 86. 1/3 (2000), 100-35.

[58] HYGZ 152.

[59] Farmer (2007), 10.

entire realm."[60] It is perhaps significant that these three are renowned *fu* writers, and even Zhuang Zun's writings display some features of *fu* as we shall see in §2.

Modern scholars have identified new related intellectual trends that emerged during the Later Han: changing views of the canons and the rise of political prophecy that have to do with the rise of local schools focused on alternative interpretations of the canons and a broadening methodology. We find in Qiao Zhou for example "valuable insights into the relationship between the academic and political worlds of early medieval Sichuan," and one whose "writings demonstrate a devotion to the canon as historical documentation of China's antiquity, as well as a drive to 'correct errors' in the canon and its interpretations…"[61] Howard Goodman has also done an excellent study tracing the private developments of *Zhou yi* exegeses that he argues had formed the context for Wang Bi's own interpretation.[62] Chinese scholar Jin Shengyang 金生楊 had also published a book focusing on the various studies of the *Zhou yi* specifically in the Ba-Shu area.[63] Japanese scholar Yoshikawa Tadao looks at the Jingzhou school of Liu Biao as an

[60] 文章冠天下. HS 28.1645. Wang Bao's biography is found in HS 64.2821-2, and Zhuang Zun's in HS 72.3056-8. Ban Gu devotes an entire *zhuan* with two parts each for Yang Xiong 87.3513-3588 and Sima Xiangru (HS 57.2529-2612).

[61] Farmer (2007), 3.

[62] Howard Lazar Goodman, "Exegetes and Exegeses of the Book of Changes in the Third Century AD: Historical and Scholastic Contexts for Wang Pi," Ph.D diss. (Princeton University, 1985).

[63] Jin Shengyang 金生楊, *Han Tang Ba Shu Yi xue yanjiu* 漢唐巴蜀易學研究 (Sichuan: Ba Shu shuju, 2007). This important study is in a sense an extension of Tang Yongtong's contention that there were three main geographical strands of Yi studies: 1. east of the Yangzi river, represented by Yu Fan and Lu Ji; 2. Jingzhou, represented by Song Zhong; and 3. the north, represented by Zheng Xuan and Xun Rong. Tang Yongtong 湯用彤,

example of diverging methods and interpretations from the imperial academy.[64] These trends paint a more complicated picture of the academic milieu in addition to the common belief that the scholarly divide centered primarily around disputes between the so-called New Text (*jinwen* 今文) and Old Text (*guwen* 古文) strains of interpretation. Thus as we have seen contrary to traditional belief the "south" had made important contributions that would form the context for intellectual discourses back at the imperial capital, including that of the Cao-Wei dynasty in the third century. During the early third century we begin to see the formation of *xuan* learning that differed in emphases from the Ru teachings of the Han.

1.2.3 The Jingzhou school and rise of local scholarship

The Jingzhou academy is an instance of the rise of local scholarship with methods and interpretations of the classics that diverged from the Han orthodox tradition centered around Confucius as the most important sage all worthy men ought to emulate. It was a local school founded under the patronage of Liu Biao (144-208) when he was appointed regional inspector of Jingzhou, Xiangyang 襄陽 (modern Xiangfan, Hubei) in 190 CE.[65] The area was relatively peaceful for its time, consisting of northern immigrants escaping political strife. Liu Biao himself

"Wei Jin sixiang de fazhan" 魏晉思想的發展, rpt., *Wei Jin sixiang* 魏晉思想 (Taipei, Liren shuyu yinghang, 1995), 128.

[64] Yoshikawa Tadao, "Family Scholarship During the Six Dynasties and Its Milieu," *Acta Asiatica* 109 (2015): 49-70; and "Scholarship in Ching-chou at the End of the Later Han Dynasty," *Acta Asiatica* 60 (1991): 1-24.

[65] For Liu Biao's standard biography, see HHs 74.2409-2429, and SGZ 6.210-218. On Liu Biao's literary salon as one of the sites for his political maneuvers, see also Andrew Chittick, "The Life and Legacy of Liu Biao: Governor, Warlord, and Imperial Pretender in Late Han China," *Journal of Asian History* 37:2 (2003), 155-86.

was a northerner from Gaoping 高平 county in Shanyang 山陽 commandery (modern Zou 鄒, Shandong), as was the polymath Wang Can 王粲 (177-217), shining star of his staff. Unfortunately, there is not much reliable information we have on the Jingzhou school. The main sources on the school we have include a note by Wan Can titled "Jingzhou wenxue ji guan zhi" collected in the *Yiwen leiju*, Cai Yong's 蔡邕 (133-192) epitaph for Liu Biao, and an account of Liu Biao's settlement in Jingzhou in the *Wei shu*.[66] According to these sources, we know that Liu had assigned two scholars who were to be in charge of the academy: Song Zhong, and a certain Qiwu Kai 綦毋闓. Under Liu's directive, Song Zhong's staff had set out on an ambitious educational project that produced new versions of the five classics and other texts, which included new commentaries and possibly new interpretations that may have been different from the orthodox curriculum.

The curriculum was probably a reflection of Liu Biao's own scholarly disposition, and included as its basis a collection titled *Hou ding Wujing zhangju* 後定五經章句, which Yoshikawa surmises may have included Liu Biao's own division of the *Zhou Yi* into *zhang* 章 (sections) and *ju* 句 (paragraphs).[67] The *Shiwen* notes a collection of "sections and paragraphs" (*zhangju* 章句) on the *Zhou Yi* in five *juan* by Liu Biao, and a commentary of nine *juan* by Song Zhong.[68] Yoshikawa also points out Liu Biao's possible authorship of a certain Xiang'er commentary 想余注 in two *juan* listed in the *Shiwen* "Preface" under *Laozi*, commenting that it

[66] SGZ 6.212; YWLJ 38.695; and *Cai Zhonglang ji* 蔡中郎集 (Taipei: Xinxing shuju, 1959), 3.19b.

[67] See SS 32.909; Lu Deming 陸德明, *Jingdian shiwen Xu lu shuzheng* 經典釋文序錄疏證, Wu Chengshi 吳承仕 comm. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2008), 39; and SGZ 6.212.

[68] JDSW, "Xu," 39.

is significant that Liu Biao should be interested in the *Laozi*.[69] In addition to the *Hou ding Wujing*, Song Zhong also wrote a commentary on the *Taixuan*. This leads one to surmise that a class on the *Zhou yi*, specifically Liu Biao's version of it, may have been supplemented with Song's commentary on the *Zhou yi*, Yang Xiong's *Taixuan*, and Song's commentary on the *Taixuan*.

Yoshikawa Tadao 吉川忠夫 contends that the *Hou ding wujing zhangju* "was used as a textbook in the academy in Jingzhou and that the reason why the characters *houding* were attached to the title was to show that it was a revised edition of the text which had been used at the Metropolitan College."[70] Additionally, he cites a distasteful comment on Song's interpretation of the *Taixuan* by Lu Ji 陸機 (261-303): "The principle connotation of the character *xuan* is divination by counting divining sticks. Song Zhongzi, however, overlooks this basic point, so his commentary, therefore, is of no use for telling fortunes. Though he grasps the superficial meaning of the text, he is mistaken when it comes to the underlying structure." Yoshikawa believes that this suggests that Song's interpretation diverged from taking the

[69] It is likely that 余 is a graphic error for 爾, and so 想余注 would be 想爾注. Another possible author is Zhang Lu 張魯. See JDSW, "Xu" 140. It is interesting that the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* are the only two texts including in the *Shiwen* that are not traditionally recognized as *jing* (classic), despite the title of Lu Deming's phonological glosses on the classics. Lu Deming lived in the six century, coinciding with the first (extant) appearance of "*xuanxue*." A copy of the "Xiang'er commentary" was found amongst the Dunhuang manuscripts and has been reconstructed by Jao Tsung-i. See Jao Tsung-i 饒宗頤, *Laozi Xiang'er zhu jiaozheng* 老子想爾注校證, (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 1991). On the "Xiang'er commentary" see also William Boltz, "The religious and philosophical significance of the 'Hsiang-erh' Lao-tzu in light of the Mawang tui manuscript," *BSOAS* 45:1 (1982), 95-117.

[70] Yoshikawa (1991), 12.

Taixuan as a divination work, taking it instead as a "metaphysical work."[71] In summary, "Song Zhong belonged not to the school of symbolic and numerical study of the *Yijing* but to the school of ethical study, it could be said that he heralded the 'esoteric studies' (*xuanxue*) which flourished later in the Zhengshi period…"[72] He further characterizes the nature of Jingzhou scholarship as "humanistic," which seems to mean having a value on a well-rounded education.[73]

The significance of Wang Can for our purposes is his great book collection that he had inherited from Cai Yong, which was then passed on to his nephew Wang Ye, who in turn gave it to his sons, Wang Hong and Wang Bi, the latter of whom is the poster-child of *xuanxue*. Wang Can was indeed an important member of Liu's salon, but we do not know for sure how much he participated in the Jingzhou academy, if at all, other than his brief account that Liu Biao "gave orders to Song Zhong, retainer learned in the Five Classics to establish an academy and invite colleagues. […] Thus the Six Classics were taught, lectures on various institutions and artifacts were given, the eight musical timbres were made to harmonise, the musical pitches were adjusted, the calendar was prepared, the penal code was framed, books in various fields were collected and the thought of all schools were represented."[74] Tang Yongtong had also singled out

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[71] Yoshikawa (1991), 15. Recall that Wang Bi's interpretation of the *Zhou yi* is also usually distinguished as more "metaphysical" and does not dwell on the numerological aspects.

[72] Yoshikawa (1991), 16.

[73] Yoshikawa (1991), 18. Perhaps he is thinking of something like the German *Geisteswissenschaft*, which is literally untranslatable into English, meaning something like a science of the human spirit encompassing the humanities as an essential component alongside the technical sciences in education.

[74] 乃命五業從事宋衷新作文 (YWLJ 38.692). Yoshikawa's translation. See Yoshikawa (1991), 11. The editors of the *Yiwen leiju* note that 衰 should be amended to 衷. There is dispute on the meaning of *wuye* 五業. See JDSW, 50. It is unclear if *wenxue* refers to the discipline or to the actual institution.

this condition saying "Wang Bi was the great master who had in fact inherited that one current of *Yi* studies of new canonical exegeses from Jingzhou."[75]

The suggestion is appealing, yet there is not much substantial evidence to prove that Wang Bi's *xuan* thoughts were in fact influenced by the Jingzhou curriculum. Even if we could say that Wang Bi had in his possession Song Zhong's commentary on the *Zhou yi* and the *Taixuan* (inherited from Wang Can), we cannot make any definitive judgments about the relationship, unless there is some undeniable thread connecting Song Zhong's *Zhou yi* or *Taixuan*, neither of which is extant except through fragments. By definitive thread I mean for instance matching passages that may have been excised from one to the other. Further, the scant sources we have on the Jingzhou school is insufficient to determine its precise nature in teachings, other than that it diverged from the orthodox tradition, and so cannot be used as evidence towards taking it as a possible intellectual foundation. The suggestion remains attractive, however, and we cannot discount the possibility that the migration of northern émigrés who fled south during the fall of the Eastern Han returning back north to the Cao court after the establishment of the Wei dynasty might have brought back ideas from Jingzhou that would promote *xuan* discourse.

The issue that is at stake here is a counter against the long-perceived notion of northern prestige – southerners, too, had much to contribute to the culture of China. That is to say, standard histories have mostly focused on the north, with an image of the south as a barbaric place for the exiled, and thus uneducated, uncivilized, in need of reformation and educational and cultural refinement from the imperial capital—such as what we see from the efforts of men including Wen Weng and Liu Biao. The argument for a southern origin of *xuanxue* in effect

[75] Tang, 128.

displaces the spotlight from the imperial capital and opens up possibilities for local culture that never made it to official accounts. This is a stake for historiographic representation, that is, how we today can give a fuller account of the socio-political, cultural, and intellectual histories of a land as expansive as China by localizing our studies. This feeds into the suggestion that the term "Northern and Southern dynasties" is not simply a geographic division, but an "imagined" identity pertaining to cultural and intellectual differences as well.[76]

1.3 Philological analyses

In this section I will give philological analyses of three items: the fundamental and evolved meanings of *xuan*; and two *xuan*-headed compounds that appear in the *Zhigui* and Yang Xiong's writings, i.e. *xuande* 玄德 and *xuanmo* 玄默.

1.3.1 *Xuan*.

The *locus classicus* of *xuan* is found in the *Laozi*:

道可道，非常道。
名可名，非常名。
無名天地之始，
有名萬物之母。
故常無欲，以觀其妙。
常有欲，以觀其徼。
此兩者，同出而異名，同謂之玄。
玄之又玄，衆妙之門。
The tao that can be spoken of is not the constant tao;
the name that can be named is not the constant name.
That which lacks a name is the beginning of the heavens and earth;
that which has a name is the mother of the myriad things.
Therefore, in constantly lacking desires one observes its marvels,

[76] See Wendy Swartz eds. (2014), particularly Part I of this volume. For a collection of essays that explore the tensions in the construction of a southern identity through poetic compositions in the Six Dynasties period, see also Wang and Williams, ed. (2015).

in constantly having desires one observes its manifestations.
These two are the same but with different names, both are referred to as *xuan*. *Xuan* upon being *xuan*, this is the gateway to the collective marvels.[77]

This brief passage is loaded with the motifs of the expressibility of the constant way or principle (called "tao"), and the profound (*xuan*) and mysterious paradox between the two is the key to the secret of the universe.[78] Here we see that *xuan* is articulated to be that profound aspect of tao, but is not necessarily equivalent to tao.

[77] *Laozi* 1. The complicated history of the text of the *Laozi* forces one to have a make a decision on which version to use in one's translation. There is the received *Laozi* (the one that includes Wang Bi's commentary, although it might not have been the version that Wang Bi himself used), the Mawangdui silk manuscript (henceforth MWD), and the Guodian bamboo strips (henceforth GD), and of course Zhuang Zun's version, all of which contain textual variants and slightly different organization. For the purposes of this dissertation, I have decided to stick with the received version, but will note significant differences from the manuscripts. Here in this passage, the MWD has *wanwu* 萬物 (myriad things) as the subject in lines 3 and 4, where the received version has *tiandi* 天地 (heaven and earth) and *wanwu* in the respective lines. See William Boltz, "The 'Lao tzu' Text that Wang Pi and Ho-shang Kung Never Saw," *BSOAS* 48:3 (1985), 493-501; and his "The Fourth-Century B. C. Guodiann Manuscripts from Chuu and the Composition of the Laotzyy," *JAOS* 119:4 (1999), 590-608. For a collection of manuscript variants from GD see *Guodian Chu jian yanjiu* 郭店楚簡研究, comp. Cheung Kwong-yue 張光裕 et al. (Taipei: Yiwen yinshuguan yinghang, 1999); and Ting Yuen-Chih 丁原植, *Guodian zhujian Laozi shixi yu yanjiu* 郭店竹簡釋析與研究 (Taipei: Wanjuan lou tushu youxian gongshi, 1999).

[78] It is not quite clear which "two" have different names. Wang Bi explains the "two" to be the beginning (*shi* 始) and the mother (*mu* 母), but Ames and Hall takes the "two" to be the named (*ming* 名) and the nameless (*dao* 道). See *Wang Bi ji jiao shi,* 1:2; and Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall, *Daodejing "Making This Life Significant," A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2003), 77. Another possible translation is marvels (*miao* 妙) and manifestations (*jiao* 徼), which happen to rhyme. Or it could be an instance of unifying an

The *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 entry for *xuan* explicates that it "means 'secluded and distant'; graphically it looks like 幽 with 人 hidden within. A black [color] with a reddish hue is [also called] *xuan*." Duan Yucai's 段玉裁 (1735-1815) commentary cites the line from the *Laozi* that we saw above, and then he writes: "Gao [You's] commentary on the *Huainanzi* says that it refers to the heavens. The classics of the sages do not talk about the profound and minute. It is not until the forged *Shangshu* that there is a saying of profound virtue rising to be heard."[79] Duan testifies to the fact that based on extant collections *xuan* in the sense that it has in the *Laozi* does not take center stage in any of the classics. It appears that in the pre-Qin times *xuan* was primarily used as a blackish color, sometimes symbolic of the heavens, as we see in the "Kun" hexagram of the *Zhou yi* "the heavens are blackish-red, and the earth is yellow" 天玄而地黃.

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apparent duality between all three, and this oneness of duality (and therefore multiplicity) is what makes the principle *xuan*.

[79] 高注淮南子曰，天也。聖經不言玄妙，至偽尚書乃有玄德升聞之語。SWJZ 161. The passage in the forged *Shangshu* contains a total of 28 words that function as a kind of introduction to what the forged version designates as the "Shun dian" 舜典 (The Canon of Shun) and are not included in the transmitted *Shangshu*. This is the only place that the word *xuan* appears in the *Shangshu*. See Chu Wan-li 屈萬里, *Shangshu ji shi* 尚書集釋 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban, 2013), 17, n60. One wonders if Yang Xiong's *Taixuan* ever floated across Duan's mind, although his assessment that ultimately excludes the *Taixuan* as a "classic" (*jing*) is not surprising. The "forged *Shangshu*" is alternatively referred to as the "ancient script *Shangshu*" 古文尚書. The ancient script *Shangshu* contains some tens of "chapters" of the *Shangshu* written in pre-Han script, in addition to the then received Fu Sheng version, that Kong Anguo (ca. 156-74 BCE) had supposedly uncovered. Liu Xin found this and other documents in the same script in the imperial archives. These were not accepted as official until the reign of Wang Mang. For a brief study of the inauthenticity of the *guwen Shangshu*, see Michael Nylan, "The *ku wen* documents in Han times," *TP* 81:1/3 (1995), 25-50.

The *Laozi* is probably the earliest instance where *xuan* is assigned a more abstract meaning—yet even in the *Laozi, xuan* does not occur that often. The line quoted above from *Laozi* 1 is the only place that *xuan* is used alone, unfixed to any other word. In all other occurrences in the *Laozi* it is used as a modifier as listed below.

1）*xuan pin* 玄牝：

谷神不死，是謂玄牝。玄牝之門，是謂天地根。綿綿若存，用之不勤。(*Laozi* 6)

The spirit of the valley does not die; it is referred to as the **murky female**. The gateway of the **murky female** is referred to the root of the heavens and earth. Continuously it persists; use it without frequency.

2) *xuan tong* 玄通：古之善為士者，微妙玄通，深不可識。夫唯不可識，故強為之容。[80] (*Laozi* 15)

Those who excelled at being scholar-officials were subtle and marvelous; **far-reaching in scope**, [their ways are] deep and cannot be known. Because they cannot be known I must force a description.

3）*xuan tong* 玄同：

知者不言，言者不知。塞其兌，閉其門，挫其銳，解其分，和其光，同其塵，是謂玄同。(*Laozi* 56)

[80] The MWD version has 古之善為道者 and 玄達. 達 dá < * t^hɑt and 通 tōng < *t^huŋ are synonymous in meaning.

The one who knows does not speak; the one who speaks does not know. Block the openings, close the gate, blunt the sharpness, untangle the knots, harmonize the glare, make same the mundane—this is referred to **profound sameness**.

4) *xuan lan* 玄覽:

載營魄抱一，能無離乎。專氣致柔，能嬰兒乎。滌除玄覽，能無疵乎 。(*Laozi* 10)

When you carry on your head the area of the material soul and embrace unity, can you be without departure? In concentrating your breath to extreme smoothness, can you be like an infant? In cleaning and polishing your **far-reaching vision**, can you be without flaws?[81]

5) *xuan de* 玄德:

故道生之，德畜之；長之育之；亭之毒之；養之覆之。生而不有，為而不恃，長而不宰，是謂玄德。[82] (*Laozi* 51)

Thus tao gives them life, and virtue rears them. Growing them, nourishing them, brings them to fruition and maturity, feeds them and shelters them. It gives them life yet claims

[81] The precise meaning of this compound is under some dispute. Some say that 覽 *lǎn* is a graphic loan for 鑑 *jiàn* 'mirror.' The *jia* text of the MWD has the variant 藍, and the *yi* text has the variant 監, both similar in graphic form. Lou Yulie points out that because Wang Bi glosses 玄覽 as 極覽 "extreme observation," there is no way that 覽 can mean 'mirror', rather that it should be taken to mean 'observe.' See his comments in *Wang Bi ji jiao shi*, 25, n6. This is similar in meaning to the variant in MWD 監 *jiān* 'oversee.' Notice that the graphic difference between 鑑 and 監 is the former addition of the metal classifier 金.

[82] Cf. parallel in *Laozi* 10.

no possession, it benefits them yet exacts no gratitude. It is the steward yet exercises no authority. This is what is called **profound virtue**.

古之善為道者，非以明民，將以愚之。民之難治，以其智多。故以智治國，國之賊；不以智治國，國之福。知此兩者亦稽式。常知稽式，是謂玄德。玄德深矣，遠矣，與物反矣，然後乃至大順。(*Laozi* 65)

Those of old who excelled at tao did not [govern] by enlightening the commoners, instead by making them foolish. The difficulty of ordering the commoners is because they can be clever. Thus, to govern a state by wit is harmful to the state; to not govern a state by wit is a blessing to the state. To know these two is also to know the same model. Constantly knowing the same model is called **profound virtue**. **Profound virtue** is extensive and far-reaching; he returns with things, and only then he reaches the grand continuity.

From these passages, we see that when functioning as a modifier *xuan* has two meanings in the *Laozi*: describing something that has distant and far-reaching effects, as we see in 2 and 4; and describing some profound, unknown thing that is mysterious to human understanding, as we see in 1, 3, and 5.

1.3.2 *Xuande*

This compound is quite interesting. Other than the *Laozi*, it also occurs in the *Zhuangzi* "Tiandi" 天地 and the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 "Yuan dao" 原道 chapters, both of which have been dated to the Western Han.[83]

1) Sections from the *Laozi* 51, 65. See 1.3.1 above.
2) 性修反德，德至同於初。同乃虛，虛乃大。合喙鳴，喙鳴合，與天地為合。其合緡緡，若愚若昏，是謂玄德，同乎大順。(*Zhuangzi* "Tiandi" 天地)[84]

   With one's nature cultivated, one returns to innate power; having one's innate power reach its ultimate state is identical to [reaching the] beginning. Being identical [with the

[83] The *Zhuangzi* is recorded in the official histories to have been composed by Zhuang Zhou 莊周, who had held a minor post in the lacquer gardens in the state of Song 宋 during the Warring States period, contemporaneous with King Hui of Liang 梁惠王 and King Xuan of Qi 齊宣王. Scholarship today finds it difficult to determine whether or not there was a historical Zhuang Zhou who had written the *Zhuangzi*. The text of the *Zhuangzi* itself consists of different layers that date from different times. Only the first seven *pian* are thought to be from the Warring States. For a detailed history on the text of the *Zhuangzi*, see A. C. Graham, *Chuang-tzu: The Seven Inner Chapters and Other Writings from the Book Chuang-tzu* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1981), and Fang Yong 方勇, *Zhuangzi shi lue* 莊子史略 (Sichuan: Bashu shu she, 2008). The *Huainanzi* is a collection of essays composed by the literati at the court of Liu An 劉安 (179-122 BCE), King of Huainan. The history of the text is as complicated as the *Zhuangzi*, and it is uncertain whether the extant *Huainanzi* was the same as the one compiled during Liu An's time, and the question of Liu An's exact role remains debatable. Suffice to say for our purposes, the text was composed by different hands, some sections probably a result of court discussions. See Harold D. Roth's "Introduction" to *The Huainanzi: A guide to the theory and practice of government in early Han China,* John S. Major et al. trans. and ed., (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 1-47.

[84] Guo Qingfan 郭慶藩, *Zhuangzi jishi* 莊子集釋, (Beijing, Zhonghua shuju, 1961), 424.

primordial beginning], only then will one be empty. Being empty, only then will one be expansive. According with the chirping of the beak, the chirping of the beak is in accord, and in accord with the heavens and earth. This accordance is mindless – as if foolish, as if confused – this is referred to as **profound virtue** and is in harmony with the great compliance.

3) 當此之時，口不設言，手不指麾，執玄德於心，而化馳若神。使舜無其志，雖口辯而戶說之，不能化一人。是故不道之道，莽乎大哉。(*Huainanzi*, "Yuan dao")[85]

At that time, [Shun's] mouth did not put forth words, and his hands did not guesture [directions]. Holding fast **profound virtue** within his heart, his transforming influence sped like a spirit.[86] Suppose Shun lacked such resolve, then despite his oral eloquence and attempt to persuade people from door to door, he would not have been able to transform a single person. Thus, the way of non-speaking is boundless and vast![87]

4) 次二。作不恃。克大有。測曰，作不恃，稱玄德也。(*Taixuan jing* "Sheng" 盛)[88]

APPRAISAL 2 Acts that have no reliance: brings about great abundance.[89] INTERPRETATION An act that has no reliance is called profound virtue.

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[85] *Huainanzi*, SBBY, 1.7b.

[86] Gao You equates *xuan* with *tian* 天 'heaven.' *Huainanzi*, 1.7b.

[87] John S. Major translates *xuande* as "mysterious potency." See John S. Major et al., trans. and ed., *The Huainanzi: A guide to the theory and practice of government in early Han China* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 58-60.

[88] TXJ 3.18a-b.

[89] Reading 克 kè < *kʰək as the phonetic fusion of 可得 kě dé < *kʰɑ tək.

We saw in the excerpts from the *Laozi* that *xuande* refers to the efficacy of action through non-action. Similarly, passage 3 from the *Huainanzi* explicates the virtue of the sage king in the *Laozi* notion of leadership through acting with non-action. Deliberate action and verbal persuasion is not an effective means of governance. "This is why sages cultivate their roots internally, and do not adorn with their branches externally."[90] This follows the philosophy that the greatest principle of tao cannot be exhausted through speech, but in the play between speech and non-speech, action and non-action. The *Huainanzi* passage attributing profound virtue to Shun is particularly interesting because a similar message also occurs in the *guwen* version of *Shangshu* "Shundian." In the latter, the profound virtue of Shun rose to be heard above in the heavens, and thus he was ordained with the position of the throne. These contexts suggest that the highest state of virtue is such that the individual resonates with heavenly ways.

The *Zhuangzi* passage gives it an extra natural twist: sublime virtue is that disposition that comes naturally without contrived thinking, "mindless, as if foolish, as if confused." Effortless manifestation is in accord with the flow of the universe, and it is in this sense that one who possesses such virtue that he is "in harmony with the great compliance." On *xuande* Guo Xiang clarifies that this is "virtue that is profound (*xuan*), and what it conforms to is the ultimate."[91] This is comparable to the *Taixuan* context where abundance is the power of not relying on any external things but persists through its own internal power. As we will spend more time on the *Taixuan* later, I only introduce the passage here.

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[90] *Huainanzi*, 1.7b. 是故聖人內修其本，而不外飾其末.

[91] Wang Shu-min 王叔岷, *Zhuangzi jiao quan* 莊子校詮 (Taipei: Zhongyang yanjiuyuan lishi yuyan yanjiushuo, 1988), 1:436.

1.3.3 *Xuanmo* 玄默

1) 且凡言譴告者，以人道驗之也。［…］苟謂天德優，人不能諫，優德亦宜玄默，不當譴告。萬石君子有過，不言，對案不食，至優之驗也。夫人之優者，猶能不言，皇天德大，而乃謂之譴告乎。夫天無為，故不言。(*Lun heng* 論衡，"Ziran" 自然) [92]

Moreover, those who speak of reprimands verify them through the ways of humans. […] If the virtue of the heavens is the most fine so that humans cannot remonstrate with it, then fine virtue is to remain **deeply silent**, and [the heavens] cannot be reprimanded.[93] When the lord of Wanshi had a transgression, he did not speak, and at the table he did not eat; this is validation that he is the most refined. Thus the refinement of humans is the ability to not speak. The virtue of the august heaven is grand, so how can we say that it admonishes? Heaven lacks action, and so it does not speak.

2) 太一之精，通于天道，天道玄默，無容無則，大不可極，深不可測，尚與人化，知不能得。(*Huainanzi*, "Zhu shu xun" 主術訓) [94]

The essence of the Grand Unity accesses the heavenly tao. The heavenly tao is **profoundly silent**, with no appearance, no regulations. It is grand and cannot be limited;

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[92] Liu Pansui 劉盼遂, *Lun heng jijie* 論衡集解 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1957), 370.

[93] Cf. Alfred Forke's translation leaves out *xuan*: "If they say that Heaven's virtue is so perfect, that man cannot remonstrate with it, then Heaven possessed of such virtue, ought likewise to keep quiet, and ought not to reprimand." Alfred Forke, *Lun-heng: Selected Essays of the Philosopher Wang Ch'ung* (Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1911), 1:281.

[94] Liu Wendian 劉文典 ed., *Huainan Honglie jijie* 淮南鴻烈集解, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1989), 1:270-1. John S. Major (1983) takes *xuanmo* as "mysterious and silent," 296.

deep and cannot be measured, yet as it transforms with humans, it can be known but not obtained.

Wang Chong's usage of *xuanmo* is not very clear. The context for the *Lun heng* passage is an attack on the general belief that the heavens should participate in human activities, and so the claim that it would give warnings in the form of calamities is absurd. The ability to keep silent seems to be a valued quality, one that is most refined. Unlike the *Lun heng*, the *Huainanzi* clearly correlates the heavenly way with profound silence, the latter of which appears to be an attribute of the human person who is able to access the absolute truth of the heavens. The context warns that the carelessness of the senses (sight, hearing, and speech) can lead to frivolity. The main concern of this particular chapter is the art (or technique) of being a ruler, guidelines which resonate with the *Laozi* concept of tranquility and non-action 處無為之事而行不言之教，清靜而不動一度而不搖.[95] Non-action and non-speech (i.e. *xuanmo*) are complimentary: two aspects of the same manifestation of tao in human behavior (or human arts).

The only text thus far that contains both *xuande* and *xuanmo* is the *Huainanzi* with the implication that the greatest virtue a person can have is the ability to remain silent. Such virtue and silence are said to be "profound" because it brings the state of the individual closer to the tao, itself the most profound, that which cannot be spoken of and cannot speak, that which is pure potency (*de*) by virtue of being all-encompassing without possessing. We must also take into consideration the fact that the *Huainanzi* was meant as an "encyclopedic" manual for the

[95] Liu Wendian, 269.

sage ruler that in many instances resonate with the *Laozi*.[96] Here in the *Huainanzi* the word *xuan* is used *adjectivally*—that is, it is not a thing in and of itself, rather it refers to an essential attribute that distinguishes the sage from the layman.[97] In this respect, it makes mortal that divine quality, reestablishing the link between the human and heavenly realms. The state of *xuanmo* is an essential stepping-stone for anyone who wishes to become a sage.

In the next section we will take a look at Zhuang Zun's *Laozi zhigui*, particularly how he uses these two ideas to explicate his understanding of the *Laozi*, and how they are central to his notion of cultivation of the state and of the self. The *Zhigui* is of particular interest because it expands on the notion of *xuan* by attaching it as an adjectival modifier to another noun, usually abstract. It is quite possibly one of the earliest texts, if not the first, that does this to such a great extent.

[96] That *Huainanzi* is probably a synthetic text (i.e. composed by different hands over a period of time and later collected into one volume) is significant, for we often find parallel passages and similar ideas in pre-Qin and Han texts, including the *Zhigui*. It would be interesting to do a comparative analysis of the *Huainanzi* and *Zhigui*, but this would have to wait for another time.

[97] By essential attribute I mean that aspect of a thing or person that is essential to the essence of that thing or person (the "suchness" a la Zen Buddhist philosophy, or "thisness," *haecceity* a la Leibniz), as opposed to accidental attributes that have no bearing on one's essence, e.g. skin color, hair length, etc.

§2 Zhuang Zun and the *Laozi zhigui*

2.1 The figure and life of Zhuang Zun

The mysterious figure of Zhuang Zun 莊遵, *zi* Junping 君平, is known through scarce historical records as a learned recluse, and mentor of his famous disciple Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE -18 CE). His is a story typical of detached high-minded men like Laozi and Zhuangzi who, despite their evident wisdom and talents, refuse public service to live a simple and carefree but intellectual life away from the dangers of the court. Alan Berkowitz describes Zhuang as one who "epitomizes a perfect blend of laudatory Confucian as well as Taoist characteristics."[98] We cannot be sure of his dates, only that he must have lived during the reign of Emperor Cheng 成 (r. 33-7 BCE) and through the early life of Yang Xiong. Aat Vervoorn argues that his dates are probably around 83 BCE – 6 CE.[99] Zhong Zhaopeng 鍾肇鵬 suggests that we can push his dates to 10 CE to include the Wang Mang usurpation, but this is difficult to say for certain.[100] Zhuang Zun is better known by the surname Yan 嚴 due to a taboo on Emperor Ming's 明 (r. 57-75 CE) personal name Liu Zhuang 劉莊, and some scholars today still continue to adhere to this practice.

Zhuang Zun is not given his own biography in the *Han shu*, but details of his life are found in the "Biographies of Wang Ji, Gong Yu, the Two Gongs [Gong Sheng and Gong She]

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[98] Alan J. Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement: The Practice and Portrayal of Reclusion in Early Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 93-5.

[99] Aat Vervoorn, "Zhuang Zun, A Daoist Philosopher of the Late First Century B.C.," *MS* 38 (1988-1989), 70.

[100] Zhong Zhaopeng 鍾肇鵬, "Zhuang Zun" 莊遵, in *Sichuan sixiangjia* 四川思想家, Jia Shunxian 賈順先 ed. (Chengdu: Ba Shu shushe, 1988), 5.

and Bao Xuan" 王貢兩龔鮑傳. He is described as a self-sufficient, virtuous recluse who never took anything that did not belong to him. Although he had a reputation for being a recluse, he retained some Ru values which he would teach others. His story goes like this:

> 君平卜筮於成都市，以為卜筮者賤業，而可以惠眾人。有邪惡非正之問，則依蓍龜為言利害。與人子言依於孝，與人弟言依於順，與人臣言依於忠，各因勢導之以善，從吾言者，已過半矣。裁日閱數人，得百錢足自養，則閉肆下簾而授老子。博覽亡不通，依老子、嚴周之指著書十餘萬言。[101]
>
> Junping performed divination in the markets of Chengdu. He contended: "Divination is an inferior profession, but it can be beneficial for people at large. If there are questions about the perverse, the malevolent or the incorrect, then I would rely on the yarrow stalks and tortoise to say whether it was beneficial or harmful. With sons, I would converse about the meaning of filial piety, with younger siblings the meaning of compliance, with officials the meaning of loyalty. According to each person's circumstance I would then guide them with benevolence. Those who have followed my words are over half." At the end of the day after examining a number of people and earning enough coins sufficient to sustain himself, he would then close his blinds, lower his shades and give [instruction] on the *Laozi*. He read widely and there was nothing in which he was not conversant. He based [his thoughts] on the meanings of Laozi and Zhuang Zhou writing words that amount to some tens of thousands of words.

Vervoorn says that Zhuang Zun was a true "hermit of the marketplace" (*shi yin* 市隱). Not all hermits hid within the mountains, and some, like Zhuang Zun, were not completely detached from social life.[102] The *Han shu* records an anecdote of a conversation between Yang Xiong and Li Jiang (or Qiang) 李彊 of Duling, the regional governor (*mu* 牧) of Yi province, who wanted to make an acquaintance of Zhuang and offer him an official position. When he asked Yang Xiong to help make the connection, the latter replied, "even if you were to go with gifts, he would not receive you." Undeterred, Li Jiang persisted, but as Yang Xiong had warned,

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[101] HS 72.3056.

[102] See Vervoorn (1988-1989), 71, where he presents a summary of the different kinds of hermits during Han dynasty.

he was indeed not even granted a meeting. Zhuang Zun lived to about ninety years of age. His "profession" died with him and he was loved and admired by the people of Shu.[103]

The *Huayang guozhi* account is similar to the *Han shu*, describing Zhuang Junping as a person of "upright character that is calm and placid, his scholarship was superbly exquisite. He focused his attention on the great *Yi*, immersing himself in Lao and Zhuang" 雅性澹泊學業加妙專精大易耽於老莊.[104] In Huangfu Mi's "Gaoshi zhuan" we have another anecdote of a certain Wang Feng 王鳳 also dismissed by Zhuang Zun, but a successful encounter with a wealthy person by the name of Luo Chong 羅沖. The dialogue features Luo Chong asking Zhuang Zun why he will not serve as an official (*shi* 仕), presumably under Luo Chong, offering Zhuang a good amount of material wealth. Zhuang still refuses, saying he has no need for excessive riches, concluding with the witty remark, "what is beneficial for my material wealth steals from my spirit; what gives rise to my fame harms my body—thus I will not serve as an official" 益我貨者捐我神，生我名者殺我身，故不仕也.[105]

Yang Xiong thought highly of Zhuang Zun, praising him as one free of desires from the material world.

> 蜀莊沈冥。蜀莊之才之珍也，不作苟見，不治苟得，久幽而不改其操。雖隨、和何以加諸。舉茲以旃，不亦寶乎。吾珍莊也，居難為也。不慕由，即夷矣。何鬼欲之有。[106]
>
> Zhuang [Zun] of Shu was immersed in the profound. What is most prized about the character of Zhuang of Shu is that he does nothing that would improperly attract

[103] On Zhuang Zun's life see HS 72.3056-7.

[104] HYGZ 10.532-533.

[105] Huangfu Mi 皇甫謐, *Gaoshi zhuan* 高士傳, *Gujin yishi* 古今逸史, 2.18b.

[106] Yang Xiong, *Fa yan yi shu* 法言義疏, Wang Rongbao 汪榮寶 ed. (Bejing: Zhonghua shuju,1997), 200.

> attention, engages in nothing that would bring gain. He remains in seclusion and does not change his commitments. One may have [the pearl of] Sui or the [jade of] He [Bian], but how can they exceed his worth? We should raise him as if a red banner, is he not also precious to us? I value Zhuang because he occupied himself with things that were difficult to do. He does not even seek to emulate [Xu] You nor [Bo] Yi—how could he have greed or desire?[107]

In a letter to Liu Xin, we learn from Yang Xiong that Zhuang Zun was "deeply fond of the *xungu* 訓詁" method, and gave him help during his compilation of the *Fang Yan* 方言.[108] As far as the relationship between Zhuang Zun and Yang Xiong, this is all we can know for certain. Nothing explicit is said about anything else Yang Xiong might have learned from Zhuang, nor under what circumstances they carried on their master-disciple bond. Based on the *Han shu* and other sources we can surmise that course content probably included Zhuang's specialties of the *Laozi, Zhuangzi*, and the *Zhou yi*, and teachings were probably conducted through oral transmission. Based on the content of the *Laozi zhigui* (which is the only surviving text we have in his name), and the biographical details of Zhuang's life and conduct it is usually generalized that his understanding of the *Zhou yi* reflected more of a "Taoist" strain than the Ruist overtones

[107] Xu You was a legendary figure believed to have refused an offer to the throne by Yao, preferring to enjoy a life of carefree seclusion. He appears rather often in the *Zhuangzi*, including in the "Xiaoyao you" 逍遙遊 (Roaming carelessly), "Da zongshi" 大宗師 (The great and honored master), and some sections in the Outer and Mixed chapters. Bo Yi 伯夷 was the older brother of Shu Qi 叔齊, both sons of Guzhu 孤竹. When King Wu 武王 of Zhou 周 had overthrown the Shang dynasty, Guzhu wanted to override King Wu's legitimacy by placing his younger son Shu Qi on the throne. Shu Qi refused on the grounds that his older brother should be the one to take this position, but Bo Yi did not want to go against his father's wishes.

[108] For a fully annotated translation of this letter, see Knechtges, "The Liu Hsin/Yang Hsiung Correspondence on the *Fang yen*," *MS* 33 (1977-78): 309-25.

prevalent in the Han dynasty. Jin Shengyang suggests that the prognostic function of the *Zhou yi* for Zhuang is only secondary; the primary significance of this text is its philosophical principles.[109] I would further add that it is moreover a book of wisdom, and that whatever principles were extracted from the *Zhou yi* Zhuang takes as a philosophy of life, a perspective also found in Yang Xiong's *Taixuan jing*.[110] Jin makes an interesting observation:

> While Zhuang Zun excelled at Yi studies, he was also fond of the teachings of Laozi and Zhuangzi, and so he composed the *Laozi zhigui* in fourteen *juan*, which 'became the foundation of Taoist texts', and henceforth it has been transmitted down in history. At the same time, his own thought became influenced by Yi studies and teachings of the Tao schools, and thus his writings very naturally incorporated both elements. The combination of *Zhou yi* and the *Laozi*, and the frequent usage of the thought of Laozi and Zhuangzi to explain *Zhou yi* became a unique and important feature of Zhuang Zun's Yi studies.[111]

The third point is that Zhuang's understanding of the *Zhou yi* retains an "obvious" (明顯) preference for Taoist ideas.[112] This point is more difficult to establish, as we do not have any

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[109] See Jin Shengyang 金生楊, *Han Tang Ba Shu Yixue yanjiu* 漢唐巴蜀易學研究 (Sichuan: Ba Shu shushe, 2007), 68. As the title suggests, this includes Shu and Ba scholarship on the *Zhou yi* from Han to Tang times, including a section on Yang Xiong.

[110] We will take a closer look at this in chapter 4.

[111] 嚴遵精於易學，卻又酷愛老莊之說，著老子指歸十四卷，‘為道書之宗’，至今留傳於世。著使得他自己的思想同時受到易學於道家學說的影響，在著書立說中自然而自然地將二者融合起來。融合易老，常用老莊思想來解釋周易就成為嚴遵易學的另一種特徵。Jin Shengyang, 70-1. There is probably a typo here in the text where 自然而自然 should be 自然而然. Emphasis in italics, mine.

[112] Jin Shengyang, 72.

writings from Zhuang that are explicitly on the *Zhou yi*.[113] But the fact that Jin should say that the blending of ideas from the *Zhou yi* and *Laozi* happened "very naturally" (自然而然) suggests perhaps that these two texts were probably quite compatible in the first place. That this "blending" should be a unique feature of Zhuang Zun is not of much intellectual consequence. What is much more significant, I think, is how he does the blending which is reflected in his literary style of writing. This point will be made more clearly in 2.3 where we examine selected passages from the *Zhigui.*

2.2 The text and authenticity of the *Laozi zhigui*

2.2.1 Textual history and transmission

In the bibliographical index of the *Han shu* Ban Gu records that Zhuang Zun had written a text of some ten thousand sayings based on the ideas of Laozi and Zhuang Zhou without listing a title.[114] Likewise, the *Qian Han ji* 前漢紀 records that Yan Junping wrote some five hundred thousand sayings on the work of *Laozi*, also without a title.[115] The bibliographic section in the *Han shu* has an entry for a Taoist work with a curious name Chen Junzi 臣君子 in two *juan* by a man from Shu.[116] Chen Zhi 陳直 suggests that this may be a scribal error for *chen* Junping 臣君

[113] The question on what is meant by "Taoist" (or *daojia* 道家 as is used in the Chinese by Jin) is another difficult problem, along with how it can be demarcated from "Confucianism" (or Ruism, as I prefer to call it) that cannot be answered here.

[114] HS 72.3056.

[115] *Qian Han ji* 23.15a, 依老子之言。著五十餘萬言。

[116] HS 30.1731.

平, "your majesty's subject, Junping."[117] This could possibly be referring to Zhuang Zun's commentary to the *Laozi,* which was noted in the *Shiwen*.[118] The earliest mention of an actual title by the name *Laozi zhigui* is in the *Huayang guozhi*.[119] It is unclear whether *zhigui* refers to the title or the type of work. In the preface of *Jingdian shiwen* under the *Laozi*, Lu Deming lists a commentary (*zhu* 注) by Zhuang Zun in two *juan*. The subcommentary by Wu Chengshi 吳承仕 tells us that he also composed a *Laozi zhigui* totaling fourteen *juan*.[120]

In the bibliographic catalogues the first mention of a title is in the *Sui shu* with the entry, "*Laozi zhigui*, twelve *juan*."[121] In the *Jiu Tang shu* and *Xin Tang shu* catalogues, Du Guangting's *Daode zhenjing guang sheng yi* 道德真經廣聖義 the "Zhigui" is listed with fourteen *juan*.[122] Sometime during the Song the *Zhigui* had contained only thirteen *juan*.[123]

The authenticity of the *Zhigui* has already been explored in detail by a handful of scholars. I will here summarize the conclusions. The compilers of the *Siku quanshu zongmu* took what was left of the *Zhigui* by the Qing dynasty as a forgery based on the Ming version in Hu Zhenheng's *Mice huihan*, published in 1603. Hu's version was taken from the *Daozang* but does not include the *Laozi* text, the Gushenzi commentary, the preface, or the last *juan*, along with

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[117] Chen Zhi 陳直, *Han shu xin zheng* 漢書新證 (Tianjin: Renmin chubanshe, 1979), 231.

[118] JDSW, "Xu," 137. 嚴遵注二卷.

[119] HYGZ, 532. 授老莊著指歸.

[120] JDSW, "Xu," 137. 老子指歸十四卷.

[121] SS 34.1000.

[122] *Jiu Tang shu* 47.2027; *Xin Tang shu* 59.1515; Du Guangting 杜廣庭, *Daode zhenjing guangshengyi* 道德真經廣聖義, DZ 440, preface.

[123] *Song shi* 205.5177.

some other lines. Recent studies by Wang Liqi, Meng Wentong, and Yan Lingfeng have argued for the authenticity of the *Zhigui*.[124]

Ultimately, we cannot be completely sure that the extant *Laozi zhigui* is in fact the one written by Zhuang Zun, the same text that was noted without a title in the *Han shu*. The extant *Zhigui* might have been a collection of someone's writings that may or may not have been by Zhuang Zun. Another theory proposed by Meng Wentong suggests that someone else who added quotes from Zhuang Zun might have composed it.[125] This would explain the inconsistent occurrences of "Master Zhuang says" 莊子曰 throughout the *Zhigui*. Aat Vervoorn, and Alan Chan believe that there is no serious reason to doubt the authenticity of the *Zhigui*, and I follow suit. It remains open whether the extant *Zhigui* is the same as the one that Zhuang Zun wrote, but this is always a possibility for a majority of early Chinese texts. I believe that even if the integrity of the *Zhigui* is not fully whole, we can at least suppose that the ideas are representative of Zhuang Zun's thoughts.

[124] Wang Liqi 王力器, "Dao zang ben Daode zhenjing zhigui tiyao" 道藏本道德真經指歸提要, *Zhongguo zhexue* 4 (1980): 340-1; Meng Wentong 蒙文通, "Yan Junping Daode Zhigui lun yiwen" 嚴君平道德指歸論佚文, *Tushu jikan* 6 (1948): 23-38; and Yan Lingfeng 嚴靈峯, "Bian Yan Zun Daode zhiguilun fei weishu," 辨嚴遵道德指歸論非偽書, *Dalu zazhi* 29.4 (1964): 107-13.

[125] Meng Wentong, "Daojia shi suotan" 道家史索探, *Zhongguo zhexue* 4 (1980): 314-5.

2.2.2 Structure and contents of the *Zhigui*

The basic structure of the *Zhigui* as collected in the *Daozang* and *Xuxiu Siku quanshu* is as follows:

1. A preface that can be divided into two sections: the first with unknown authorship; the second distinguished by the phrase "Junping's explanation of the contents of the two *jing*" 君平二經目.
2. Quotes from the *de* part of the *Laozi* partitioned into forty sections, which differ from the received version, in some cases matching the Mawangdui manuscript, other times matching that of the Guodian.
3. Two words "*zhigui*" 指歸 indicating the end of the *Laozi* quotes and the beginning of the *Zhigui* explications.
4. Occasionally there will also be the phrase "Master Zhuang says," but this does not appear in every section.
5. Minimal commentary by a certain Gushenzi 谷神子.

The preface (1) states that there are seventy-two chapters of the *Laozi* further adding that there are a total of forty sections in the *shangjing* 上經, and thirty-two sections in the *xiajing* 下經. The received *Laozi* contains a total of eighty-one "chapters" divided into two *jing*, the first being the *daojing*, the second *dejing*. The discrepancy between the *Zhigui* and the extant *Laozi* has troubled scholars. Vervoorn suggests (following Meng Wentong and Wang Liqi) that the discrepancy is probably due to later editing of the *Zhigui* in order to make it conform to the received eighty-one chaptered version.[126] The extant *Zhigui* contains forty sections from the *de*

[126] Vervoorn (1988-1989), 78.

portion of the *Laozi,* which by the standards of the received *Laozi* text should correspond to the second book, or *xiajing* 下經, which contradicts the preface. Based on the Mawangdui manuscript which reverses the order of the two "books" in the standard *Laozi* with the *dejing* coming before the *daojing*, and the fact that the *Laozi* in the *Zhigui* matches for the most part the one in the Mawangdui, the "shangjing" 上經 referred to in the preface probably corresponds to the *dejing* of the *Laozi* (part one), not the *daojing* (part two). Sometime near the end of the Han the order of the two books of the Laozi was reversed, the *daojing* constituting part one (then part two), and the *dejing* constituting part two (then part one). Zhuang Zun's *Zhigui* might have been rearranged accordingly, and the first part on the *daojing* lost sometime during the Song dynasty.

The extant *Laozi zhigui*, sometimes called the *Laozi zhigui lun*, includes only the part commenting on the *de* section of the *Laozi* (*juan* 7-13), and is preserved in two general formats:

1. A seven *juan* version with the title *Daode zhenjing zhigui* 道德真經指歸, collected in the *Daozang* 道藏, *Yilan tang congshu* 怡蘭堂叢書, and the *Xuxiu siku quanshu* 續修四庫全書. The seven *juan* versions include the *Laozi* text without subheadings, and also a commentary by a certain Gushenzi 谷神子, whom we know nothing about.
2. A six *juan* version with the title *Daode zhigui lun* 道德指歸論 collected in the *Mice huihan* 秘冊彙函, *Jin dai mishu* 津逮秘書, *Xue jin tao yuan* 學津討原, and *Congshu jicheng chu bian* 叢書集成初編. The six *juan* versions do not contain the *Laozi* text, but have subheadings consisting of the first few words from each section of the *Laozi* passages.

There are a handful of modern versions of the *Laozi zhigui*, including two by Wang Deyou 王德有, and one by Fan Bocheng 范波成.[127] There has not yet been a full translation of the extant *Zhigui* into English, although there are excerpts included in studies by Vervoorn, Chan, and Wagner. Wang Deyou has an edition of the *Zhigui* rendered into modern Chinese.[128]

The version of the *Laozi* text attached to Zhuang Zun's commentarial essay is another interesting matter. The *Laozi* text that is attached to the *Zhigui* differs from the received Heshanggong version of the *Laozi* in textual variants and "chapter" divisions matching the Dunhuang and Mawangdui manuscripts. This would help to date the *Zhigui* to the mid- to late-Han because in its early form the *de* section of the *Laozi* seems to have preceded the *dao* section, as we have mentioned above. The *dao* part of the *Zhigui* was probably lost sometime between the late Song to early Ming dynasties. Modern editors have partitioned the according to set phrases in the *Laozi* that are now titled by extracting the first few words from the *Laozi* passage. For example, the first section in the *Zhigui* is called "Shangde bu de pian" 上德不德篇 corresponds to *Laozi* 38 which begins with the line 上德不德是以有德. [129] In my translations I will refer to sections in the *Zhigui* following this method.

Our next question concerns the nature of the *Zhigui* expositions. If one merely looked at the expositions without the *Laozi* lines and without knowing that it was an explication of the

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[127] Wang Deyou 王德有, coll. and punc., *Laozi zhigui* 老子指歸 (Bejing: Zhonghua shuju, 1994); Wang Deyou, trans. and comm., *Laozi zhigui yizhu* 老子指歸義注 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2004); and Fan Bocheng 范波成, ed. and comm., *Laozi zhigui jiaojian* 老子指歸校箋 (Shanghai: Shanghai guji chubanshe, 2013).

[128] Wang Deyou 王德有, Laozi Zhigui yi zhu 老子指歸譯注 (Beijing, Shangwu yinshuguan, 2004).

[129] For a basic overview of the Zhuang Zun and manuscript versions of the *Laozi*, see William Boltz's entry "Lao tzu Tao te ching" in Michael Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts*, 271-3, 281-4.

Laozi, it might not be immediately apparent that the *Zhigui* is dependent on the *Laozi* text. In other words, the *Zhigui* can very well be read independently from the *Laozi*, whereas in contrast Wang Bi's commentaries cannot be extracted to constitute a whole corpus by itself. Consider for example the two writings on the beginning of the "Shangde bu de pian":

Zhuang Zun:

天地所由，物類所以。
道為之元，德為之始，
神明為宗，太和為祖。
道有深微，德有厚薄，
神有清濁，和有高下。
清者為天，濁者為地，
陽者為男，陰者為女。

That from which heaven and earth come is that from which things and their kinds are based.
Tao serves as its origin, *de* as beginning.
Spiritual Brilliance constitutes the progenitor, and great harmony the ancestor.
Tao has depth and subtlety, de thickness and thinness;
Spirit has lucidity and turbidity, harmony has highness and lowness. The lucid becomes heaven, the turbid earth;
Yang becomes male, yin female.

Wang Bi:

德者得也。常得而無喪，利而無害，故以道為名焉。何以得德。由乎道也。何以盡德。以無為用。以無為用，則莫不載也。故物無焉，則無物不經，有焉，則不足以免其生。是以天地雖廣，以無為心，聖王雖大以虛為主。[130]

De means 'to acquire'. When one constantly acquires [something], there is nothing to lose; this is beneficial and lacks harm. Thus, we take 'tao' as its name. How does one acquire de? It comes from tao. How does one exhaust de? By taking nothingness as useful. If one takes nothingness as useful then there is nothing that one cannot accomplish. Therefore, if things lack a place to come from, then in lacking things there is no place to originate from. If things have a place to come from, then it is insufficient in

[130] *Laozi zhu* in *Wang Bi ji jiao shi*, 23.

evading his body.[131] This is because although heaven and earth are vast, they take nothingness as their center, and although the sage king is superior, he takes the void as his guide.

The *Laozi* passage in question is the following:

上德不德，是以有德。
下德不失德，是以無德。
上德無為而無不為，下德為之而有以為。

The one who has ultimate potency does not act virtuously; this is because he has potency.
The one who has subordinate potency does not lose virtue; this is because he does not have potency.
One with ultimate potency proceeds by nonaction but there is nothing not acted upon;
One with subordinate potency acts on something but there are still things to be acted upon.

Other than an obvious difference in style (consistent tetrasyllabic lines from the *Zhigui* in contrast with prose from Wang Bi's *Laozi zhu* 老子注), we note that the former begins with something resembling a cosmological theory, whereas the latter immediately goes into the meaning of *de*.[132] In terms of style Zhuang Zun's is more aesthetic, or poetic, while Wang Bi's is composed in expository prose. In fact, Wang Bi is much more concerned with ideas and the paradoxical relation expressed in the *Laozi*. Even in this short excerpt, we see that he was almost obsessed with the meaning of "nothingness" (*wu*). This obsession would become the trademark for Wang Bi and for *xuanxue* discourse.[133]

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[131] Following Lou Yulie who takes *shēng* 生 as interchangeable with *shēn* 身 'body'. *Wang Bi ji jiao shi*, 96, n. 4.

[132] It is perhaps noteworthy that Wang Bi's commentary to this particular section is quite long in comparison with the other sections of the *Laozi*. The *Laozi* concept of de must have been of great significance for Wang Bi.

[133] Due to the limits of this dissertation, I can only provide preliminary observations that are lacking in depth and sophistication. A proper (and intriguing) study would require a side-by-side comparison of Zhuang Zun's

Scattered throughout the *Zhigui* are the three words "Master Zhuang says" 莊子曰, by which is not meant Zhuang Zhou of the *Zhuangzi*, but Zhuang Zun without the taboo. It is unclear what 莊子曰 is doing here, whether it functions as an indicator of some sort, and if so, what kind of indicator. It is not really a dialogue, for Master Zhuang is the only speaker. If Zhuang Zun is the acknowledged writer of the *Zhigui*, why would he need to have the self-referential phrase, "Master Zhuang says"? Yang Xiong's *Fa yan*, for example, only has 曰, not 揚子曰, with the implied speaker as Yang Xiong himself. It is even more puzzling when one notices that "Master Zhuang says" does not appear in every section that has been marked off by lines from the *Laozi*. One could argue that what precedes "Master Zhuang says" 莊子曰 is an idea or current saying that the author is trying to rebuke, explain, or expand, but we cannot be certain. Another possibility is to take what comes after "Master Zhuang says" as actual quotes from Zhuang Zun, which leaves open the question of where the other part of the *Zhigui* comes from. Vervoorn suggests that it is "more likely… an example of the dialogue style of exposition so common in Han literature, a style used to brilliant effect by Zhuang Zun's pupil Yang Xiong in his major work *Fa yan* 法言, and that both questions and answers come from the same author."[134] The only difference is that in the *Fa yan* quotes are set off impersonally with "someone asks" (或曰 or 曰), never with an actual name.

Zhigui and Wang Bi's *Laozi zhu* that would tease out nuances of each time period and would perhaps say something about different commentarial traditions. This will have to be saved for a later time. Rudolf Wagner has done a few comparisons between these two, but they are not full-scale studies. See Wagner (1986).

[134] Vervoorn (1988-1989), 78.

As is a persistent and notorious problem in Western studies of ancient Chinese texts, we are now confronted with the question of how to translate *zhigui*. Vervoorn translates the compound as "gist", Wagner as "pointers."[135] *Zhi* of course means 'to point, instruct.' Alan Chan suggests that it means something like "meaning" as used in the *Mengzi*, the *Han shu*, and the *Wenxin diaolong*, but he leaves it untranslated.[136] Grammatically, it is likely a verb-object construction: "pointing out the origin/road of return."[137] The basic meaning of the word *gui* is 'to return', and with the context of the *Laozi* in mind, means specifically a return to the origin of the cosmos. For this reason Chan then proposes that *zhigui* "suggests recovery of the 'original,' 'true' meaning of a work."[138] *Laozi zhigui* is therefore a treatise meant to draw/point out the original meaning of the *Laozi*.

2.3 Ideas and Motifs

The *Zhigui* is traditionally classified as a "Taoist" text beginning with Ban Gu because of its explicit association with the *Laozi*. Studies on Zhuang Zun and the *Zhigui* are limited, probably due to questions of authenticity. In recent times there has been an increasing interest, usually as an example of an early Han synthesis of Taoist temperament and Ruist ethics, often

[135] See Vervoorn (1988-1989); and Rudolf Wagner, "Wang Bi: The Structure of the Laozi's Pointers, A Philological Study and Translation," TP 72.1/3 (1986): 92-129.

[136] Chan (1998) 109, n. 15.

[137] There are other possibilities, such as to take the two words as nouns: "the pointing/direction and the return of the Laozi"; or both as verbs, "pointing and returning."

[138] Ibid.

mentioned in conjunction with Yang Xiong, and as the intellectual foundation of Wei-Jin *xuanxue*.

As a commentarial essay on the *Laozi*, one can already expect discussions on ideas that involve the concepts of acting with nonaction, the unspeakability of tao, the metaphysical relation between being and nothingness. Significant to the *Laozi* as a guide for rulership, there are also treatments on what constitutes virtue. In terms of composition technique, the *Zhigui* is composed in mostly parallel prose with many tetrasyllabic verses. It also takes up some features of the *Zhuangzi* including motifs of spontaneity and a carefree lifestyle, and even shares a similar literary style particularly in lines with many creative descriptives where it seems like the author has gone "rambling" in a poetic frenzy. This is something A. C. Graham had brilliantly identified as the "rambling mode" where there are places in the *Zhuangzi* that shift suddenly and spontaneously between prose and verse. He acutely points out a difficulty in reading (and hence, translating) Taoist texts, including the *Laozi*.

> A statement is much less dependent on immediate context in verse than in prose, because a verse line has, besides its place in a linear sequence, relations with other lines organized by the overall pattern. […] But once the form is dissolved we are left with only a linear sequence too loose for consecutive prose, giving that effect of inconsequential drifting which we call the Rambling Mode.[139]

This, I think, also applies to the *Zhigui*, and so my translations will attempt to reflect this shift from "linear prose" to sometimes "inconsequential driftings" in verse typographically. We will see later that in Yang Xiong's commentaries to the *Taixuan* there are similar shifts, except that the "drifting" in verse is not "inconsequential" (nor is it "mystical" as most Taoist classics seem

[139] A. C. Graham, "Two Notes on the Translation of Taoist Classics," *A Companion to Angus C. Graham's Chuang Tzu, the Inner Chapters*, Harold D. Roth ed. (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2003), 146.

to be) to follow Graham's vocabulary, but on the contrary flows accordingly from the previous lines. This will be taken up later in the next two chapters on Yang Xiong.

In a modern punctuated edition of the *Zhigui* Wang Deyou lists a number of characteristics of the text's "philosophical thought" 哲學思想 by way of introductory matter: 1. the cosmological principle of something arising from nothing; 2. the importance of taking nothing (*wu*) as the (abstract) foundation for all things (following 1. above); and 3. the idea that the myriad things have the automated capacity to persist and to change.[140] These characteristics are typical themes that can be generalized from the *Laozi*, or any other *Laozi* related text for that matter. For Wang, the uniqueness of the *Zhigui* lies in Zhuang Zun's philosophy of life: a principle of life where each thing has its own distinct features and function; the return to simplicity and genuine essence; and guidelines on how to behave in specific societal roles, for example, as a subordinate, as a *junzi*, and as the "profound sage".[141] Wang also points out the many hierarchical sets throughout the text including the divisions of the *junzi* (the man of tao, of virtue, of humanity, of righteousness, and of propriety); and levels of cosmic forces (tao and potency, spiritual brilliance, grand harmony, heaven and earth, and the myriad things). We will have chance to discuss these divisions in section 2.3.

[140] Wang Deyou (1994), "Introduction," 5-18.

[141] Wang Deyou 王德有 and Ma Longxiao 馬龍肖, "Yan Junping de rensheng xueshuo" 嚴君平的人生學說, *Zhongguo zhexue shi* 1 (1992), 37-43.

Alan Chan stresses the prevalent usage of the term *ziran* throughout the *Zhigui,* a term which is also a central concept in *xuanxue*.[142] *Wuwei* is the concrete expression of *ziran*, the principle by which one should be guided in self-cultivation. *Ziran* refers to the nature of tao and its manifestation in the world, as well as to an ethical ideal that bridges tao with the human world by providing a model of government for the enlightened ruler. In political thought the concept of *ziran* is tied to the notion of "quietude and nonaction" 清靜無為, that is, the primal simplicity of all existence as the foundational virtue for self-cultivation and state government. Zhuang Zun uses *ziran* to tease out the meaning of the *Laozi*, and his thought reflects the influence of the Huang-Lao school.[143]

Similarly, for Vervoorn the *Zhigui* is a political tract that is concerned with government and social order on a macro scale, and self-cultivation on a micro scale. Zhuang blends Ru and Tao ideas to form a theory of the perfect ruler, who is also a sage.[144] Self-discipline is what conditions human actions to be *ziran*. As Vervoorn understands it, *ziran* is: 1. a way of conceiving reality, 2. not a "thing" in itself, 3. an unending process, and 4. is spontaneous and harmonious, and subject to change. In other words, it is the higher order where tao is made manifest in the phenomenal world.

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[142] Chan (1998), and his "The *Daode jing* and its tradition," 1-29, *Daoism Handbook*, Livia Kohn, ed. (Leiden: Brill, 2000). For the theme of *ziran*, see also Richard B. Mather, "The Controversy Over Conformity and Naturalness During the Six Dynasties," *History of Religions* 9.2-3 (1969-70), 160-180.

[143] Chan (2000), 13.

[144] Yen Kuo-ming also gives a similar argument. Yen Kuo-ming 顏國明, *Yi zhuan yu Ru Dao guanxi lunheng* 易傳與儒道關係論衡 (Taipei: Liren shuju, 2006), 287-9.

There is something else that is very striking about the *Zhigui* that the aforementioned scholars have not touched on. This is the abundant usage of *xuan* as adjectival modifier creating a whole wealth of what I tentatively call "xuan-headed compounds" including: *xuande* 玄德 (~ virtue), *xuanmo* 玄默 (~ quietude), *xuanyu* 玄域 (~ realm), *xuanming* 玄冥 (~ dark), *xuanliao* 玄寥 (~ far), *xuanyuan* 玄遠 (~ distant), *xuantong* 玄通 (~ accessibility), *xuanmiao* 玄妙 (~ marvels), *xuansheng* 玄聖 (~ sage), a reduplicative *xuanxuan* 玄玄 (~ ~), and *xuantong* 玄同 (~ agreement). The compound *xuanmo* includes two expanded versions *xuanxuan momo* 玄玄默默 (profoundly and silently), and *wei xuan wei mo* 為玄為默 (acting profoundly and silently). *Xuan* as a noun, almost never appears by itself in the *Zhigui*. Even in the *Laozi,* it is unattached only once in the first chapter. This is interesting because the word tao, which is usually taken as a synonym of *xuan*, is frequently mentioned as a stand-alone noun even in its abstract sense.

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will focus on the aspects of the *Zhigui* that are relevant to Yang Xiong, i.e. the motifs of *xuande* 玄德 and *xuanmo* 玄默 as pertain to the highest level of self-cultivation. Additionally, I wish to suggest that in what can be conceived of as Zhuang Zun's literary experimentations with *xuan*-prefixed compounds we catch glimpses of threads that may very well have influenced Yang Xiong's articulation of *xuan* in the *Taixuan*.

2.3.1 *Xuande* as "superior potency"

In section 1.3.2 we looked at the usages of the binomial compound *xuande* and found that other than the *Laozi* (which is quite possibly the earliest attested usage) it also occurs in the syncretist sections of the *Zhuangzi* and the *Huainanzi.* In the *Zhigui xuande* refers to a state of high excellence in potency that includes all esteemed virtues. I suggest that for Zhuang Zun "profound potency" *xuande* is the same as "superior potency" *shangde* 上德, that is as a

collective "potency" that encompasses individual virtues, and is the counterpart to tao, whereas *de* refers to *specific* "virtues" belonging to human persons, e.g. humanity, righteousness, courage, propriety, etc. Profound potency refers to the innate power of a person (or cosmic thing) that allows the being to persist and move with the flow of nature. Its power is necessarily internal and self-generating, and thus does not rely on external points of causation. The *Laozi* line 上德不德是以有德 can then be translated accordingly as "the one with highest potency does not have [individual] virtues, this is because he has potency [i.e. all virtues]." Because he is fully saturated with every virtue and potency emanates from within, he further has the ability to act naturally, i.e. spontaneously in accordance with his nature, where he no longer has to think consciously about his actions and still move in compliance with tao—this is the true essence of "action with nonaction". As Yang Xiong would write in his *Taixuan*, "action that does not depend [on anything] is called profound potency" 作不恃，稱玄德也.[145] In the context of the *Zhigui* this high saturation of potency signifies the presence of an ideal ruler.

Before we look at the occurrences of *xuande*, it would be helpful to first look at how the *Zhigui* explicates the meaning of "ultimate potency" (*shangde*) in the *Laozi* 38, or the "Essay on 'one with superior potency does not act with virtue'" 上德不德篇. First is the *Laozi* passage.

> 上德不德，是以有德。
> 下德不失德，是以無德。
> 上德無為而無不為，下德為之而有以為。
> 上仁為之而無以為，上義為之而有以為。
> 上禮為之而莫之應，則攘臂而仍之。
> 故失道而後德，失德而後仁，失仁而後義，失義而後禮。
> 禮者，忠信之薄而亂之首。[146]
> 前識者，道之華而愚之始。

[145] *Taixuan jing*, SKQS 3.15b.

[146] Received *Laozi* includes topic marker 夫 at the beginning of the sentence.

是以大丈夫處其厚，不處其薄，
處其實，不處其華。[147]去彼取此。[148]

The one who has superior potency does not act virtuously; this is because he has potency.
The one who has subordinate potency does not lose virtue; this is because he does not have potency.
One with ultimate potency proceeds by nonaction but there is nothing not acted upon;
One with subordinate potency acts on something but there are still things to be acted upon;
One with superior benevolence acts on something but there is nothing by which he acts.
One with superior rightness acts on something but there is something by which he acts.
One with superior propriety acts on something but when there is nothing that responds to him, he rolls up his sleeves and carries on as usual.
Thus, one must lose the way before there is virtue, lose virtue before there is benevolence, lose benevolence before there is righteousness, lose righteous before there is propriety.
Propriety is nothing but wearing thin of loyalty and trust, thereupon putting the leader into chaos.
Prior knowledge is the blossoming of tao and the beginning of stupidity.
Thus this is why the great man resides in the thick and does not reside in the thin;
He resides in the substantial, and does not reside in the blossoms.
He expels that to obtain this.

This section deconstructs the general conception of potency and the other virtues by highlighting the paradoxical nature of action and nonaction. The greatest potency is not achieved simply through abiding by the categorical definitions of virtue that results in virtue skin-deep, i.e. "residing in the thin." It is a level attained when one is no longer conscious of acting virtuously, but in so far as he is acting, he is already *naturally* (ziran) virtuous. This is an example of acting with nonaction, with natural spontaneity at its core, for the truly self-so is that which happens of its own accord. If one needs to be consciously reminded of what it means to act with virtue, one is not yet at the level of the highest. It is in actions of spontaneity, that is, immanent responses

[147] Received *Laozi* has 不居 for 不處. This variant does not alter the meaning. In the Zhigui, the verb "reside" *chu* is consistent throughout this sentence, whereas the received text uses *ju*.

[148] Wang Deyou ed., *Laozi zhigui*, 3 (hereafter LZZG); DZ 7.4.

that are immediate and without analytic thought, that one reaches the sagely status of ultimate potency. Zhuang Zun's interpretation of this passage is as follows.

> 莊子曰，
> 虛無無為，開導萬物，謂之道人。
> 清靜因應，為所不為，謂之德人。
> 兼愛萬物，博施無窮，謂之仁人。
> 理名正實，處事之義，謂之義人。
> 謙退辭讓，敬以守和，謂之禮人。
> 凡此五人，皆樂長生，尊厚德，貴高名。
> 各慎其情性，任其聰明。[149]
>
> Master Zhuang says:
> One who is empty and void lacking action, leading the myriad things—this refers to a man of tao.
> One who is calm and silent complying and conforming to things, acting on that which does not act, this refers to a man of de.[150]
> One who tends and cares for the myriad things, broadly giving without limit—this refers to a man of benevolence.
> One who puts name in order and makes essences correct, arranging the properness of affairs—this refers to a man of rightness.
> One who unpretentiously demurs and yields and declines while being respectful by way of guarding harmony—this refers to a man of propriety.
> These five kinds of men all find joy in lengthening their lives, esteem deep virtue, and value a high-minded reputation.
> Each is attentive to their disposition and innate nature, and makes good use of their acuity and insight.

Tao and *de* seem to hold a special divine status, above all other moral virtues of *ren, yi*, and *li*. Vervoorn suggests that there is a hierarchy, and while similar to the "Confucian ideals of benevolence and righteousness, Yan Zun is emphatic that such conduct can only come about by

[149] LZZG, 3-4; DZ 7.5.

[150] Cf. Sima Qian's comments about the figure of Laozi: "Laozi values the way, the empty and void, complying and conforming to changes and transformations through non-action. Thus, his writings and sayings are regarded as refined and marvelous, and difficult to understand" 老子所貴道，虛無，因應變化於無為，故著書辭稱微妙難識. SJ 63.2156.

forgetting all about benevolence and righteousness and allowing the self instead to flow with the unfolding of Nature."[151] That is to say, that there is a mixture of Ru and Tao elements. The fact that there are five items leads Vervoorn to further speculate that this classification was part of the five phases theory.[152] His suggestion for a hierarchy is appealing, but I would modify it slightly by placing tao and de on the same level, for if we look at the descriptions given above, the qualities "empty and void" and "calm and silent" seem to be similar states of being.

The passage continues to warn against a possible disconnect between name and substance, a problem that was already raised in pre-Qin times.

故或有溟涬玄寥而無名，
或濛鴻茫茫而稱皇，
或汪然滂汎而稱帝，
或廓然昭昭而稱王，
或遠通參差而稱伯。
此其可言者也。
然而伯非伯，而王非王，而帝非帝，而皇非皇，而有非有，而無非無，千變萬化，不可為計，重累億萬，不可為名。[153]

Thus [in demeanor] some may be murky and muddled, obscure and empty, and so lack reputation;
Some are confounded and confused, befogged and befuddled, and yet are called "emperor";
Some are limitlessly vast and broad, yet are called "sovereign";
Some are expansive and clear sighted, and yet are called "king";
Some are far-reaching haphazardly and yet are called "hegemon".
This is something that can be articulated in words.
But then—the "hegemon" is not a hegemon, the "king" not a king, the "sovereign" not a sovereign, the "emperor" not an emperor, and then something is not something, and nothing is not nothing. With a thousand changes and myriad transformations, we are unable to calculate; repeatedly heaped-up[154] thousands of ten-thousands, we are unable to give names.

[151] Vervoorn (1988-1989) 85.

[152] Vervoorn (1990), 68-9.

[153] LZZG, 4; DZ 7.5.

[154] Cf. 累重 'massed; tiered.'

There is an inherent critique of the political condition where men who hold the titles of "emperor", "sovereign", etc. do not actually possess anything substantial, or "thickness" *hou* as we read in the Laozi, that one should expect from these positions. Then there are those who are equally "murky and muddled" in demeanor who do not have titles. Names may match substance, but they may not—the point seems to be that we cannot truly know for sure as there are "a thousand changes and myriad transformations" in worldly phenomena. With change as the only constant, nothing can be subordinated into analytic systems of calculation or naming.

Note again that there is a five-fold schema, though here it is not as clear whether these five instances are hierarchical. The first instance of one who lacks name or reputation is at least one where name and substance are fitting, and brings to mind social outcasts who hold no worthy positions and appear to be "murky and muddled." The next four are clearly examples of corrupt rulers and officials, and seem to all belong under the same category of mixing up name and substance. This point is made more explicitly as follows:

> 何以明之。夫易姓而王，封於泰山，禪於梁父者，七十有二義，其有形兆圻堮[155]髣髴[156]不可識者，不可稱言，此其性命不同，功名不齊者非耶也。[157]
>
> How can we clarify this? Change one's surname and make him a king, perform a sacrifice [to heaven] at Mount Tai, perform a ceremony [to earth] at Mount Liangfu, with seventy-and-two [moral] rites[158]—these leave traces of carved lines that are obscure and cannot be discerned; what cannot be named and spoken, innateness and destiny of this kind of person are not the same, merit and names are not uniform—is this not so?

[155] Graphic variant of 圻鄂.

[156] Graphic variant of 彷彿.

[157] Following Wang Youde who amends 非耶也 to 非也耶. LZZG, 4, 8, n.3; DZ 7.5.

[158] This refers to the *feng shan* rites reputed performed by seventy-two ancient rulers. See SJ 28.1361.

For those who do not understand the paradoxical lines of the *Laozi*, the *Zhigui* elaborates somewhat less paradoxically on the qualities of a ruler who is of greatest virtue 上德之君 in contrast with one who is of lowest virtue 下德之君, as well as a ruler with greatest humanity 上仁之君, one with greatest benevolence 上義之君, and one with greatest propriety 上禮之君. This list is different from the five kinds of people mentioned above by not including a ruler with "greatest tao," while all others are accounted for. Under each category, differences are systematically mapped in the following aspects: natural innateness (*xing* 性) and destiny (*ming* 命) in relation to the self-so (*ziran* 自然), mental disposition (*qing* 情) and resolution (*yi* 意) in relation to spiritual brilliance (*shenming* 神明), and movements (*dong* 動) and actions (*zuo* 作) in relation to grand harmony (*taihe* 太和).

是故， 上德之君，體道而存。
神與化倫，德動玄冥。
天下王之，莫有見聞。
德歸萬物，皆曰自然。
下德之君，體德而行。
神與化遊，德配皇天。
天下王之，或見或聞。
德流萬物，復反其君。
夫何故哉？上德之君，性受道之纖妙，命得一之精微，性命同於自然，情意體於神明，動作倫於太和，取舍合乎天心。[159]

Thus, the ruler with the greatest potency embodies tao and thereupon persists.
His spirit is comparable to transformation, his virtue moves profoundly and mysteriously.
To honor such a person as the king of the entire realm—this has never been seen or heard of.
His grace redounds to the myriad things; all say this is the self-so state of affairs.
The ruler with the lowest virtue experiences *de* and thereupon acts.
His spirit wanders with transformation, and his virtue is matched with the august heavens.
To honor such a person as the king of the entire realm—sometimes this is seen and heard of.
Grace flows amongst the myriad things, returning to this ruler.

[159] LZZG, 4; DZ 7.5-6.

> Why is this so? As for the ruler of greatest virtue, his innateness receives the delicate and dainty [qualities] of tao, his fate obtains the refined and subtle [qualities] of one. In his innateness and fate, he is same as the self-so; in his disposition and thoughts he is embodied with spiritual brilliance; in his movements and actions, he is comparable to the great harmony; in his taking and relinquishing, he is together within the heart of heaven.

The distinction between the ruler with greatest and lowest virtue lies in the former's alignment with the forces of the cosmos, thus internalizing these forces so that he no longer has to think about what he is doing (i.e. action with nonaction). Moving seamlessly "without form" 無形, remaining tranquil as if "not yet born" 未生, he is able to "shift form" and "conceal his intent" 遺形藏志 and thus is at one with tao. "Thus, being calm, placid, and nonacting, his potency fills into the realm of *xuan*. Being profoundly silent, still and tranquil, his transforming influence flows into the boundless." 故恬淡無為而德盈於玄域，玄默寂寥而化流於無極。 One who possesses ultimate potency and is acknowledged as a ruler exists only in theory; more often are seen men who have minimal degrees of virtue, and even in this case they are only "sometimes" honored as rulers.

The compound *xuande* is found in the *Laozi* in three places: chapters 10, 51 and 65 as partitioned in the standard received version. The extant *Zhigui* only preserves 51 and 65, or the "Essay on 'Tao gives birth'" 道生篇, and the "Essay on 'the one who excels at tao'" 善為道者篇, respectively, in accordance to *Zhigui* divisions.[160] This first one is the "Essay on 'Tao gives birth to it'".

> 道生之，德畜之，物形之，勢成之。
> 是以萬物尊道而貴德。
> 道尊德貴，夫莫之爵而常自然。
> 道生之，德畜之，成之熟之，養之覆之。

[160] LZZG, 45-7, 81-4.

生而不有，為而不恃，長而不宰，是謂玄德。[161]

Tao engenders it, de nourishes it;
Things shape it, power completes it.
These are the ways that the myriad things esteem tao and value de. When tao is esteemed and de is valued,
it is not though an ordinance of it, but the taking as constant the self-so.[162]
Tao gives rise to it, de nourishes it;
Prolongs and lengthens it,
completes and ripens it,
nourishes it and shelters it.
It gives life but does not possess it, it benefits but takes no gratitude, it is the steward but exercises no authority—
This is called profound virtue.

The sense of this particular passage seems to be the internal generating power of virtue that sounds like a prime mover or a prime giver: it gives life, but does nothing else; it offers benefits, but does not further participate. The *Zhigui* takes this to implicate the sage's ability to rely on nothing but the self-so and in this way is in close affinity with the world. "The art of the sage's wisdom does not descend from heaven, nor does it emerge from earth. Internally, it is found in the self; externally in things. He observes by way of the self-so, and there is nothing that is inaccessible" 聖智之術不自天下，不由地出，內在於身，外在於物。督以自然，無所不通.[163] A few lines later, we read that this "art" of the sage operates by a non-operation: "action through nonaction" and "implementation through non-implementation."

是故，
知道以太虛之虛無所不稟，
知德以至無之無無所不授，
道以無為之為品於萬方而無首，
德以無設之設遂萬物之形而無事，

[161] LZZG, 45; DZ 9.10.

[162] For 爵 the received Laozi has 命 'to ordain' which is how I have translated here.

[163] LZZG, 45; DZ 9.10.

故能陶性命，冶情意，造志欲，化萬事。[164]

Thus—
This is to know that tao, as the void of the greatest void, is nowhere not endowed;
And to know that potency, as the nothingness of the ultimate nothing, is nowhere not received.
Tao takes action through nonaction to qualify/classify the myriad directions while [itself] lacking direction;
Virtue by means of non-schematized schemes give final form to the myriad things without doing anything;
Thus [the sage] is able to fashion nature and the ordained, smelt dispositions and intent, create resolutions and desires, and transform the myriad affairs.

The "*art* of the sage's wisdom" seems to be more of a practical know-how that has reached the point of natural movement no longer requiring a "crafted ability" (巧能), and from which the sage's actions follow accordingly (因之).

This reminds us of the famous story in the *Zhuangzi* about Cook Ding carving an ox for Lord Wenhui 文惠君.[165] The cook moved in such a way that "the 'whoosh!' of the brandished blade unites with the Mulberry Forest dance, in tempo with the orchestra of Jingshou" 秦刀騞然合於桑林之舞乃中經音之會. When praised for his "skill" (*ji* 技), Cook Ding says that his is not of a technical skill, but an embodiment of the way, "in touch with the daemonic" 以神遇 where he does not have to think about *how*; he simply *does*. No longer relying on his objective senses of sight, he only "depends on the principles of heaven" 依乎天理. In delicate areas that are slightly difficult, he concentrates but for a brief moment, and with a flicker of his chopper "in

[164] Ibid.

[165] According to Guo Qingfan's commentary, Lord Wenhui had served under the court of King Hui of Liang 梁惠王 during the Warring States. *Zhuangzi jijie, Zhuzi jicheng*, 55.

one stroke the tangle has been unraveled" 動刀甚微諜然已解.[166] This is precisely the kind of "action with non-action" and "implementation with non-implementation" that Zhuang Zun attempts to illustrate.

Tao and potency are the only principles that are not subject to change. Those that are include predisposition (*xing* 性), fate (*ming* 命), disposition (*qing* 情), resolution (*yi* 意), intention (*zhi* 志), and desire (*yu* 欲). The translation for *xing* is difficult, because it is usually understood as something that is inborn and out of one's control. Here Zhuang Zun seems to imply that *xing* can be altered. He defines it as "that which is endowed by tao thereupon assuming shape and form." There is a multiplicity of shapes and forms, for example male and female, bold and timid, large and small, tall and short, strong and feeble, etc.[167] These seem to refer to more or less physical attributes that are given to us at birth. The six items listed above "all originate from tao and *de*, and with a thousand changes and myriad transformations, there is no limit or end. Only the one who has heard of tao and *de* is able to follow with its standards" 凡此六者皆原道德千變萬化無有窮極唯問道德者能順其則.[168]

Next is the "Essay on 'the one who excels at the Way'". The *Laozi* passage reads,

古之善為道者，非以明民，將以愚之。
民之難治，以其知之。
以智治國，國之賊；
不以智治國，國之福。
知此兩者亦楷式。
常知楷式，是謂玄德。
玄德深矣，遠矣，與物反，至於大順。[169]

[166] *Zhuangzi jijie*, 56-8.

[167] DZ 9.11.

[168] DZ 9.11.

[169] LZZG, 82; DZ 11.10.

Formerly, those who excelled at the Way did not [govern] by illuminating the people, rather by making them foolish.
The difficulty with ordering the people is doing so through one's knowledge.
To order the state by knowledge is a calamity for the state.
To order the state not by knowledge is a blessing for the state.
To understand these two is also a standard model.
To constantly understand the standard model is referred to as profound potency.
Profound potency is vast and far,
Returning with things, it arrives at the great continuity.

From the *Zhigui*:

莊子曰，
夫天地不知道德之所為，故可為然也。
萬物不覩天地之所以，故不可存也。
萬民不識主之所務，故可安也。
四肢九竅不諭心之所導，故可全也。
夫萬物之有君，猶形體之有心也。[170]

Master Zhuang says,
Heaven and earth do not know of the actions of tao and de, and thus they can act as so.
The myriad things cannot behold that by which heaven and earth are, and thus they are able to persist.[171]
The myriad people do not understand what the ruler engages in, and thus they are at ease.
The four limbs and nine orifices do not know what the heart guides, and thus they are remain intact.
The fact that the myriad things have a lord is similar to the physical body having a heart.

The most effective way to govern is not by enlightening the people (contrary to the modern political theorists such as Hobbes and Leibniz) but by leading them to a state of stupidity. The argument seems to be that while a process of enlightenment may lead some to wisdom, others

[170] LZZG, 82-3; DZ 11.10.

[171] In the Jindai and Xuejin versions, the *bu* 不 is omitted, which would render this line "thus they are able to persist." Judging from the parallel construction, the Jindai and Xuejin versions probably reflect the original accurately. Editors had probably inserted the *bu* to make better sense of the line, since myriad things are generally understood to be fleeting objects that cannot persist indefinitely.

may reach a level of cleverness that may prove to be harmful to others through scheming. If the masses remain simpleminded without knowing the higher ordeals behind keeping order, like heaven and earth simply flowing in compliance with the principles of tao and *de*, the myriad beings will go about their everyday lives simply by following their leader. Only this way can the myriad entities continue to persist.

It is best to keep the masses in ignorant bliss than to endow them with the knowledge that they might not know how to process. Not everyone can handle the truth when told. Plato's allegory of the cave expresses a similar message. When the person who had finally escaped the cave of images and had seen the light, he returned back down to try to save the rest from delusions, only to be met with hostility and ultimate death. For Zhuang Zun the sage ruler is one who knows all of this and is able to proceed through the back gate, so to speak, and rule unconventionally by way of appearing not to rule. This was how the former emperors and kings governed through returning to the self-so, i.e. returning to the origin that is nothing, "teaching by way of not knowing, and leading through the formless" 教以不知，導以無形.[172] Moreover,

> 動與天地同節，靜與道德同容。
> 萬物並興，各知其所，
> 名實俱起，各知其當。
> 和氣流通，宇內童蒙，
> 無知無欲，無事無功。
> 心如木土，志如死灰，
> 不覩同異，不見吉凶。[173]
>
> When he moves, he is on the same rhythm as heaven and earth;
> When still, he is has the same appearance as tao and de.
> The myriad things flourish together, each knowing its proper place,
> Name and substance arise together, each knowing its fittingness.

[172] LZZG, 83; DZ 11.10.

[173] LZZG, 83; DZ 11.10-11.11

Harmonious *pneuma* flows and circulates; within the eaves [all] are dim-witted,[174]
With no knowledge and no desire, no affairs and no merit,
His heart is like the trees and soil, his resolution like dead ashes.
He does not discern the similar or the different, and he does not observe good or ill fortune.

In the *Zhuangzi* we have a similar line to "a heart like trees and soil, intent like dead ashes." This appears in an encounter between two men, Ziqi of Nanguo, and Ziyou of Yancheng. Ziyou approaches Ziqi, who is sitting down in a reclined position, his head looking up to the sky as if he had "lost" himself. Ziqi then speaks, "What is this? How is it that you can make your form like a withered tree, and your heart like dead ashes?" 何居乎，形固可使如槁木而心固可使如死灰乎.[175] One could interpret the *Zhuangzi* story as a portrayal of a man in deep meditation who has reached a transcendental state of mind. We can take "withered tree" and "dead ashes" as describing his unmoving body, as if his soul had "lost" (*sang* 喪) or departed from his body.

Instead of a "a form like a withered tree," the sage ruler of the *Zhigui* has his heart aligned with the "trees and soil" of the earth, his "resolution like dead ashes." The concept is the same: his mind and spirit are one with nature, returning to the great earth as if mind and spirit are nothing more than "dead ashes", free from knowledge, desire, worldly affairs, and social status.

廢棄智巧，玄德淳樸，
獨知獨慮，不見所欲，
因民之心，塞民耳目。
不食五味，不服五色，
主如天地，民如草木。[176]

He dismisses and abandons wisdom and craftiness,

[174] The Jindai and Xuejin versions have a variant 宙 for 內 which would make the line 宇宙童蒙 as "the eaves and ridgepole are dim-witted."

[175] *Zhuangzi jishi*, 22.

[176] LZZG, 83; DZ 11.11.

His profound potency is pure and simple.
He alone knows, he alone considers;
He does not envision what is desired.
Based on the hearts of the people,
He obstructs the ears and eyes of the people.
He does not consume the five flavors,
He does not clothe himself in the five colors.
The master should be like heaven and earth;
The people like the grasses and trees.

To give a summary of everything thus far on the meanings of *de* and *xuande* in the Zhigui:

1) There are two ways that we can understand *de*:
    a) as reference to individual human virtues, e.g. benevolence, righteousness, propriety, etc., which we can simply translate as "virtue"; and
    b) as reference to a collective Virtue, which includes a realization of all individual virtues combined constituting a "fullness in *de,*" and which I propose to translate as "potency."
2) The idea of "utmost potency" (*shangde*) is explained in such a way that it resembles the meaning of "profound potency" (*xuande*), where the former is explicitly associated with the ruler (*jun*), the latter with the sage; in essence, they are the same.
3) The term *xuande* designates the highest level of self-cultivation whereby the spirit of the individual has aligned itself with tao, now taking expression through his actions as nonaction in a singular movement of the self-so.

2.3.2 *Xuanmo* as condition to sagehood

The term *xuanmo* appears quite frequently in the *Zhigui*. It takes an almost mystical connotation in that it seems to refer to a mentally transcendental, almost meditative, state of being where mind and body collapse and return the individual to the "primal beginning" (*taichu*

太初) of all things. With the disintegration of the individual he is now one with the myriad things and gains access to higher truths. Now, he is free to roam to the ends of the boundless carelessly.

Xuanmo is unquestionably associated with sagehood, the cultivation goal for all aspiring *junzi*s. It is a state of becoming one with the cosmos while still rooted in the human realm. Essentially the opposite of speech, it does not represent anything, or perhaps better, it represents the profound by presenting itself as the absence of representation. The following except comes from the "Essay on 'ordering the state with uprightness'" 以正治國篇, where the Laozi expounds once again on the principle of rulership by way of nonaction and emulation.

> 聖人之言云：
> 我無為而民自化，
> 我無事而民自富，
> 我好靜而民自正，
> 我無欲而民自樸。
> 其政悶悶，其民[言春][言春]。
> 其政察察，其民缺缺。
> 禍兮福之所倚，
> 福兮禍之所伏。
> 孰知其極！[177]
>
> There are words from the sage that say:
> Because I lack action the people self-transform;
> Because I lack affairs the people become self-abundant;
> Because I enjoy quietude the people self-correct;
> Because I lack desires the people are self-simplified.
> When our government is uneventful, then our people are pure.[178]
> When our government is complicated, then our people are pretentious.
> Calamity is but where blessing leans toward;
> Blessing is but where calamity hides in.
> Who knows where this ends!

[177] LZZG, 60. his corresponds to the received Laozi 57 and half of 58 up to 其日固久. I have only included an excerpt here.

[178] Reading [言春] [言春] according to the received Laozi variant 淳淳.

The *Zhigui* explication is highly political, stating explicitly the various kinds of corruption and pretense of the court resulting from "active" governance, where some "adorn themselves with knowledge that enhances stupidity, and using deception to enhance their importance" 飾智相愚，以詐相要.[179] Others "devise methods that further their skills, carving and polishing with patterns and color, strange changes that are different and uncanny, through praising they obtain 'virtue', through distinction they separate the exhalted and the base" 作方遂伎，雕琢文彩，奇變異怪，以褒有德，以別尊卑.[180] These are all reasons for why the state is "dimwitted" (*hun* 昏) and its affairs are in a "decline" (*shuai* 衰).[181] Faithful to the *Laozi* technique of overturning the general conceptions of opposites, the *Zhigui* proceeds to explain the last three lines of the *Laozi* passage:

> 福生於禍，禍生於福。
> 福之與禍，同營異域，
> 俱亡俱存，異情同服。
> 相隨出入，同來異極，
> 非有聖人，莫能獨得。
> 故去福則無禍，無禍則無福，
> 無福之福，至微玄默，
> 天下好知，莫能窮極。
> 唯無為者能順其則。[182]
>
> Blessings arise from calamities, and calamities arise from blessings.
> Blessings and calamities, together they operate in different realms.

[179] LZZG, 63; DZ 10.10.

[180] Ibid.

[181] Ibid.

[182] LZZG, 64; DZ 10.11.

Together they perish, together they persist – they have different dispositions but perform the same duties.[183]
Together they flow out and in, with the same origin but different poles.
If it were not for the sage, none can alone obtain [this knowledge].
Thus if one dispels blessings then there will be no more calamities. Without calamities there will then be no more blessings.
The blessing of no blessings is the most refined and profound silence.
For the entire realm to be fond of knowledge, there are none who can exhaust these limits.
Only the one who does not act is able to comply with this standard.

Opposites, blessings and calamities, are mirror images of the other, their identities dependent on the existence of the other. They are not so much opposites nor transitional stages but one and the same insofar as they constitute one movement that flows from here to there and back again. The idea of constant movement is tied to the principle of change.

Self-cultivation is itself a movement of internal change, and is modeled after the highest principle tao. "The way is located in the body, not out in the wilds; transformation emerges from myself, not from others" 道在於身，不在於野，化自於我，不由於彼.[184] Cultivation is not simply about following the rites and behavioral norms, which are all external actions, but most importantly it must be an uprooting from within. Only if it is an internal transformation can it be said to be genuine.

是以聖人，

[183] Following Wang Deyou's reading of 服 as 職事. Wang (2004), 188.

[184] LZZG, 26; DZ 8.10.

柄和履正，治之無形。
遊於虛廓，以鏡太輕。
遺魂忘魄，休精息神。
無為而然，玄默而信。[185]

This is how the sage
Grasps harmony and walks upright in ordering [the realm] without revealing his form.
He roams in the empty expanse, in order to obtain a mirror-like vision of Grand Clarity.
He forgoes his spiritual-soul and forgets his carnal-soul, rests his essence and reposes his spirit.[186]
With nonaction he is [naturally] so, with profound silence he is reliable.

The sage emulates the tao, which is itself formless and unattached to any other external force or being. The tao is that which the formed is attached to, and that which all else relies upon for their being, just as the commoners are dependent upon the sage for the correct (and safe) lifestyle. The sage must be a model for the common people just as the tao is a model for the sage. That is, he must present himself as if he did not rely on his senses – and thus, unattached to worldly affairs – harboring a "profound silence" in his being so he is always calm and unaffected. Yet he is essentially a mortal being, and there are inevitably some instances where he will have to perform human activities. If there is no need to speak, he keeps to himself. But when the time is appropriate, his words have to power to shake the entire foundation of the earth.

是以，君子之立身也，

[185] LZZG, 26-7; DZ 8.10-11.

[186] On different conclusions of whether early Chinese notions of *hun* and *po* referred to two distinct parts of the soul, see Lo Yuet Keung, "From a dual soul to a unitary soul: the Babel of soul terminologies in Early China," *MS* 56 (2008): 23-53; Yu Ying-shih, " 'O Soul, come back!': A study in the changing conceptions of the soul and afterlife in Pre-Buddhist China," 58-84, *Chinese History and Culture: Sixth Century B.C.E. to Seventeenth Century* (Columbia: Columbia University Press, 2016); and K.E. Brashier, "Han thanatology and the division of 'souls'", *Early China* 21 (1996), 125-58.

如暗如聾，若樸若質。
藏言於心，常處玄默。
當言深思，發生若哭。
和順時適，成人之福。
應對辭讓，直而不飾。
故言滿天下而不多，
振動四海而不速，
連接萬物而不有，
辭動天下各得所欲。[187]

These are the ways that the *junzi* establishes the self:
As if blind, as if deaf; similar to the simple, similar to the plain.
He conceals his words within his heart, constantly residing in the profoundly silent.
As he is about to speak, he thinks deeply, and once he emits [sound] it is like a cry.
Harmoniously complying and according with the proper time, achieves a man's blessings.
Being deferential and demurring in reply and answering, one can be straightforward and not gloss over things.
Thus his words fill the entire realm but are not excessive,
Tremble and move the four seas but not quickly,
Connect and join the myriad things without taking possession of them.
His words move the entire realm each obtaining that which is desired.

Zhuang Zun seems to contend that complete detachment from the external world is unnecessary. This is something that has already been pointed out by Vervoorn and Berkowitz.[188] What is not clear is whether Zhuang Zun truly believes that the sage, who by his definition is one who is disinterested in any sort of position of power, can in actual practice *be* the ruler. Surely, he *ought* to be: for he is the only one with the theoretical understanding and practical demeanor that makes him suitable for a rulership that centers on action with non-action. Yet at the same time, the fact that he is most fitting already negates the possibility that would place him on the throne. Much like the philosopher-king of Plato's *Republic* (i.e. Socrates), the tension between what ought to

[187] LZZG, 75; DZ 11.2-3.

[188] Vervoorn (1990), 58-64; and Berkowitz (2000), 92-5.

be in theory and what actually happens in practice puts the sage in a marginal, unidentified position: it is as if he has no rightful place in the material world. Usually bereft of wealth, he wanders amongst common people, unseen and unheard; intellectually, he is full of wisdom and sought after by lords and ruler for political advice. He may even have a small group of disciples eager to learn from him. This was the persona of Zhuang Zun as well as many other high-minded hermits in Taoist lore. The lack of position, or place, in the earthly realm is reflective of his transcendental aspirations toward the heavenly world. He must necessarily by definition be unattached to either realm, "free of desires" – even the desire to be a sage – he finds contentment anywhere and everywhere. The condition of a meditative profound silence helps him to do this by returning him to the primal essence of pure nothingness.

> 是故聖人操通達之性,
> 游於玄默之野,
> 處無能之鄉，託不知之體；
> 寂若虛空，奄忽如死,
> 心無所圖，志無所治；
> 聰明運動，光耀四海,
> 塗民耳目，示以無有；
> 庖廚不形，聲色不起,
> 知故不生，禍亂息矣。
> 不言而宇內治，無為而天下已。[189]
>
> This is why the sage manages his comprehensive and far-reaching disposition
> By roaming the wilds of profound silence,
> Residing in the realm of uselessness, entrusting himself to the body of unknowing.
> He is in a state of solitude, as if void and empty; in a state of quietus, as if having died;
> his heart lacks that which contrives, his resolve has nothing that needs to be controlled;
> with sharp hearing and keen-sightedness he moves round, his brilliance illumines the four seas;
> he covers the ears and eyes of the common-folk, and demonstrating through lacking [material] things;
> the kitchen cook [moves] without form, sounds and colors do not arise,

[189] LZZG, 97; DZ 12.8.

clever calculations do not arise, and thus disaster and chaos cease.[190]
Without speaking the entire world is ordered, with non-action the entire realm comes to rest.

Moving in the world alone, but not completely severed from worldly phenomena – so long as he is still a mortal being with corporeal body – for his actions (or nonaction) and speech (or non-speech) move the realms. The tension defines him: on the one hand, he must be as if without sight, without hearing (如暗如聾), and without speech (常處玄默). On the other, he must be all-observing to the order, or disorder, of the world around him (聰明運動), for it is through him alone that the world can be at peace, that the people can remain whole. There is probably another allusion to Cook Ding who moves effortlessly around the kitchen, the key is that he does not rely on his senses but flows in compliance with the way. And so,

是故聖人
慎戒其始，絕其未萌，
去辯去知，去文去言。
虛靜柔弱玄默素真，
隱知藏善，導以自然。[191]

[190] The pair 知故 appears in the *Huainanzi* "Jingshen xun" 精神訓 in a similar context: "Clear the eyes and do not use it for sight, quiet the ears and do not use it for listening, shut the mouth and do not use it for speech, discard the heart and do not use it to think. Discard keen-hearing and clear-sight in order to return to the utmost simplicity, rest essence and spirit in order to abandon clever calculation. He is awake but appears to be asleep, alive but appears to be dead. At the end, he will then return to the origin, the time before birth, and become one with transformation. Death and life but constitute one." 清目而不以視，靜耳而不以聽，鉗口而不以言，委心而不以慮。棄聰明而反太素，休精神而棄知故. 覺而若昧，以生而若死，終則反本未生之時，而與化為一體。死之與生，一體也。*Huainanzi* 7.10a.

[191] LZZG, 121; DZ 12.18.

This is why the sage is
Cautious and restrained in regards to his beginning, cuts off that which has yet to sprout,
Expels disputations and expels knowledge, expels words and expels speech.
He is empty and tranquil, soft and supple; profoundly silent, plain and genuine;
He hides his knowledge and conceals his excellence, leading by way of the self-so.

"Leading by way of the self-so" is that action in compliance with the natural principle of spontaneity, of action through non-action, a motif that we have seen again and again throughout the *Zhigui*.

To summarize this section on the meaning and usages of *xuanmo*:

1) In practice, *xuanmo* is a form of release from material sense that may not be restricted to the negation of speech, but includes that of sight and sound, similar to the common saying "hear no evil, see no evil, speak no evil" prevalent in multiple cultures.
2) Ontologically, it is a mental activity that returns the heart/mind to the primal force of tao. It can also refer to a deep state of intellectual thought that opens access to higher, more profound truths. It is devoid of sense and action where the individual blocks off access to external stimuli so as to let the accidental attributes pertaining to form fall away from the mind to reveal the pure and unadorned essence.

These metaphysical nuances in the *Zhigui* are a new development from the earlier usages that we saw in the *Lun heng* and *Huainanzi* in §1.3.3. In the *Lun heng*, *xuanmo* is described quite simply as a valued and refined demeanor of humans with no extra profound connotation, other than a vague correlation with heaven. Thus, we translate *xuanmo* here as "deep silence." The *Huainanzi* takes a slightly "deeper" step, to use a bad pun, by making *xuanmo* a kind of attributive property of the "heavenly tao," and seems to be the connective pathway for the mortal to access the divine. We see an increased interest in the concept of *xuanmo* in the *Zhigui*, particularly the way that it opens the door to higher knowledge.

We saw in §1.3.2 that *xuande* refers to the compliance of one's being with the naturalness of heaven and earth (*Zhuangzi*) that occurs without thinking, and as an innate quality that empowers the sage ruler to transform people (*Huainanzi*). The *Zhigui* seems to combine these two usages: In complete accord with heaven, this *xuande* that has transformed the *junzi* into a sage in turn allows the sage to transform others effortlessly: this is the essence of leading with non-action. For Zhuang Zun profound potency is the point at which the sage has become fully saturated with every individual virtue where he no longer needs extra effort to maintain his proximity with heavenly ways. This is exactly what Yang Xiong had expressed in his *Taixuan* as "an act that has no reliance brings about great abundance."[192]

At the onset of this section I have mentioned the possible relevance of the *Zhigui* for Yang Xiong in its literary expression of profound and philosophical ideas. More specifically, I have suggested the affinity of the two particularly in the concepts of *xuanmo* and *xuande*. The next two sections will be devoted to Yang Xiong and his *Taixuan jing* and how the literary features and ideas of the *Zhigui* may figure in the writings of Yang Xiong.

[192] TXJ 3.18a-b.

§3 From Embellished Fu to Absolute Philosophy

Sic ego nunc quoniam haec ratio plerumque videtur
tristior esse quibus non est tractata retroque
vulgus abhorret ab hac volui tibi suaviloquenti
carmine Pierio rationem exponere nostram
et quasi musaeo dulci contigere melle
si tibi forte animum tali ratione tenere
versibus in nostris possem dum perspicis
naturam rerum qua constet compta figura.[193]

3.1 The life and times of Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE – 18 CE)

The figure of Yang Xiong is exceptional not only because his broad intellectual interests had produced a rich treasure of literary and philosophical works but also because of the fact that he managed to live through the fall of the Former Han into Wang Mang's 王莽 reign (9-23 CE). These times were tumultuous as opposing forces fought for power at the court, and the fall of the Han imperial family seemed imminent. When Yang Xiong moved to the imperial capital at Chang'an 長安, the throne was occupied by Emperor Cheng 成 (r. 32-7 BCE). The real power rested with the family of his mother, the Grand Empress Dowager Wang Zhengjun 王政君, who had allowed her older brother Wang Feng and other relatives to rule as regents. When the emperor passed away in 7 BCE, the throne was given to his nephew, Emperor Ai 哀 (r. 6 BCE – 1 CE), and the Wang clan found themselves confronted with the new emperor's side of the family, the Ding 丁 and Fu 傅 clans. Wang Mang was then dismissed from his post as regent and did not get summoned back to court until Emperor Ai's death in 1 CE. The last member of the Liu family on the throne was Emperor Ping 平 (r. 1-6 CE) who was but a mere child, and it was during this

[193] Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, ll. 943-950.

time that Wang Mang's power rose. When Emperor Ping suddenly died in 6 CE, a one year old descendant Liu Yin 劉嬰 became the heir designate with Wang Mang as regent.

After a series of uprisings and rebellions by the nobility, Wang and his supporters through a series of political maneuvers equipped with auspicious omens in favor of a new ruler finally declared the house of Han dysfunctional, and Wang Mang ascended the throne and gave his dynasty a new name Xin 新. During his short reign he issued forth a series of policies involving new currency, land reform, taxes and monopolies, bureaucratic titles, and others. Amidst the formation of a new government and increasing revolts from the nobility of the Liu clan and peasant rebels, Wang also had to deal with the aftermath of the flooding of the Yellow River back in 2 CE during the reign of Emperor Ping. Wang Mang met his ultimate fate in the year 23 when Liu Yan 劉縯 (d. 23) and his brother Liu Xiu 劉秀 (5 BCE – 58 CE) defeated Wang's armies, and Liu Xuan 劉玄 (d. 25) was unofficially declared emperor. Liu Xiu however was clearly more suitable in his ability to lead and quell disorder. After much dancing around between the nobility and the clans who overthrew Wang Mang, Liu Xiu finally became the first emperor of the Eastern (or Later) Han dynasty with its capital at Luoyang, and was given the posthumous title of Emperor Guangwu 光武 (r. 25-58).[194]

[194] For a summary of the history of the Western to Eastern Han in English see *The Cambridge History of China, Volume I, The Ch'in and Han Empires, 221 B.C.—A.D. 220*, Denis Twitchett and John K. Fairbank, eds. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 103-290. For an account of the Emperor Cheng era, see Michael Nylan and Griet Vankeerbergen, eds., *Chang'an 26 BCE: An Augustan Age in China* (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 2015), in particular Michael Loewe's "Chengdi's Reign, Problems and Controversies," 221-238.

One can only imagine the various kinds of conflict that must have taken place at court with the disintegration of the imperial family amidst warring factions, and the very real danger that would fall upon one's head if one chose the wrong ally. Yang Xiong had managed to gain favor with Wang Mang, continuing to serve in court as keeper of the imperial archives in the Tianlu Gallery. In the year 10 CE he composed a notoriously controversial piece "Denigrating the Qin and Praising the Xin" 劇秦美新 which later became the grounds for accusing Yang Xiong of being a traitor.[195] Ban Gu's account of Yang Xiong throwing himself down from the upper stories of the archives in fear of being arrested for accusations of plotting against Wang is representative of the anxiety and genuine dangers that Yang no doubt had experienced during this tumultuous dynastic transition.[196]

In addition to the socio-political conditions briefly summarized above, we must also consider the intellectual climate of the Han court that was dominated by teachings attributed to Confucius. The institution of the Imperial Academy (*Taixue* 太學) was founded in 124 BCE by Emperor Wu (r. 141-87 BCE) under the advice of Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BCE). This included appointments for five academic chairs each in charge of one of the five classics (*Zhou Yi, Shi jing, Shu jing, Li ji*, and *Chunqiu*) with a total of fifty students. This number would

[195] For a discussion of this, see Knechtges (1976), 230-4. We would never know what Yang Xiong truly thought of this ruler, whether he was a usurper, or someone who had the potential of becoming an enlightened ruler. We can surmise, however, based on his "Fan Sao" and "Denigrating the Qin and Praising the Xin," his general disapproval of Emperor Cheng and ultimate disillusion with official life, and the concept of change inherent in the *Taixuan* that he was at least open to the idea that Wang Mang might become an apt and able emperor. These are mere speculations, and it remains difficult to say anything definitive about Yang's feelings.

[196] HS 87.3584.

gradually increase as official scholarship continued to grow, reaching three thousand by 8 BCE. With this growth there emerged different interpretations of these classics, each becoming a distinct tradition, each claiming their own authority against the others.[197] What has been called "Han Confucianism" is perhaps more accurately rendered as "*schools* of classical studies."[198] Each tradition then had to defend itself against the others, and resulting in what Ban Gu called "hairsplitting arguments" and what Yang Xiong termed "strange convolutions with hairsplitting arguments and paradoxical language".[199] Additionally, the rise of the weft-text further complicated what constituted correct interpretations.[200] The so-called triumph of Han Ruism as orthodox teaching only gives a false impression of a unity of thinking, for as Yang Xiong had witnessed, these Ru scholars essentially failed to come to an agreement of any sort due to their interpretive differences. It was this kind of discordance between scholars and the proliferations of multiple competing interpretations of the classics that prompted Yang Xiong to recover what he believed to be the correct teachings of the sages. Although Yang Xiong did not live to see the restoration of the Liu family rule, and one wonders what he, who was so concerned with establishing human order and spent the latter half of his life pondering the mysteries of fate and the role of humans situated between the heavens and earth, would have thought about the significance of the fall of one dynasty and the rise of another.

[197] Examples include the Guliang and Gongyang interpretations of the *Chunqiu*.

[198] Twitchett and Loewe (1986), 756.

[199] For Ban Gu's words, see n10 below. For Yang Xiong, see Knechtges (1982), 56; and HS 87.3580.

[200] See Jack Dull, "A historical introduction to the apocryphal (ch'an-wei) texts of the Han dynasty, Ph. D diss., University of Washington (1966).

Yang Xiong *zi* Ziyun 子雲 was born in Pi 郫 in Shu commandery (modern Pidu 郫都, Sichuan).[201] He traces his ancestry to a northern aristocratic family that had fled south during the war in Jin in the sixth century BCE. Around 115 BCE, the family fled to the Pi area near the southern slopes of the Min mountains. For the first thirty years of Yang Xiong's life he lived in Shu where he imitated the style of the great *fu* writer Sima Xiangru 司馬相如 (179-117 BCE), who was also a native of Shu.[202] Sometime around 24-21 BCE he composed his own response to the "Lisao" 離騷 called "Fan sao" 反騷 (Contra *Sao*). In 20 BCE he traveled to the imperial capital at Chang'an and was named candidate for appointment under Emperor Cheng, which was not an official post but indicated that he was under consideration for one. During his candidacy as a court poet he was given the task of composing *fu* under imperial command. The *Han shu* records a total of four pieces: "*Fu* on Sweet Springs" 甘泉賦, "Hedong fu" 河東賦, "*Fu* on the Barricade Hunt" 校獵賦 (alternatively titled "Yu lie fu" 羽獵賦), and "*Fu* on Tall Poplars" 長楊賦. These were all written with the purpose of moral suasion. It was probably after presenting these *fu* that he was then given the official position of gentleman (*lang* 郎 or *shilang* 侍郎), and later as servitor at the Yellow Gate (*jishi huangmen* 給事黃門).[203]

[201] Yang Xiong's standard biography is found in HS 87:3513-3587, which includes quite possibly Yang's autobiography. The entire account has been translated with detailed annotations by David Knechtges, which I will be using throughout this dissertation, unless otherwise noted. After the surge of recent interest in the history of Sichuan due to rich excavations, Yang Xiong has also become a subject of pride for local identity.

[202] Sima Xiangru's standard biography is found in the HS 57.2529-2611. For a general study, see Yves Hervouet, *Un Poéte de cour sous les Han: Sseu-ma Siangjou* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964).

[203] HS 87.3583.

Sometime during the reign of Emperor Ai he became disillusioned with the effectiveness of *fu* as a means for moral suasion, and vowed that he would stop composing *fu*, redirecting his energy toward more scholarly endeavors. It was at this point that he began to compose the first of his philosophical works, the *Taixuan* 太玄 (around 2 BCE). The second is his *Fa yan* 法言 (Exemplary sayings), written in dialogue format around 10 CE during the Wang Mang era, modeled after the *Lunyu* 論語. His declaration to never again compose *fu* did not exclude the production of poetic forms, as we can see in "Justification Against Ridicule" 解嘲, "Justification Against Objection" 解難, "*Fu* on expelling poverty" 逐貧賦, and "Denigrating Qin and Praising Xin."[204] In addition, he also compiled two philological works, the *Xun zuan* 訓纂 (Compilation of glosses) and *Fang yan* 方言 (Regional words), which is a collection of dialect variants. Thus to say that Yang Xiong was a literary master of the Han *fu* is really an understatement of the wide range of intellectual interests including philosophy, astronomy, cosmology, mathematics, and philology—he was truly the exemplar par excellence of a scholar who was not only concerned with the formation of correct ideas but also the actualization of these ideas for a better Han China. Yang Xiong died in 18 CE, and was buried on the slope of Anling near modern Xianyang, Shaanxi. His good friend Huan Tan 桓譚 (43 BCE-28 CE) arranged his funeral, and his

[204] For fully annotated translations of "Justification Against Ridicule" and "Justification Against Objection" please see "The Han shu Biography of Yang Xiong (53 B.C.-A.D. 18)." Occasional Paper No. 14 (December, 1982); for "Fu on expelling poverty" see his "Early Chinese Rhapsodies on Poverty and Pasta," *Chinese Literature: Fiction, Poetry, Art* (1999), 109-12; for "Denigrating Qin and Praising Xin, see "Uncovering the sauce jar: a literary interpretation of Yang Hsiung's 'Chü Ch'in mei Hsin,'" in *Ancient China: Studies in Early Civilization*, ed. David T. Roy and Tsuen-hsuin Tsien (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1978), 229-52.

faithful disciple Hou Ba 侯芭 prepared his grave mound, mourning him for three years like a son. Hou Ba was the one responsible for transmitting the teachings of the *Taixuan*, and for elevating its status to that of a classic (albeit unofficially) by appending the word *jing* (經 "classic") to the end of the title.

Yang Xiong describes himself as a studious individual who did not use the common *zhangju* 章句 method preferring instead *xungu* 訓詁 (which he says that he absorbed from Zhuang Zun in his letter to Liu Xin).[205] In terms of personality, he was even-tempered, and because he stuttered (*kouji* 口吃) he did not like to participate in lengthy conversations, rather he "remained silent while immersing himself in deep thought" 默而好深湛之思.[206] Vervoorn suggests a connection between recluses and speech impediment, and Mark Pitner points out that this quality is portrayed as a positive aspect where the "disability in speech" correlates to a "high ability in thought," which brings to the fore the question of matching appearances to substance.[207] Yang Xiong relates that he was detached from court life, uninterested in fame or money, and was satisfied with the basic necessities of life—attitudes typical of high-minded men

[205] The *zhangju* method was a new way of interpreting lines of the classics that involved verbose explanations justifying a particular view resulting in lengthy commentaries, characteristic of the New Text tradition. According to Ban Gu "they apply themselves to hairsplitting arguments in order to escape criticism, and by glib words and ingenious explanations that destroy the substance of the texts." HS 30.1723, translation by Robert P. Kramers in Twitchett and Loewe (1986), 758. In contrast, the *xungu* method seemed to be a more philological approach in uncovering the evolution of meanings behind words. See also Knechtges (1982), 64, n15.

[206] HS 87:3514.

[207] See Vervoorn (1990), 207; and Mark Pitner, "Stuttered Speech and Moral Intent," *JAOS* 137:4 (2017), 699-717. Sima Xiangru is also recorded in the *Han shu* to have stuttered. HS 57.2589.

worthy of sagely status, similar to what we would expect of recluses.[208] The notion of silence (*mo* 默) is rather prevalent in Yang's writings including his autobiography. In "Justification Against Ridicule" he again emphasizes the importance of silence: "Thus in knowing the profound and knowing silence, I am able to hold fast to the utmost [principles] of tao" 是故知玄知默守道之極. A few lines later after listing individuals who have met with opportune time while acknowledging that Yang himself has not been there, he concludes "silently, I alone guard my *Taixuan*" 故默然獨守吾太玄.[209] There seems to be a connection between silence as an internal state of being that conditions intellectual accessibility of higher contemplation, making possible the verbal and written articulation of those profound principles of the cosmos, i.e. the

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[208] Vervoorn writes,

> In general, therefore, eremitism may be taken to refer to a mode of conduct or outlook [that] has been fairly consciously arrived [at], usually involving some moral and even intellectual sophistication. As to defining eremitism, perhaps it is best to say that it entails, psychologically, a lack of regard for those things of the world which are the common objects of human action, such as wealth, power and fame, with correspondingly greater importance being attached to goals which in a philosophical or moral sense are conceived to be 'higher,' for example… the eradication of desire and complete identification of the self with the principle of order in the cosmos; behaviourally, this is manifested in a tendency to withdraw, either physically or mentally, from the types of social involvement like to result in the violation of those higher goals—in particular, involvement in the realm of politics and state affairs.

Vervoorn (1990), 3-4. The case of Yang Xiong, in fact, along with Dongfang Shuo, belongs to what Vervoorn has identified as "eremitism at court." See also Alan Berkowitz, *Patterns of Disengagement: The Practice and Portrayal of Reclusion in Early Medieval China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000).

[209] HS 87:3571, 3573.

tao that cannot be spoken of. As we read in the *Zhigui*: "in holding fast to stillness and reaching emptiness, I become the lodge for the Way."[210] The *Taixuan* was drafted during the rule of Emperor Ai when the Ding and Fu clans and Dong Xian controlled the court. Many scholars believed that this was Yang's way of staying out of trouble, a tactic of preserving his life, as modern scholar Hsu Fu-kuan once put it.[211] This is an aspect leading some to characterize Yang Xiong as a synthetic thinker who attempted to bridge Ru and Tao thought in that he refrained from aggressive action, and was content with whatever condition life, or time, had placed him.

When the guest in "Dissolving Ridicule" insinuates the uselessness of the *Taixuan*, Yang responds by saying that one needs to be careful in standing out and being useful in court, for even one careless mistake could cost one's own life. Moreover, occupying a high position is meaningless, for it can be taken away overnight—status and achievement (both of which Yang Xiong did not possess) are fleeting, and thus by definition unessential, and says nothing about what is most important to a person, i.e. his essence which is made manifest through virtue is an internal power, unaffected by and superior to external material wealth and status.

[210] 守靜至虛我為道室. LZZG, 49.

[211] Hsu Fu-kuan 徐復觀, *Liang Han sixiang shi* 兩漢思想史 (Taipei: Taiwan xuesheng shuju, 1989), 2:488.

3.2 From Fu to Philosophy

In this section I will trace the developments of Yang Xiong's writings and draw a connection to his theory of refined compositions.[212] First, I will take a look at Yang's articulation of the purpose of writing and his theory of literature. Then, I will identify four kinds of writings: 1.) fu proper; 2.) post-fu fu (or *apologiae*); 3.) dialogue in the *Fa yan*; and 4.) a cosmo-philosophical composition of the *Taixuan*. Concerning the last two, I will attempt to distinguish these two "imitations" by pointing out their difference in form, content/substance, and overall message, finally pointing out that the *Taixuan* is something altogether distinct from all of his other works, that is to say, that it maintains a *transcendental* status insofar as it balances form with substance and is the embodiment of the natural (*ziran* 自然). By transcendental I mean an expression of a higher truth that is itself a manifestation of that truth. (This will be explained in the next section.) Moreover, insofar as the *Taixuan* is a culmination of Yang's entire lifetime efforts, its composition signifies extreme significance on a personal level that is representative of the intellectual maturity of Yang's thought situated in a particular socio-historical condition that allows for the writing of such a work.

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[212] I will only deal with *fu* that are collected in the *Han shu* biography. Other pieces that are attributed to Yang Xiong but with dubious authenticity include "Shu du fu" 蜀都賦 (*Fu* on the Shu Capital), "He lin fu" 覈靈賦 (*Fu* on Examining the Spirit), and "Taixuan fu" 太玄賦 (*Fu* on the Great Profound). Professor Knechtges has argued that the "Shu du fu" is probably authentic, but not the "Taixuan fu". See Knechtges (1976), 117-8. For an argument supporting the authenticity of the "Taixuan fu" see Shu Jingnan 束景南, "Taixuan fu fei wei zuo bian" 太玄賦非偽作辨 [An argument that the "Taixuan fu" is not inauthentic], *Guji zhengli yanjiu xuekan* 5 (1993), 5-9. There is also a short piece called "Jiu zhen" 酒箴 (Admonition on wine), alternative title "Jiu fu" 酒賦(Fu on wine), preserved in the *Han shu* (HS 92.3712-3). The purpose of this *fu* was to indirectly criticize Emperor Cheng's fondness for wine.

3.2.1 Rhetorical didacticism: A theory of literature

In Yang Xiong's autobiography, he declares definitively, "I believe that the fu is for the purpose of persuasion. It must speak by adducing examples, use the most ornate and lavish language, grossly exaggerate, greatly amplify, and strive to make it such that another person cannot add to it. Then, when it returns to the rectifying message, the reader has already missed it."[213] This realization would have important ramifications for Yang's literary theory in his formulation of the relation between *wen* 文 and *zhi* 質.[214] The word *wen*, literally 'patterns, markings', can be used to designate the refinement of language through literary adornment, as is understood in the compound *wenci* 文辭 (refined words). The meaning of *zhi* generally refers to the content that is indicated by wen. This content, moreover, constitutes the substance, or essence, of the thing in question. As a conceptual pair, *wen* and *zhi* roughly correspond to the general English pair "form" and "content". The *locus classicus* for the contrast between *wen* and *zhi* comes from a famous passage in the *Lunyu*. "When substance (*zhi*) is superior to form (*wen*), then it is a case of the rustic. When form is superior to content, then it is a case of the scribe. When form and content are properly mixed, only then is it a case of the *junzi*" 質勝文則野，文勝質則史。文質彬彬，然後君子.[215] For Confucius, a balance must be maintained between form and content in the cultivation of a gentleman (*junzi*). A person's external appearance and behavior should match his/her internal essence. Yang Xiong takes up the notion of *wen* and *zhi* in the forty-seventh tetragram "*Wen*" illustrating the stages of the emergence of form. He

[213] HS 87.3575. Translation, Knechtges' (1982), 53.

[214] This is a subject already taken up by Professor Knechtges in his study on Yang Xiong's *fu*. I here give an abridged version. See Knechtges (1976), 89-108.

[215] *Lunyu*, SBBY, 3.12b.

modifies the four-character phase "form and substance properly mixed" 文質彬彬 into something of his own: "When form and substance are properly manifested, the myriad things are in splendid array." 文質班班，萬物粲然.[216] The fifth *zan*, the peak position of the nine *zan*, describes the phase of perfect harmony: "Bright and elegant: form that is esteemed is manifested clearly" 炳如彪如，尚文昭如.[217]

Yang Xiong explains his views quite succinctly in the *Fa yan*.

> 或問，景差、唐勒、宋玉、枚乘之賦也，益乎。
> 曰，必也淫。
> 淫則奈何。
> 曰，詩人之賦麗以則，辭人之賦麗以淫。如孔氏之門用賦也，則賈誼升堂，相如入室矣。如其不用何。[218]
>
> Someone asked, "As for the *fu* of Jing Cha, Tang Le, Song Yu and Mei Sheng, are these beneficial?"[219]
> "They were necessarily excessive."
> "In being excessive, what of this?"
> "The *fu* of the Songs-poets are beautiful but maintain standards, whereas the *fu* of the epideictic writers are beautiful but unrestrained. Just like if the disciples of Confucius had used *fu*, then Jia Yi would rise to the hall, and [Sima] Xiangru would enter the rooms. Being like this, yet they do not use [the *fu*]—how is this?

We see here that there are two kinds of fu: one that is written in the *shi*-style of the Shi jing, the other in *ci*-style of the epideictic dafu, such as those court pieces composed by Sima

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[216] TXJ 4.10a.

[217] The *Taixuan* contains a total of eighty-one tetragrams, and each tetragram has a total of nine *zan* lines (similar to the six *yao* lines of the *Zhou yi*) that are read during different times of the day. We shall have a lengthy investigation into the structure and contents of the *Taixuan* in §4, so my explanation here remains brief.

[218] *Fa yan yishu*, 49-50.

[219] The *Shi ji* records these three figures as disciples of Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340-378 BCE) who delighted in composing *fu* 皆好辭而以賦見稱. SJ 84.2491.

Xiangru and Yang Xiong. Aesthetic writings are not completely dismissed: there is a right way, and wrong way. One conforms to "standards" or "regulations" (*ze* 則), and the other conforms to nothing through being "excessive" (*yin* 淫), or exceedingly adorned.

***Fu*.** This category includes Yang Xiong's early compositions in the style of Sima Xiangru that are of a highly descriptive nature using extensive cataloguing, binomial descriptives, repetition, parallelism, and others literary features. As coined by Professor David Knechtges, these "epideictic" *fu* are so named in the sense of the Greek word *epideixis*, meaning a "showing forth, making known" and by extension "exhibition, display, demonstration." As a genre it is a mixture between verse and prose, usually with rhymes and variable syllabic length (between four- and six-syllables), but this structure is not regulated. The earliest forms of the fu probably originated in the Warring States period with the *Chuci* 楚辭 tradition of Qu Yuan 屈原 (ca. 340-378 BCE) and Song Yu 宋玉 (ca. 319-298 BCE), and the rhetorical features in the writings of Xun Qing 荀卿.[220] We see epideictic features beginning with Mei Sheng 枚乘 (d.

[220] The compositions attributed to Qu Yuan and Song Yu are sometimes classified as belonging to the sao tradition distinct from the *fu*, as we see in Liu Xie's 劉勰 (ca. 465-ca. 521) *Wenxin diaolong* 文心雕龍 and Xiao Tong's 蕭統 (501-531) *Wen xuan* 文選. For studies on *fu* as a genre, see David R. Knechtges, *The Han Rhapsody, A study of the* Fu *of Yang Hsiung (53 B.C.E.-A.D. 28)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976); and the "Introduction" to his *Wen xuan, or Selections of Refined Literature, Volume I: Rhapsodies on Metropolises and Capitals* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2014), 1-72; and Fu Gang 傅剛, "Fu de laiyuan ji qi liubian" 賦的來源及其流變, 67-73, *Han Wei liuchao wenxue yu wenxian lungao* 漢魏六朝文學與文獻論稿 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2016). For an investigation on the origins and study of individual *fu* writers from Jia Yi 賈誼 to Cai Yong 蔡邕, see Gong Kechang 龔克昌, *Studies on the Han Fu*, trans. David R. Knechtges (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1997).

141 BCE) whose most famous work "Qi fa" 七發 (Seven stimuli) contains ornate descriptions with an overall didactic message for an ailing prince. The *fu* reached its mature form in the Han dynasty with Sima Xiangru, and continues to be a major form of poetic expression in modern times. Court *fu* were composed on the spot upon imperial command, and are essentially oral in nature.

Sima Xiangru's "*Fu* on the Shanglin Park" 上林賦 is a classic example of the epideictic *fu*.[221] It is a particularly long piece boasting of rare descriptives, many of them *hapax legomena*, illustrating the splendor and magnificent beauty of the imperial park from flora and fauna (including divine creatures), to depictions of hunting and other royal activities. Everything is captured; nothing escapes. The *fu* ends with a moral message for the emperor: he ought to return to his study of the classics and teachings of the sages, and focus on activities that benefit the common people.[222] Yet due to the difficult and overly ornate expressions it was easy to overlook the didactic message. It was this reason that convinced Yang of the ineffectiveness of *fu* as indirect persuasion.

There are four pieces by Yang Xiong that fall into the *fu* proper category: "Hedong fu" 河東賦, "Ganquan fu" 甘泉賦 (*Fu* on the Sweet Springs), "Changyang fu" 長楊賦 (*Fu* on the Tall Poplars), and "Jiaolie fu" 校獵賦 (*Fu* on the barricade hunt) with alternative title "Yulie fu" 羽獵賦. The "Ganquan fu" and "Hedong fu" are both sacrificial pieces, the latter two are on

[221] The original title for this piece may have been "Tianzi youlie fu" 天子游獵賦 (Fu on the excursions and hunts of the Son of Heaven). It is collected in Sima's biography in HS 57.2533-2575, and in the *Wen xuan* 8.106-113. For a translation of this *fu* see Knechtges, *Wen xuan*, 2:53-113.

[222] HS 57.2575.

imperial hunts. The "Ganquan fu" was composed for the emperor's sacrifice to the Taiyi heavenly deity at the Great Altar in the Sweet Springs Palace, east of Chang'an. The "Hedong fu" was for the sacrifice to the Houtu earth deity at Fenyin, northeast of the imperial capital. If we compare the "Hedong fu" and "Jiaolie fu" we see a general decrease in flowery language and an increase in more direct critique with a clearer moral conclusion.

Despite Yang Xiong's reputation and self-admission as an imitator of Sima Xiangru, his *fu* do not really borrow much from his predecessor, rather his diction is quite distinctive—even his fantastic imageries differ in function, for they are not employed for mere descriptive extravagance but serve a didactic purpose as well.[223] Even in terms of technique, Yang pushes further than Sima. We can see this in a brief comparison of how the two employ indirect critique. In Sima's "Fu on the Shanglin Park" the moral lesson is found only in the last section:

> As for
> Galloping and riding all day long,
> Tiring the spirit, straining the body,
> Exhausting the utility of carriages and horses,
> […]
> Striving only for selfish pleasure;
> Not caring for the common people,
> Ignoring the administration of the state,
> Craving only a catch of pheasants or hares:
> These are things a benevolent ruler would not do.[224]

In Yang's "Barricade Hunt" the message for valuing erudition is evident throughout. We find a description of the emperor with "great masters and grand scholars … bowing and yielding before Him."[225] The emperor is a "divine sage" who "establishes the Way and Virtue as His teacher"

[223] This has already been pointed out. See Knechtges (1976), 57.

[224] Knechtges, *Wenxuan* (1982), 113.

[225] Ibid., 133.

and "takes Humaneness and Morality as His friend," is modest and yielding in demeanor, and values the erudite by entrusting to them the important responsibility of education.[226] Instead of fancy excursions and depleting the empire's resources in meaningless displays of power, the divine sage

> opens the forbidden parks,
> Distributes the public stores,
> Constructs enclosures of the Way and Virtue,
> Expands preserves of Humaneness and Kindness,
> Gallops and fowls in enclosures of divine brilliance.
> […]
> He has no time for
> The beauty of parks and enclosures,
> The extravagance of excursions and hunts.[227]

Is the "divine sage" meant to be Emperor Cheng, on par with the virtuous Three Kings and Five Emperors of old? Yang Xiong is probably being sarcastic, for we know that he did not approve of the ways of the Son of Heaven. What then is the purpose of such hyperbole? Other than indirect critique, perhaps the eulogy at the end of this *fu* was also intended as a model for how the emperor *should* behave: modest, acting only in the best interests of the common good, employing worthy men, and halting all excessive activities such as constructing lavish parks and indulging in hunting expeditions.

The "Changyang fu" is a continued explication of what constitutes the sage ruler. As has already been mentioned, this piece is a dialogue-debate between a guest Master Ink and his host Brush Forest. Yang Xiong makes it clear that this was composed for the purpose of indirect criticism of the emperor, just like in "Barricade Hunt". Master Ink poses a problem that he identifies as a discrepancy in the way a sage ruler should act and the implications involved in the

[226] Ibid., 119.

[227] Ibid., 135.

hunt at Changyang. He begins by setting forth the characteristics of an ideal emperor: "I have heard that a sage ruler in nurturing the people imbues them with benevolence, and steeps them in kindness. He does not act for his own sake."[228] After a few lines describing the hunt as "the grandest sight in the empire," he comments that the construction of the park seems to only be for purposes of pleasure, adding that it has nothing to do with sacrifices, all the while exhausting the time and resources of farmers. "How is it done in behalf of the people? Moreover, a true ruler of men embraces a spirit of mysterious silence, a virtue of placid tranquility."

The host, Brush Forest, then tries to convince Master Ink otherwise, saying that the guest has only a "superficial" knowledge, and though the host claims that he is "already weary of expounding on it and [is] unable one by one to explain the details" the rest of the *fu* is Brush Forest's extended and eloquent rejection of the guest's critique that contrary to what the latter may think the hunt is in fact beneficial to the people by "allowing the farmers to continue plowing / And the weavers to stay on their looms."

The fact that the spirits on high have given their blessings to the emperor and allow him to make sacrifices prove that his actions are correct. The host continues,

> How can He only crave:
> Dissolute excursions and frivolous sightseeing,
> Dashing and galloping through fields of rice,
> Roaming and rambling through groves of pear and chestnut,
> Crushing and trampling fodder and hay,
> Boasting and bragging to the common multitudes,
> Vaunting the crop of monkeys and hoolocks,
> Flaunting the catch of elaphures and deer?

[228] Ibid., 139. For the rest of the quotations from "Changyang fu" I direct the reader to Knechtges' *Wenxuan* (1982), 139-151.

We should note that this question is rhetorical (per Yang Xiong) in the sheer enumeration of these "excessive spectacles" which he vividly portrays. Finally, Brush Forest ends by accusing Master Ink of failing to see the bigger picture: "You merely begrudge that the Hu tribes are catching our birds and beasts; and do not know that we also have captured their kings and lords." The implication is that even if the people are overworked – but of course as Brush Forest presents that they are not – it would be for the cause of control over the foreign tribes thus bringing peace to the Han empire. To which the guest surrenders by falling down to his knees and cowering his head saying, "Grand indeed is your substance! Truly it is nothing this humble child could match. Today you have dispelled my ignorance, and now I see vast and clear."

Note that Brush Forest's words take up the majority of the dialogue, his argument framed forcefully and more persuasively than the few objections of Master Ink. In terms of fair debate, the argument appears to be heavily weighted in the host's favor. Were it not for Yang Xiong's note in his autobiogrpahy stating explicitly that this was meant as an indirect critique, it would not be readily apparent to the reader (or listener) that the victory of Brush Forest was meant to be ironic.

Post-fu fu. These are pieces composed after Yang claims to have rejected the *fu*. They are highly personal pieces also in dialogue format, what Professor Knechtges categorizes as "frustration fu," following the late Professor Wilhelm, and that can be further qualified as *apologiae*.[229] Frustration fu are those pieces that illustrate the "double-edged" victory of the scholarly class by the rise of the Han dynasty. Now that these Ru scholars have established a firm place as one of the ruling classes, they are now confronted with the fact that their

[229] Hellmut Wilhelm, "The scholar's frustration: Notes on a type of *fu*," 310-9, 398-403, *Chinese Thought and Institution,* ed. John K. Fairbank (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957).

dependence upon one ruler (as opposed to the many different hegemons of the Warring States) often put them in vulnerable positions. "Their position, beginning in the Han and elaborated and refined in later times, was based upon the premise of their dependence upon government and their becoming a bureaucracy. Thus, even in their new garb, they found their old problem never solved."[230] Like Qu Yuan, these Ru scholars felt that they, too, did not meet the proper time with an enlightened ruler who would value their advice.

Yang Xiong found himself in a similar situation of a time unpropitious. As a devoted follower of the teachings of Confucius and serious scholar of the classics, he never gained an official status that would grant him security at the court, favor by the emperor, nor high respect from his fellow "Confucians." The unity sought for by the Ruists against all the other hundred schools in the Warring States alas was never achieved during the Han. He also composed a few pieces that belong to frustration *fu*, but in addition to venting on living in an improper time, his writings were also defenses against his low status and justifications for his scholarly endeavors. These include "Justification Against Ridicule," "Justification Against Objections," and "Fu on Dispelling Poverty." The first is a defense of Yang's low official status and impractical devotion to scholarship; the second, a defense of Yang's *Taixuan*; and the third, a defense of a life of poverty over political power and social recognition. They contain in many places literary devices that are used in the *fu*, such as metaphors and analogies, and the use of historical examples.

For instance, in "Justification Against Ridicule" he responds to the attack on his "miserable failure as an official" by continuously pointing to historical figures who were able rise to power because the timing was right.

> Xiao made the pattern and Cao followed it;
> The Marquis of Liu devised the plans,

[230] Ibid., 316.

And Chen Ping produced the ingenious schemes.
Their merit was as high as Mt. Tai,
And their fame resounded like an avalanche.
Although these men were of abundant wisdom,
They met the proper time for acting.[231]

The "Fu on Expelling Poverty" is more properly a frustration piece.[232] It is an allegorical dialogue-debate between the figure of Poverty and Yang Xiong where the issue at heart is whether a humble life of "coarse cloth" and "brambles" for food is better than that of "patterned embroidery" and "rice and millet."

You have forgotten my great kindness,
You remember only petty grudges.
You withstand cold, endure heat
Gradually I have gotten you used to them.
Cold and heat are unwavering,
They are long-lived as immortals.
Jie and Zhi you do not heed,[233]
From greedy types you do not seek.
Others all lock themselves in,
Only you live in the open.
Others all tremble with fear,
Only you have no apprehensions.[234]

The ultimate message is that what may appear to be ill-fortune is in fact a blessing in disguise, for these hardships only strengthen one's character and keeps him safe from harm. Most noteworthy about this piece for our purposes is the straightforward language, and the fact that it

[231] Knechtges (1976), 52.

[232] For some reason this piece is not included in the *Han shu* or the *Wen xuan*. Its earliest version is collected in the *Yiwen leiju*. This raises some doubts about the authenticity of the fu, but as Professor Knechtges has pointed out its composition and literary devices are of high quality and sophistication. There is no evidence that would discount its authenticity. See Knechtges (1976), 104-7. For the "Zhu pin fu" see YWLJ 35.628-9.

[233] Jie 桀 is known as the corrupted last ruler of the Xia dynasty, and Zhi 跖 was a robber.

[234] Knechtges, "Early Chinese Rhapsodies on Poverty and Pasta," *Chinese Literature* 2 (1999), 111.

is composed in the tetrasyllabic meter of the Shi jing which sets it apart from other fu. Professor Knechtges has suggested that this may be an example of what Yang Xiong calls "fu of the *shi*-poets".[235]

Fa yan. The *Fa yan* is a collection of brief exchanges on various topics that were of concern to the Ru tradition and Yang Xiong's rearticulation of the values and importance of this tradition as he believed it to be.[236] It was likely composed over a period of time, probably completed sometime around 9 CE. We can catch a glimpse of Yang's somewhat conservative nature in the comments of his autobiography: "I saw that the various masters all used their knowledge to gallop off in different directions, and that for the most part they reviled and denigrated the sages. Some engaged in strange convolutions, and with hairsplitting arguments and paradoxical language confused the affairs of the world."[237] And so he tells us that it was for this reason he compiled the *Fa yan* in imitation of the *Lunyu*, to elucidate what he believed to be the correct teachings of the sages. Like the *Lunyu*, the *Fa yan* is in dialogue format and uses examples and analogies to answer various questions about education, virtues, correct knowledge, etc. It is an explicitly didactic work, with none of the epideictic language we find in the fu. It is noteworthy that some passages continue to defend the *Taixuan*.

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[235] Knechtges (1976), 104.

[236] Yang Xiong tells us in his autobiography that he had arranged them into 13 *juan* (HS 87.3580). There are two basic editions: one is a 13 *juan* version with commentary by Li Gui 李軌 (fl. 317); the second is a 10 *juan* version prepared by Northern Song scholar Song Xian 宋咸 (*jinshi* 1150) which later became the basis for the thirteen *juan* version by Sima Guang. For Yang's own assessment of the *Fa yan* with chapter summaries, see HS 87.3580; on general textual transmission see Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts*, 100-4; and Knechtges' *Reference Guide* 213-7.

[237] Knechtges (1982) 56.

Taixuan. Yang Xiong tells us that he began drafting the *Taixuan* sometime after the denunciation of *fu* but before or around the same time as the *Fa yan*. According to his autobiography, it seems that he might have incorporated the *huntian* (spherical heaven) theory into his system and descriptions of the cosmos.[238] The *Taixuan* was made to imitate the entire cosmic universe from the movement of the constellations and heavenly bodies to the natural cycles of the seasons, all the while incorporating the actions and affairs of humans: "various forms and phenomena… human affairs… Five Phases… the Way, virtue, humaneness, propriety, ritual and wisdom." At the center of his system is *xuan* as the guiding concept, which holds the key to the "mystery" of the united realms of heaven, earth, and humanity. Hsu Fu-kuan believes that *xuan* refers to virtue,[239] but I think that the ultimate concern in the *Taixuan* is one that surpasses human excellence to a higher ordeal.

Yang Xiong must have met various attacks and disparaging remarks during the compilation of the Taixuan, enough that he would have to compose two entire fu in defense of his work: "Dissolving Ridicule" 解嘲 and "Dissolving Difficulties" 解難. Although both are imaginary scenarios, they are probably accurate representations of the kinds of opposition he had faced. In "Justification Against Ridicule" a guest snidely remarks that although Yang had been serving as a Gentleman-in-attendance, he had never drafted "a single ingenious plan or produced a single scheme," rather he

> silently compose[s] the five-thousand character *Taixuan*,
> With its leaves and branches so thickly spread,
> The explanations alone amount to some one hundred thousand words.
> Where deep, it enters the Yellow Springs,
> Where high, it outreaches the azure sky,
> Where large, it enfolds the primal *pneuma*,

[238] HS 87.3575.

[239] Hsu, 488.

Where minute, it enters the finest crevice.
It is my opinion that your 'dark mystery' is still 'white.' For why have you been such a miserable failure as an official?[240]

To which Yang Xiong replies with wit and elegance: "You might laugh that my 'darkness' is still white; yet I laugh at your deep illness [with error]" 子徒笑我玄之尚白，吾亦笑子之病甚. In the second piece, another guest protested that the *Taixuan* was neither appealing nor comprehensible to ordinary men. "Now you," the guest pushes,

> with your high-flown language, abstruse theories, extravagant ideas, and strange concepts, gallop all alone on the boundary between existence and nonexistence. You have forged a great furnace that vastly encompasses all forms of life. To read through it would take many years, yet one would find it quite incomprehensible.
> You have simply wasted your energy on the one hand,
> And annoyed scholars on the other.
> You may be compared to
> A painter who tries to paint the formless,
> Or a zither player who strums to the soundless.
> Wouldn't all this be virtually impossible?[241]

Yang Xiong answers by making various poetic analogies, drawing allusions to passages in the *Zhou yi* and invoking its purported composer Fu Xi. It is not that he enjoys writing difficult things accessible to only a select few, but rather that circumstance prompts such an act, and the individual is left with no choice but to "establish norms" like Fu Xi and "reveal the secrets of Heaven and Earth and determine the foundation of the myriad things" like King Wen and Confucius.[242] His conclusion is that "the most sublime sounds cannot appeal to the ears of ordinary men, the most beautiful forms cannot suit the eyes of the profane, and the most

[240] Knechtges (1982), 46-7. I have kept the Chinese title of the *Taixuan* without translating it.

[241] Ibid., 54.

[242] Ibid., 55.

elaborate language cannot match the hearing of common men."[243] He conjures up his last sage *Laozi* quoting, "I am honored those who understand me are few."[244] Notice Yang Xiong's careful literary constructions: in "Justification Against Ridicule," he puns on the meaning of *xuan* 玄 as a dark color in contrast to white, and as abbreviation for the text *Taixuan*. Then in "Justification Against Objections" Yang Xiong is described as "painting the formless" and "strumming to the soundless," an effort deemed "virtually impossible." But his "forging of a great furnace that vastly encompasses all forms of life" proved to be, on the contrary, not at all impossible—the completed text of the *Taixuan* stands as witness to this possibility.

What does this mean for us? Should the purpose of the *fu* be for eulogizing, then all of those epideictic descriptions would be appropriate, and one needs to go no further than what has been described. But as we have seen, Yang Xiong makes it clear that the *fu* should be for indirect criticism with a didactic message. Literary techniques are not employed for the end of beautiful language but are rather rhetorical devices so that the poet can admonish the Son of Heaven without coming off as too harsh and risk the possibility of getting into trouble. I have attempted to point out a movement away adornment of language to a more concise expression that is on the one hand more effective in moral education, and on the other is more restrained in literary form reflecting the content. But what if the subject matter is much more abstract, something invisible to the naked eye, something that escapes the confines of language each time one tries to capture it in words? If what is under discussion is a higher entity that transcends the limits of human knowledge – and hence, of human language – how is one to fully express that which cannot be fully expressed precisely because of its profound and mysterious nature?

[243] Ibid., 56.

[244] Ibid.

This tension between the acknowledgment that something cannot be fully expressed in language and the human desire to express the inexpressible – a desire to categorize knowledge and thought – is evident already in the *Zhuangzi* and in some passages in the *Laozi*. This tension moreover expresses an impossibility for complete expression but presents itself as a task for the serious thinker, one such as Yang Xiong who is perhaps one of the most serious thinkers of Han China. His *Taixuan* is distinct precisely because it is a product of this impossible task. Yang Xiong engages with a subject matter that is mysteriously profound and through a cautious balance between form and content seeks to make the unspeakable speakable. The profound can be represented so long as the way that it is expressed appropriately reflects, or imitates, its ontological dimensions into the literary form.

3.2.2 Exhausting meaning through speech and image

In a famous passage of the "Xi ci" commentary to the *Zhou yi* we read of an early concern with the question of language and representation:

> 子曰，書不盡言，言不盡意。
> 然則聖人之意，其不可見乎。
> 子曰，聖人立象以盡意，設卦以盡情偽，
> 繫辭以盡其言，變而通之以盡利。[245]
>
> The Master said, "Writing does not exhaust speech, and speech does not exhaust meaning." If this is so, then is it the case that the meanings of the sages cannot be seen?
> "The sages established the images in order to exhaust meaning, arranged the *gua* in order to exhaust the genuine and the false, appended words to these in order to exhaust their speech, let things change and permutate in order to exhaust benefits."

This passage poses the question of transmission of teachings by the sages, which were probably primarily done through oral instruction in person. When these truths are written down, would

[245] *Zhou yi zheng yi*, SBBY, 7.18a.

there a discrepancy in meaning? And if so, how then can these teachings be transmitted to later generations? The answer we have here seems to be that the *Zhou yi* was compiled for precisely this reason: so that the truth would be transmitted by the sages through "images" and "appended words" that would exhaust oral teachings by fixing them down onto some medium. Yang Xiong responds explicitly to this passage by making it clear that the only person who is able to transmit truth is none other than the sage—it is the sage alone who is makes this feat possible.

> 言不能達其心，書不能達其言，難矣哉。惟聖人得言之解，得書之體。白日以照之，江河以滌之，灝灝乎其莫之禦也。面相之辭相適，捈中心之所欲，通諸人之嗑嗑者，莫如言。彌綸天下之事，記久明遠，著古昔之晻晻，傳千裏之恣恣者，莫如書。故言，心聲也。書，心畫也。聲畫形，君子小人見矣。聲畫者，君子小人之所以動情乎。[246]

> "Speech cannot communicate one's heart, writing cannot convey one's speech"—this is indeed difficult![247] Only the sage can obtain the explanation of words, and obtain the proper form of writing. Like the bright sun, he casts light on things; like the Yangzi and Yellow River, he cleanses things. He is broad and boundless, and nothing can impede him. Interaction through face-to-face contact, and interaction by means of verbal exchange express that which the inner heart desires; in accessing the suppressions of humans, there is nothing like speech. For permeating and weaving the affairs of the entire realm, for recording the past and illuminating the distant, for writing down the murkiness of ancient times, and transmitting the confusions of a thousand *li*, there is nothing like writing. Therefore, speech is the sound of the heart, and writing is the depiction of what is in the heart. In sound, depiction, and form, the *junzi* and petty man are revealed. For sound and depiction are those by which the *junzi* and petty man move their dispositions.[248]

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[246] *Fa yan yishu*, 246-7.

[247] Cf. *Lunyu*: "The Master said, 'When the masses group together for the entire day, their words do not reach benevolence, but they are fond of executing small wisdom. It is indeed difficult!'" 子曰，群居終日，言不及義，好行小慧，難矣哉。*Sishu ji zhu*, SBBY 8.4b.

[248] *Mengzi* 1.7b-1.8a. King Xuan of Qi asks Mencius about what kind of virtue is required of a good king. Mencius replies, "The one who protects his people and thereupon becomes king; no one is able to resist him" 保民而王莫之能禦.

Live speech that takes place "face-to-face" is the best means by which the heart's intent can be communicated. The power of writing lies in its ability to "record the past and illuminate the distant", which points to the didactic value that Yang Xiong assigns to writing. From this passage we see that Yang Xiong finds no problem with exhausting meaning through speech and writing. The key lies in the question of *who*—is it the *junzi*, or the petty man? What comes out of a person's mouth will mark him as one or the other. He also places emphasis on the "face-to-face" exchanges, suggesting a prominent tradition of oral transmission. But when truth is exchanged in speech, can it be captured into writing? Further on in the *Fa yan* Yang Xiong writes,

> 書不經，非書也。
> 言不經，非言也。
> 言、書不經，多多贅矣。[249]
>
> Writings that do not [accord with] the classics are not writings.
> Speech that does not [accord with] the classics is not speech.
> Speech and writings that do not [accord with] the classics—these are many and superfluous!

He seems to be saying that there are many kinds of sayings and writings, but most do not conform to the teachings of the classics. Yet he does not touch on *how* language can convey the truth.

This is a question pertaining to an imitative reproduction of truth into language (speech and writing) and by extension to epistemology. What I mean by the *reproduction of truth* is the process of intellectual activity where thought is captured in language and then written down onto some medium that can then be transmitted in fixed form. The *text* is the physical manifestation (or production) of this process. Its purpose aims to communicate some truth or sets of truth for a

[249] *Fa yan yishu*, 253.

particular audience, complicated by cultural, social, and political dimensions. By *epistemology* I simply mean the techniques and defining criteria that set forth a system of knowledge, and makes possible the *reproduction of truth* into a *text*. It is in these senses that I suggest the *Taixuan* to be a text that was intended by Yang Xiong as a reproduction of the truth as he believed it to be, and a direct engagement and solution to the problem posed in the cited passage above.

3.3 Interlude: "Painting the formless" and "strumming the soundless"

We saw earlier that Yang Xiong had countered many attacks and derogatory comments on his *Taixuan*. Why did he so adamantly continue this "impossible" task of "painting the formless" and "strumming the soundless"? Yang Xiong says that it was in order to establish norms and reveal the secrets of Heaven and earth and determine the foundation of the myriad things. Elsewhere, he says that it is "in the interest of humaneness and justice." I believe that the *Taixuan* was significant for Yang Xiong on another more personal level, that it is representative on the one hand of Yang's ultimate expression of the principles of the universe into a highly sophisticated system where the form itself accurately reflects the universe, and on the other a personal engagement with these unseen forces to attain a level of transcendental knowledge that would take him away from the mortal world into a divine realm. This personal engagement, moreover, is executed in a manner that also reflects the truth that he is seeking insofar as his demeanor and disposition imitates that truth. The profoundness and absoluteness of the ultimate principle makes it difficult to be captured in language. Yang Xiong does not lose hope and finds a way to "paint the formless" and "strum the soundless," which respectively correspond to image (and perhaps by extension to writing insofar as writing is a form that appeals to vision) and speech.

I have already suggested the importance of *mo* (silence) earlier in the chapter, and now I will make this explicit on two levels: *practically*, as a means to remain alive away from the dangers of court; and *conceptually*, as an internal state of being (almost meditative) that is consistently associated with contemplating and writing about the mystery of the universe. Let us look at the following excerpts from Yang's various works:

a. 攫挐者亡，默默者存；位極者宗危，自守者身全。是故知玄知默，守道之極；爰清爰靜，游神之廷；惟寂惟寞，守德之宅。[250]

Those who grip and claw [at each other] perish[251]; those who remain silent persist. Those whose positions are high, even their ancestors are endangered; those who guard themselves are able to keep their bodies whole. Thus, it is only in knowing *xuan* and knowing silence that one can guard the utmost [principles] of tao; only in clarity, in tranquility that one can roam the confines of spirit; only in solitude and in isolation that one can guard the dwelling of virtue.[252]

[250] HS 87.3571.

[251] On *jué rú* 攫挐: *jue* literally 'to grasp with talons/claws.' For *rú* 挐 there is a graphic variant *ná* 拿 'to grasp.' HYDCD glosses 攫挐 as grasping something tightly with an idiomatic sense of fighting for power, citing from this passage in the *Han shu*. The compound was also used in Wang Yanshou's 王延壽 "Fu on the Linguang altar in the state of Lu" 魯靈光殿賦：奔虎攫挐以梁倚，仡奮疊而軒鬐 in such a way that beasts grasping prey into their claws with little chance of letting go. This is telling of the conditions of court battles.

[252] Note the separation of synonymous binomes: 玄默，清靜，寂寞.

b. 夫藺先生收功於章臺，四皓采榮於南山，公孫創業於金馬，票騎發跡於祁連，司馬長卿竊訾於卓氏，東方朔割名於細君。僕誠不能與此數公者並，故默然獨守吾太玄。[253]

Master Lin received his merits from Zhangtai,[254] the four hoary ones plucked blossoms from the southern mountains;[255] Gongsun established his affairs at the Bronze Horse Gate;[256] the Swift Cavalry General started his rise at Qilian;[257] Sima Zhangqing obtained the riches of the Zhuo clan;[258] and Dongfang Shuo carved a portion of meat for his dear

[253] HS 87.3573.

[254] Master Lin refers to the Warring States persuader Lin Xiangru 藺相如, who is recorded in his biography in the *Shiji* as an emissary sent from the state of Zhao to the state of Qin to exchange a precious jade tablet in return for fifteen cities. The King of Qin took the tablet and gifted it to his court ladies, but never fulfilled his end of the bargain. Lin Xiangru then devised a plan to retrieve the tablet. Zhangtai was the name of the terrace that Lin Xiangru had initially presented the jade. SJ 81.2439-41.

[255] The "four hoary ones" 四皓 refer to four men who became recluses during the time of the First Emperor of Qin and survived on a diet of plant blossoms. SJ 55.2045-46.

[256] Gongsun Hong 公孫弘 was appointed Erudite and Candidate for Appointment by Emperor Wu at the Bronze Horse Gate. HS 58.2617.

[257] The Swift Cavalry General refers to Huo Qubing who defeated the Xiongnu in the Qilian Mountains. SJ 110.2909.

[258] Zhangqing is the courtesy name of Sima Xiangru, also a native of Shu and a well-known fu writer of the early Han dynasty. He eloped with Zhuo Wenjun 卓文君, the daughter of a wealthy merchant Zhuo Wangsun 卓王孫. SJ 117.3000-1.

wife.[259] I certainly cannot compare with these great men; and so silently, I alone guard my *Taixuan*.[260]

c. 顧默而作太玄五千文，支葉扶疏，獨說十餘萬言. [261]

Instead, you remain silent and compose the five thousand words of the *Taixuan*, with its leaves and branches extending profusely, the explanations alone amount to some hundred thousand words.

d. 為人簡易佚蕩，口吃不能劇談，默而好深湛之思，清靜亡為. [262]

In conduct I am easy going and relaxed. Because I stutter, I am unable to speak eloquently. I am quiet and enjoy contemplating deep thoughts, and am calm and unassertive.

e. 且人君以玄默為神澹泊為德。[263]

Moreover, a ruler should instill his spirit with profound silence and make tranquil his virtue.

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[259] This line refers to the story of Dongfang Shuo (fl. 140-130 BCE) who had cut off a piece of sacrificial meat during the Day of Concealment without waiting for the head butler to arrive. Upon being summoned by the emperor to explain himself, he said that the meat was for his wife. HS 65.2846.

[260] The implication is that Yang never met with the opportune moment that granted these men success in their social and political status.

[261] *Wen xuan* 45.629. In the *Han shu* version the word *mo* "silence" is omitted but retained in the *Wen xuan.* See HS 87.3566.

[262] HS 87.3514.

[263] HS 87.3558.

Silence is clearly an aspect of Yang Xiong's character, not only by internal disposition but also a practical device for staying out of trouble: "those who remain silent persist" (a). This is also tied to the notion of timeliness and knowing one's opportune moment (b). Unlike Master Lin, Gongsun Hong, Huo Qubing, and Sima Xiangru who met with favorable fate, Yang Xiong knows that his moment has yet to come. To step out of the safety zone and forcibly stretch out one's head when it should be submerged can bring disaster. This view is expressed clearly in "Justification Against Ridicule": "You only wish to vermillion my wheel hubs, and do not know that one slip will redden my entire clan."

On a metaphysical level, silence is a state of being that allows the individual to reach a deep level of thought: "in *knowing* xuan *and knowing silence* one can guard the utmost [principle] of tao." In passage (e) which comes from the "Changyang fu" a higher status of silence is associated with the ideal ruler. Yang Xiong himself is of quiet demeanor, "calm and unassertive" (d) his personality can be likened to the flow of a river, a common analogy for the movement of tao as action with non-action. Silence preserves by keeping the physical body intact (身全), and generates by allowing for thought to proliferate (深湛之思). The notion of *xuanmo* is the highest state of contemplation that brings the individual closer to the tao, a concept that is of great importance in Zhuang Zun's *Zhigui*.

The *Taixuan* itself is Yang's answer to the question of whether words can convey a higher truth—a question already posed in the "Xici" commentary: "If writing cannot exhaust speech, and speech cannot exhaust meaning, then how can the teachings of the sages be made known?"—Through the production of writing in balancing image, verse, and prose; through the *act* of writing itself; and then the *act* of reading (i.e. transmission). Just as Yang Xiong after reading the *Zhou Yi* digests its teachings through re-writing its contents and making it a product

that is distinctly his own along with autocommentaries, perhaps we are prompted to read (and most likely reread multiple times) Yang Xiong's *Taixuan* along with the *Zhou Yi*, and ourselves digest through writing. Reading and writing is a cyclical process, repetition of which does not yield sameness, but difference. This difference is what defines a classic.

§4 The *Taixuan jing*

Speech and silence—absolutely the same: extremely subtle and profound.
A good remedy was prescribed a long time ago.
Piercing the sky, embracing the earth—no end to it.
An immense escarpment glowing with mysterious light.[264]

4.1 Text and transmission of the *Taixuan jing*

Yang Xiong gives an explanation of the structure and contents of the *Taixuan* in his autobiography, and although it is quite long, it is worthwhile to quote him in length since we will have to refer back to this throughout our discussion.

> Instead, with great profundity, I pondered the Spherical Heaven theory. I made three figures and apportioned them by fours, finally reaching a total of eighty-one. In addition, I traced the three figures through nine positions, finally reaching a total of seven hundred twenty-nine judgments. This too is the way of nature. Thus, in viewing the *Changes*, one gives [its figures] names by examining the gua, but in viewing the *Mystery*, one stipulates [names for its figures] by counting lines. The way it operates is beginning with the Celestial Prime, one adduces a system [that incorporates] day and night alternating, yin and yang, numbers and degrees [of the constellations], pitchpipes and calendar so that nine and nine make a grand revolution, ending and beginning with [the cycle of] Heaven. Thus, the three regions, nine provinces, twenty-seven departments, eighty-one families, two hundred forty-three indicators, and seven hundred twenty-nine judgments are divided into three juan, which are called "one," "two," and "three." It corresponds to the Grand Inception Calendar. It also has the calendar of Zhuanxu in it.
>
> In sorting out the divining stalks, I count them by threes. I have related the positions to the auspicious and inauspicious, incorporated them with various forms and phenomena, allocated them in accord with human affairs, embellished them with the Five Phases, and correlated them with the Way, virtue, humaneness, propriety, ritual, and wisdom. [The *Xuan*] has no governing dogma or school affiliation, but in essence conforms to the Five Classics. If anything is contrary to them it will not appear in the text. Because the work is so abstruse and difficult to understand, there are eleven sections called the "Heads," "Correspondences," "Miscellany," "Interpretations," "Expositions," "Elucidations," "Numbers," "Embellishments," "Analogies," "Illustrations," and "Pronouncements," all of which serve to explicate the form of the *Xuan* and separate the

[264] Written in "Chinese-style": with Chinese characters but read with Japanese grammatical aids in Japanese pronunciation. *Moon in a Dewdrop: Writings of Zen Master Dogen*, edited by Kazuaki Tanahashi (New York: North Point Press, 1985), 218.

text. The chapters and sections commentary still is not included with them. The text of the *Mystery* is too long, and thus it is not recorded here.[265]

4.1.1 Transmission

In the *Han shu* bibliography Ban Gu records that Yang Xiong's *Taixuan* as having a total of nineteen *pian* belonging under the heading *ru jia* 儒家 "Ru specialists."[266] In the early Western Han there was a commentary by Yang's student Hou Ba 侯芭 and possibly one in the Eastern Han by the polymath Zhang Heng 張衡 (78-139), neither of which is extant.[267] The *Sui shu* bibliography records five different commentaries by Song Zhong (fl. 200-208), Cai Wenshao 蔡文邵 (n.d.), Yu Fan 虞翻 (169-239), Lu Ji 陸績 (188-221), and Wang Su 王肅 (195-269):

揚子太玄經九卷宋衷注。梁有揚子太玄經九卷，揚雄自作章句，亡。

揚子太玄經十卷陸績、宋衷注。

揚子太玄經十卷蔡文邵注。梁有揚子太玄經十四卷，虞翻注；揚子太玄經十三卷，陸凱注；揚子太玄經七卷，王肅注。亡。[268]

Yangzi *Taixuan jing*, 9 *juan*, with commentary by Song Zhong. In the Liang there was also Yangzi *Taixuan jing* in 9 *juan*, with Yang Xiong's self-composed *zhangju*. Lost.

Yangzi *Taixuan jing*, 10 *juan*, with commentaries by Lu Ji, and Song Zhong.

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[265] HS 87.3575. Translation from Knechtges (1976), 53-4.

[266] HS 30.1727. 揚雄所序三十八篇。太玄十九法言十三，樂四，箴二.

[267] The *Huayang guozhi* records that there were commentaries 注解 by the Ru scholars Zhang Heng, Cui Yuan, Song Zhong, and Wang Su. See HYGZ, 533.

[268] SS 34.998.

> Yangzi *Taixuan jing*, 10 *juan*, with commentary by Cai Wenshao. In the Liang there was Yangzi's *Taixuan jing* in 14 *juan* with commentary by Yu Fan; Yangzi's *Taixuan jing* in 13 *juan* with commentary by Lu Kai; and Yangzi's *Taixuan jing* in 7 *juan* with commentary by Wang Su. These are all lost.

According to Lu Ji's "Shu Xuan" 述玄 Song Zhong compiled a *jiegu* 解詁.[269] It is unclear if this is the same text as the *zhu* listed in the *Sui shu*, or if it is a separate collection of notes on the *Taixuan*. Unfortunately, none of these commentaries mentioned above is extant. We only have fragments from Song Zhong, Lu Ji, and Yu Fan as preserved in the Fan Wang and Sima Guang editions.

The first full extant commentary is by Fan Wang 范望 during the Jin dynasty under the title *Taixuan jing*. He was the one who rearranged the *Taixuan* into ten *juan* appending the "Ce" commentary to the end of each *zan* which then became the standard format.[270] The next extant version, the *Taixuan jizhu* 太玄集注, was compiled in the Song dynasty by Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086) with commentaries to the first six *juan*. Later Xu Han 許翰 (d. 1133) finished the last four following the example of the co-commenting of the *Zhou Yi* by Wang Bi 王弼 and Han Kangbo 韓康伯.[271] Unfortunately, the Sima-Xu edition is not too helpful in explaining lexical items in the *Taixuan*, and does not contain much commentary from previous scholars. In the

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[269] See Lu Ji's "Shu Xuan" 述玄 appended to the beginning of the *Taixuan jing*, SBCK.

[270] See Fan Wang's preface to the *Taixuan jing*, SBCK 1.2a.

[271] See Knechtges' entry on the "Taixuan jing" in his *Reference Guide*, and Liu Shaojun (2011), 4-6. For a comprehensive list of all commentaries on the *Taixuan* from the Han dynasty to Song, see ibid.,77-107. He has also collected excerpts of criticism and praise from scholars since imperial Han China, ibid., 397-558.

Qing dynasty the philologist Chen Benli 陳本禮 (1739-1818) compiled a version which he titled *Taixuan chanmi* 太玄闡祕 and included many useful sound and semantic glosses.

It is difficult to determine what the *Taixuan* originally looked like when Yang Xiong had first drafted it. In his autobiography, he says that the three regions, nine provinces, twenty-seven *bu*, eighty-one *jia*, two-hundred forty-three charts, and seven-hundred twenty-nine *zan* totaled three *juan*. The ten commentaries and eighty-one heads totaled eleven *pian* explaining the form of the *Taixuan*. There is an interesting line that reads "the chapters and sections commentary still is not included with them" 章句尚不存焉.[272] We do not know if this means that he had written a *zhangju* and had discarded it; or that it never existed in the first place, with the commentaries substituting what would have been the *zhangju*.[273] This latter suggestion would then be consistent with Yang's claim that he only wrote *xungu* and no *zhangju* as recorded in the *Han shu*. This makes it interesting that the *Sui shu* catalogue should record a *zhangju* from the hand of Yang Xiong that was known to the compilers of the Liang catalogue, but they did not actually have possession of the text itself.[274] In the "Justification Against Ridicule" we are told that the *Taixuan* contains some "five thousand phrases" 五千文, and the "sayings" alone amount to over 100,000 words 獨說十余萬言.[275] Liu Shaojun believes that even if we added these two numbers, there is still a discrepancy between this total and the nineteen *pian* recorded in the *Han shu* bibliography. Regardless, we cannot determine the original format, though it seems that the

[272] HS 87.3575.

[273] Liu believes that it is probably the latter instance. Liu (2011), 60.

[274] HS 87.3514, and SS, 34.998.

[275] HS 87.3566.

eighty-one tetragrams without text formed its own set, just as the "ce" lines had originally constituted another set until at least Fan Wang's editing.

During Yang's times some of his contemporaries regarded the *Taixuan* as an important work, including the bibliographer Liu Xin 劉歆 (d. 23 CE) and Yang's good friend and polymath Huan Tan 桓譚 (43 BCE-28 CE).[276] By the end of the Han to the Wei-Jin dynasties there seems to have been a surge of interest in the *Taixuan*, particularly in the Jingzhou 荊州 school of Song Zhong 宋衷 (fl. 200-208) under the auspices of Liu Biao 劉表 (142-208). Studies on the Jingzhou school and Liu Biao's province of control have suggested the use of the *Taixuan* as a kind of "textbook" to the classics curriculum, and was probably meant to be read alongside the *Zhou yi*. By the Song dynasty however, the *Taixuan* met with many critics, including Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130-1200) and Su Xun 蘇洵 (1009-1066), who attacked this work for reasons that have less to do with the ideas in the text itself than with the tainted opinion of Yang Xiong's character as a traitor who had served under Wang Mang.[277] Yang Xiong was also criticized for his audacity of claiming himself to be a sage on par with the uncrowned king (i.e. Confucius). During the Qing dynasty and Republican era, some scholars have sought to defend Yang Xiong, including Yu Yue 虞越 (1821-1907) and Wang Rongbao (1878-1933). In the *Siku quanshu* catalogue, the *Taixuan* was demoted from the Ru category to numerology.[278]

[276] See Lu Ji's "Shu Xuan," TXJ, 2a-3b.

[277] For a study on the reception of Yang Xiong and his works, see Mark Pitner, "Embodied Geographies of Han Dynasty China: Yang Xiong and His Reception," Ph. D diss. (University of Washington, 2010).

[278] Siku quanshu zhongmu tiyao, 108.1.

For my translations I have used the *Siku quanshu* reprint of Fan Wang's *Taixuan jing jiezan* 太玄經解贊 as the base text, cross referencing with Sima Guang's *Taixuan jizhu* 太玄集注 and Chen Benli's *Taixuan chan mi* 太玄闡祕 in areas that are particularly puzzling.[279] During such encounters, which are often, I have also checked the respective English and Japanese translations of Michael Nylan and Suzuki Yoshijirō 鈴木由次郎.[280] Additionally, I am heavily indebted to and influenced by the late Hellmut Wilhelm's studies and an unpublished manuscript of selected translations from the *Taixuan*.[281]

4.1.2 Structure and Contents of the *Taixuan*

In form, the *Taixuan* resembles the *Zhou yi*, and is based on a set of linear complexes complete with title names (*shou* 首) and line "appraisals", or "interpretations" (*zan* 贊). Each complex in the *Zhou yi* contains a total of six lines that are either solid (representing yang) or

[279] Fan Wang 范望, *Taixuan jing* 太玄經, rpt. *Siku quanshu*; Sima Guang 司馬光 (1019-1086) ed. and comm., Liu Shaojun 劉韶軍, punc. and coll. *Taixuan jizhu* 太玄集注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1998); *Tongcheng xiansheng diankan Taixuan duben* 桐城先生點勘太玄讀本, Wu Rulun 吳汝綸 (1840-1903), punc. and comm. (China: Yan xing she, 1910); and Chen Benli 陳本禮 (1739-1818), ed. and comm, *Taixuan chan mi* 太玄闡祕, 10 *juan*, *Juxue xuan congshu* 聚學軒叢書; rpt. *Xuxiu Siku quanshu*.

[280] Michael Nylan, trans., *The Canon of Supreme Mystery, A Translation with Commentary of the* T'ai Hsüan Ching (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993); Suzuki Yoshijirō 鈴木由次郎, *Taigen eki no kenkyū* 太玄易の研究 (Tokyo: Meitoku shuppansha, 1964). Suzuki's translation only includes the preface, and the eighty-one *shou* with the *zan* and *ce* commentaries, but he does not include the other auto-commentaries.

[281] I am deeply grateful to Professor David Knechtges for giving me a copy of this manuscript, without which the *Taixuan* would probably continue to remain a greater mystery than I should like to admit.

broken once (representing yin), yielding a total of 64 hexagrams. The *Taixuan* has only four lines in each complex, with three kinds of lines: solid (representing heaven), broken once into two sections (earth), and broken twice into three sections (humankind). Instead of the binary yin-yang forces governing the lines in the *Yi*, the *Taixuan* is ruled by the trinary system of heaven, earth, and humans. There is thus a total of 81 (3^4=81) tetragrams. While the hexagram is read from bottom to top, the tetragram is read from top to bottom. The lines are titled *fang* 方 (region), *zhou* 州 (province), *bu* 部 (department), and *jia* 家 (family). A *shou* 首 (head) consists of the tetragram, the title of the tetragram, and a tag-phrase describing the dynamics of yin-yang associated with the tetragram. Each *shou* comes with nine poetically constructed *zan* that are meant to be read at different times of the day, representing the rise and fall of a particular situation. Additionally, each *zan* has an explanatory commentary called *ce* (interpretation). Yang Xiong also indicates for each tetragram the corresponding *Yi* hexagram. To further supplement the tetragrams, Yang himself wrote a total of ten commentaries similar in function corresponding to the "Ten Wings" 十翼 of the *Yi*. Notice that most of these explanations are synonyms for the titles. Fan Wang seems to take the *Taixuan* as a counterpart to the *Zhou yi*, structured around the concepts of yin and yang.[282] At face value the *Taixuan* is inextricably linked to the *Zhou yi*, and is for this reason that the former is regarded as an imitation of the latter. Upon closer investigation, there are significant differences.

We have already noted the structural and nominal differences above. The most significant conceptual difference is the replacement of the central idea of "change" with *xuan*, the precise nature of which still needs to be discussed, and so I will leave it untranslated at the present

[282] "Jie zan" 解贊 (Explaining the Zan), TXJ 1.1a.

moment. In the *Zhou yi* the idea of "change" is governed by the binary forces of yin and yang (reflected in solid and broken lines) which then differentiate into further complementary pairs including male and female, hard and soft, dark and light, night and day, etc. In the *Taixuan* each kind of line of the tetragram represents the heavens, earth, and humankind; but there is a second trinity that is found in the "Li" commentary: *xuan*, yin, and yang. This is one difference: binary oppositions in the *Zhou yi*, triadic relations in the *Taixuan*. A second difference is how the idea of *xuan* differs from change, if at all. If we follow Wilhelm's interpretation that the concept of change lies in the categorical relation between time and space through which it is made manifest, then where, or when, does *xuan* find its expression in reality?[283] These are all questions that we will approach in due course.

According to Ban Gu, Yang Xiong "genuinely loved antiquity and delighted in the Way, and his ambition was to seek through his writings a reputation in later ages. Of the classics, he considered none greater than the *Changes*, and thus he composed the *Grand Mystery*… In all of these works he drew from the original essence, imitated the models, but then galloped further on."[284] Although Ban Gu does not say so explicitly, it sounds as if Yang's final purpose in composing the *Taixuan* was to gain a "reputation" by "imitating" the *Zhou Yi*, and thus by extension gain sagely status, something for which later scholars would fault him. Later he adds that Yang "applied his mind inward and did not seek things without."[285] But according to Yang Xiong's own words it seems that the *Taixuan* was composed not only with the *Zhou yi* in mind, but also the Spherical Heaven (*huntian*) theory. "Instead [of engaging in fu writing], with great

[283] Wilhelm (1997), 4-5.

[284] Knechtges (1982), 59.

[285] Ibid., 59.

profundity, I pondered the Spherical Heaven theory," and continues to explain the structure of the *Taixuan* in comparison to that of the *Zhou yi*.[286] "Thus, in viewing the *Changes*, one gives (its figures) names by examining the *gua*, but in viewing the *Mystery*, one stipulates (names for its figures) by counting lines."[287] This section is the only instance where Yang Xiong explicitly links his *Taixuan* to the *Zhou yi*. In the *Fa yan* he pays homage to Confucius who was purported to claim himself as only a transmitter and not a creator by answering simply that although "matters have been transmitted [by the sages] through the ages, the text is only now being written." 或曰，述而不作，玄何以作。曰，其事則述，其書則作。[288] Elsewhere he comments the *Taixuan* is composed "only for the sake of humanity and rightness" 為仁義 but "without mixing in other elements" 勿雜也而已矣.[289] It is not my intention to deny that the *Taixuan* is an imitation of the *Zhou Yi*, but that it is only an imitation in form and not substance, and moreover it was not intended as a *replacement* of the *Yi*, rather as a *supplementary* text to be read alongside this important classic, which was exactly how Song Zhong at the Jingzhou school would use it. For as we read in Yang's autobiography: "Some engaged in strange convolutions and with hairsplitting arguments and paradoxical language confused the affairs of the world. Even though they made trifling arguments, in the end they damaged the grand Way and deceived

[286] Ibid., 53.

[287] Ibid.

[288] *Fa yan yi shu,* 165.

[289] *Fa yan yishu,* 168. This reminds us of the famous account of Mengzi's visit to King Hui of Liang. The king said to Mencius upon his arrival, "Sir, in not regarding as far a thousand li you have come here. Do you also have something to benefit my state?" To which Mencius responds, "My king, why must you speak of benefits? There are also matters of humanity and rightness!" See *Mengzi*, SBBY 1.1b.

the masses, causing them to drown in what they had heard without knowing how wrong it was."[290] I believe that this was one of the intentions of Yang Xiong—he was not replacing the classic, but correcting the various convoluted interpretations of the *Zhou Yi* that were proliferating throughout the Han, probably that of the multiple weft-text traditions.[291]

4.2 Modern scholarship on the Taixuan

Typically scholars have characterized Yang Xiong's thinking as a synthesis of Ru and Tao teachings. Hsu Fu-kuan believes that the composition of the *Taixuan* was on one hand a form of "self-preservation" 自守 and on the other a culmination of Yang's thought in its entirety.[292] Moreover, "we can say that his *Taixuan* is established by combining [the concepts of] tao and virtue from the *Laozi* as form, and [the concepts of] humaneness and righteousness from the school of Ru as practical use."[293] And then making a general observation a few lines later, Hsu writes that "the synthesis of the ideas of Ru and Tao is representative of a general intellectual trend during the Western Han."[294] These generalizations are only useful to a certain degree: the synthesis of Ru and Tao ideas presuppose some conceived definition of what constitutes "Ru" in contradistinction from "Tao," definitions which are not often clear-cut, and which are subject to multiple evolutions throughout the course of history. Ideas that took shape

[290] Knechtges (1982), 56-7.

[291] See Jack Dull, "A Historical Introduction to the Aprocryphal (Ch'an-Wei) Texts of the Han Dynasty," Ph.D diss., University of Washington, 1966.

[292] Hsu Fu-kuan, 475-6.

[293] 可以說他的太玄是以老子的道德為體，以儒家的仁義為用所建立起來的。Ibid., 488.

[294] 道儒思想結合表明了西漢思想的一個傾向。Ibid.

in early China did not assume a distinct conscious identity to which we can properly define as "Ru," "Tao," etc. Yet discarding these categories altogether make intellectual history difficult to discuss. We need only keep in mind that these "-isms" hold true only to a certain degree, and cannot be thought of as mutually exclusive—as is the case with Ru and Tao ideas, many of which overlap.

Writing during the early Republican era when the problem of whether China had "philosophy" became an issue of hot debate, Fung Yu-lan gave the following assessment of Yang Xiong: "Philosophically speaking, Yang obviously falls short of Mencius in creative achievement. His chief merit, however, is that he, more systematically than most other members of the Old Text school, restored Confucianism from its intermingling with the yin-yang beliefs. Historically speaking, therefore, he has earned a secure niche for himself."[295]

Hong Kong scholar Fung Shu Fun 馮樹勳 points out that there are two general ways of understanding the relation of the *Taixuan* to its classic counterpart, the *Zhou yi*. The first is "imitation of the *Yi*" 擬易, and the second is something like "taking the *Yi* as a standard" 準.[296] It is not too clear what the differences are, but it seems like these two modes have a different point of emphasis. The first emphasizing the strictly mimetic relation making the *Taixuan* completely dependent upon the *Zhou yi* in terms of ideas and as a continuation of the Ru legacy. The second is to take both texts as "equal systems" 平衡關係 so that while they are formally related, the *Taixuan* is not restricted as an appendage to the *Zhou yi*.[297] The problem with the first approach

[295] Fung Yu-lan, 150.

[296] Fung Shu Fun 馮樹勳, *Yang Xiong de fanshi yanjiu* 揚雄的範式研究 (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2015), 147-62.

[297] Ibid., 158.

is that by already presupposing a dependent relation it is easy to overlook what makes the *Taixuan* unique and worthwhile in its own right.

Fung further attempts to salvage the value of the *Taixuan* by arguing that it is not simply an imitation but a creative rewriting: "Under the circumstances that the Ru and Tao schools are two different visions [of thought], [the problem for Yang Xiong is] how to establish 'Ru as the mainstay and Tao as supplement' that is able to remain in the arena of Ru thought while incorporating a Tao system."[298] To answer this question Fung very creatively sets forth an ideological hypothesis of imitation called a "similar-to-me effect" (類我效應) that forms the foundation of Yang Xiong's construction of the *Taixuan* and the *Fa yan* as a theory of education through emulation, in the way that a teacher is the model for the student. This "similar-to-me" educational theory is the culmination of imitation and is made manifest in the material text and the personality and behavior of a person, both of which constitute a "resemblance of appearance" 形象上的類似.[299]

In a similar vein, Mainland scholar Liu Shaojun says that although the *Taixuan* appears to be an imitative work, it is in fact an inventive product that combines Ru and Tao ideas by rewriting the *Zhou Yi* and taking into consideration current advances in the astronomical, calendrical, and natural sciences. Because Yang Xiong is without doubt the sole writer of the *Taixuan* (unlike the uncertain authorship of the *Zhou Yi*) we can say with more certainty that it forms a systematic philosophy of life. Moreover the use of verbal virtuousity also marks the

[298] 在儒家與道家兩種不同理想下，如何建構一個「儒主道輔」能在儒家理想中吸收道家的方案。Fung Shu Fun, 293.

[299] Fung Shu Fun, 231, 225-71. The English term "similar-to-me effect" is Fung's own rendition.

Taixuan as distinctly Yang Xiong.[300] Elsewhere Liu notes that Yang's choice of *xuan* as the driving principle was intended to be distinguished from the meaning of the word tao as used in the school of Tao, and that Yang Xiong in fact refrained from using Tao school terminology so that he could create his own system with Ru teachings at the center.[301]

4.3 *Taixuan* as exemplar of cosmos

When we read the *Taixuan* there can be no doubt that the *Zhou Yi* maintained a steady grip on Yang Xiong's mind. It is undeniable that the former was consciously based on the latter, at least in terms of form, which may lead one to assume that content-wise it should also be similar. Upon closer examination there are many ideological differences. On the one hand we cannot deny the relation between the *Zhou yi* and the *Taixuan*. Yet if we only read the *Taixuan* as an imitation of the *Zhou yi*, it would be difficult to see the value of Yang Xiong's work, as Fung Shu Fun had argued. We could do away with the idea of imitation, except that this would be to ignore the glaringly obvious. My proposal is to tread carefully between these two options. In effect, it is similar to Fung's suggestion. I differ from his in that I want to shift our emphasis on the *Taixuan* from pure imitation of the *Zhou yi* to taking both the *Taixuan* and the *Zhou yi* as an imitation of something else: that is, the ultimate, absolute principle that governs the entire cosmos.

This ultimate principle is expressed differently in the two texts: "change" (*yi*) and "profundity" (*xuan*). The ideological conception of the grand principle is not the same. Quite possibly they are different conceptualizations of the governing principle of all existential things

[300] Liu Shaojun (2005), 1-2.

[301] Liu Shaojun (2011), 165.

with different emphatic points. Whereas the trigrams and hexagrams in the *Zhou yi* capture the concept of change by imitating movement through the alternations of solid and broken lines, the tetragrams in the *Taixuan* represent the intricate web of causal dynamic between the three realms of heaven, earth, and humankind, a dynamic that is based on numerology. The *Zhou yi* was for Yang Xiong the greatest of all classics. The problem was that over time the original meaning had been obscured by men of the court each giving their own interpretations by adorning the truth of the absolute to the point that "they damaged the Way and deceived the masses, causing them to drown in what they had heard without knowing how wrong it was."[302] How then can Yang Xiong recover, or uncover, the "grand Way"?

One obvious solution is to lift up the many layers from the weft-text traditions to reveal the original, but then he would have to add his own interpretations, which would then seem to be a hypocritical move as he himself had criticized everyone else's interpretations. For whatever reason, Yang Xiong decided on a more difficult procedure: he would simply write a new version of the *Zhou yi*. His version would make clear the importance of the human realm in the balance of the cosmos. As we have seen in §3.2.1 Yang Xiong believed that for language to be an accurate representation of the subject it must imitate in form the substance of its subject and by this way strike a perfect balance between *wen* and *zhi*. With the subject matter of the *Taixuan* being that ultimate principle, how could he make language – something with audible speech and visible words – conform to the nature of something inaudible, invisible, but yet at the same time all pervasive and absolute in being? For Yang Xiong it would be striking a balance between the infinite and the finite in a proper mixture of image, verse, and parallel prose. His *Taixuan* is remarkable and difficult precisely because of its multi-dimensional nature layering heaven,

[302] Knechtges (1982), 56-7.

humankind, and earth on one level; the expression of *xuan* as it pervades all three of these realms in literary techniques on another; and the fundamentally mathematical grounding in his system of the tetragrams to reflect the interrelatedness of the three realms and the expression of *xuan*.

There are two levels on which the *Taixuan* can be said to be an exemplar of the cosmos: theoretically, and ontologically. By "theoretically" I mean the reworking of a cosmological theory through a reformulation of Han cosmological thought. Yang Xiong did not adopt any one school, but rather creates his own theory of the shape and principles of the cosmos through a mixture of ideas. By "ontological" I mean the way that the contents of the *Taixuan* are arranged and articulated to imitate the nature of the cosmos through literary techniques and form. In the next two sections, 4.3.1 and 4.3.2 I will expand on what I mean by theoretical and ontological revisions. Then in 4.4 I will look at specific passages from the *Taixuan* that demonstrate the multi-dimensional layers.

4.3.1 A theoretical revision of the cosmos

Yang Xiong is said to have originally believed in the *gaitian* theory, but later changed his mind after discussions with Huan Tan, becoming a proponent of the *huntian* theory. The *Xin lun* gives a record of Yang Xiong's turning point in a conversation between the two men, after which Huan Tan gave a demonstration of how the sun could not possibly rotate with the movement of the skies. Originally, Yang Xiong "based himself on the discussions of heaven by many Ru scholars and took it to be [like] an umbrella (*gai*). It always turns to the left [i.e. as seen from outside the heaven disc looking towards the pole], carrying the sun, moon, and stellar mark-

points with it so they move from east to west."[303] Huan Tan disagreed by arguing, "at the spring and autumn equinoxes, day and night must be equal. Now at dawn the sun rises in the direction mao, exactly due east, and at dusk it sets in the direction you, exactly due west. But we are looking at things from a position in the [Han] empire: this east-west line [through] people [in that position] is not the east-west line of heaven. That passes through the pivot of the northern Dipper, which is the pivot of heaven. […] So how could the numbers of *ke* for the day and night clepsydras be equal?"[304] Yang Xiong found himself at a lost of words, and we are told that he then "immediately destroyed his work, and so the literati's belief that Heaven revolves towards the left is erroneous."[305]

There is also an anecdote about Yang Xiong's fascination with astronomy. "Yang Ziyun loved astronomy. He questioned an old artisan who had helped make an armillary sphere at the Yellow Gate. He said, 'When I was young I could do such work [just] by following the specifications in feet and inches, but I could not really understand their meaning. Gradually I came to understand more and more. Now I am seventy, and I feel that I am just now beginning to know it. But I am old and will die soon."[306]

Yang Xiong tells us in his autobiography that after he stopped composing fu he turned to "greatly ponder *huntian*" 大潭思渾天.[307] There are a few ways we can interpret "*huntian.*" It can

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[303] Christopher Cullen, Heavenly Numbers: Astronomy and Authority in Early Imperial China (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 219. Brackets, Cullen's.

[304] Cullen (2017), 220.

[305] Timotheus Pokora, *Hsin-lun (New Treatise) and Other Writings by Huan T'an, An Annotated Translation with Index* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1975), 117.

[306] Pokora, *Hsin-lun*, 114.

[307] HS 87.3575.

of course refer specifically to the *huntian* theory itself. Or it could simply be a general description of the shape or image of heaven as "circular" following Yan Shigu's gloss in the *Han shu*. The usual interpretation takes the first choice, drawing evidence from the *Xin lun* excerpts that put Yang Xiong as a proponent of *huntian lun*. Recent studies on the cosmology of the *Taixuan* suggest that this may not necessarily be the case. In a recently published book, Wen Yongning 問永寧 reconstructs Yang's cosmology in the *Taixuan* and compares it with the different versions of the *huntian* and *gaitian* theories, identifying slightly different strains in each tradition.[308] Wen argues that the *Taixuan* incorporates elements from both of these cosmological theories: from the *huntian*, the cosmos is "shaped" like an egg with a half yolk (heaven corresponds to the egg white, the earth to the half yolk); and from the *gaitian*, it consists of two poles with the north found in the middle of the heavens and the south hidden in the depths of the earth. With these points in mind Yang Xiong's comment might simply mean "greatly pondering the chaotic shape of heaven."

Zheng Wangeng 鄭萬耕 points out that the concept of *xuan* is manifold. He believes that Yang's idea of *xuan* evolved from the conception of the stationary position and far distance of North Polestar 北極星, around which all other celestial bodies revolved.[309] These match the conceptual attributes of *xuan* as that central unchanging principle which serves as the nucleus of all phenomena. Physically, *xuan* is similar to "primal essence" (*yuanqi* 元氣), taking no finite

[308] Wen Yongning 問永寧, *Taixuan yu Yixueshi cungao* 太玄與易學史存稿 (Beijing: Shangwu yinshuguan, 2017), 102-13.

[309] Zheng Wangeng 鄭萬耕, "Yang Xiong *Taixuan* zhong de yuzhou xingcheng lun," 揚雄太玄中的宇宙形成論, *Shehui kexue yanjiu* 27.4 (1983), 109-10.

form, and contains the forces of yin and yang.[310] Additionally, Zheng argues that this "primal essence" is the same thing as *taiji* 太極, which he says is the highest principle in the *Zhou yi*.[311]

4.3.2 Ontological imitation of the cosmos

The subject matter of the *Taixuan* is the ultimate principle of the universe, i.e. the absolute. By "ontological imitation" is meant how the text of the *Taixuan* takes up its own existence in its literary representation of the absolute. In order for one to comprehend the grand profound principle one must be immersed in an interplay of image and language that combines aesthetic verse and philosophical explication, and that as a whole expresses the cosmos in all its grandeur and sublimity. Language must re-enact the profound aspects of the absolute.

The nineteenth century German philosopher F. W. J. von Schelling was one thinker who formulated an aesthetic theory on the expression of the absolute. At first glance, there could not be anyone more different than Yang Xiong in so many different ways. Historical distance (some eighteen centuries after Yang) and locality is but one instance. Intellectually, Schelling belonged to a philosophical development of what we today call "German Idealism". In spirit, and in

[310] Zheng, 111.

[311] This seems to be based on other Han interpretations of the *Zhou yi*. I do not agree with this approach for two reasons: first, the term *taiji* does not appear in the main text of the *Zhou yi*, and only once in the "Xici" commentary, which probably dates to the early Han. Second, Zheng's evidence from the apocryphal texts in equating Yang's *xuan* with *taiji* and *yuanqi* is problematic. As I understand it, these were probably the kinds of interpretations of the *Zhou yi* that Yang Xiong was so critical against. Why would he construct his *Taixuan* using these? Third, the highest principle of the *Zhou yi* is exactly as its title tells us, i.e. "change," which serves as the backbone of the transitions from one *yao* to another, and one hexagram to another. See Zheng, 111.

endeavor of the infinite, they resonate rather beautifully. In the introduction to his *Philosophy of Art*, Schelling states the purpose of his aesthetic project as the following:

> I am speaking of a more sacred art, one that in the words of antiquity is a tool of the gods, a proclaimer of divine mysteries, the unveiler of the ideas; I am speaking of that unborn beauty whose desecrated radiance only dwells and illuminates purer souls, and whose form is just as concealed and inaccessible to the sensual eye as is the truth corresponding to it. Nothing of that which a baser sensibility calls art can concern the philosopher. For him it is a necessary phenomenon emanating directly from the absolute, and only to that extent can it be presented and proved as such does it possess reality for him.[312]

That "sacred art" of which Schelling speaks of is the construction of the absolute, which he identifies as the proper subject and concern of philosophers.[313] The only subject matter for poesy is the absolute, the infinite principle that is nature, a nature that is always in movement: *natura naturans*.[314] Schelling distinguishes between two basic forms of art: the plastic arts, or the formative, which includes sculptures, paintings, and music; and the verbal arts, or poesy, which includes the lyric, epic, and dramatic. With art as representation of the absolute, the formative arts are the informing of the infinite into the finite (or ideal into real), whereas poesy is the informing of the finite into the infinite (the real into ideal). The only distinction between the real and idea is the mode of expression – both form two sides of the same coin. "The essential nature of poesy is the representation of the absolute or of the universe in the particular" that is an "immediate reflex of the infinite" portrayed in language.[315] Poesy is essentially composed for the

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[312] Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, *The Philosophy of Art*, Douglas W. Stott, ed. and trans. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989), 4.

[313] Incidentally, he also acknowledges Plato's seeming distaste for the imitative art, but adds that it must be understood from within the Greek context as we have already dealt with in §1.3.

[314] For Schelling's philosophy of art rearticulated as a philosophy of nature, see Jason Wirth, *Schelling's Practice of the Wild: Time, Art, and Imagination* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2015).

[315] Schelling, 204.

ear and differentiated from prose in this way through rhythm and sonority. As such, there is a necessarily performative and oral aspect to poesy. "A poetic work in the larger sense is a *whole* possessive of its own internal time and momentum, and thereby separated from the larger whole of language and completely self-enclosed."[316] Because art is the "emanation of the absolute" – that is, the infinite, the universe, nature in its entirety – it must present the forms of the universe "as forms of things as those things are in themselves, or as they are within the absolute."[317]

It is these senses of poesy as expression of the truth and beauty of nature that informs my philosophical understanding of the ontological construction of the *Taixuan*. That is, that the *Taixuan* as an imitation of the universe transcends its status as imitation in becoming representative of the absolute insofar as it includes the universal and the particular expressed as such. This is done through the mathematic configurations of the eighty-one *shou* and seven-hundred and twenty-nine *zan* that are cyclical in structure and yet captures difference in the unique combinations of the *shou* and *zan* in sync with what the Chinese call "heavenly time and earthly patterns" 天時地理. It repeats insofar as it follows in accordance with the cyclical nature of the cosmos (and is therefore timeless and eternal). It differentiates insofar as it allows for a unique act with the right conditions if the individual is positioned to do so. Although the *Taixuan* as a text cannot properly be counted as an example of a formative art, it can be conceptualized as straddling the formative and verbal insofar as it is that one entity meant to embody the unity of the absolute in modes of thought and extension. The human person is the site upon which the ideal is made real, and the real is in turn made ideal—the human realm is, after all, Yang Xiong's primary concern in his reconfiguration of the three realms.

[316] Schelling, 206.

[317] Schelling, 32.

Our departure from Schelling is that the verbal aspects of the *Taixuan* do not fit quite neatly into "poesy." What Schelling had in mind was the Greco-Roman tradition, and though there are similarities with the Classical Chinese literary tradition, the two contain crucial differences. The distinguishing feature of the poetic constructions of the former is meter: Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Vergil's *Aeneid*, and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were all composed in dactylic hexameter. Classical Chinese composition borders between verse and prose due to its pervasive parallel construction that has equal line breaks (like verse) and equal number of syllables. If recited, one can still hear rhythm and sonority even if it was not originally composed to be delivered through speech.

The preface of the *Taixuan* is clearly poetic verse with line breaks and rhymes. The "Li" commentary, which we will look at closely in §4.4, does not contain regulated rhymes, but the perfectly crafted parallelism achieves a similar effect of rhythm if performed, much like the "word magic" of the *fu*. True to his critique of overly ornate language, Yang Xiong is careful in maintaining restraint and balance in his descriptions of *xuan*. This balance is what creates the perfect representation of a harmonious cosmos, beautiful and sublime. Through literary devices including rhythm in parallelism and rhyme, descriptive techniques including reduplication, "restrained" display through synonyms and antonyms, condensation of the complex into simple phrases, and then expansion of the simple into intricate expositions of *xuan*, the absolute is allowed to shine forth from its darkness.

Poetry, by virtue of condensing the truth into few words, is able to say more. Prose by contrast, says (comparatively) less insofar as it restricts ideas/concepts to grammatically concise sentences, fixed (more or less) in meaning. This phenomenon is what Schelling describes as an informing of the finite into the infinite (taking actual things/events and making a claim of truth),

that is, poetry; and the informing of the infinite into the finite (taking a claim of truth and expounding on it into concrete examples), that is, prose.

4.4 Close reading

In this section we will look at specific passages and see how the notion of xuan is articulated through three modes of expression: image in the "Zhong" 中 tetragram and its *zan* and *ce*; verse in the "Preface", and parallel prose in the "Li" commentary. The tetragrams and the "Preface" are written with concise diction mostly in tetrasyllabic lines, closely resembling the structure of the *Shi jing* poems. We saw earlier in §3.2.1 that the "Zhu pin fu" was quite possibly an example of what Yang Xiong meant by "*fu* of the *Shijing*-poets." The lines that accompany the tetragrams as well as their explanations, and those of the "Preface" arguably belong to the same category of literary composition.

Poetic construction in the *Taixuan* does not end with the eighty-one tetragrams but extends to the commentaries. What makes the commentaries distinctly Yang Xiong are the fu-like descriptions with prosodic features of unregulated rhyme and equal line lengths, and there is even a sense of "display" in many lines, but much more "restrained." There are significantly fewer descriptives though he does not shy away from adorning certain subjects. Yang strives to strike the perfect balance between prose and verse, the result of which is seen in the auto-commentaries. In the commentaries the poetic style is different from what we see in the eighty-one sets of *zan* as we shall soon see.

4.4.1 Reading the tetragrams: Shifting imagery of the "Center"

Unlike the six *yao* lines that have a one-to-one correlation with the six lines in the hexagrams of the *Zhou yi*, the *zan* in the *Taixuan* are not based on the trigrams (although they are related), but are of numerological order correlated with the calendrical system.[318] This is why Yang's divination system requires the *zan* to be read at specified times of the day. In addition to calendrical and numerological correspondences, Yang Xiong also assigns a metaphysical significance to each *zan*, making the entire system of the *Taixuan* highly sophisticated. As we read in the "Ni" commentary: "As for the *zan* phrases of the *Taixuan* some are [expressed] by *qi*, some by kind, and some by the ends of the twists and turns of affairs" 玄之贊辭也或以氣或以類或以事之骫卒.[319]

In order to read an entire tetragram we must be able to look at each individual *zan* in relation to the others. The nine *zan* constitute a whole, but each position of each individual *zan* bear different relations. These relations are explained in the following passages from the "Diagrams" commentary[320]:

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[318] HS 87.3575.

[319] TXJ 9.8a. For *wěi* 骫 Fan Wang glosses as "twists and turns" 委曲, and so in this context refers to the different results of a particular situation depending on how the situation shapes itself. Alternatively, 骫 can also be understood as *wěi* 委 'pile up; collect'. We would then translate this line as "the end of the accumulated affairs." This meaning of 骫 is used in the 60th tetragram of the *Taixuan*, "Accumulation" 積, the ninth *zan*: "the petty person accumulates falsehood; this is the piling up of calamity" 小人積非，禍所骫也 (TXJ 5.10b).

[320] I have deleted the words 故 and 夫 from the beginning of the first lines in passages 1 and 2 respectively to enunciate the parallelism.

P1

1 思心乎一，反復乎二，成意乎三，
2 條暢乎四，著明乎五，極大乎六，
3 敗損乎七，剝落乎八，殄絕乎九。
4 生神莫先乎一，
5 中和莫盛乎五，
6 倨劇莫困乎九。[321]

1 Thoughts of the mind appear in the first [zan];
Return and recurrence are in the second;
Formulation of ideas is in the third;
2 Branching and unfolding is in the fourth;
Articulating the illumined is in the fifth;
Reaching its greatest point is in the sixth;
3 Decline and loss is the seventh;
Disintegration and fall is the eighth;
Destruction and annihilation is the ninth.
4 Nothing but the birth of spirit precedes in first;
5 Nothing but balance and central harmony are fuller in the fifth;
6 Nothing but arrogance to an extreme is trapped in the ninth.

P2

1 一也者、思之微者也；
2 四也者、福之資者也；
3 七也者、禍之階者也。
4 三也者、思之崇者也；
5 六也者、福之隆者也；
6 九也者、禍之窮者也。
7 二五八、三者之中也。
8 福則往而禍則承。

1 The first [zan] is the manifestation of thought;
2 The fourth is endowment of blessings;
3 The seventh is the stairway to calamity;
4 The third is the fullness of thought;
5 The sixth is the apex of blessings;

**I thank Edmund Lien for his helpful comments and suggestions on this following section, without which there would doubtless be many mistakes.

[321] TXJ 10.6a.

6 The ninth is the extreme of calamity;
7 The second, fifth, and eighth are the three middles.
8 Blessings flow, and calamities follow.[322]

We can arrange the sequence of the nine *zan* into a 3x3 grid[323]:

z	*y*	*x*	
3	**2**	**1**	*a*
6	**5**	**4**	*b*
9	**8**	**7**	*c*

[322] Based on Fan Wang's explanation, *ze* seems to be functioning as a particle here: "One cultivates excellence in order to send blessings, therefore blessings proceed from this. One who implements the abhorred receives calamities, therefore calamities follow from this" 修善以致福，故福往行惡以受禍，故禍承之也. TXJ 10.7a.

[323] One wonders if this may have anything to do with the "magic square" where all columns, rows, and diagonals add up to the number 15. There might be connections with the mysterious "river charts" (*hetu* 河圖), which is itself a magic square, but there are not many early sources on this. The earliest mention of the "river charts" is in the "Gu ming" 顧命 of the *Shang shu* 尚書 (*Shang shu* 25.3a). Together they are mention in the "Xici" as important documents, along with the *Zhou yi*, for sages (*Zhou yi* 7.17b). Zhang Heng also mentions it in conjunction with the "Luo documents" (*luoshu* 洛書) in various places throughout the *Lun heng*. Because there are a total of nine *zan*, it is possible to try to arrange them into such a scheme. The nine *zan* may also have something to do with two cycles of the five phases also in the *Shang shu* "Hong fan" 洪範. It records that the great Yu was endowed by high heaven with the "great plan" with nine divisions (*Shang shu* 20.2 b-20.3a). It may not be a coincidence that the nine divisions are enumerated with the same headings as the *Taixuan*: 初一，次二，次三 … 次九. The exception is the ninth stage, where in the *Taixuan* is 上九, but in "Hong fan" it is 次九. Perhaps Yang Xiong felt that the *Taixuan* was his "great plan" to partition worldly phenomena?

Passage 1 lays out the nine *zan* in ordinal sequence. The first row (l.1) represents the rise and fall of a "thinking" (*si* 思) process from "thoughts of the mind" 思心, to "return and repetition" 反覆, to "formation of meaning" 成義. Row b (l.2) represents "blessings" (fu 福), which we can generalize as positive phenomena including extension, articulation, and expansion—let us call this "affirmation". Row c (l.3) represents "calamities" (*huo* 禍), which can be generalized as negative phenomena including decline, disintegration, and destruction—let us call this "negation". The last three lines highlight *zan* 1, 5, and 9, which form the diagonal *az*, *by*, and *cx*. Together, ll.1-3 (all nine *zan*) represent a little more than simply the rise and fall of a situation (as we see in the *Zhou Yi* hexagrams), but also the change in "thought" processes, almost epistemological in the way that it seems to describe how the mind comes to know what it knows.

Passage 2 divides the nine *zan* according to their position in the grid. *Zan* 1, 4, and 7 occupy column *x*; *zan* 3, 6, and 9 occupy column *z*; and *zan* 2, 5, and 8 occupy the center column *y*. The *zan* members of column x signify the beginnings of each phenomena in rows a, b, and c; whereas those of column y signify the endpoint. Line 7 seems to indicate transitional phases (or passing points) in column y as we move from column x to z. Line 8 concludes with the statement that rows b (positive movement) and c (negative movement) "flow" and "assist", which seems to mean that they keep the process going in a continuous cycle. Rows a, b, and c then represent three series of events respectively: thought, blessings (affirmation), and calamities (negation). The second sequence (P2) also divides the nine zan into three series: 1, 4, and 7 as the correlated beginnings of the first sequence (column x); 2, 5, and 8 as the middle transitional series (column y); and 3, 6, and 9 as the final stages (column z).

This is a more sophisticated system than the discussions of blessings (*fu*) and calamities (*huo*) found also in the *Laozi* and the *Laozi zhigui*. In the *Zhigui*, the relation between blessings

and calamities is something like two sides of the same coin. Each one emerges from the other, simultaneously constituting the flowing of a cycle: "Together they flow out and in, with the same origin but from different poles."[324] It is the mind's distinction of *huo* and *fu* as two opposing forces and the desired ability to identify them that further give rise to the distinction between good and bad. Such distinctions are the sources of delusion.[325]

> 故去福則無禍，無禍則無福。
> 無福之福，至微玄默，
> 天下好知，莫能窮極。
> 唯無為者，能順其則。
> 正在福禍之間，無所不剋。失正則奇生而民惑，善人為妖，是非反覆，天下大迷而不復也。[326]

> Thus if one dispels blessings then there will be no more transgressions,
> If there are no more transgressions, then there will be no more blessings.
> The blessing of no blessings is the most refined and profound silence.
> The entire realm is fond of knowledge, thus none is able to exhaust its limits.
> Only the one who lacks action is able to comply with this standard.
> Rightness is found between blessing and calamity; there is nothing it cannot overcome. If one loses rightness then oddities emerge and then the commoners will be confused, fine individuals become unnatural, right and wrong reverse and turn over—the entire realm will be in great delusion and cannot return.

Similar to the critique of knowledge in the *Zhuangzi*, Zhuang Zun locates the problem of confusion in knowledge. The cause of human delusion is the desire to obtain the kind of knowledge that categorizes phenomena into binary oppositions. Only the sage is able to see through these distinctions and transcend the cycle by (paradoxically) moving with the flow and acting through nonaction.

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[324] LZZG, 64.

[325] The vocabulary I use here may be suggestive of Buddhist teachings, but I am not necessarily drawing a connection, although there are a handful of affinities between the *Laozi* and Buddhist thought.

[326] LZZG, 64.

Yang Xiong furthers the relation by introducing another element, that of "thought" (*si*).[327] He rearranges the elements of *huo* and *fu* into a system that would correlate with the eighty-one tetragrams. On the one hand, thought is the point of origin for *huo* and *fu*. On the other hand, the rise and fall of thought is correlated with that of *huo* and *fu*, as we see in the 3x3 grid. The line "blessings flow and calamities follow" agree with the *Zhigui* idea that these two emerge from the other not in contradistinction but "mutually follow each other in coming and going."[328]

Next, let us see how we can practically apply this to a tetragram and its set of *zan*. The first tetragram of the *Taixuan* is "Zhong" 中 (center) which consists of four solid lines. Almost counter-intuitively, it does not correspond to the first hexagram of the *Zhou yi* "Qian" which consists of six solid lines, but rather to the sixty-first "Zhong fu" 中浮 (inner trust). Being the opening *shou* of the *Taixuan*, the "Zhong" tetragram is without doubt the most significant of the eighty-one heads. While there is nothing trivial in the meaning of *zhong* it holds a central position in the thought of Classical China. It can be translated as "center" or "middle," referring the center or middle position of something, and by semantic extension a state of internal balance. The concept of *zhong* is widely accepted as one of the key concepts of the Ru school, although it has been pointed out that it is also important in the *Laozi*.

A reading of the "Zhong" requires multiple cross-referencing to other sections in the *Taixuan*:

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[327] One wonders whether the thought series is connected to Zhuang Zun's *xuanmo*. In consideration of Zhuang's explication of the Laozi passage on *huo* and *fu*, Yang Xiong's addition of *si* is significant insofar as it differentiates his thought from the mainstream understanding of *huo* and *fu*. Note that elsewhere in the "Li" commentary he writes "to use [*xuan*] as a compass is thought" 規之者思也. See TXJ 7.10a.

[328] LZZG, 64.

1) We need to keep in mind the head imagery.
2) We need also to remind ourselves of the numerical relations and positions of the *zan* in the three-by-three grid provided above.
3) We need to look at the respective "Ce" commentaries, already conveniently placed under each *zan* by Fan Wang.
4) Finally, we must also look at Yang Xiong's explanation of the entire "Zhong" tetragram provided in the "Wen" commentary.[329]

It is also the only tetragram which Yang blesses the readers with extra commentary, suggesting content of high importance. I will attempt a preliminary endeavor of weaving these four steps together below and hopefully reveal a somewhat coherent pattern.

中。[330]
Center.

陽氣潛萌於黃宮，信無不在乎中。
The power of the Yang, still submerged, is budding in the Yellow *gong*.[331] Its reliability is nowhere outside of the center.

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[329] This list is not exhaustive, for in considering the fact that the *Taixuan* holds an intimate relation to the *Zhou yi*, we must also look at its corresponding hexagram. Finally, if we take the principle of cyclical change seriously, we would have to repeat steps one to four until the connection reveals itself. As I am not blessed with infinite time, this will remain an impossible project for another more proper time. One imagines that this might be what a class at the Jingzhou academy on the *Zhou yi* supplemented with the *Taixuan* would look like.

[330] TXJ 1.4a-1.6b. The English translations of "Zhong", its *zan*, and its "Ce" commentary are taken from Wilhelm with minor modifications. Where *xuan* appears in the text, I have left it untranslated. Wilhelm construes *xuan* as "Mystery" throughout. See Wilhelm, *Heaven, Earth, and Man,* 136-40.

[331] Wilhelm translates *huanggong* 黃宮 as "Yellow Palace," which is associated with the top part of the head in the Taoist school. He notes that another possibility for *huanggong* as the lead note of the pentatonic scale,

初一，昆侖旁薄，幽。
FIRST Chaotic and boundless; hidden.[332]

suggested by Professor Knechtges. I follow the latter interpretation as a part of Yang Xiong's incorporation of the five phases theory. See Wilhelm, 136.

[332] The binomial 昆侖 is probably not read *kūnlún*, which refers to the name of a mythical mountain where the Xiwang mu 西王母 goddess resides, but the rhyming binome *húnlún* meaning an undifferentiated mass. Fan Wang gives a gloss for 昆 kūn < LH kuən < *kûn as the word 渾 hún < LH guən < *gûn 'chaotic, muddled', taking *hunlun* as a description of heaven (TXJ 1.4). It is perhaps noteworthy that the only difference in pronunciation is in the aspirated velar initial. The *Wang Li Gu Hanyu zidian* 王力古漢語字典 tells us that 昆侖 is also written 渾淪, which appears in a cosmological account in the *Liezi* 列子 "Tian rui 天瑞: "*Hunlun* describes the chaotic intermingling of the myriad things before they have separated. Looking at it, it is invisible; listening for it, it cannot be heard; chasing it, it cannot be grasped; thus we call this 'change'." 渾淪者，言萬物相渾淪而未相離也。視之不見，聽之不聞，循之不得，故曰易也。See *Liezi zhu* 列子注, comm. Zhang Chen 張湛 (Jin), ed. Yang Chia-lo 楊家駱 (Taipei: Shijie shuju, 1958), 2. This passage in the *Liezi* seems to resonate with our *Taixuan* line above. The textual history of the *Liezi* is as complicated as the *Zhuangzi* and the *Laozi*, all three of which were given high status as Taoist classics in the mid-eighth century CE. The name of the text is from the sage Lie Yukou who was mentioned in the Zhuangzi, purportedly living during the fourth century BCE. The style and contents of the *Liezi* are similar to the *Zhuangzi*, but its authenticity as an early text has been doubted. A. C. Graham has argued for its authenticity. For studies on the *Liezi* see Yan Lingfeng 嚴靈峯, *Wu qiu beizhai Liezi jijie* 無求備齋列子集解 (Taipei: Yiwen shuju, 1970); and A. C. Graham, "The Date and Compilation of the Liehtzyy", *Asia Major* 8 (1960-61), 139-198.

測曰，昆侖旁薄、思諸貞也。[333]
Chaotic and boundless: concentrate on this with rectitude.

次二，神戰于玄，其陳陰陽。
SECOND Spirit battles with *xuan*, it clashes yin against yang.

測曰，神戰于玄、善惡并也。
The spirit battles with *xuan*: Good and bad are conjoined in combat.

次三，龍出于中，首尾信，可以為庸。
THIRD The dragon emerges from the center; its head and tail stretch out. It can be taken as constant measure.[334]

測曰，龍出于中、見其造也。
The dragon emerges from the center; its creative force becomes apparent.

次四，庳虛無因，大受性命，否。
FOURTH Lowly and void, without support. Receiving in great measure natural disposition and fate: obstruction.

測曰，庳虛無否、不能大受也。
The obstruction of the lowly and void: he cannot receive in great measure.

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[333] Interestingly, for 思諸貞 Sima has the variant reading 思之貞. See Sima, 4. *Zhū* 諸 is the phonetic fusion of *zhī* 之 (direct object pronoun) and *yū* 於 ('in relation to'). If we followed Sima's version with 思之貞 as a modifier-head construction we would translate as "the perseverance of thought/concentration." The meaning does not change much. A more intriguing question is why there is a lexical difference and when and who changed it, for the *zhi* in Sima's edition is embedded in the meaning of *zhu* in Fan's edition, although the function of *zhi* differs. That is, as part of the fusion of *zhu*, *zhi* is functioning as a pronoun, whereas in the Sima text *zhi* may be functioning as a possessive modifier.

[334] The image of the dragon is prevalent throughout the *Zhou yi* as embodiment of full creative force, and has become the symbol for celestial or imperial power. The most famous one occupies the entire first hexagram "Qian" which represents the rise and fall of the dragon through the six lines. Contrast this with the "Center" tetragram that only mentions the dragon in the third *zan*.

次五，日正于天，利以其辰作主。
FIFTH The sun in the zenith of heaven. It is beneficial to use the moment in time to become master.

测曰，日正于天、貴當位也。
The sun in the zenith of heaven: the elevated has his appropriate position.

次六，月闕其博，不如開明于西。
SIXTH The fullness of the moon wanes: It would be better to open up light in the west.

测曰，月闕其博、明始退也。
The fullness of the moon wanes: the light begins to retreat.

次七，酋酋，大魁頤，水包貞。
SEVENTH Complete and concluded. Fire takes the lead in nourishing, water contains perseverance.

测曰，酋酋之包、任臣則也。
What cleared wine contains: this is the measure of investing officials.

次八，黃不黃，覆秋常。
EIGHTH Yellow does not yellow. The constancy of autumn is overturned.

测曰，黃不黃、失中德也。
Yellow does not yellow: central power is lost.

上九，巔靈，氣形反。
NINTH The life-giving spirit topples. Vital breath and corporeal form return home.

测曰，巔靈之反、時不克也。
The returning home of the life-giving spirit: time cannot be overcome.

Calendrically “Center” corresponds to the winter solstice, the shortest day of the year, where the creative force (*yang qi*) lies latent. In the natural world, this is reflected in the hibernation of beasts, lifeless plants, and the barren land. According to P1 and P2 in “Diagrams,” the *zan* should be read in two different sequences each with three series.

As we saw earlier, the first ordinal sequence (P1) divides the nine *zan* into three series: 1-3, 4-6, and 7-9 as respective processes of thought, affirmation, and negation. In the first series

(*zan* 1-3), the first *zan* represents the condition of the beginning of the beginning. The description "chaotic and boundless; in darkness" conjures up an image of the black hole that is packed with an intense amount of matter where nothing, not even light, can escape. The "Ce" commentary glosses the line as "concentrate on this with perseverance" 思諸貞也.[335] Yang Xiong further explains the first *zan* in the "Wen" commentary,

> 賢人天地，思而包群類也。昆諸中未形乎外，獨居而樂，獨思而憂，樂不可堪，憂不可勝，故曰幽。[336]
>
> The worthy man, [on behalf of] heaven and earth, contemplate and nourishes the various kinds. Making [these kinds] muddled within the center with their shapes yet to externalize, residing alone, he is joyous, thinking alone he is anxious." His joy cannot be endured, and his anxiety cannot be conquered. Thus this [condition] is called "darkness."[337]

The black hole analogy where nothing escapes is quite appropriate for we see in Yang's explanation that the worthy man still has his mind spinning in thought where ideas have not yet taken shape or differentiated.

In *zan* 2 "spirit battles with *xuan*, it displays yin and yang," energy begins to stir as spirit battles with the muddled swirl, the result of which is the first differentiation of yin and yang (this is also the transitional phase of the second series). Here yin and yang represent the two outcomes of the battle as either auspicious (yang) or inauspicious (yin).[338] The image of the emerging dragon in *zan* 3 shows that there is a break in stillness, but he is not quite in full flight. For the

[335] TXJ 1.4b.

[336] TXJ 9.3b.

[337] Following Fan Wang's gloss of 包 as "nourish" 養.

[338] TXJ 9.3a-b.

majority of us who cannot understand this line and are curious about the significance, Yang Xiong supplements:

> 龍德始著也。陰不極則陽不生，亂不極則德不形。君子脩德以俟時，不先時而起，不後時而縮。動止微章，不失其法者，其唯君子乎。故首尾可以為庸也。[339]
>
> The potency of the dragon is beginning to form. If yin does not reach its culmination then yang will not arise; if chaos does not reach its culmination, then potency will not form. The *junzi* cultivates potency by awaiting the proper time: he does not arise prior to the proper time, and he does not shrink back after the proper time. Motion and stillness can be subtle or evident; as for the one who does not lose sight of this method, is this not the *junzi*? Thus we say that the "head and tail can be put into use.

The second series (*zan* 4-6) expresses the rise and fall of "blessings" (*fu* 福), or affirmations. We see that the primary figure in the first series was the dragon. Here the dragon has been replaced with the sun (*zan* 5) and the moon (*zan* 6). Both images have long been symbolic of the ruler in Chinese culture, and for Yang Xiong they seem to also be representing the wise sage. The fourth *zan* reads, "Lowly and void, without causation. Receiving in great measure of nature and destiny is at a standstill." Yang explains in the "Wen" that this indicates a stage of standstill where neither the petty person nor the *junzi* is able to advance or retreat. Wilhelm rightly describes this as a "field of ordered tension," but since it is still at the beginning position, "[s]uch a void state of equilibrium opposes human action."[340] The fifth *zan* describes the sun at its highest position in the middle of heaven where the situation is most favorable for action. This reaches an end by the sixth *zan* (a position of decline in column z) where the sun is replaced by an image of the waning moon and "the light begins to retreat."

[339] TXJ 9.3b.

[340] Wilhelm (1997), 138.

The third series (*zan* 7-9) is a process of "transgression" (*huo* 禍) which I tentatively generalize as negation. The image of "cleared wine" in *zan* 7 is quite curious. Wilhelm explains this state as the point of unfiltered wine fermentation where the sedimentation is visible from the clear liquid portion at the top. "The turbulence and opaqueness of the fermentation must lie completed behind him"—that is, it is time to let go. This analogy is quite literary. The eighth *zan* "Yellow is not yellow: the constancy of autumn is overturned" is even more curious. Yang Xiong gives this a moral twist in the "Wen":

> 君子在玄則正，在福則沖，在禍則反。
> 小人在玄則邪，在福則驕，在禍則窮。
> 故君子得位則昌，失位則良。
> 小人得位則橫，失位則喪。
> 八雖得位，然猶覆秋常乎。
>
> When the *junzi* is in the dark he is upright; if he is in a blessed position, he is modest; if he is a position of calamity, he turns inward. But when the petty man is in the dark, he is off-centered; if he is in a blessed position, he is haughty; if he is in a position of calamity, then he is in adversity. Thus when the *junzi* obtains this position [of the eighth] then he is flourishing, if he loses it he is still of good character. But if the petty person obtains this position he will be perverse, and if he loses it he will be suffering. The eighth may be of an achieving position, but how does this compare to "the constancy of autumn being overturned?"[341]

In the five phases theory, the color yellow is associated with the center position, the last month of summer, the earth element, and the *gong* note (the first in the pentatonic scale). It is possible that Yang Xiong is up-fronting the transition from one phase to another, for the phase that follows happens to be correlated with autumn. Finally, in the ninth *zan* we have the "toppling of the life spirit; power and form (return home) are reversed."

[341] TXJ 9.5b-9.6a.

The next two sets of lines come from the "Wen" commentary, which I have labeled W1 and W2 for convenience.[342] I have numbered each line to correspond to the nine *zan*. The tenth line functions as a kind of unifying comment on all nine *zan*. Corresponding rhyme groups are placed in parentheses following each line. It is clear that Yang Xiong deliberately composed these sections (W1 and W2) according to a rhyme scheme: ll. 1-5 belong to one rhyme group, and ll. 6-10 belong to another, although there is one anomaly in each section (l. 7 in W1, and l. 8 in W2).[343]

W1

1 昆侖旁薄、大容也。　　（東）
Chaotic and boundless: Greatly encompassing.

2 神戰于玄、相攻也。　　（東）
The spirit battles with xuan: Mutually attacking.

3 龍出于中、事從也。　　（東）
The dragon emerges from the center: Affairs follow.

4 庳虛之否、不公也。　　（東）
Lowly and void in obstruction: Not impartial.

5 日正于天、光通也。　　（東）
The sun in the zenith of heaven: Brightness permeates.

6 月闕其博、損贏也。　　（耕）
The fullness of the moon wanes: Reducing in fullness.

7 酋酋之包、法乎則也。　　（職）
Containment of the complete and concluded: Model conforms to rules.

[342] TXJ 9.6b-9.7a.

[343] It is strange that there should only be one line in each set that does not conform to the rhyme pattern. I find it rather unsettling that someone with the brilliance of Yang Xiong should let something like this slip by, but I have no explanation and will have to leave this issue with these observations.

8 黃不黃、失中經也。　　（耕）
Yellow does not yellow: Losing the guideline of the center.

9 巔靈之反、窮天情也。　　（耕）
The returning of the toppled life-giving spirit: Exhausting heaven's disposition.

10 罔直蒙酋、贊群冥也。[344]　（耕）
The Barren, Extension, Cover, and Completion: These assist the various things that are secluded.[345]

The significance of this set of interpretations lies in its use of figurative and conceptual imagery.

Then we must reread the nine *zan* with a different set of interpretations.

W2

1 昆侖旁薄、資懷無方。　　（陽）
When it is chaotic and boundless: The material that is harbored lacks borders.[346]

2 神戰于玄、邪正兩行。　　（陽）
When spirit battles with *xuan*: The off-centered and correct take two paths.

3 龍出于中、法度文明。　　（陽）
When the dragon emerges from the center: The model and guidelines are cultured and brilliant.

4 庳虛之否、臣道不當。　　（陽）
The lowly and void in obstruction: The way of the vassal is not fitting.

5 日正于天、乘乾之剛。　　（陽）
The sun in its zenith: Riding on the firmness of the creative [force].

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[344] TXJ 9.5b-9.6a.

[345] Fan Wang construes *zan* as a verb: "This is saying that the myriad things are found within the secluded, and the four potencies [i.e. Barren, Extension, Cover, and Completion] assist them" 言萬物在冥昧之中而四德贊之也. TXJ 9.6b.

[346] Fan Wang explains 方 as 常方 "constant method/direction." TXJ 9.7a. Nylan translates 資懷無方 as "the stuff embraced has no bound," placing this in quotes. See Nylan, 452.

6 月闕其博、以觀消息。　　（職）
The fullness of the moon wanes: One thereby observes its ebbs and flows

7 酋酋之包、揩任乎形德。　（職）
The containment of the complete and concluded: the model relies on shape and potency.[347]

8 黃不黃、不可與即。　　（質）
Yellow does not yellow: Unable to be reached together.

9 巔靈之反、時則有極。　　（職）
The returning of the toppled life-spirit: Time then has its culmination.

10 罔直蒙酋、乃窮乎神域。[348]　　（職）
The Barren, Extension, Cover, and Completion: Then and only then does one finally reach the realm of spirit.

The significance of this set is that the interpretations are to be applied to concrete situations. To demonstrate the interconnectedness and importance of a synthetic reading, let us look at three individual *zan*, the first, fifth, and ninth, in conjunction with their respective commentaries given in the "Wen" section (W1 and W2 above).

FIRST Chaotic and boundless. In darkness.

CE Chaotic and boundless. Concentrate on this with perseverance.

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[347] The precise meaning of this line is puzzling. Fan Wang explains this as: "to take potency as relying on form, and form relying on potency" 以德任刑，以刑任德 (TXJ 9.7a). The definition of *kāi* 揩 is 'swipe; rub together,' which sounds nonsensical here. Professor Knechtges has suggested the possibility that 揩 may be equivalent to *kǎi* 楷 'model, pattern.' Phonetically, they are similar. Graphically, the semantic components 木 and 扌 look similar. I have followed this suggestion. Interestingly, Wang Li notes that the *Shuowen* does not contain an entry for 揩. See *Wang Li guhanyu zidian*.

[348] Cf. "Xi ci" commentary: "reaching the spiritual and knowing transformation is the fullness of potency" 窮神知化德之盛也 (ZYZY 8.6b).

W1 Chaotic and boundless. Greatly encompassing.

W2 Chaotic and boundless. Take in one's embrace no methods.

Notice that the first phrases in all four lines are identical. This is not always the case as there are sometimes slight variations. The connection between the second phrases is a bit more obscure. Keeping in mind the intention of the "Wen" is to explicate the Taixuan, it does not seem as if Yang Xiong is merely repeating himself.

FIFTH The sun in the zenith of heaven. It is beneficial to use the moment in time to become master.

CE The sun in the zenith of heaven. The elevated has his appropriate position.

W1 The sun in the zenith of heaven. Brilliance is accessed.

W2 The sun in the zenith of heaven. Riding on the firmness of the creative force.

We have already noted the significance of the fifth *zan* above, saying that it represents the peak position of a situation. "The sun in the zenith of heaven" is the general literary imagery and is repeated in the first half of the "Ce" and the two "Wen" explications. The *zan* explains the imagery of the high sun as that point where one ought to seize the opportune moment of being at the top to further oneself as "master," or simply as leader. The "Ce" confirms this: "the elevated has his appropriate position." W1 and W2 are interesting explanations. In the first, the phrase "brilliance is accessed" is a poetic rearticulation of the *zan* imagery. In the second, "riding on the firmness of the creative" suggests an agent performing some action, and although it is not made explicit, we can take this to be an extension of the "Ce" explanation. If we combined all four lines by excising the second halves, we would get the following situation for the fifth *zan*:

日正于天，利以其辰作主。

貴當位也，光通也，乘乾之剛。

The sun in the zenith of heaven. It is beneficial to use the moment in time to become master.

The elevated has his appropriate position. Brilliance is accessed. Riding on the firmness of the creative.

This reordering clarifies the fifth *zan* as a specific moment in the cycle of the nine zan, where its "restrained" verbal display utilizes concise words but does not fail in poetic expression.

Let us look at the ninth *zan* in the same fashion as another example.

NINTH The life-giving spirit topples. Power and form return home.

CE The returning of the toppled life-giving spirit. Time cannot be overcome.

W1 The returning of the toppled life-giving spirit. Exhaustion of heaven's disposition.

W2 The returning of the toppled life-spirit. The rules of time have an end.

These supplement interpretations are only given for "Center." Unfortunately, we are left on our own to read the other eighty tetragrams.

4.4.2 The "Preface"

The "Preface" is undeniably in verse format, as I have attempted to show in my full translation.[349] There are clear line breaks with mostly tetrasyllabic rhyming couplets. The first five lines of the "Preface" introduce the concept of *xuan* as an undifferentiated mass of pure movement circulating through its own accord. Through the mixture of yin and yang, night and day are distinguished. With the rising and setting of the sun in a yearly cycle the myriad life forms are thus created. With the exception of l. 8 the rest of the "Preface" is constructed in perfectly regulated tetra-syllabic couplets in the 耕 rhyme group. The "Preface" serves to

[349] See Appendix I.

introduce the basic format of the *Taixuan*, concluding beautifully with the statement that the eighty-one heads express all the affairs of one year (*sui*).

1 Compliant, indeed, is xuan!
2 Moving in an integral sphere without limit, it exactly imitates the heavens.
3 Yin and yang pair to become a trinity,
4 Through the initial yang calculate the initial sequence,
5 And the myriad things obtain their forms.

The preface begins with praising the compliancy of *xuan* insofar as it is a force of continuous spherical movement it reflects the heavens. It is implied that the "heavens" is infinite space, significantly different from the *gaitian* theory where the heavens are "shaped" like an umbrella, suggesting finite extension. From this swirl of continuous movement yin and yang emerge as a pair to create a "trinity" along with *xuan*, and through a process of multiplication the myriad things are formed. These first few lines resonate with the *Laozi* 42:

> 道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。
> 萬物負陰而包陽，沖氣以為和。[350]
>
> Tao gives rise to the one, the one gives rise to the two, the two gives rise to three, and the three give rise to the myriad things.
> The myriad things carry yin and embrace yang, which surge together to become harmonious.

It is not clear if "one" means the abstracted number one, or the formation of stuff into one finite, particular being. "Two" refers to the yin and yang forces, and "three" indicates that now there are three things: the "one," yin, and yang. As soon as there is distinction between these three then multiplicity emerges. Hall and Ames give a philosophical nuance to this passage to say that tao "gives rise to continuity, continuity gives rise to difference, difference gives rise to plurality, and

[350] *Laozi zhu* 老子注, *Zhuzi jicheng* 諸子集成, 26-7.

plurality gives rise to the manifold of everything that is happening."[351] Although this is not a precise translation, as they have acknowledged, the philosophical interpretation that is embedded in their rendering is on point. In taking "one" to mean "continuity," the translators are able to give a seamless account of the ontological grounding in the formation of the cosmos. It is unclear whether there is a "one" in the *Taixuan*. In l.3 of the "Preface" we read that "yin and yang pair to become a trinity." But yin and yang are only two items – where is the third member of said trinity? One possible candidate is *xuan*, for this is the only other "thing" that is mentioned prior to l.3.

4.4.3 The "Li" commentary

The "Li" commentary offers yet another style: a mixture of parallel prose with verse. I have tried to make this clear in the formatting of my translations. In terms of content it is an explication of the concept and function of *xuan*, in many cases we find parallels in the "Xi ci." The philosophical depth and sophistication is striking in the auto-commentaries. There are clear sections in the "Li", already noted by Sima Guang.[352]

I. Origin, birth, and expansion of the universe.

II. Place of humans in the cosmos and correct conduct (virtues).

III. Astro-cosmic accounts.

Part II focuses on the human realm: it points out the finitude of human knowledge and existence, and the endeavor towards the unknown; and describes the concepts of tao, virtue, benevolence,

[351] David Hall and Roger Ames, *Daodejing "Making This Life Significant": A Philosophical Translation* (New York: Ballantine Book, 2003), 142.

[352] Liu (2011), 186.

righteousness, accomplishment (*ye* 業), yin and yang. Part III finishes up with an astrological account of the celestial bodies and their movements. This is a very difficult section. It seems as if it is based on Yang Xiong's own cosmological account. It is difficult to say how much of Yang's account is representative of the *huntian*.

Liu Shaojun contends that the primary purpose of "Li" is to describe the relation between *xuan* and the myriad things, and secondly the relation between *xuan* and humankind. Moreover, "The 'Li' is an explication of the deeper principles of the whole Taixuan, not that of the eighty-one heads."[353] It is not clear how he makes the distinction, particularly if we take the eighty-one heads as manifestations of the concept of xuan in the three realms.

As is often the case with Yang's writings, we immediately encounter a difficulty in translating the title of this commentary. In the "Ni" we are told that this section is an "extension" of *xuan* (or heaven) 攡長之.[354] By "extension" is meant, I think, both in an actual and figurative sense. In actuality it is an explication in quantifiable words that constitute the materiality of the physical text; figuratively, it is through verbal adornment (extending the concept by expanding through thought). Through these two modes of "extension" (*zhang*) that "set forth" (*li*) the features of *xuan*, one can "grasp" (摛 *chi*) the idea. Let us look at the following opening lines of part I.

> *Xuan* is that which obscurely sets forth the myriad kinds [of things] but does not reveal its form.
> 2 It fashions the stuff of the void and emptiness, which rise from the round.
> 3 Supporting spiritual brilliance, it establishes the models.
> 4 It penetrates the heavens from the past and present in order to separate/distinguish categories,

[353] Liu (2011), 165.

[354] TXJ 9.7a. Liu Shaojun interprets the direct object pronoun *zhi* to either refer to the *Taixuan* text, or to the concept of *xuan*. Liu (2011), 165.

5 Setting forth and arranging yin and yang, thereby releasing *pneuma*.
6 Now severed, now conjoined, Heaven and earth are thus replete.
7 As heaven and sun revolves and proceed, the hard and soft thus make contact.
8 Circling and returning to their position, the beginning and end are thus established.
9 As things now come to life, then die, disposition and fate are made clear.

This part sets forth the defining attributes and activity of *xuan*. The first thing to notice is Yang's choice of words: *Xuan* differentiates the "myriad *categories*" (*wanlei* 萬類) not the "myriad *things*" (*wanwu* 萬物) which is a more typical construction. Some scholars have suggested that the usage of *wanlei* was Yang Xiong's way of distancing himself from the school of Tao. If this were so, then one would expect Yang to not use *wanwu* at all, which is not the case, for we see this in many other places in the *Taixuan*. For example, in the "Preface" we read "through the initial yang calculate the initial sequence, / and the myriad things obtain their forms," 一陽乘一統萬物資形 and "the void and substantial sway, and so the myriad things are tied up" 虛實盪故萬物纏. In the process of differentiation categories must first be made before things are formed into those categories, *prior* to the division between yin and yang. "Through seeing the forms that cannot be seen, and extracting the threads that cannot be extracted, the myriad categories are mutually linked" 以見不見之形抽不抽之緒與萬類相連—unseen forms and un-extractable threads are the prelimaria of categorical thought that need to be organized by the mind before they can be sense and classified. Categories are ideas associated with thought, whereas "things" have already taken corporeal form (finite extension). Xuan is portrayed as a force penetrating the heavens through space and time (or perhaps better, prior to the categorization of space and time) – atemporal accounts for continual renewal – differentiating and thereby fixing those categories.

This force is that potency of pure movement, spherical and continuously swirling like an undifferentiated mass. It imitates the heavens insofar as it is "without limit" (*wu qiong*), implying

a conception of infinite space. From pure movement the two complimentary forces of yin and yang emerge, thereby creating a "trinity": light, darkness, and movement. This resonates with the *Laozi* 42: "Tao gives rise to one, the one gives rise to two, the two gives rise to three, and the three gives rise to the myriad things (*wanwu*). The myriad things carry yin and embrace yang, surging together to become harmonious." If we compare these two passages it seems that *xuan* is not quite the same as tao. In the *Laozi dao* is that origin from which all else arises. But the *Taixuan* says that *xuan*, as pure movement, is one of the three, so it cannot be the prime beginning. Perhaps Yang's "*xuan*" is Laozi's "one"?

We discussed the origins of the cosmos based on the differential power of *xuan*, principles that are key to proper human action and decision. If these principles are invisible how does one know how to act accordingly? The search for the correct way drove thinkers to the mysterious gate of the way, behind which was the dark unknown, obscure, like an infinite expanse of nothingness. Yang's answer is to look up and observe the "images" (*xiang* 象), that is, the constellations in the night sky. These sparkling patterns of the heavenly bodies in the dark night and their movements correspond to phenomenal events on the earth. Because constellations shift, events likewise change accordingly—seasonal changes is one observable example. Through these observations of celestial phenomena and terrestrial events we conclude a general pattern, and this general pattern is the natural disposition of things through which the "ordained" (*ming* 命) is revealed. In the origin of things we see the end, the purpose towards which all things strive.

There are passages that resemble those of the "Xi ci," and though not verbatim, it is clear that these lines were meant to refer to the "Xi ci" counterpart. For example, let us compare ll. 9-11 to a passage in the "Xi ci":

"Xi ci":

仰以觀於天文，俯以察於地理，
是故知幽明之故，原始反終。
故知生死之說。[355]

Look up to observe the heavenly markings, look down to examine the earthly patterns.
Thus, the reasons for the obscure and the illumined are made known, and the primal origin returns to the end.
Thus, the explanations for life and death are made known.

"Li":

一生一死，性命瑩矣。
仰以觀乎象，俯以視乎情，
察性知命，原始見終。

Now living, now dying, the natural and the ordained are illuminated.
Look up to observe images, look down to view dispositions.
In examining the natural and knowing the ordained, the primal beginning shows the end.

The lines in "Li" are a scrambled recreation of those in the "Xi ci". Yang Xiong uses synonyms in replacing "heavenly markings" 天文 with "images" 象, and "earthly patterns" 地理 with "dispositions" 情, condensing two words into one. Where the "Xi ci" says "the primal origin returns to the end," Yang Xiong replaces the verb "return" (*fan*) with "makes appear" (*xian*).

There are also places with similarities to the *Laozi*, for example:

Laozi:

知者不言，言者不知。
塞其兑，閉其門，挫其銳，
解其分，和其光，同其塵，
是謂玄同。[356]

[355] ZYZY 7.5b.

[356] *Laozi* 56. According to Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之 there is a *Wen xuan* commentary on the "Wei du fu" that quotes from this passage without including the tri-syllabic phrases: 知者不言，言者不知，是謂玄同. Some

That which knows does not speak; that which speaks does not know.
Block its openings, shut its gates, blunt its sharpness;
Unwind its sections, dull its brilliance, unify its dust.[357]
This is called the profound sameness.

"Li"

嘿而該之者，玄也。
擸而散之者，人也。
稽其門，闢其戶，叩其鍵，
然後乃應。況其否者乎。
That which is silent and combines [heaven and earth] is *xuan*.
That which disperses and spreads it [i.e. *xuan*] is humankind.
Knock on its gate, open its door, rap its door-bar—
Only then will there be a response. What of those who do not do so?

These two passages contain similar three-character phrases. The *Laozi* expresses mostly negative actions: shut and close, blunt and unwind, dull and unify. These six actions belong to that of the "profound agreement/sameness" in the sense that those who do these same actions are in accord with the profound. The "Li" expresses positive actions: knock, open, and rap. We can say that Yang Xiong furthers the *Laozi* passage by an optimistic result where the inquirer receives a response. The paradox of speech and knowledge is explicit in the *Laozi*, and Yang Xiong interprets this paradox as a tension between the divine and the mortal: the silent and undifferentiated realm belongs to *xuan*, the naming and differentiation of things belongs to that of humans.

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scholars speculate that this might be an interpolation from *Laozi* 52, which contains similar phrases: "block the openings, shut the door […] unblock the openings, add to your troubles […] use the light […]" 塞其兌，閉其門 […] 開其兌，濟其事 […] 用其光 […] See Zhu Qianzhi 朱謙之, *Laozi jiaoshi* 老子校釋, 228. D. C. Lau's translation. D. C. Lau, *Tao Te Ching* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1982), 75.

[357] For 同其塵 Lau translates as "let your wheels move only along old ruts." Lau, 83.

Ll. 32-42 (literary techniques)

32	夫玄	Thus, *xuan*
33	晦其位而冥其畛,	hides it position and obscures its boundary,
34	深其阜而眇其根,	deepens its land mass, and blurs its roots,
35	攘其功而幽其所以然者也。	hides its efforts and conceals that which makes it so.
36	故玄	Thus, *xuan* is
37	卓然示人遠矣,	preeminent, showing humankind a far-ranging perspective;
38	曠然廓人大矣,	expansive, enlarging humankind to be greater;
39	淵然引人深矣,	fathomless, guiding humankind to be deep;
40	渺然絕人眇矣。	boundless, preventing humankind from short-sightedness.
41	默而該之者，玄也；	That which is silent and encompasses things is *xuan*;
42	擿而散之者，人也。	that which indicates and distinguishes things is humankind.

We can divide this passage into three distinct sections:

1) Lines 32-35 express the intensive (contraction) attributes of *xuan* acting on itself.
2) Lines 36-40 express the extensive (expansion) attributes of *xuan* in relation to humans. Notice the adjectival *-ran* suffixed sets: 卓然，曠然，淵然，渺然.
3) Lines 41-42: summary of the nature/essence of *xuan* and humankind. Note the contrast between the inclusiveness of *xuan* and exclusiveness of humans: *xuan* takes the multiple and gathers them into one; humans take the one and make it multiple through “indicating and distinguishing” things. Note also how Yang Xiong contrasts the functional attributes of *xuan* and humans by drawing attention to opposite actions.

For those who wonder about the usefulness of the *Taixuan*, Yang Xiong does not fail to include implicit moral dimensions that pertain to the *junzi* who aspires toward sagehood. "If on a daily basis the *junzi* strengthens what he lacks and discards his excesses then these are approximations for a profound way" 君子日彊其所不足而拂其所有餘，則玄道之幾矣.[358] Moderation is key for a well-rounded individual. For the *junzi* the divine path is all-pervasive – it appears at every turn of the road, and it is the option he must choose. Once he realizes the necessity of this, the norm for moderation comes naturally and effortlessly: "Even if he wants to go against the rules, he cannot; remaining tranquil and obtaining his [rightful] place—this is [acting in accordance] with *xuan*" 欲違則不能，默則得其所者玄也. To move with the flow of *xuan* is to "utilize" it in the following ways:

> Thus, *xuan* is the culmination of utility.
> Those who see and know it are knowledgeable;
> Those who observe and care for it are benevolent;
> Those who are decisive and certain about it are intrepid;
> Those who impartially determine things and make broad use of ideas are impartial;
> Those who can coordinate phenomena of things are all-comprehending;
> Those who lack attachments and fetters are sages.
> That which is timely and not timely is the ordained.[359]

Yang Xiong plays with sight/knowledge related verbs in the first three lines: "see" (*jian* 見), "observe" (*shi* 視), and "discern" (*duan* 斷). This flow with the divine – *xuan*, or divine, ways of the *junzi* – is a cultivation of five important virtues (wisdom, benevolence, courage, impartiality, and insight) that lead up to a formation of the sage and thus determines one's ordained fate (*ming*). The list of virtues continues on to include an explication of the two most important ones, tao and potency, as well as a rearticulation of benevolence and propriety. All of this builds up to

[358] TXJ 7.8a.

[359] "Li," II. ll. 29-36. See Appendix II.

heritage/legacy (*ye*) which is the ability to "grasp tao, de, benevolence, and righteousness, and to utilize these" 秉道德仁義而施之.

In the following passage Yang Xiong defines virtues by using words with phonetic similarity.

虛形萬物所道之謂道也,
因循無革天下之理得之謂德也,
理生昆群兼愛之謂仁也,
列敵度宜之謂義也。

That which follows the way of the empty forms of myriad things is called "tao."
Following and according with the course without changing
the principles of the realm thereupon obtaining it is called "*de*."
Ordering life, unifying the many,
and giving indiscriminate care to it is called "*ren*."
Arranging matching pairs and measuring what is fitting
is called "*yi*."[360]

Here are the Late Han and Old Chinese reconstructions:

道 daò < LH dou^{B} < * lûʔ
道 daò < LH dou^{B} < * lûʔ

德 dé < LH tək < * tə̂k
得 dé < LH tək < * tə̂k

仁 rén < LH ńin < *nin
愛 aì < LH ʔəs < *ʔə̂ts

義 yì < LH ŋje^{C} < *ŋɨɑi^{C}
宜 yí < LH ŋɨɑi < *ŋai

The instance of tao is a circular definition and should remind us of its formulation in the first chapter of the *Laozi*: "that which can be *dao*-ed is not the constant *dao*." The case of 得 and 德 is

[360] TXJ 7.8b-7.9a.

special not only because they are homophones and because of their semantic relation of belonging to the same word family, but also because using 得 to define 德 is a common practice in early Chinese thought.[361] Yang Xiong is no exception. We should note that l. 37 is quite consistent with what Zhuang Zun had written in the *Zhigui*: "One who is calm and silent with reliance and response, acting on that which does not act, this refers to a man of de" 清靜因應，為所不為，謂之德人.[362]

Using the same method of drawing attention to pronunciation and meaning, Yang articulates these virtues in the *Fa yan* where *de* is defined in relation to one's personhood.

> 道、德、仁、義、禮，譬諸身乎。
> 夫道以導之，德以得之，仁以人之，義以宜之，禮以體之，天也。合則渾，離則散，一人而兼統四體者，其身全乎。[363]
>
> The way, potency, benevolence, righteousness, and propriety: how do these compare to the self?
>
> The way [relates to the self through guiding it, potency through obtaining it, benevolence through making it human, righteousness through making it fit, propriety through making it respond: these [are the ways of] heaven. When something is unified then it is muddled, when it is separated then it is disparate. The one person that combines all four forms, is this not that his body is complete?

In this passage the homophones are even more obvious:

道　daò < LH dou^{B} < * lûʔ
導　dǎo < LH dou^{C} < *lûh

德　dé < LH tək < * tə̂k
得　dé < LH tək < * tə̂k

仁　rén < LH ńin < *nin

[361] For the etymological relation between 德 and 得 see Schuessler (2007), 208, and his references in regard to this matter.

[362] LZZG, 3.

[363] *Fa yan yishu*, 111.

人　rén < LH ńin < *nin

義　yì < LH ŋje^{C} < *ŋɨɑi^{C}
宜　yí < LH ŋɨɑi < *ŋai

禮　lǐ < LH lei^{B} < *rîʔ or rə̂ʔ
體　tǐ < LH t^{h}ei^{B} < * rhîʔ

In these two passages Yang Xiong explicitly suggests the relation between the pronunciation of words and their meanings, and is an example where Yang shows his linguisitic acuity and carefully crafted sentences.

It is my contention that the *Taixuan jing* is a work that strives to give form to the absolute. By "absolute" I mean that ultimate principle that governs the entire universe (all three realms) that takes expression as xuan, i.e. power of pure movement, in turn expressed by Yang Xiong in a language that pushes the limits of representation. The absolute is, as its name suggests, all-encompassing, inexhaustible, and thus infinite. The idea of the absolute is paradoxical because while it is the principle that is found in everything, it cannot be properly expressed through words precisely for the reason that language attempts to fix meanings words. As the *Laozi* reminds us, if something can be fixed within language it is not the constant principle—that the only thing constant is change.

This principle is best represented by the Latin *natura naturans* in distinction from *natura naturata*. The former takes nature as *naturing*, that is, forever in a state of change, constantly renewing itself and yet at the same time is perpetual insofar as it operates on the force of continuous movement. The latter takes nature as having been natured, as if nature itself was a means to some final end, motion with a definite beginning and rest, static and fixed in its being.

Now we can finally answer the million-dollar question: what is the meaning of *xuan* for Yang Xiong? Hellmut Wilhelm rightly points out:

> The idea of *xuan* is not easily differentiated from other primal concepts, such as the concept of *yi* [change], or instance, or of tao. Perhaps the dividing line could be drawn as follows: *yi* as well as tao are the laws of becoming, under which a phenomenon organizes itself and takes it course, that is, the path of life and the law of change. *Xuan*, on the other hand, as primal energy, is still absolutely undifferentiated; it is the primal energy monad, which is still completely neutral in respect to future developments.[364]

Yet the line is not so easily drawn. I thus propose to add extra lines to Wilhelm's division by refining the meaning of *xuan* as follows:

1. As the primal origin of the heavenly and earthly realms, it is synonymous with tao.
2. As the primal force of the entire cosmos, it refers to the potentiality of pure movement (following Wilhelm above).
3. It is made manifest in the heavenly realm through the movements of celestial bodies, in the human realm through infinite configurations of human action and the rise and fall of events, and in the earthly realm through the cyclical changes of the seasons and the interactions of the five phases.

Why did Yang Xiong abandon the poetic form of the *fu* and turn to other forms of composition: dialogue in the *Fa yan*, and a mixture of prose and verse in the *Taixuan*? For Yang,

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[364] Wilhelm (1960), 85. I do not know if Professor Wilhelm's choice of the word "monad" is a reference to Leibniz' *Monadology*, though it would not be surprising, for he was certainly familiar with Leibniz' interest in the *Zhou yi*. For studies on Leibniz and the *Zhou yi* see Hellmut Wilhelm, "Leibniz and the *I-ching*," *Collectanea Commissionis Synodalis* (1943): 205-19; and Frank J. Swetz, "Leibniz, the *Yijing*, and the Religious Conversion of the Chinese," *Mathematics Magazine* 76.4 (2003): 276-91. For a general study, see Franklin Perkins, *Leibniz and China: A Commerce of Light* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

the *fu* is not strictly aesthetic but also didactic. The primary function is to persuade the reader/listener of a moral message—enchantment, or "word magic" (Waley), is only the superficial form, and thus a secondary feature. Yang's rhetorical skills are to instruct the emperor without being explicitly harsh. The *Fa yan* is Yang's attempt to apply the Ru tradition to his own times, including social institutions and customs, and ethical rules of conduct. The Han court was overly decorated and embellished in its many manifestations to the point that, like the epideictic *fu*, the original nature of humans and correct way of rulership had been lost amidst the excessive ways associated with increasing power and wealth. Yang's solution was a return to order, more specifically, to that order envisioned and promoted by the great Confucius himself. Wilhelm calls this a "tragic realism": "During a period that has the tendency to concede on an hypertrophied position to human institutions, Yang Hsiung contributes something curiously modern and timely. […] His order is created by man and it expresses itself in worldly traditions and institutions. And his clarity is the clarity of the human spirit." That is, he attempts "to sever man from his origins in chaos and darkness, in other words, to uproot man."[365]

To further qualify Professor Wilhelm's statement, Yang's attempt to "uproot man" is simultaneously an attempt to re-root, or reground, the human person back into the cosmos by positioning him closer to that primal force. So long as he is mortal he cannot physically be one with the divine tao, but insofar as he can train his mind to return to that primal state of void and utmost stillness, he is in consciousness of a profound state. In practice this is achieved through an appropriation of the tranquil mind to deliberate action. Deliberate action is the ability to act in accordance with the way, i.e. action with non-action relies on nothing other than its own potency to act, and it never departs from the primal force. The internalization collapses distinction

[365] Wilhelm (1997), 131.

between "this" and "that" so that the human person can be at one with the cosmos in spirit. The order of the three realms is one that balances. The order in the human realm is balancing the manifestation of xuan through a continuous generation of all the virtues and thereby maximizing one's potency.

Order is dependent upon humans—in humans alone is the solution, culminating in the sage's understanding of his position between heaven and earth. The power of heaven is limited; that of the sage is much broader and more expansive. Yang says, "As for my view about heaven, I see only its unconscious, unintentional creativity… How is it to have the power to render form?"[366]

The *Zhou yi* was unsatisfying for Yang Xiong. While it formed the basis for an innate order of the cosmos represented in the images of the hexagrams and its correlations, it did not explicitly give grounding to the human realm, nor a solution for human order. Order was the most pertinent and pressing issue of Yang's time, as he himself witnessed in his later years through the deterioration of the Han court. Neither did he find any comfort in the fact that the *Zhou yi* was subject to a plethora of warped and complicated interpretations (the multiple weft-text schools), for this meant that there was no standard against which to judge or correct. As Wilhelm put it, Yang Xiong thus "hardened the free and infinite possibility of change into a cyclical movement, within which genesis and passing are subject to inescapable laws. And for the image of change in his system he substituted the 'idea in itself', the *Great Mystery*."[367]

The significance of Yang's *Taixuan* is that it forces us to "step backward" and recognize that the issue is not a need to return to a primal chaos of antiquity where there are no

[366] Wilhelm, 1977, 131-2; Zach, 16.

[367] Wilhelm, 1977, 134.

rules/regulations (*Laozi*), but rather that we need to move away from the notion of primal chaos and focus on the present moment in the restoration of order in the human domain. "Only in this way," Wilhelm explains, "are we able to escape the confinement in the system of orders and institutions, and only thus can we recognize life in its wholeness. It is a step out of confinement into freedom."[368] We need to develop and advance, not regress, from the multifaceted and dizzying layers of apocryphal interpretations that have made it impossible to distinguish truth from superficial adornment. The only truth for the human domain is nothing but the principles of *ren* and *yi*, both key aspects of *de*. The heavens do not give form to life; humans do, and they alone have the capacity to change whatever destiny has in store for them.

Wang Yi asked Huan Tan, will Yang's works be transmitted? Huan replied, "For sure, but I believe you and I will not live to see it. All men disdain what is near and value the distant. […] Now the literary import of Yangzi's writings is most profound, and his theories do not deviate from those of the sages. Suppose he had encountered a ruler in his time and had associated with men of worth and wisdom, and was praised by them, [his fame] would have surpassed all the philosophical matters."[369]

[368] Wilhelm (1977), 152.

[369] Knechtges (1982), 61.

§5 Epilegommena

In the "Prolegommena" I stated that the starting point for this project is the claim that Yang Xiong's *Taixuan jing* might have formed the intellectual foundation for *xuanxue* by providing the vocabulary and means of articulation for the concept of *xuan* through the synthesis of elements from the school of Tao and Ru. Further, that Yang Xiong may have acquired his so-called "Taoist" strain from Zhuang Zun, who is believed by some scholars to have been the first to take the three texts of the *Zhou yi*, the *Laozi*, and the *Zhuangzi* together. These three texts hold the defining motifs for Wei-Jin *xuan* discourse, and thus it is for these reasons that scholars have suggested a continuity from Zhuang Zun, to Yang Xiong, to *xuanxue*. But to what extent can we say that there was indeed a continuity? My answer is that, based on the historical and textual evidences available, such a continuity can only be a conceptual one, and not actual. By conceptual I simply mean we can draw similarities and differences in ideas and discourse by comparing the texts of Zhuang Zun, Yang Xiong, and those that are classified to belong to *xuanxue*. By actual I mean an established connection where we can confidently say, for example, these ideas from Wang Bi in such-and-such passage were clearly extracted or influenced by these ideas we find from such-and-such passages from the *Taixuan* or the *Zhigui*. But even the conceptual continuum can prove to be dangerous, as we would be assuming some set of eternal ideas that existed throughout time with which thinkers such as Zhuang Zun and Wang Bi were concerned, e.g. the concept of *ziran*, or *wu*. At the same time, we cannot do away with making comparisons, for an investigation into the history of ideas requires the need to read a text in relation to another, such as I have done here with the *Zhigui* and the *Taixuan*.

My point is simply that we need to be aware of our own presuppositions as well as the limits to a comparative method and the restrictions behind using common tropes and traditional

classifications. Instead of beginning with the presupposition that the *Taixuan* is an imitation of the *Zhou yi* and an intellectual specimen that "uses Taoist ideas to explain Ruist teachings," we should read the *Taixuan* without restricting it to rubrics of the school of Tao, the school of Ru—rubrics that were never clear-cut in the first place. Instead, we should read the *Taixuan* within the historical and intellectual contexts of Yang Xiong's own times and within the framework of his other works, which is what I have attempted to do here.

My conclusions in regard to the question of the *Taixuan* as precursor to *xuan* discourse:

- that it is easier to establish a definitive link between Zhuang Zun and Yang Xiong than it is to claim that the thought of these two thinkers formed the basis for Wei-Jin *xuan* discourse;
- that regardless of the first point, one can still argue for a conceptual continuity, which may be useful in understanding how *xuan* discourse may have evolved, so long as one recognizes that this continuity may not be actual;
- that the first two points do not in any way reject the claim that the scholarly activities of the south are significant for the construction of a larger picture of the intellectual climate of early China; and
- that the significance of the *Taixuan* can only be fully understood and appreciated if we read it not as an imitation of the *Zhou yi* but as a creative product of an individual thinker.

I should now like to conclude by revisiting the thematic issues I had discussed in the "Prolegommena" and attempt to tie them together here.

The relevance of Plato in understanding Yang Xiong's Taixuan *as expression of the absolute*: The quarrel between poetry and philosophy is one that questions the effectiveness of writing and speech in representing truth and in guiding humans to correct action and behavior. For Plato's Socrates truthful representation can be achieved through mixed narration, that is, a weaving of styles producing a balanced effect. Just as Plato's dialogues balance form with content by having the interlocutors reenact the subject matter in a question and answer format that is intrinsic to education, Yang Xiong's *Taixuan* also balances form with content by imitating all the aspects of the infinite truth in aesthetic simplicity through a weaving of verse with prose.

The link between Zhuang Zun and Yang Xiong: We saw in our readings of the *Zhigui* that Zhuang Zun expounded on the ideas of the Laozi in a highly poetic form using many descriptive binomes, alternating between tetrasyllabic verse and parallel prose. We also saw that one of the defining features of the *Zhigui* is the prolific use of *xuan*-headed compounds. While it is tempting to immediately assume a relation to Yang Xiong's *Taixuan*, we will need to look closely at how they use the word *xuan*. In fact, their usages are quite different. In the *Zhigui* the word *xuan* is functioning primarily as an adjective, whereas in Yang Xiong uses it as an independent concept and assigns to it a transcendental status unprecedented to the *Taixuan*. This is where the *Taixuan* diverges from the *Zhigui*. One similarity is that these two works use literary expressions to expand on philosophical concepts, although one can argue that this kind of writing is not unique to Zhuang Zun or Yang Xiong but is characteristic of many Han dynasty compositions (the *Huainanzi*, for example). This shared feature alone does not necessarily prove any literary connection between the two. Perhaps the only thing we can claim with more certainty is a practical connection: the notion of *xuanmo* where silence acquires an almost meditative undertone from which the individual enters a state of profound contemplation that

returns the mind to that primal origin, and the notion of profound potency which retains features of the Taoist sage who acts through non-action. What I mean is to say that what Yang Xiong had retained from his mentor was not only ideas but also a particular perspective of life where a practice of sagehood with virtuous grace and "guarding of the center" (or sustenance of balance) is the re-enactment of the divine in reality.

The significance of the Taixuan jing: at a macroscopic level, because it is an example of an alternative interpretation of the Han classical tradition, and remarkable because unlike other interpretations that take form of commentary the *Taixuan* is a complete rewriting of a classic. This shows us that the intellectual climate of Han China was not a uniform entity, and so the term "Han Confucianism/Ruism" is misleading if it is to be taken as representative of the mainstream scholarly milieu. This also trumps the conventional cliché that the Han dynasty should be identified as Ruist, with the Wei-Jin era as a "metaphysical" turn to Taoist thought, for as we see already in Zhuang Zun and Yang Xiong there was a mixture of these two currents.

The *Taixuan* is also important at a microscopic level, because it represents the culmination of Yang Xiong's mature thought on the function of refined writing: practically, that it should serve a didactic purpose and help guide humans to correct action; and theoretically, that it should in form properly imitate its substance, i.e. the grand principle of the cosmos, by reproducing movement (change) and balance (order) through image, verse, and parallel prose. These three forms of writing are able to encapsulate that higher principle, what I have called the absolute, in the following way: in the linear images of the tetragrams we find a condensation of worldly phenomena and events, which are then expressed in aesthetic verse, and then further expanded in philosophical parallel prose. What we see in the *Taixuan* is a very serious and rigorous treatment of the question of the representability of transcendental truth in speech and

writing—Yang Xiong proves to us that it is possible to exhaust meaning, and that it is not necessary to discard forms once we have grasped the meaning precisely because Yang Xiong's system does not restrict content to form. Because the *Taixuan* operates on a highly sophisticated network of cosmological and mathematical correlations that are constructed in a high literary style and philosophical depth, it is a creative product of a very original thinker, and so we cannot do justice to either Yang Xiong or the *Taixuan jing* if we take it as an imitation of the *Zhou yi*. But the *Taixuan* does imitate something: that infinite principle of the absolute in substance, that inexhaustible and unspeakable concept of the tao in form.

Yang Xiong's project of the *Taixuan* shows us a genuine concern with multiple interpretations of classical texts that he believed had obscured the correct meaning of the sages. As a scholar – but not necessarily a Ruist – and as a follower of Confucius he felt that it was his responsibility to recover the right teachings, and in behavior emulate that of Confucius and his mentor Zhuang Zun. And so, like Zhuang Zun, Yang Xiong "does nothing that might improperly attract attention and engages in nothing that would bring gain." Yang's efforts were indeed a life of the mind—for although he lacked status and fame living a life in material poverty, he was rich in high-minded intellectual efforts, for again, like Zhuang, "he occupied himself with things that were difficult to do"—and so he tells us that "knowing the profound and knowing tranquility [he] holds fact to the utmost [principles] of the tao."

In witnessing the fall of the Western Han and the rise of the Xin dynasty, Yang Xiong knew that the world around him thrived on constant change. And yet, he could not let go of the desire to find order and balance in the universe. We cannot be sure whether he succeeded in his quest for a transcendental truth; but whatever order or truth he found we can surmise he had built into the structure of the *Taixuan.* Dynasties may rise and fall, seasons may come and go—but at

the end of it all is another beginning. Change is indeed important; but without central balance, it is meaningless. As Yang Xiong writes,

> Look up to observe the heavenly markings, look down to examine the earthly patterns.
> Then, the reasons for the obscure and the illumined are made known, and the primal origin returns to the end.
> Then, the explanations for life and death are made known.

The *Taixuan* is a timeless meditation on the profundity of the universe by returning the mind to the primal beginning of pure silence and pure potentiality. Only this way can Yang Xiong be at peace with the world of chaos and find order in the beauty of the cosmos—by painting the formless and strumming to the soundless, he is becoming one with the divine.

Appendix I[370]

The *Taixuan* "Preface" to the *Shou* 太玄首序[371]

1	馴乎玄,	真部
2	渾行無窮正象天。	真部
3	陰陽比參，	侵部
4	以一陽乘一統，	
5	萬物資形。	耕部
6	方州部家，	
7	三位踈成，	耕部
8	曰陳其九九，	
9	以為數生。	耕部
10	贊上群綱，	
11	乃綜乎名，	耕部
12	八十一首，	
13	歲事咸貞。	耕部

1 Compliant, indeed, is xuan!*

2 Moving in an integral sphere without limit, it exactly imitates heaven.*

3 Yin and yang pair to become a trinity,*

4 Through the initial yang calculate the initial sequence,*

[370] Note on formatting: English translations will be provided with the Chinese text. To avoid long footnotes that may run on for pages, I have placed philological notes marked with an asterisk in the main text correlated with line numbers in a separate section titled "Textual Notes." When the etymology or definition of a specific word is in question, I have included tone marks with the *pinyin*. Phonological reconstructions are given when relevant and are taken from Axel Schuessler. For my base text, I have used Fan Wang's edition, *Taixuan jing*, as collected in the *Sibu congkan*.

[371] TXJ 1.2b-1.3a.

and the myriad things obtain their forms.*
In the Regions, Provinces, Districts, and Families,
The three positions are arranged and complete.*
We say that this establishes the nine times nine,
And by this way enumerates life.
The "Appraisals" present the various guidelines,*
Which are then arranged according to the names.
In the eighty-one heads,
the yearly affairs are all made proper.

Textual Notes

L1. The first line is highly problematic, particularly with the meaning of the word 馴 *shùn*. Fan Wang takes 馴 to be synonymous with 順 *shùn* 'to be compliant' (TXJ 1.2b). Song Zhong and Sima Guang follow suit.[372] Chen Benli understands 馴 as 訓 *xùn* to mean 純 *chún* 'perfect', and Suzuki Yoshijirō follows this interpretation in his translation.[373] It is unclear how Chen makes this connection.

Let us first look at the *Shuowen jiezi* entry for 馴:

馬順也。从馬川聲。

[Means] a horse that is compliant. It is graphically/semantically derived from 馬, and is phonophoric with 川 *chuān*.

[372] TXJZ, 165.

[373] Suzuki, 35. TXCM, 1.1a.

Alternatively 馴 can also mean 訓 *xùn* 'to instruct,' as in the context of a story in the *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋.[374] Confucius is going to the state of Qi 齊 to meet with Duke Jing 景公, who then went to Yanzi suggesting that they grant Confucius a fiefdom. Yanzi did not look upon this suggestion favorably, giving a string of attacks against the effectiveness of Confucius' teachings, saying,

i. 不可以道眾而馴百姓.

He cannot lead the masses, nor can his teachings **instruct** the hundred clans.[375] Zhang Chunyi 張純一 (1871-1955) offers a note that 馴 is the ancient form of 訓 *xùn* 'to instruct', citing another context in the *Shi ji* "Xiao Wen benji" 孝文本紀 where it takes the specific meaning of "teaching and instructing the common folk" 教馴其民, probably in moral lessons.[376]

馴 also takes on another common meaning of 訓 *xùn* as 'to explicate, explain' in the *Mozi* "Tianzhi" 天志 (heavenly intent). Mozi is discussing what kinds of things and people are most valuable for the Son of Heaven. Someone poses the question of who is of value and who is knowledgeable, and the answer for both is "heaven."

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[374] The *Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋 is a collection of stories and parables surrounding the historical figure Yan Ying 晏嬰 (d. 500 BCE) and Duke Jing 景 of Qi 齊 (held the title 547-489 BCE). This text seems to have been in wide circulation by the time of the grand historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (?145-?86 BCE), who notes in the *Shi ji* 史記 that many possessed copies of a *Yanzi chunqiu*. As is typical with pre-imperial texts, the transmission history is complicated. For a concise introduction, please consult Michael Loewe's *Bibliographical Guide*, 483-9.

[375] *Yanzi chunqu jiao zhu* 晏子春秋集注, Zhang Chunyi 張純一 comm., *Zhuzi jicheng*, 8.205.

[376] Ibid.

ii. 此吾所以知天之貴且知於天子者，不止此而已矣，又以先王之書馴天明不解之道也知之.

This is how I am able to know of the value of the heavens as well as that of the Son of Heaven, and [how I know these things] does not stop here. I also use the writings of the former kings to **explicate** the ways that are not illuminated by the heavens to know this.[377]

To further complicate the matter, the following lines in the *Fa yan* seem to take 訓 *xùn* and 順 *shùn* as interchangeable:

iii. 君子微慎厥德，悔吝不至，何元憿之有。上士之耳訓乎德，下士之耳順乎己.

The *junzi* is cautious in the meager and virtuous in the scarce; the unrepenting he does not reach—how could there ever be great aversion? The ears of the superior scholar are *xùn* by virtue; the ears of the inferior scholar are *shùn* by the self.[378]

Based on the parallel construction it seems that 訓 and 順 should be the same word. Li Gui 李軌 glosses 訓 as 順, but this begs the question of why Yang Xiong would use two different graphs in the same line for what should be the same word. The Shide tang 世德堂 edition of the *Fa yan* has 訓 in both places. One possible explanation is scribal error, or there may be inherent lexical nuances, but these remain speculations.

[377] *Mozi xian gu* 墨子咸詁, Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 comm., *Zhuzi jicheng*, 7.123

[378] *Fa yan yi shu,* 107-8. Nylan translates *xun* as "attuned," and *shun* as "accustomed." See Nylan (2013), 51.

We finally reach a fourth usage of 馴 in the "Xiang" 象 commentary to the "Kun" 坤 hexagram in the *Zhou Yi*.

iv. 象曰，地勢坤。君子以厚德載物。

初六，履霜，堅冰至。

象曰，履霜堅冰，陰始凝也。馴致其道，至堅冰也。[379]

XIANG The earth's condition is receptive devotion. Thus the superior man who has breadth of character carries the outer world.[380]

SIX AT THE BEGINNING When there is hoarfrost underfoot, solid ice is not far off.[381]

XIANG "When there is hoarfrost underfoot, solid ice is not far off." When the dark power begins to grow rigid and **continues** in this way, things reach the point of solid ice.[382]

Interestingly, Wang Bi includes *shun* 順 in a comment on the "Xiang" image for "Kun": "the shape of the earth cannot [be described as] *shun*, it is its condition that is *shun*."[383] Richard Lynn translates *shun* as 'compliant'. Unfortunately, Wang Bi remains silent on the meaning of 馴. The important thing to remember is that the "Kun" hexagram complements the "Qian" (or "Creative"), and that "the Receptive must be activated and led by the Creative; then it is productive of good."[384] It is this complementary relation between "Qian" and "Kun" that

[379] ZYZY 1.14.

[380] Wilhelm and Baynes, 12.

[381] Wilhelm and Baynes, 13.

[382] Wilhelm and Baynes, 389, italics mine.

[383] 地形不順，其勢順也。ZYZY 1.14.

[384] Wilhelm and Baynes, 11.

possibly informs Yang Xiong's prefatory opening remarks. If *xuan* refers to the heavens, which is also what "Qian" stands for, then we could understand the line 馴乎玄 with the implication that earth is compliant to the profoundness of heaven. In fact, 馴 happens to be tetragram 77 with a note that it corresponds to the "Kun" hexagram. The image of 馴 is a panoramic continuity of infinite movement: "*Yin qi* is greatly continuous; circling amorphously without end, its origin cannot be seen" 陰氣大順渾沌無端莫見其根 (TXJ 6.16a). This is yet but one out of many instances in which Yang rearticulates his understanding of the *Zhou Yi* into a distinct system by using his command of the literary language.

Here are the phonetic reconstructions of the three attested words and their respective definitions according to Schuessler:

a) 馴 xún < LH zuin < *s-lun 'to follow, obey, be docile'

b) 順 shùn < LH źuin^{C} < *m-luns 'to be compliant; follow, agree'

c) 訓 xùn < LH hun^{C} < *huns 'to instruct; comply'

Following Schuessler's reconstruction, we see that the Old Chinese pronunciations of these three are similar in their finals, but only 馴 and 順 have almost identical Late Han and Middle Chinese pronunciations. Schuessler suggests that *shùn* 順 'to follow, agree, be agreeable' is cognate to *xún* 馴 'docile'. The OC *s- before initial *l functions as an iterative prefix, cognate with or borrowed from the Written Tibetan word *slob-pa, slabs* 'to learn, teach', in turn cognate with *slobs* 'exercise, practice'. He gives the Chinese word 習 xí < *s-ləp 'to do repeatedly, repeat' as one example.[385] The OC *m- and *s- prefixes respectively indicate an extrovert and introvert

[385] Schuessler (2007), 89, 476.

pair, as we have here with a) and b), which Schuessler conveniently lists as an example.[386] Based on this morphology, if Schuessler is correct, this means that *xun* 馴 is an introvert verb that is passive, maybe with valence decreasing, requiring no agent; *shun* 順 is extrovert, passive of transitive words, with an agent. Perhaps during Yang Xiong's time there was a slight semantic nuance between *xun* 馴 and *shun* 順, and Yang Xiong knowingly decided to use *xun* 馴 in order to illustrate the "introvertedness" of *xuan*, that is, the *xun*-ness of *xuan* is such that it is directed inward to itself so that its power is self-generating with no direct object and no need for an external force. If this is so, then the translation "compliant" can be slightly misleading because the English leaves want for a direct object: what is it complaint to? For this reason and taking into consideration the image of the 馴 tetragram as "circling amorphously without end," and line 2 "moving in a integral sphere without limit," I have decided on "continuous" for translation, diverging from Professor Wilhelm's "compliant."

Second, is the question of the function of the second word *hu* 乎 which effects how one decides to punctuate the line. One possibility is to take it as a rhetorical interrogative in which we would stop after *hu* and have *xuan* be the opening word to the next line. Another possibility is to take *hu* as an exclamatory particle that highlights Yang Xiong's praise for *xuan*. We would then pause after *xuan* following Sima Guang's suggestion.

[386] Ibid., 90. "In introvert words, the action is directed toward the subject, or happens to or within the subject (to buy, to watch, to grow)" – similar to the Greek middle voice – and "in extrovert words the action originates in or within the subject and is directed out and away to a necessarily external object (to sell, to show)." Ibid., 38. For his full explanation on the distinction between the semantic categories of introvert and extrovert, see 38-50.

L2. There is some disagreement about the meaning of *xuan*. Most scholars believe it is synonymous with tao, or it is synonymous with the heavens. Han Jing 韓敬 points out against the latter interpretation that for Yang Xiong *xuan* is that which is prior to the heavens and earth, so to say that *xuan* is the same as heaven is absurd.[387] Gao Heng 高亨 argues that it refers to the text of the *Taixuan*.[388] Han gives a long discussion on the meaning and function of the word 渾. He says that 渾 is a loan graph for 溷 *hùn* 'jumbled, mixed together.' He then quotes the *Shuowen* glosses for the following three contested words:

混 hùn < LH guən^{B} < *gûnʔ 'overflowing'

渾 hún < LH guən^{B} < *gûnʔ 'the sound of overflowing liquid'

溷 hùn < LH guən^{C} < *gûns 'chaos'

drawing a general semantic sense of something muddled and indistinguishable. Though Han does not say so explicitly, it seems to me that he is identifying what can be called a word family.[389] This is in fact how Schuessler groups these three items under the head entry of 混, 渾 'chaos; muddled, confused.'[390] Han argues that 渾 is functioning as a modifier and cannot function as head noun, so that Fan Wang was incorrect to equate 渾 with the heavens. Quoting

[387] See Han, 59.

[388] See Gao Heng, 2.

[389] See William Boltz, "Studies in Old Chinese Word Families," Ph. D diss., University of California (1974).

[390] Schuessler (2007), 290.

the *Guangya* 廣雅 gloss for 混 *hùn* as 'to turn' 轉也,[391] Han argues that *hun* is functioning as a modifier of *xing* meaning something like "jumbled movement," and drawing a general semantic sense from the above definitions concludes that it describes something muddled and indistinguishable moving in a circular motion. This is pertinent to Han's interpretation that the eighty-one heads of the *Taixuan* serve to mimic the cyclic movement of the profound tao as is made manifest in the seasonal changes that repeat annually.[392] Alternatively, the muddled appearance and circular movement can also be a reference to *huntian* theory.

L3. 玭參 can literally refer to the numbers 'two' and 'three,' or the verbs 'to combine' and 'divide.' For 玭, Song Zhong defines as 'two' 二也, Wang Ya as 'to coordinate' 配合也, Fan Wang as 'to pair with' 比也 (TXJ 1.3a). Semantically speaking, these three meanings are similar in that in combining or comparing one takes two (or more) items side by side. According to Han Jing, it is a variant of 坒 *bì* 'to place side by side,' which as we can see from its graphic appearance is composed of the same elements of 玭 with the 土 component placed on the bottom rather than the left of 比. According to the *Shuowen* gloss of 坒, the 土 'earth' functions as a semantic component, hence Xu Shen's definition 地相次也 with 比 as the phonophoric. But perhaps 比 is also another (primary) semantic? Han cites from the Fang yan that 參 is a Qi dialect word for 'divide.' It is on this basis that he understands 玭參 to mean "combine and separate."

[391] The entry Han refers to is actually the reduplicative 混混, grouped together with 沌沌, glossed as 'turning' 轉也. Qian Dazhao 錢大昭 (1744-1813) comm., *Guangya shu yi* 廣雅疏義 (Tokyo: 靜嘉堂文庫, 1940), 12.37a-b.

[392] For his full argument, see Han, 58-9.

But then he also explains that the line 陰陽毗參 is also Yang Xiong's reformulation of a *Laozi* passage, chapter 42 道生一一生二二生萬物, suggesting that 毗參 means "two and three."[393]

L4. Sima Guang's understanding is different from Fan Wang's (who takes *yang* as *yang qi*) explaining that 一陽 refers to the winter solstice (一陽節 "Initial Yang Festival) when the "initial yang is generated" 一陽生. The calendrical system used during the late Eastern Han dynasty was called the *San tong li* 三統歷, translated by Nathan Sivin as "Triple Concordance Calendar." This was Liu Xin's revision to the previous Grand Inception System 太初 used during Emperor Wu's reign. One *tong* 統 (Concordance Cycle) totals 1,539 years. One *yuan* 元 (epoch cycle) is equivalent to three Concordance Cycles.[394]

Han Jing understands the 一 'one' in 一陽 and 一統 not to mean a 'single one' but rather 'each one', that is 'each one kind of yang' and 'each one kind of tong.' He comments that Sima's calendrical contextualization is a traditional, yet "forced" interpretation, adding that the eighty-one heads of the *Taixuan* are not based on the weft-texts and calendrical calculations of the Han dynasty, but rather on the *huntian* theory. That the eighty-one heads do account for a year's worth of phenomenal changes is a reflection of Yang's "philosophical" thought, but in no way has to do with the weft-text or calendrical tradition.[395]

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[393] See Han, 59-60.

[394] For a detailed study on the development of mathematical calendrical computations during the Han dynasty, see Sivin (1969), 12-18. For a narrative history of astronomy and numerology in early China, see Christopher Cullen, *Heavenly Numbers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).

[395] See Han Jing, 60. I do not see why philosophical ideas are incompatible with weft-text/calendrical prompts. It seems to me that these two simply have different methods, and their ideas do not necessarily contradict each other.

L5. Fan Wang glosses 資 as 取 *qǔ* 'obtain.' In his explanation of the couplet 以一陽乘一統萬物資形 he understands yin and yang to combine and form the three regions (*fang* 方), where one *yang* means one *fang* (TXJ 1.3a). *Yi tong* 一統 refers to *tian tong* 天統 which can either mean one of the three concordances, or a general reference to the heavenly system or heavenly principles.

L7. For 踈: Fan Wang glosses as 大 paraphrasing, "regulating the positions of the *santong*, and are then greatly/fully completed" 則三統之位，乃大成也. (TXJ 1.3a) Sima has a variant *shù* 疏 which Song Zhong glosses as *bù* 布 'to display,' and Wang and Lesser Song have a variant *tǒng* 統.[396] The "three positions" refer to the three kinds of solid and broken lines in Yang's tetragrams. In the *Zhou Yi*, *wei* 位 'position' refers specifically to the *yao* lines 爻辭 which indicate the position of the broken or unbroken line in the hexagram. As we read in the "Xi ci", "the movement of the six lines is the way of the three poles [i.e., heaven, humankind, and earth]" 六爻之動三極之道.[397] Here, too, Yang Xiong has transported this meaning into his own system of tetragrams.

L10. Following Sima Guang's gloss which reads 上 as a verb *shǎng* meaning 'to submit, present' 舉也.[398] Fan Wang takes 上 as the locative *shàng* in his explanation: "this describes how the various guidelines shift above, and then arrange and order all the names of the shou" 言諸綱動於上乃綜理眾首知名姓. (TXJ 1.3a) Gao Heng understands 上 to mean 尚 'dominant, most

[396] TXJZ, 2.

[397] ZYZY, 309.

[398] TXJZ, 2.

important' following the *Guangya*. He explains this line as "taking the leading [principles] of the various gua as the most important" 以各卦的綱領為主.[399]

[399] Gao, 3.

Appendix II

The "Li" 攡 Commentary

I.

1 玄者、幽攡萬類而不見形者也。
2 資陶虛無而生乎規，
3 攡神明而定摹，
4 通同古今以開類，
5 攡措陰陽而發氣。
6 一判一合，天地備矣。
7 天日迴行，剛柔接矣。
8 還復其所，終始定矣。
9 一生一死，性命瑩矣。[400]

1 *Xuan* is that which obscurely sets forth the myriad kinds but does not reveal its form.*
2 It fashions the stuff of the void and emptiness, generated from the round;
3 Supporting spiritual brilliance, it establishes the models.*
4 It penetrates unity from the past and present in order to separate/distinguish categories,*
5 Setting forth and arranging yin and yang thereby releasing pneuma.
6 Now severed, now conjoined, heaven and earth are thus replete.
7 As heaven and sun revolve and proceed, hard and soft thus make contact.
8 Circling and returning to their position, beginning and end are thus established.
9 As things now come to life, then die, disposition and fate are made clear.

[400] TXJ 7.5a-b.

仰以觀乎象，俯以視乎情。

察性知命，原始見終。

三儀同科，厚薄相劘。

圜則杌棬，方則嗇吝。

噓則流體，唫則凝形。

是故闔天謂之宇，闢宇謂之宙。

日月往來，一寒一暑。

律則成物，曆則編時。

律曆交道，聖人以謀。

晝以好之，夜以醜之。

一晝一夜，陰陽分索。

夜道極陰，晝道極陽。

牝牡群貞，以攡吉凶。[401]

We look up in order to observe the [heavenly] phenomena,

look down to scrutinize [earthly] matters/dispositions.

Examining [internal] nature, we recognize the ordained;

returning to the beginning we see the ending.

The three modes have the same standard,

the thick and thin mutually intersect.*

If it is round, then it wobbles unsteadily,

if it is square, then it conserves.*

If it exhales, then it causes a flowing of bodies;

if it inhales, then it congeals the forms.

Thus, the enclosure of the heavens is called eaves,

the opening of eaves is called ridgepole.*

With the coming and going of the sun and moon,

[401] TXJ 7.5b-7.6b.

it is now cold, now hot.
With the pitchpipes then comes a completion of things;
with the calendars then comes the arrangement of seasons.
18 Pitchpipes and calendars intersect in their ways,
the sages use this in planning.
The day he regards as favorable, the night detestable.
20 Now day and now night,
yin and yang divide and seek [where they belong].*
The way of night is extreme yin (darkness),
and the way of day is extreme yang (light).
22 Male and female are diversely regulated,*
in order to set forth the auspicious and inauspicious.

Textual Notes on I

L1. First is a remark about the rare graph 攡. Fan Wang glosses: "攡 means to elongate/expand." 攡張也 (TXJ 7.5a). Chen Benli offers only a sound gloss saying that it is phonophoric with *lí* 離. Chen Benli, 7.2b. Nylan translates 攡 variously as 'evolution' and 'to unfold'. Her explanation: "FW 7/5a glosses this *li* 攡 (the same character appears in the title) as *zhang* 張 ('to expand'). The character is also related to *li* 離 (GSR 24), meaning 'to be dispersed.' My translation attempts to capture both meanings." Nylan, *Supreme Mystery*, 614, n. 1. The only note from the HYCD is that it is interchangeable with 摛 chī < LH tʰɑi < *rhai 'to spread out, elucidate; to transmit.' The *Shuowen* does not contain an entry for 攡, but 摛 is included and is explained as "to expand, stretch out; it is graphically derived from 手 and is phonophoric with *lí* 离" 舒也从手离聲. Duan Yucai elaborates that 摛 is found in the "Fu on the

Shu capital" 蜀都賦 and "Fu on the Wei capital" 魏都賦, both of which were composed by Zuo Si 左思 (ca. 250-ca. 305). He also cites the *Taixuan* line that we are working on. Importantly, Duan adds a note that the word 摛 'to expand' is also written with the graph 攡, by which we are to understand that these are graphic variants of the same word 'to expand.' If we follow Chen Benli's note that 攡 is phonophoric with 離, and assume that 離 and 离 (from Duan's note) are the same pronunciation, then following the Old Chinese and Later Han pronunciation of 摛 LH ʈʰɑi < *ɾhai is phonetically close to 離 LH liɑi < *rai.

In the "Fu on the Shu capital" Zuo Si in describes the talent of the three great fu writers of Shu saying "their profound thoughts sparkled with the Way and Its Virtue; / Their rhetorical displays dazzle the imperial court."[402] In the "Fu on the Wei Capital" he writes, "When the former hoisted his banners, his severe demeanor was keener than autumn frost. / When the latter wielded his brush, his literary elegance burgeoned like spring flowers."[403] These are two of three fu that became known as the "San du fu" 三都賦 (Fu on the Three Capitals) on the three capitals of Shu, Wu, and Wei. Zuo Si had put in much research on each of the capitals before actually composing.[404]

L3. Liu Shaojun takes 資 *zī* and 陶 *táo* to be functioning as verbs, 'to change/mold' and 'to nourish,' respectively. The basic meaning of Liu's preference for this unconventional meaning of *táo* is taken from the *Fang yan* where it is noted as a Qin dialect word meaning 'to

[402] 幽思絢道德, 摛藻掞天庭. Knechtges (1982), 1.371.

[403] 抗斿則威喻秋霜, 摛翰則華縱春葩。Knechtges (1982), 1.465.

[404] For a basic biography of Zuo Si, see Knechtges and Chang (2014), 4.2380-93. For translations of the three *fu* along with the preface, see Knechtges (1982), 1.341-477.

nourish.'[405] But why would Yang Xiong use a dialect word in the *Taixuan*? A more traditional understanding is to take *táo* as 'pottery,' and if functioning as a verb 'to fashion/mold clay.'

On 攡 we are given a sound gloss as 關 *guān* by Fan Wang and Chen Benli. Fan explains that it means to close with both hands, taking the 手 element as semantic classifier. (TXJ 7.5a; TXCM 7.2b) This is a rare graph, perhaps a *hapax legomena*. The *Shuowen* does not have an entry for this. The *Jiyun* 集韻 (compiled in the Song dynasty) and later rhyme books, as well as the *Kangxi zidian* gloss this graph according to Fan's explanation, citing this line from the *Taixuan*. Michael Nylan translates 攡 as 'tied.' My imperfect translation of 攡 as 'support' is a loose rendering of Fan's explanation, in the sense that the divine entities are supported/lifted up. *Guī* 規 is a device used for drawing circles (compass), often paired with 矩 which is used to draw right angles (L-square), but is not what we have here. Instead, it is paired with *mó* 摹 'model, pattern' and by extension 'to model after, imitate, copy.' Note also the compound binome 規模 'structure.' Here they are clearly used as nouns. Liu takes *guī* to mean 'principle.'[406] It is not inconceivable that Yang is also using it to designate something round, i.e. the heavens, as part of the *huntian* schema.

L4. Interestingly, for 通同古今 the SKQS version of Fan Wang's *Taixuan jing* has 通天古今, which would change the translation to "penetrating heaven from the past to present." See SKQS, *Taixuan jing*, 7.4a. Sima Guang, Chen Benli, and the *Taixuan jing* in SBCK all have 通同古今 "penetrating unity from past to present." (TXCM 7.2b; TXJ 7.5a; TXJZ, 184) Fan Wang

[405] Liu (2011), 166.

[406] Ibid.

takes the subject of this line to be *xuan*, which he describes as the "vessel that penetrates the past and present, and the qi that opens up yin and yang; it unifies the kinds of the myriad things" 通古今之器，開陰陽之氣，同萬物之類也 (TXJ 7.5b).

L12. The three modes (*san yi* 三儀) can either refer to heaven, humankind, and earth according to Fan Wang 7.5a; or the sun, moon, and other heavenly bodies according to Chen Benli 7.3a. Fan explains that the thick describes the muddiness (or denseness) of yin, and the thin describes the clearness (or sparseness) of yang. (TXJ 7.6a) Cf. "three poles" *san ji* 三極 in "Xi ci": "the movement of the six yao [lines] are the ways of the three poles" 六爻之動，三極之道也. Han Kangbo glosses *san ji* as *san cai* 三材, which Kong Yingda further explains to be heaven, earth, and humankind (ZYZY, 7.4b).

L13. For the word *wù* 杌 'to sway, shake,' there is a variant 阢. 棿 is the ancient form of 輗 *ní* 'curved collar-bar of large carriage.' These two words also appear in the 74th tetragram "Closure" 闒 which paints an image of a wrong fit:

> 初一，圜方杌棿，其內窾渙。測曰，圜方杌棿、內相失也。
>
> APPRAISAL Round and square is like a peg and socket, but its inside is loose and changes.
>
> INTERPRETATION Round and square is like a peg and socket. This means that internally, they are disconnected with each other.[407]

[407] TXJ 6.11a-b. Nylan seems to take 杌棿 to mean "square socket" in the "Appraisal", but then translates it as "peg and socket" in the "Interpretation" which is slightly inconsistent with the Chinese: "App. 1: Round peg and square socket: Inside is a bad fit. Fath. 1: Circle and square, peg and socket. Mean: Inside, they miss each other." See Nylan, 398.

Fan Wang glosses 杌隉 as "having an appearance of unsteadiness" 不安之貌. There is also a rhyming binome 杌陧 wùniè < ŋuət net < *ŋût nît meaning 'shaky and unsteady, teetering on the edge.' This binome is found in the *Shang shu*, *Zhou shu*, "Qin shi" 秦誓: "The *decline and fall* of a state is said to originate from one man. The glory and tranquility of a state may also originate from the goodness of one man."[408] The two words *sè* 嗇 and *lìn* 吝 are synonyms meaning 'stint, sparing.' Fan Wang takes the round and square to respectively refer to the heavens and earth, explaining that because the heavens rotate it is said to be wobbly. It is implied that the squareness of the earth "conserves" because it is stationary, and thus does not exert energy.

L15. Nylan's translation: "what encloses Heaven we call spaces and what opens spaces out we call times." She points out a difficulty in translating the two words *yǔ* 宇 and *zhòu* 宙. In her translation, she renders these two as "spaces and time" explaining that this decision is

> based on certain passages where the binome *yü chou* 宇宙 unambiguously refers to spaces and times (e.g., HNT 11:178). Sivin comments that he "does not feel at ease interpreting *yü-chou* as two abstractions that can be identified with modern—or even Aristotelian—continua." He prefers "spaces" and "times" as translation "to keep them concrete" (private communication). However, Serruys thinks *yü chou* here describes the upper and lower worlds, with reference to the Kai-t'ien astronomical theory, which has Heaven like a huge domed vault perched on the flat plate of Earth. In that case, the passage says, "For this reason, what encloses Heaven, it we call the 'side eaves'. What opens from the 'side eaves', we call it the 'canopy'.[409]

It is curious that Serruys would think that *yu zhou* is a reference to the *gaitian* theory, for by the time of the composition of the *Taixuan* we know that Yang Xiong had already been persuaded by the *huntian* theory. The comment by Serruys is undated in Nylan, and according to her notes must be from a private communication. Needham also interprets *yu zhou* as "space-time" based

[408] 邦之杌隉，曰由一人；邦之榮懷，亦尚一人之慶. *Shang shu*, SBBY, 29.3b

[409] See Nylan, 429, 614-5, n. 16, brackets hers.

on passages in the *Mozi*.[410] One possible explanation is that Yang Xiong might have been developing his own theory of the cosmos.

L20. Fan Wang glosses 索 as *shu* 數 'numbers.' Based on the construction of this phrase, it is possible to take this word as a verb meaning 'to count, enumerate,' but it would not make much sense in the context. Yang Xiong seems to be describing various phenomena taking place within lunar and solar cycles.

L22. On 貞: Nylan translates as "orientations" with an alternative suggestion of "omens" in her notes.[411] Perhaps this is an interpretation of Fan Wang's curious gloss of 貞 as *zhèng* 正 'correct/proper/regulated.' He explains: "Yin becomes female, yang beomes male. Female and male [counterparts] of the myriad things are transformed into life, each obtaining its regulations. Therefore it is said that the various [things] are regulated through the expansion of auspicious and inauspicious affairs." 貞，正也. 陰為牝陽為牡，牝牡萬物化生，各得其正，故曰，羣貞以張吉凶之事也. (TXJ 7.6b-7.7a.)

II

則君臣、父子、夫婦之道辯矣。是故

日動而東，天動而西，

天日錯行，陰陽更巡。

死生相摎，萬物乃纏。

故玄聘取天下之合而連之者也。

綴之以其類，占之以其觚，

[410] For his rationale, see Joseph Needham, "Time and Eastern Man, The Henry Myers Lecture 1964," *Royal Anthropological Institute Occasional Paper* No. 21 (1965), 1-9.

[411] Nylan, 429, 615, n. 18.

曉天下之瞶瞶，瑩天下之晦晦者，

其唯玄乎。

夫玄

晦其位而冥其畛，

深其阜而眇其根，

攘其功而幽其所以然者也。

故玄

卓然示人遠矣，

曠然廓人大矣，

淵然引人深矣，

渺然絕人眇矣。

嘿而該之者，玄也；

擇而散之者，人也。[412]

Therefore there are distinctions between the ways of the lord and his vassal, the father and his son, the husband and his wife. This is why

When the sun moves east, the heavens move west.

The heavens and the sun cross paths,

and yin and yang alternately circulate.

Life and death are intertwined,

and the myriad things are interwoven.

Thus, *xuan* seeks to obtain the wholeness of the entire realm and to thereupon connect it,*

Stitching by means of its categories,

prognosticating by way of its norms.*

That which understands the obscurity of the entire realm,

that which illuminates the dimness of the entire realm—*

[412] TXJ 7.7a-b.

It might only be *xuan*!*

Thus, *xuan*

Hides it position and obscures its boundary,

Deepens its landmass and blurs its roots;

Hides its efforts and conceals that which makes it so.

Thus *xuan* is

Preeminent, showing humankind a far-ranging perspective;

Expansive, enlarging humans to be greater;

Fathomless, guiding humans to be deep;

Boundless, preventing humans from short-sightedness.*

That which is silent and encompasses things is *xuan*;*

That which indicates and distinguishes things is humankind.

稽其門，闢其戶，叩其鍵，其後乃應。況其否者乎。

人之所好而不足者，善也。

人之所醜而有餘者，惡也。

君子日彊其所不足而拂其所有餘，則玄道之幾矣。

仰而視之在乎上，

俯而窺之在乎下，

企而望之在乎前，

棄而忘之在乎後，

欲違則不能，嘿則得其所者玄也。[413]

Knock on its gate, open its door, rap its door-bar—only then will there be a response. What of those who do not do so?*

That which humans are fond of but lack—this is favorable.

That which humans find repulsive and yet have excess of—

[413] TXJ 7.7b-7.8a.

this is abhorrent.

But the *junzi* daily strengthens himself where deficient, and dispels his excesses, and so this is the opportunity for a profound way.

Looking up, he sees that it is located above;

Looking down, he observes that it is located below.

Tiptoeing, he sees that it is located in front;

Upon discarding something, he forgets that it is located behind.

Even if he wants to go against the rules, he cannot; remaining silent and obtaining his place—this is [acting in accordance] with *xuan*.

故玄者，用之至也。

見而知之者智也，

視而愛之者仁也，

斷而決之者勇也，

兼制而博用者公也，

能以偶物者通也，

無所繫輆者聖也。

時與不時者命也。[414]

Thus, *xuan* is the culmination of utility.

Those who see and know it are knowledgeable;

Those who observe and care for it are benevolent;

Those who are decisive and certain about it are intrepid,

Those who impartially determine things and make broad use of ideas are impartial;

Those who are able to coordinate phenomena of things are all-comprehending.

Those who lack attachments and fetters are sages.

[414] TXJ 7.8b.

36 That which is timely and not timely is the ordained.

虛形萬物所道之謂道也，

38 因循無革天下之理得之謂德也，

理生昆群兼愛之謂仁也，

40 列敵度宜之謂義也。

秉道德仁義而施之之謂業也。

42 瑩天功、明萬物之謂陽也，

幽無形深不測之謂陰也。

44 陽知陽而不知陰，陰知陰而不知陽，

知陰知陽，知止知行，知晦知明者，

46 其唯玄乎。[415]

That which follows the way of the empty forms of myriad things is called "tao."*

38 Following and according with the course without changing the principles of the realm thereupon obtaining it is called "de."

Ordering life, unifying the many, and giving indiscriminate care to it is called "ren."

40 Arranging matching pairs and measuring what is fitting is called "yi."*

Grasping tao, de, ren, yi, and utilizing these is called heritage/legacy.

42 Elucidating the efforts of heaven, and illuminating the myriad things is called yang;

Opaque and lacking shape, deep and unfathomable,

[415] TXJ 7.8b-7.9b.

these are called yin.

Yang rules yang but does not rule yin,

yin rules yin but does not rule yang.

To rule yin and rule yang, to recognize when to halt and recognize when to proceed, to recognize confusion and recognize elucidation—

It might only be *xuan*!

縣之者、權也，平之者、衡也。

濁者使清，險者使平。

離乎情者必著乎僞，

離乎僞者必著乎情。

情僞相盪而君子小人之道較然見矣。

玄者、以衡量者也。

高者下之，卑者舉之，

饒者取之，罄者與之，

明者定之，疑者提之。

規之者、思也，

立之者、事也，

說之者、辯也，

成之者、信也。[416]

As for what suspends the myriad things it is the balance.

As to what levels them, it is the steelyard beam.

As for the turbid, it makes it clear;

As for the precipitous, it makes it level.

Anything that departs from [true] conditions

necessarily belongs to the false.*

[416] TXJ 7.9b-7.10a.

Anything that departs from the false
necessarily belongs to the true.*
Whenever true and false push against one another,
the ways of the noble and petty man are revealed.*
Xuan is that which uses scales to measure:
The elevated it lowers, the low it raises.
From the abundant it takes away, to the depleted it gives.
The bright it tones down, the doubtful it clarifies.
To use it as compass is thought,
To establish it is duty.
To explain it is to make distinctions,
To complete it is good faith.

Textual Notes on II

L5. Cf. Chen Benli provides a gloss on 聘 as *qǔ* 取 'to obtain.' (TXCM, 7.3b) Fan Wang alternatively glosses 聘 as 求 'to seek,' paraphrasing, "to seek and obtain the unity of the entire realm." (TXJ 7.7a)

L6. Fan glosses 觚 as *fǎ* 法 'method' (TXJ 7.7a)

L7. For *huì* 晦 'dark, night' the *Shiwen* construes as *wǔ* or *hū* 膴, and the reduplicative 膴膴 is glossed as "too minute to be seen" 微視 (TXJZ, 185).

L8. Chen Benli contains the variant 惟 for 唯 (TXCM 7.4a).

L7. Sima notes that Song has the variant [亻+眇] for 渺. Note the pun on 渺 miǎo < LH miau^{B} < *miauʔ 'endless expanse (of water)' and 眇 miǎo < LH miau^{B} < *miauʔ 'minimal; sublimal, infinitesimal'. These two words probably form a word family with 妙 miào < LH

miau^{C} < *miauh ‘inscrutible; barely perceptible; subtle’. One might even consider including 秒 *miǎo* ‘endpoint’, 杪 *miǎo* ‘tip of a branch’, and 緲 *miǎo* ‘lightly blurred’ indicating items/conditions that are far away so as to be imperceptible to the senses.

L18. On *gaī* 該 Fan explains as “**embracing** and illuminating the ways of the heavens and earth” 兼明天地之道 (TXJ 7.10b).

L20. I take this as a rhetorical question where *qí* 其 has a modal function suggesting something otherwise than what is already stated, and *fǒu* 否 expresses the negative counterpart “or not”. Fan Wang and Sima Guang have different interpretations on the rhetorical force of this line. Fan interprets this line with *xuan* as the subject that responds. If not even *xuan* will respond upon the “knocks” of an inquirer, nothing else will (TXJ 7.8a). For Sima, *xuan* is not the thing that is actively giving the response, but insofar as the inquirer seeks it, the inquirer is the one who feels the response (TXJZ, 185-6). Cf. *Laozi* 56: “The one who knows does not speak, the one who speaks does not know. He shuts his mouth, closes the gate, dulls the sharpness, unravels differences, harmonizes his brilliance, accords with the mundane—this is called profound accordance.” 知者不言，言者不知。塞其兑，閉其門，挫其銳，解其分，和其光，同其塵，是謂玄同。

L27. Note double puns in this couplet:

企 qǐ < LH k^{h}ie$^{B/C}$ < *khe?/h

棄 qì < LH k^{h}is < *khis/khits

望 wàng < LH muɑŋ$^{A/C}$ < *maŋ

忘 wàng < LH muɑŋ$^{(C)}$ < *maŋ^{A}

L34. Following Fan, 偶 in the sense of 配 *pèi* ‘to accord with’ (TXJ 7.8b).

L37. Sima gives the following notes on several textual variants. For the phrase "empty forms" 虛形, the 章，丁 versions have "empty and void" 虛無; 宋，林，許，黃 have "empty and void form" 虛無形。For 所道 Song has 通, which would change the translation to "the accessibility of empty forms of the myriad things is called tao" (TXJZ, 186).

L39. Chen Benli glosses 秉 as *zhí* 執 'to grasp.'

L40. Following Fan Wang: "*di* means to match, *lie* means to arrange" 敵匹也，列序也 (TXJ 7.9a).

L44. Zheng Wangeng takes 知 zhī < LH ʈe < *tre in the sense of 主 zhǔ < LH tśo^{B} < *toʔ 'to lead, rule over', following the line "the creative force leads the grand beginning" in the "Xi ci" commentary.[417] Perhaps Yang Xiong is playing with the double meanings of 知 'to rule' and 'to recognize', which is how I have decided to translate this passage.

Ll 49-51. Fan Wang glosses qing 情 as "real/substantial," wei 偽 as the "empty/void" 情實偽虛也, and 著 as "attach to." 著附也 (TXJ 7.9b). Chen Benli similarly glosses 著 as 歸 "to belong to" (TXCM, 7.5b). Chen paraphrases these lines as "the genuine and the false cannot stand together [i.e. be equally valid], thus the dispelling the genuine necessarily returns [the situation] to the false; dispelling the false necessarily returns [the situation] to the genuine. This is how we distinguish the *junzi* from the petty person." 情偽不可以兩立，去情必歸於偽，去偽必歸於情。此君子小人之所以分也。(Chen, 7.5b) Fan Wang glosses 盪 as 盪濯 "cleanse."

[417] Zheng, 110.

III.

夫天宙然示人神矣，
夫地他然示人明也。
天地奠位，神明通氣，
有一有二有三。
位各殊輩，回行九區，
終始連屬，上下無隅。
察龍虎之文，觀鳥龜之理，
運諸泰政，繫之泰始，
極焉以通琁璣之統，正玉衡之平。
圜方之相研，剛柔之相干，
盛則入衰，窮則更生，
有實有虛，流止無常。[418]

Heaven, firmamental, displays to humans the daemonic;
Earth, stable, displays to humans the luminaries.*
Heaven and earth have their appointed positions, and Spiritual Brilliance circulates qi.
There are one, two, and three.*
Each position has a distinct order [in the tetragrams],
moving in a circuit to the nine arenas,*
So that end and beginning are interconnected
and interdependent, and above and below have no angles.
By examining the patterns of the Dragon and Tiger, observing the arrangements of the Bird and Turtle,
Coursing through all Seven Regulators,
connecting them to the Culmen of the Grand Inception.*

[418] TXJ 7.10a-11a.

Letting it reach its culmination, it thereby goes through all the
sequences, and regulates the leveling off of the Jade Balance.*
The round and square grind against each other,
the hard and soft engage with one another.*
When things consummately thrive, they enter decline.
When things reach depletion, they are regenerated.*
Thus there is the substantial and the void.
Flowing and stopping is without constancy.

夫天地設，故貴賤序。
四時行，故父子繼。
律曆陳，故君臣理。
常變錯，故百事析。
質文形，故有無明。
吉凶見，故善否著。
虛實盪，故萬物纏。
陽不極則陰不萌，
陰不極則陽不牙。
極寒生熱，極熱生寒。
信道致詘，詘道致信。
其動也，日造其所無而好其所新；
其靜也，日減其所有而損其所成。
故推之以刻，參之以晷；
反覆其序，軫轉其道也。
以見不見之形，抽不抽之緒，與萬類相連也。[419]

The heavens and earth are positioned,

[419] TXJ 7.11a-7.12b.

thus the noble and base are arranged [in sequence].

The four seasons proceed [in order],

thus the son succeeds the father.

The pitchpipes and calendar are properly disposed,

thus the ruler and vassal are well-ordered.

Constancy and change alternate,

thus the hundred affairs are distinguished.

Simplicity and embellishments take shape,

thus being and nothingness are made clear.

Blessings and calamities appear,

thus the good and the sordid are revealed.*

The void and substantial convulse,

thus the myriad things become entangled.

If yang does not culminate, then yin will not bud;

If yin does not culminate, then yang will not sprout.*

Extreme cold produces heat, extreme heat produces cold.

The way of extension induces contraction;

the way of contraction induces extension.*

When in motion, things steadily create what they lack

and prefer that which it renews;

When quiescent, things reduce what they possess and diminish what is completed.

Therefore we infer it by the waterclock;

we further test it by the gnomon.*

Return and repetition is its sequence,

twisting and turning is its path.

By way of a form that appears without appearing, and threads that unreel without unreeling, together with the myriad things, [xuan] is interconnected.

其上也縣天，下也淪淵；
30 纖也入蕨，廣也包畛。
其道游冥而挹盈，
32 存存而亡亡，
微微而章章，
34 始始而終終。
近玄者玄亦近之；
36 遠玄者玄亦遠之。
譬若天蒼蒼然
38 在於東面、南面、西面、北面，
仰而無不在焉，及其俛則不見也。
40 天豈去人哉？人自去也。[420]

Above, it hangs from the sky,
Below, it sinks into the abyss. (18)
30 It is minute, entering openings;*
it is broad, embracing boundaries.
Its way is to float in the dark and draw from the plentiful. (19)
32 Persisting and perishing,
Infinitesimal and brilliant,
34 Beginning and ending.
That which comes close to *xuan*, *xuan* will also get close to it;
36 That which distances itself from *xuan*, *xuan* will also distance itself from it.
For instance: The azureness of the sky is situated
38 To the east side, south side, west side, north side.

[420] TXJ 7.12b.

Looking up, there is no place that it is not present,

But looking down, it disappears.

Is it really that heaven has gone with the person?

It is that the person himself has gone.

冬至及夜半以後者，近玄之象也。

進而未極，往而未至，

虛而未滿，故謂之近玄。

夏至及日中以後者，遠玄之象也。

進極而退，往窮而還，

已滿而損，故謂之遠玄。

日一南而萬物死，

日一北而萬物生；

斗一北而萬物虛，

斗一南而萬物盈。

日之南也，右行而左還；

斗之南也，左行而右還。

或左或右，或死或生，

神靈合謀，天地乃并，天神而地靈。[421]

After the winter solstice and midnight,—

this is the phenomenon of approaching *xuan*.

Proceeding, but not yet at the limit;

advancing, but not yet arriving;

Empty, but not yet full—this is what we call approaching *xuan*.

After the summer solstice and high noon—

this is the phenomenon of distancing from *xuan*.

[421] TXJ 7.12b-7.13b.

Proceeding toward the limit but then regressing,
advancing toward the absolute end-point but then returning,
Already replenished but then reducing—
this is what we call distancing from *xuan*.
When the sun faces south the myriad things perish,
but when the sun faces north the myriad things are regenerated.
When the Dipper faces north, the myriad things are void;
but when the Dipper faces south,
the myriad things are replenished. (20)
To the south of the sun, it moves rightward,
but turns leftward.
To the south of the Dipper, it moves leftward,
but turns rightward.
Sometimes left and sometimes right,
sometimes dying and sometimes generating.
Then the deities and spirits combine their plans, and the heavens and earth then align—the heavens are divine and the earth spiritual.

Textual Notes

L2. The descriptives *zhòu rán* 宙然 and *tā rán* 他然 appear to be *hapax legomena*, a linguistic usage not unusual for Yang Xiong. *Zhòu rán* 宙然 literally means 'ridgepole-like'. The ridgepole (宙 *zhou*) is the horizontal, central support for the roof to which the eaves (宇 *yu*) are attached. Professor Knechtges suggested in a personal correspondence, "Perhaps Yang Xiong is describing heaven not so much as a cover, but the mainstay support of the cosmos." This description would fit in with Yang's rejection of the validity of the *gaitian* theory (where the heavens are shaped like an umbrella and act as a cover) and his advocacy of the *huntian* theory (where the heavens surround the earth like the egg white around the yolk). Elsewhere in the "Li":

"Thus that which encloses the heavens is called *yu*, the opening of the *yu* refers to the *zhou*" 是故闔天謂之宇，闢宇謂之宙 (TXJ 7.6a). In the "Ying" 瑩 commentary: "heaven and earth open and split, the *yu* and *zhou* are expansive and illuminating" 天地開闢宇宙祏坦 (TXJ 7.13b). Fan Wang explains, "this is talking about since the opening and splitting of heaven and earth, day and night alternate with each other, just like the covering of the eaves [of the roof]. The *zhou* extend throughout heaven, and is expansive [like the protective stone-coffer] and illuminating."

William Boltz's study on concepts of space and time in the Later Mohist Canons is insightful in understanding the possible meanings of *zhouran*. The binomial *yuzhou* 宇宙 (which in modern Chinese came to take the meaning of 'universe, cosmos') is common in Warring States texts. In the Mohist Canons, *yǔ* 'eaves' > 'spatial extent' occurs frequently, but *zhou* does not appear at all. The earliest occurrence of *zhou* by itself is found in the *Zhuangzi* "Geng sang chu" 庚桑楚, which Boltz translates as 'mainstay conduit':

有實而無乎處，有長而無乎本剽…。有實而無乎處者，宇也。有長而無本者，宙也。It has substance, but is always without locale. It has length, but is always without base or tip. […] As for having substance, but always without any locale, this is 'spatial extension'. As for having length, but without base or tip, this is the 'mainstay conduit'.[422]

He explains the meaning of *zhou* as follows:

[422] William G. Boltz and Matthias Schemmel, "The Language of 'Knowledge' and 'Space' in the Later Mohist Canon," *Topoi*, preprint 442 (2013), 42. Boltz points out that this line seems to be more of an "exegetic note that has been secondarily elevated to the level of the original text…" This passage comes from the "Mixed Chapters" of the *Zhuangzi.* Wang Xianqian 王先謙 comm., *Zhuangzi jijie* 莊子集解, *Zhuzi jicheng* 3 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2010), 151.

> the sense of *zhòu* 宙 would seem to be that of a 'central ridge-pole, purlin', serving to define the complementary arched or vaulted vertical dimension of a dome-like figure, the peripheral rim-like horizontal base of which is the *yǔ* 宇, here associated with *shí* 實 'substance'. The passage says that both of these aspects of the "cosmic edifice" are thought of as without spatial limit, but there is no sense of time involved in any respect.[423]

This seems to be similar to Yang Xiong's understanding of the topos of heaven that incorporates elements from the gaitian and huntian theories: "arched or vaulted dimension of a dome-like figure" that have no "spatial limit," i.e. is of infinite space.

For *tā rán* 他然 Fan Wang gives a gloss *tài rán* 泰然 'grandly'. Ye Ziqi 葉子奇 (fl. 1378) says that this describes an "amplified appearance" 隆厚貌. Sima Guang has the variant 佗然 *tuō rán* (Sima 7.7a). Chen gives a sound gloss for 他 as 夫 *fū*, and semantic gloss 妥然 *tuǒ rán* 'securely.' (CBL) The sound gloss is troubling, for *fū* and *tā* are not phonetically compatible. Professor Knechtges speculates the possibility that 夫 may be a scribal error for 大 *dā* related to 泰 *tài*, which are much closer in pronunciation, and would fit in nicely with his subsequent semantic gloss of *tuǒ rán* 'securely' in that large things tend to be more stable and fixed in position and motion.

L4. That is, three different types of lines in the tetragrams: solid, broken once, and broken twice.

L5. The "nine arenas" 九區 refer to the nine appraisals that accompany each tetragram.

[423] Ibid., 42-3.

L8. Dragon and Tiger (*long hu* 龍虎) refer to the eastern and western quadrants of the sky, Bird and Turtle (*niao gui* 鳥龜) refer to the southern and northern quadrants of the sky. These are the four Animal Images (*xiang* 象) indicating direction (north, east, south, and west) and are correlated with the twenty-eight lunar lodges (*xiu* 宿). The four images include the Green Dragon (*qinglong* 青龍), Red Bird (*ci niao* 赤鳥), White Tiger (*baihu* 白虎), and Black Warrior (*xuanwu* 玄武). The Black Warrior took the shape of a giant turtle during Han times, with its shell representing a suit of armor, which is possibly why Yang Xiong calls it "turtle" (*gui* 龜).[424]

On 忝政: Fan Wang tells us that this refers to the sun, moon, metal (Venus), wood (Jupiter), water (Mercury), fire (Mars), and earth (Saturn).[425] This has been thought to be the same as the "seven regulators" 七政 which appears in the "Shun dian" of the *Shu jing*: "He examined the pearl-adorned turning sphere, with its transverse tube of jade, and reduced to a harmonious system (the movements of) the Seven Directors."[426] There are three possible meanings for what seven things are represented in 七政[427]:

1) sun, moon, and five planets of metal, wood, water, fire, and earth, as we see glossed in the *Shang shu* by Kong Yingda;

[424] See Sun and Kistamaker, 113-9.

[425] TXJ 7.11a.

[426] James Legge, *The Chinese Classics,* Second Edition (Taipei: Wen shi zhe chubanshe, 1971), 3:33. Rf. n58 below. 在璿璣玉衡，以齊七政 *Shang shu jin gu wen zhushu*, SBBY 1.2b

[427] The origin of the following three definitions can be found in *Shang shu*, SBBY 1.3a-1.4b.

2) heaven, earth, humans, and the four seasons, as explained by Kong Anguo (d. c. 100 BCE) in the *Shang shu*;[428] and

3) the seven stars of the Northern Dipper, as in the *Shi ji* "Tian gong shu." [429]

Pei Yin's 裴駰 commentary follows Ma Rong 馬融 in further supplementing the correlations of these seven stars with the sun, moon, and five planets, similar to what we see in definition (1) above.

In the *Taixuan* Yang Xiong uses 柒政 as well as 七政 in two different places. The first instance is what we have above. The second appears in the "Ying" 瑩 commentary: "The heavens are round, the earth square. The axis of the pole is in the center; it moves by way of the stillness of *li* (force? calendar?), hours are multiplied into twelve, and by this way establishes the seven regulators—the techniques of the *Taixuan* illuminate this."[430] If these two were equivalent for Yang Xiong, it is curious that he should use two different terms for something so technical. We are told in the HYCD that 柒 qī and 七 qī < LH ts^{h}it < *tshit are interchangeable. So it seems that these might be graphic variants for the same word "seven."

[428] 七政者，謂春、秋、冬、夏、天文、地理、人道，所以為政也. Ibid., 1.3a

[429] 北斗七星，所謂旋、璣、玉衡以齊七政. SJ 27.1291. This account is also preserved in JS 11.284.

[430]天圜地方，極植中央，動以曆靜，時乘十二，以建七政，玄術瑩之. (FW 7.12, CBL 7.8)

On 泰始 *taishi*: Fan Wang thinks that *taishi* is referring to the "Zhong" tetragram at the beginning of the *Taixuan.*[431] Nylan notes that this can either refer to the Polestar or the Han Taichu 太初 (literally "new beginning") calendar initiated in 104 BCE.[432]

L9. 琁璣 *xuanji* and 玉衡 *yuheng*: In the "Shun dian" (the same line quoted in n. 56 above) 璿璣玉衡 is translated by Legge in a literal fashion as "pearl-adorned turning sphere" and "transverse tube of jade." 璿璣 is not a compound that is recorded in the HYCD as one thing, but two: 璿 *xuán* is also written with 瓊 *xuán* or 璇 *xuán*, and refers to the second star in the Northern Dipper, what we call Big Dipper or Great Bear (*Ursa Major*). There is also a note in the HYCD entry for 璇 *xuán* that it is interchangeable with 琁 *xuán*. This suggests that the three graphs 璿, 璇, and 琁 are variants of the same word *xuán* 'the second star in the Northern Dipper' which is Merak (*Beta Ursae Majoris*). 璣 *jī* by itself refers to a device that contains a rotatable center used to collect constellation data and was decorated with a piece of jade. In the HYCD under the entry for 璇璣 *xuanji* we get the following relevant meanings:

1) the first four stars in the Big Dipper; and
2) interchangeable with the variant 琁, referring to all seven stars in the Big Dipper.

Then under the entry for 玉衡 *yuheng*:

1) a device to measure the constellations;
2) the fifth star in the Big Dipper; and

[431] TXJ 7.9a.

[432] For details and significance of the calendar, see Michael Loewe, *Crisis and Conflict in Han China, 104 BC to AD 9* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1974), 17-36.

3) the entire Big Dipper with all seven stars.

Nylan translates 琁璣 as "Jasper Template" following the meaning of 璿璣 as a constellation device, and 玉衡 as "Jade Level," probably following the HYCD definition (1) above as another device. Another possibility would be to take the HYCD definitions of 琁璣 and 玉衡 as both referring to the Big Dipper. But then this would render our line to be something like "by this comprehend the system of the Big Dipper and straighten the line of the Big Dipper," which sounds rather silly.

There is a line in 晉書天文志上 that clearly distinguishes 琁璣 and 玉衡 as two parts of the Big Dipper, the first referring to the four stars that form the bowl, and the second referring to the last three forming the handle: "The seven stars of Bei Dou ("Northern Dipper") lie north of the Tai Wei (Enclosure), forming the pivot of the Seven Regulators and he source of (the two *qi*) Yin and Yang. Hence they move in the centre of the heavens and look down to control the four quarters in order to establish the four seasons and (to distribute) evenly the Five Elements. The four stars of the head (i.e. the "box") are known as Xuanji, while the three stars of the handle are known as Yu Heng."[433] Although the *Jin shu* is indeed a later source, following this would make the entire passage from the "Li" much more intelligible, as the lines before and after are talking about constellations. It would make Yang Xiong's descriptions more systematic for the lines from "Dragon and Tiger" down to "*yuheng*" are all referring to stars and constellations. The "seven regulators" 忝政 must be the seven stars of the Big Dipper, not the sun, moon, and five

[433] 魁四星為琁璣，杓三星為玉衡. JS 11.290. Translation is from Ho Peng Yoke, *The Astronomical Chapters of the Chin shu, with amendments, full translation and annotations* (Paris: Mouton & Co., 1969), 72.

planets, and the "culmen of the grand inception" 泰始極 is probably more likely the North Star (or Polaris), not the Han calendar instigated in 104 BCE.[434]

L10. "Round and square" refer to the shapes of the heavens and earth, a common conception in early Chinese cosmology. Curiously, this conception is believed to belong to the gaitian theory of which Yang Xiong by this time should no longer be an advocate.

L11. Following Chen Benli's emendation of 人 to 入 "to enter." (TXCM, 7.6a) Fan takes the subject of the first clause to be things (*wu*), and the second to be *xuan*. "If things are in scarcity, then there is decline; if *xuan* is exhausted then there is change." 物盛則衰，玄窮則變 (TXJ 7.11a)

L18. Reading 否 as *pǐ* 'base, vile' in contrast with *shàn* 善 'refined, good'.

L21. Fan Wang: *yin* "buds" in the fifth month, and *yang* "sprouts" in the eleventh month.

L23. Reading 信 as *shēn*, interchangeable with *shēn* 伸 'to extend, stretch out, elongate' as in the "Xi ci": "The curled-up form of an insect seeks to **extend** itself."[435] Here the line is describing the natural dynamic between *qu* 屈 and *shen* 信. Additionally, in the *Mengzi* "Gaozi" 告子: "Now there is an instance of indicating without naming, **crooked and not straight**; this is not an instance of maladies and pain injuring affairs."[436] In contrast to the "Xi ci" passage, the

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[434] On *xuanji* and *yuheng* as astronomical instruments from as early as third century CE, see also Daniel Morgan, *Astral Sciences in Early Imperial China: Observation, Sagehood, and the Individual* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 66.

[435]尺蠖之屈，以求信也。ZYZY, 8.6a

[436]今有無名之指，屈而不信，非疾痛害事也。如有能信之者，則不遠秦楚之路，為指之不若人也. *Mengzi*, SBBY 6.10b.

"Gaozi" lines have moral overtones indicating an unnatural and unbalanced relation. In both instances we see that *shēn* 信 is parallel to *qū* 屈 'to bend'. According to HYCD 詘 is a graphic loan for *qū* 倔 'bent, crooked; curled up'. (N.B.: When pronounced as *jué*, 倔 has an opposite meaning of 'unbending, intractable, unsubmissive'.) 詘信 appears together in *Xunzi* "Yue lun" meaning "crooked and straight": "How can we know the idea of the dance? I say the eyes do not see it and the ears do not hear it. Rather, it happens only when the order of every episode of gazing down and lifting up the face, of **bending and straightening,** of advancing and retreating, and of retardation and acceleration is executed with proper control…"[437]

L26. 晷 *guǐ* literally refers to the shadow of a sun that is used to measure time of the day, something like a sundial. In the Han dynasty, *rìguǐ* 日晷 was used to refer to the shadow of the sun. The *kè*, or *kèlòu* 刻漏, was a type of clock that using a dial suspended in a bronze vessel filled with water. As the water gradually leaked out, the dial moves, and time is marked accordingly.[438]

L29. In accordance with the *huntian* theory that heavens are supported by *qi* and suspended around the earth, and earth lies at the center and floats on water.[439] *Xuan* encompasses both the heavens and the earth, but it does not have corporeal existence. One wonders if 天 could be a scribal error for 其, which would then make the line more parallel: "The top [of *xuan*] is

[437] John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 3:85. 曷以知舞之意。曰目不自見，耳不自聞也。然而治俯仰詘信進退遲速莫不廉制. Li Disheng 李滌生, *Xunzi jijie* 荀子集解 (Taipei: Xuesheng shuju, 1979), 464.

[438] See Morgan, 53.

[439] See Needham, 216-7.

suspended, the bottom [of *xuan*] is submerged" 其上也縣，其下也淪淵 with the implication that *xuan* is above, below, and all around. This remains mere speculation with no textual proof.

L30. On the meaning of 蔵 the *Hanyu dacidian* gives a definition of "openings and holes" 孔穴 citing from this same passage, with no other examples. Neither Fan Wang nor Chen Benli offer anything useful. Chen Benli suggests an overall sense of ll. 29-30 where the myriad kinds are all connected and encompassed by *xuan*. (Chen, 7.7a)

L31. "Swimming/wandering/floating in the dark" 游冥 yóu míng < LH ju meŋ$^{(B)}$ < *ju mêŋ may be a pun on "the deep and the dark" 幽冥 yōu míng < LH ʔiu meŋ$^{(B)}$ < *ʔiu mêŋ.

L52. 斗 *dou* probably refers to 北斗 *beidou* the Big Dipper (*Ursa major*) for the following lines describing its rotation around the North Star (*Polaris*) of the Little Dipper (*Ursa minor*). The *beidou* was used as an indicator of time and regulator of seasons.[440] The Dipper "faces" south, i.e. the handle of the dipper pointing south, during winter, and all things are "void," or dead. It "faces" north during summer, and all things are "replenished," or lively and well. According to the *Jinshu* it also represents the ruler. See JS 11.290.

[440] See Sun and Kistamaker, 149, 153.

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