

1 *Time out of Joint*

Uses of the Past from the Western Zhou to the Early Warring States

Boyi 伯夷 and Shuqi 叔齊, allegedly historical figures from the last decades of the second millennium BCE, made their first appearances in the received corpus at least some 500 years after their time in a few scattered references in the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語).¹ There, in the sayings attributed to Confucius (Kongzi 孔子, c. 551–479 BCE), they were celebrated as morally exalted figures, who demonstrated their “humaneness” (*ren* 仁) for – or despite – their overt defiance against the newly founded Western Zhou dynasty (c. 1045–772 BCE). For their adamant refusal to serve the Western Zhou court, they starved themselves to death on a mountain. For that, Confucius referred to them as “worthy men of antiquity” (*gu zhi xianren* 古之賢人), who must have been without rancor because they “sought humanness and achieved it” (*qiu ren de ren* 求仁得仁).² These enigmatic words of praise, which count as some of the first commentary on these figures, are not the last that we will hear about them. Their names and stories will continue to be invoked in the following centuries across texts of diverse persuasions.³ The familiarity of the legend of Boyi and Shuqi, cultivated by more than two millennia of commentaries, can make us forget

¹ There are four mentions of Boyi and/or Shuqi in the *Analects*: 5.23, 7.15, 16.12, 18.8. Yang Bojun 楊伯峻, *Lunyu yizhu* 論語譯注 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1980).

² Yang Bojun, *Lunyu yizhu*, 7.15. Translations from the *Lunyu* throughout this book are often adaptations from the excellent rendition by Burton Watson, *The Analects of Confucius* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); I also use my own translation when I depart from Watson’s reading.

³ For a comprehensive survey of early references to the story of Boyi and Shuqi in pre-Qin and early Han texts, see Aat Vervoorn, “Boyi and Shuqi: Worthy Men of Old?”, *Papers on Far Eastern History* 28 (September 1983), 1–22. See also the more elaborate discussion of the same materials, also by Aat Vervoorn, in the “The Origins of Eremitism and Its Development in the Warring States Period,” in his *Men of the Cliffs and Caves: The Development of the Chinese Eremitic Tradition to the End of the Han Dynasty* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1990), 19–74.

the peculiar fact that they made their first appearances in the extant corpus more than half a millennium after their supposed time. How is it possible that they were not mentioned once in the entire extant corpus of the Western Zhou dynasty? They did not appear at all in the sections of the *Classic of Documents*, the *Lost Documents of the Zhou* (*Yizhoushu* 逸周書), the *Classic of Poetry*, and the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) that may contain old material from the Western Zhou.⁴ What may have prompted this new and abiding interest in them after so much time, more than five centuries, had passed since they railed against the Zhou kings and suffered their horrible fate?

The case of Boyi and Shuqi, with their curious absence and subsequent appearances in the extant corpus, is not an isolated one. There are many more such legendary figures of antiquity who made their first appearances in the textual remains starting around the middle of the first millennium BCE. In fact, as scholars in the past century have noted, it is in the historical period subsequent to the fall of the Western Zhou that most of the canon of historical and cultural heroes of ancient China came to be fashioned. For instance, almost a century ago, in a celebrated argument in his *Gushibian* 古史辨, Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, using the examples of the legendary sage-kings Yao 堯, Shun 舜, and Yu 禹, discovered that the earlier the supposed time of a historical figure, the later he made his first appearances in the received corpus.⁵ More recently, David Schaberg, in his article “Song and the Historical Imagination in Early China,” also noted the primacy of individuals and their actions in the narratives and songs from the Warring States and

⁴ The words “Boyi” 伯夷 are in the *Shangshu* 尚書 but they are not to be confused with the “Boyi” from the end of the Shang dynasty that we are discussing here. It is an earlier figure that bears the same name who, according to legend, served the sage-king Shun 舜. Qu Wanli 屈萬里, *Shangshu jishi* 尚書集釋 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1983), 254.

⁵ Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛, “Yu Qian Xuantong Xiangsheng Lun Gu Shi Shu” 與錢玄同先生論古史書, in *Gushibian* 古史辨, 7 vols. (Shanghai: Guji chubanshe, 1982), Volume 1, 63–64. While Gu Jiegang uses the example of Yu 禹, Yao 堯, and Shun 舜, he clearly intends this to be a general argument for the early Chinese corpus at large. On the figures Boyi and Shuqi, Gu Jiegang even suspected that they may be fictional altogether, or, if they had actually existed, that the dramatic details of their story such as their suicides must have been fictional inventions from later periods. See Gu Jiegang, “Lun Yao Shun Boyi shu” 論堯舜伯夷書, *Gushibian*, Volume 1, 43–44. This argument is also reiterated more recently in Poo, “The Formation of the Concept of Antiquity in Early China.”

early Han times.⁶ It is also worth noting that in the case of the scholar Yuan Ke 袁珂, in his attempt to reconstruct the canon of ancient Chinese mythological heroes and historical figures in antiquity, he had to rely on the *Shanhaijing* 山海經, a late Warring States or Han dynasty compilation (c. third to first centuries BCE), for accounts of these individual figures – despite their alleged antiquity, they appeared in the extant corpus many centuries after their supposed time.⁷ All in all, beginning around the middle of the first millennium BCE, we begin to see a proliferation of accounts of historical individuals in the extant corpus. The figures of the individuals – specific men, women, and their actions – increasingly became a focal point in how the political elite imagined and wrote about the past. Figures of relative antiquity such as Boyi and Shuqi were dragged back to the discursive scene almost half a millennium after their death, and their actions became a point of interest across a range of political and ethical debates. The landscape of the past became increasingly dotted with such individuals and elaborate accounts of their ambitions and deeds.

What, one might ask, prompted this attention to the figures of the individuals and their historical actions in the centuries after the fall of the Western Zhou? What fundamental transformation took place with the decline of the late Bronze Age aristocracy of the Western Zhou that made accounts of individuals and their actions attract the sort of intellectual attention and rhetorical investment that we see in the extant literature beginning no later than the early Warring States in the late fifth century? What lay in the wake of the fall of the Western Zhou that translated itself into this persistent and consistent fascination with historical individuals such as Boyi and Shuqi? One answer, one that I will pursue at length in this chapter, is that this was an effect of the transformation in how the past was capitalized in the imagination of relations of power from the Western Zhou dynasty in the first few centuries of the first millennium BCE to the time after its collapse. More specifically, I will argue that the fall of the Western Zhou

⁶ David Schaberg, “Song and the Historical Imagination in Early China,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 59.2 (December 1999), 305–361.

⁷ Yuan Ke 袁珂, *Zhongguo gudai shenhua* 中國古代神話, rev. edn (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 1960). See also Richard Strassberg, *A Chinese Bestiary: Strange Creatures from the Guideways through Mountains and Seas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 3–30.

precipitated a paradigmatic shift in the political utility of historical knowledge, which was marked by a decline in the importance of the genealogical past and the introduction of a new type of historical imagination, one that is founded on a new understanding of the role and capacity of individuals as historical actors capable of effecting material changes. It was a momentous transformation that also implicated a whole host of other issues and debates, including an individual's relation to his family and state, as well as notions of historical continuity and rupture. I will elaborate upon all these over the course of this chapter.

To chart this transformation from the Western Zhou to the early Warring States period, I will discuss three set of primary materials: Western Zhou texts, the *Analects*, and the *Mozi*.⁸ The first category, Western Zhou texts, refers primarily to the bronze inscriptions (*jinwen* 金文) ranging from the tenth to the eighth centuries BCE. I will also draw on portions of the *Classic of Documents* and *Classic of Poetry* as supplementary materials.⁹ Then, I will turn to a reading of the *Analects*, where we will see not a simple departure from, but a metamorphosis and inversion of, the genealogical past that predominated in the Western Zhou. It is also in the *Analects* that we will encounter a new figure of the deliberative individual central to the historical imagination of the early Warring States period. Then, in the last part of this chapter, I will turn to the *Mozi*, the portions of this large text that possibly date to the early Warring States period. There, we will see a vision of the past that is radically different to the one in the *Analects*. Yet, interestingly, we will encounter the same figure of the deliberative individual that appeared in the *Analects*. After the collapse of the Western Zhou, by the time of the early Warring States, we can observe a common departure from the type of genealogical past that once dominated the historical imagination of the political elite under the late Bronze Age aristocratic order. There was not a single new paradigm, however, that emerged to take its place. What we would see, between the *Analects* and the *Mozi*, is competing models of how the past should once again be understood, capitalized, and

⁸ The thorny issues of the dating of these texts be dealt with in each of the three respective sections below in this chapter. In the context of each body of materials, I will explain how they map onto this period, from the Western Zhou to the early Warring States.

⁹ In one instance, I also draw on the *Yizhoushu* 逸周書. See note 26 below.

appropriated to imagine proper relations of power. While they both subscribe to this new figure of deliberative individuals, a key historical agent at the basis of their new visions of the past, they differ vastly on his roles and capacity. This divergence would constitute a major contour of the landscape of the past in early China.

Western Zhou: Moments of Origins, Exemplary Acts, and the Genealogical Past

Let us begin with a document from the first decades of the Western Zhou from around the turn of the first millennium BCE. It is the bronze inscription on the Da Yu *ding* 大盂鼎.¹⁰ Discovered in the 1820s, and now housed at the National Museum of China in Beijing, this bronze cauldron is dated by most scholars to the reign of either King Cheng 成王 (r. c.1024–1005 BCE) or King Kang 康王 (r. c.1004–967 BCE).¹¹ With 291 characters, it is one of the longest bronze inscriptions we have from the Western Zhou.¹² Despite its unusual length, the formal structure of the Da Yu *ding* inscription is fairly typical among the bronze inscriptions of the Western Zhou. It begins with a speech by the king charging a subordinate, in this case a certain man named Yu 盂, with a specific

¹⁰ For this and all other bronze inscriptions cited in this book, I refer to the reproductions and transcriptions in *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng: xiuding zengbu ben* 殷周金文集成：修訂增補本, 8 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2007). For philological details of the various bronze inscriptions, I refer to the summary discussion by the various contributors in Constance A. Cook and Paul R. Goldin, eds., *A Source Book of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions*, Early China Special Monograph Series no. 7 (Berkeley, CA: The Society for the Study of Early China, 2016); as well as the older discussion in Shirakawa Shizuka 白川靜, *Kinbun Tsūshaku* 金文通釋, 7 vols. (Kōbe-shi: Hakutsuru Bijutsukan, 1964–1984), and Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, *Xi Zhou tongqi duandai* 西周銅器斷代, 2 vols. (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2004). For the transcriptions in this chapter, I render archaic graphs in their modern forms for greater readability, largely following the recommendations in Cook and Goldin, *A Source Book of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions*.

¹¹ Shirakawa, *Kinbun Tsūshaku*, Volume 1, 2, 647. In this chapter, I follow the Western Zhou reign dates in Chen Mengjia 陳夢家, *Xi Zhou niandai kao* 西周年代考 (Taipei: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1945). I also refer to David S. Nivison, “The Dates of Western Chou,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 43.2 (1983), 481–580.

¹² Specifically, it is the second-longest bronze inscription, after the Mao Gong *ding* 毛公鼎 (Duke of Mao cauldron) inscription of 491 characters, from the late Western Zhou period.

set of duties, and it concludes with a list of gifts that the subordinate received as a result.¹³

Following is the first half of the inscription, the king's speech to his subordinate Yu; it involves a specific command, one that is articulated by way of a narrative of the past:

It was the ninth month. The king was in the Ancestral Zhou, where he gave his command to Yu. The king spoke thus: "Yu, the immensely brilliant King Wen received the great Mandate from Heaven. King Wu succeeded King Wen, and he established the state, ridding it of evils, spreading the Mandate to the four quarters, and rectifying the people [therein]. Amongst the government officials, none dared to get intoxicated when using alcohol; when presenting their burnt and grain offerings in sacrifice [to Kings Wen and Wu], no one dared to offer toasts. For this reason, Heaven watched over its son [i.e. King Wu] and offered protection for this Former King, for him to spread the Mandate to the four quarters. I heard that the Yin lost its Mandate, because their border officials and administrators, numbering exactly a hundred, all overindulged in alcohol! That was the reason why they lost their military command. Oh, from a young age, you were entrusted with great responsibilities, and I have been giving you rudimentary instructions. Do not undercut me, the One Man. Now, I have modeled myself after and possessed the correct virtue of King Wen. Just as King Wen commanded two or three government officials, I now command you, Yu, in leading the luminous [Zhou order], respectfully harmonizing the norms of virtue. Without any delay, day or night, submit your admonitions to the court; dashing back and forth, fearful of the awesomeness of Heaven." The king said, "I charge you, Yu, to model yourself after your ancestor the Duke of Nan whom you have succeeded."

隹（唯）九月，王在宗周令孟。王若曰：孟，丕顯文王，受天有大令，在珣（武）王嗣玟（文）作邦，闕厥匿（慝），匍（敷）有四方，峻正厥民。在于御事，戲，酉（酒）無敢酖，有髭（崇）蒸祀無敢酖。古（故）天異（翼）臨子，灋保先王，【敷】有四方。我聞殷述（墜）令，唯殷邊侯田（甸）季（越）殷正百辟，率肆（肆）于酉（酒），古（故）喪師。已，汝妹（昧）辰又（有）大服。余唯即朕小學，汝勿逸余乃辟一人。今我唯即井（型）廩（稟）于玟王正德，若玟王令二，三正

¹³ For a detailed description of the structure of Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History: Inscribed Bronze Vessels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 73–84; also see Edward Shaughnessy, "Western Zhou Bronze Inscriptions," in *New Sources of Early Chinese History*, ed. Edward L. Shaughnessy (Berkeley, CA: Society for the Study of Early China and the Institute of East Asian Studies, 1997), 57–84.

(征)。今余隹(唯)令女(汝)孟召(詔)榮敬雖德至(經)。敏朝夕入譫(諫)，享奔走，畏天畏(威)。王曰：而。令女汝孟井(型)乃嗣祖南公。¹⁴

The first thing to note here is that the past plays an integral role in this piece of political rhetoric deployed by the king towards his subject. The apparent political authority that the king had over his subject was wholly constructed on the ground of history. Specifically, the speech begins with a reference to a historical event, namely the Zhou conquest of the Shang, with a series of laudatory citations of the accomplishments of founding rulers King Wen (*Wen wang* 文王) and King Wu (*Wu wang* 武王). Touting the accomplishments of one's forebears is commonplace in all political rhetoric, especially under an aristocratic order, but in the case of the *Da Yu ding* inscription the attention to this particular piece of the past holds a special significance. The founding moment of the Zhou, and particularly the deeds of King Wen and King Wu, are not just idle, albeit inspiring, historical references, but they constitute the very model of political actions that the Zhou king in the present must emulate faithfully.¹⁵

To elaborate on this point, let us return to the king's speech. After recounting the accomplishments of the founding rulers of the Zhou, the king specifically declared the following: "Now, I have modeled myself after and possessed the correct virtue of King Wen. Just as King Wen commanded two or three government officials, I now command you, Yu, in leading the luminous [Zhou order], respectfully harmonizing the norms of virtue." The historical knowledge of the work of King Wen and King Wu constitutes a usable past in an eminently practical sense. What they did at the founding moment of the Zhou dynasty provided an exemplary model of actions for later kings, who only needed to emulate

¹⁴ *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng: xiuding zengbu ben*, 2837. The translation is my own, with some adaptations from the excellent version by Gilbert Mattos, "Shang and Zhou Ritual Bronze Inscriptions," in *Hawaii Reader in Traditional Chinese Culture*, ed. Victor H. Mair, Nancy S. Steinhardt, and Paul Goldin (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 14–15; and Cook and Goldin, *A Source Book of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions*, 32–34.

¹⁵ William E. Savage, in his great analysis of Western Zhou "political theology," similarly observed that, "Like other traditional societies, the Western Chou looked upon the past as a time of origins, a time of beginnings that had a paradigmatic value for the present. The most significant event in history was the founding of the dynasty." William E. Savage, "Archetypes, Model Emulation, and the Confucian Gentleman," *Early China* 17 (1992), 6.

(*xing* 井) and approximate them as closely as possible to ensure that the order they created would perpetuate and continue to prevail.¹⁶ Now, if it is the duty of the present-day Zhou king to follow the precedent set by the founding figures King Wen and King Wu, then what is the responsibility of the subject? The answer is, quite straightforwardly, that he too follows the example set by his own forefathers: “The king said, ‘I charge you, Yu, to model yourself after your ancestor the Duke of Nan whom you have succeeded’” (王曰：虘。令女汝孟井（型）乃嗣祖南公)。

The exact identity of this “Duke of Nan” (*Nan gong* 南公) is unknown, but given the exclusive use of the term *si* (嗣) within the Western Zhou corpus in referring to familial heritage or inheritor, it must be referring to an ancestor of Yu. He is typically identified as Yu’s deceased grandfather in most studies of the Da Yu *ding*, but Tang Lan 唐蘭 went as far as identifying him as the youngest maternal half-brother of King Wu.¹⁷ In any case, the point remains the same: while the Zhou king declares that he is following the precedent of his ancestors, his subordinate Yu is charged with following the precedent of his own forefather, who presumably also served the Zhou court during its founding years. In both cases, they are said to *xing*, or “model after,” their respective ancestors. The argument here is that the proper way to act in the present is to emulate the examples of our respective forefathers.

The Da Yu *ding* inscription concludes as follows:

The king said, “Yu, in following [your ancestor’s work], assist me, your ruler, in military matters. Be diligent and expedient in matters of punishment and litigations. Day and night, assist me, the One Man, to govern over the four quarters. For me, you will inspect the territories and peoples that the Former Kings had received. I now bestow upon you a jar of aromatic sacrificial spirits . . . [list of gifts omitted in translation]. I bestow upon you the flag of your ancestor the Duke of Nan for use in hunting.” [Further list of gifts omitted.] The king said, “Yu, act respectfully and properly, do not disregard my command.” In response to the exaltation by the king, Yu

¹⁶ The character 井 is a graphical cognate of the character 型 in Western Zhou inscriptions. See definition (c) for the entry *xing* 刑/型 in Axel Schüssler, *A Dictionary of Early Zhou Chinese* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1987), 688.

¹⁷ Tang Lan’s argument as cited in Wang Hui 王輝., *Shang Zhou jinwen* 商周金文 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 2006), 69–70n23.

herewith made this treasured cauldron of the ancestor Duke of Nan. It was in the twenty-third year of the king's reign.

王曰：「孟，迺召（紹）夾死（尸）司戎，敏敕（諫）罰訟，夙夕召我一人烝四方，季（越）我其適省先王受民受疆土。賜女汝鬯一卣 ... 賜乃祖南公旂，用狩。... 王曰：孟，若敬乃正，勿瀆（廢）朕令。孟用對王休，用作祖南公寶鼎。唯王廿又三祀。

The subordinate Yu, acting under the banner of his grandfather the Duke of Nan, both literally and figuratively, will help the Zhou king maintain the order among the people and land inherited from former kings of the Zhou. Through their respective emulation of the work of their ancestors, they will be able to maintain the order that their ancestors created in the first place. Imitations of the founding political actions by one's ancestors ensure a continuous extension of the original order to the present.

This pattern of political rhetoric seen on the Da Yu *ding* is typical among Western Zhou bronze inscriptions. A majority of the inscriptions describe similar official exchanges between a Zhou king and his subject. They almost always begin with the present-day Zhou king recounting the virtues of King Wen, and sometimes those of King Wu, and the founding order that they created through their actions. Then, after declaring that he will model himself after King Wen, he exhorts his subject to similarly model himself after his own ancestors, in order to maintain the Zhou order. Li Feng, in his recent monograph on the state and bureaucracy of the Western Zhou, also noted the ubiquity of this invocation of the founding rulers in the bronze inscriptions throughout this late Bronze Age dynasty. He also made an important observation that in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, only King Wen and King Wu were ever said to have directly received the so-called "Mandate of Heaven" (*tianming* 天命). This led Li to posit that the figure of King Wen, and to a lesser extent King Wu, constitute the very source of political authority for the Zhou court.¹⁸

¹⁸ Feng Li, *Bureaucracy and the State in Early China: Governing the Western Zhou* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 294–299. See also the article by Wang Ming-Ke, "Western Zhou Remembering and Forgetting," *Journal of East Asian Archaeology* 1 (1999), 231–250; the author argues that the Western Zhou elite inscribed their histories in a selective and strategic way informed by their social organization.

There is a purposeful conflation of originary and exemplary actions in these Western Zhou bronze inscriptions. The founding acts of the first rulers were immediately considered exemplary, and emulation or repetition of them could maintain or even expand the very same new order that they had created generations ago. In other words, the particular dynamics at the founding moment of the Zhou are presumed to be paradigmatic and foundational to its rule over time. That is not to say that one must repeat the founding reign of the Zhou dynasty in each generation, down to every act and word, but that the later generation should and can only perpetuate the great order of the Zhou, as initiated by the founding rulers, by emulating their exemplary acts.¹⁹

This fascination with moments of origins, and the emulation of past exemplary actions, is not limited only to the bronze inscriptions, but can also be seen in the transmitted corpus from the early first millennium BCE. In the *Classic of Poetry*, for instance, there is the famous example of the poem “Shengmin” 生民. It recounts not only the legendary birth of Hou Ji 后稷, the mythological progenitor of the Zhou clan, but also the origin of the agricultural practices and sacrificial rituals of the clan. At the very end of the poem, it says that “Hou Ji founded the sacrifices, and without blemish or flaw, they have gone on until now” (后稷肇祀，庶無罪悔，以迄于今).²⁰ Here, we see a direct

¹⁹ “These characteristics of Western Chou political theology show that politico-religious relations of dominance often were translated into relations of heritage. An important part of Western Chou legitimacy rested on the possession of family history, ancestral glory, and inherited status. In other words, access to the past, to history, represented a basic assumption about relations of dominance and subordination between men,” as Savage notes in his article “Archetypes, Model Emulation, and the Confucian Gentleman,” 6.

²⁰ Qu Wanli 屈萬里, *Shijing quanshi* 詩經詮釋 (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1983). There has been a great amount of debate on the dates and the composition of the poems in the *Classic of Poetry*, which in all likelihood did not reach its current transmitted form, as a collection of poems, until the early imperial period, many centuries after the Western Zhou. I found particularly persuasive the overview and arguments by Edward L. Shaughnessy in his article “Unearthed Documents and the Question of the Oral versus Written Nature of the *Classic of Poetry*,” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 75.2 (December 2015), 331–375. I continue to find useful the summary given by Michael Loewe in his edited volume *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide* (Berkeley, CA: The Society for the Study of Early China, 1993), 415–424. There is likely a Zhou core, or remnant of Zhou materials, in the *Classic of Poetry*. In the end, I can neither prove nor disprove that this and other poems that I will be citing are in fact from the Western Zhou period, but nevertheless I still find my references to them defensible, for two reasons. First, the argument I am making here does

linkage between origin and efficacy. One understands the efficacy of a set of rituals by understanding its origin. Or, the efficacy of the rituals is a result of their originary nature. Moreover, the poem emphasized in its very last line that these rituals, as they were from their moment of origin, had continued to the present day. As in the bronze inscriptions, order can be extended to the present by a repetition of actions constitutive of that very order at its moment of origin.²¹

Similar ideas can be seen in other poems in the *Poetry*. For instance, in the poem “Liangsi” 良耜, after an elaborate description of certain agricultural work which, when done properly, would ensure that “the barns and brim are full, and wife and children at peace” (百室盈止, 婦子寧止), the poem exclaims in its conclusion that “we shall succeed, we shall continue, continue the men of old” (以似以續, 續古之人).²² The poem “Zaishan” 載芟, after an idealized description of how the fields are cleared and seeds are planted in order to produce the harvests for the ancestral sacrifices, concludes with this fact that: “Not only here is it like this, not only now is it so. From long ago it has been thus” (匪且 有且, 匪今斯今, 振古如茲).²³ Though less explicitly concerned with identifying the moment of origin for these agricultural and ritual practices, these poems nevertheless do emphasize the importance of faithfully repeating past practices in the present, since what was once

not hinge on the fact that this or any particularly poem must date from the Western Zhou period, whatever that may even mean; it is more about a pattern of rhetoric across a body of texts – bronze inscriptions, poems, and political speeches – and losing the support of any one particular text, due to its inauthenticity, is not entirely detrimental to the argument. Second, even if turns out to be the case that one or more of these poems do postdate the Western Zhou period, it would not invalidate the argument about this pattern of rhetoric about the past entirely. This is a *chronologically elastic* argument. It would simply mean that this particular way of capitalizing the past persisted beyond the Western Zhou period. Therefore, in this chapter, I will be referring to these poems, confident in the scholarly consensus that they could in fact be Western Zhou materials, but at the same time I am also mindful that they could be later compositions, in which case the essential argument will nevertheless stand with additional chronological revisions.

²¹ Cf. Willard Peterson, “Reading *Sheng Min*,” in *Ways with Words: Writing about Reading Texts from Early China*, ed. Pauline Yu, Peter Bol, Stephen Owen, and Willard Peterson (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 2000), 31–33.

²² Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the *Classic of Poetry* are adapted from Arthur Waley, *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry*, ed. Joseph R. Allen (New York: Grove Press, 1996), 304.

²³ *Ibid.*, 304.

efficacious in the past will continue to be efficacious in the present.²⁴ Order is maintained by establishing a continuity of practices through their faithful repetition over time.

Representations of similar ideas can also be found in the early stratum of the *Classic of Documents*.²⁵ In the chapter “Li zheng” 立政, for instance, the Duke of Zhou (*Zhou gong* 周公) explained the downfall of Jie 桀, the last ruler of the Xia 夏 dynasty, by his inability to continue the traditional, inherited way of making official appointments: “Jie’s character was such that he did not follow precedents in making appointments, and therefore his character was violent and ruined the future [of his kingdom]” (桀德惟乃弗作往任，是惟暴德，罔後).²⁶ In the chapter “Jiu gao” 酒誥, King Cheng argued that the injunction against alcoholic indulgence by King Wen was one of the reasons why the Zhou was able to conquer the Shang, and provides the model for how the Zhou court can continue to maintain the mandate:

²⁴ Stephen Owen made a similar argument in “Reproduction in the *Shijing* (*Classic of Poetry*),” *Harvard Journal of Asiatic Studies* 61.2 (December 2001), 287–315. Similar observations can be made of many other poems in the *Poetry*,

such as “Chuci” 楚茨, “Xin nanshan” 信南山, “Da tian” 大田, and “Jia le” 假樂. See Qu Wanli, *Shijing quanshi*, 403–408, 12–13, 94–50.

²⁵ As on the *Classic of Poetry*, the scholarship on the *Classic of Documents* recently focused on the contexts of its composition and transmission, and by extension the dates of its materials. See the recent lively discussion in Martin Kern and Dirk Meyer, eds., *Origins of Chinese Political Philosophy: Studies in the Composition and Thought of the Shangshu* (*Classic of Documents*) (Leiden: Brill, 2017). See also a great summary of the earlier consensus in Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts*, 376–389. On the use of materials from the *Classic of Documents* in this chapter, my position is similar to the one I articulated in relation to the *Classic of Poetry* (see note 20 above). I refer to parts of the text that are likely to contain Zhou materials, and in the case that they are proven to be later materials, the essential argument about this pattern of rhetoric still stands with additional chronological consideration. The overall argument of the book, as the reader will see, does not depend on a strict, entirely certain chronology of the texts.

²⁶ Unless otherwise noted, translations from the *Shangshu* are my own, based on the edition in Qu Wanli, *Shangshu jishi*. I have also consulted the translation by Bernhard Karlgren, *The Book of Documents* (Gothenburg: Elanders Boktryckeri Aktiebolag, 1950). Also, a very similar point was made about the last ruler of the Shang dynasty, namely Zhou 紂, in the “Shang shi” 商誓 chapter of the *Yizhoushu* 逸周書. In it, he failed because he did not follow the canonical precedent (*dian* 典) set by the founder of Shang, namely Tang 湯. This chapter is tentatively dated to around the mid-Western Zhou by Huang Peirong 黃沛榮, “Zhou shu yanjiu” 周書研究, PhD dissertation, Guoli Taiwan daxue zhongwen yanjiusuo, 1976.

King [Cheng] said: “Feng, the princes of states and managers of affairs from our Western lands and you, the young one, have been able to follow King Wen’s instructions and are not excessive in wine. Therefore, up to the present time, we have been able to receive Yin’s mandate.”

王曰，封，我西土棗徂邦君、御事、小子，尚克用文王教，不腆于酒。故我至于今，克受殷之命。²⁷

Now, after this brief detour into the *Poetry* and the *Documents*, let us return to the bronze inscriptions. The *Da Yu ding*, as we have noted, is from the first decades of the Western Zhou, so to what extent is this argument applicable to later periods in the Western Zhou? Quite remarkably, the type of literary pattern and political rhetoric that we saw in that one early inscription remained quite consistent throughout the Western Zhou. Take, for example, the *Ban gui* 班簋 from the mid-Western Zhou, roughly a century after the *Da Yu ding*, in the second half of tenth century BCE during the reign of King Mu (r. 956–918). It records an exchange between King Mu and one of his relatives, Mao Ban 毛班, a descendant of King Wen. Mao Ban had just successfully finished a three-year-long military conquest in the east for the Zhou court, and the inscription commemorates his successful campaign upon his return. The first half of the inscription is a detailed description of the conquest, related as a charge by King Mu to Mao Ban; the second half is a speech by Mao Ban on his understanding of the success of the campaign and his request for a posthumous title for his deceased father, Mao Gong 毛公:

Mao Ban bowed and said, “Alas! My illustrious deceased father once received favor from the Zhou court. As a great grandchild of King Wen and his royal consort, he rose to a prominent position and had great accomplishments. The descendants of King Wen all studied his example and emulated him, and no one dared to compare himself to him. I, Mao Ban, do not hope to ask for anything, except for a posthumous title ‘Great Order’ for my deceased father, which my future descendants will forever be able to treasure.”

班拜稽首曰：烏虘，丕丕玨（揚）皇公受京宗懿釐，毓文王，王似聖孫，登于大服，廣成厥工，文王孫亡弗懷井（型），亡克競厥烈，班非敢覓，唯作卽考爽，益（諡）曰大政。子子孫多世其永寶。²⁸

²⁷ Qu Wanli, *Shangshu jishi*, 162. This particular translation is based on Karlgren, *The Book of Documents*, 45.

²⁸ *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng: xiuding zengbu ben*, 4341.

Here, we see once again the language of “modeling” or “emulation” (*xing*) regarding the work of a past exemplary figure, in this case the speaker’s father, Mao Gong. Moreover, there appears to be this desire to relate, however tenuously, the accomplishment of Mao Gong and his genealogical tie to King Wen, so that this past model for emulation would be clearly linked back to the founding rulers of the Zhou. The idea of emulation, and the concern for continuity with the founding moment of the dynasty, especially the figure of King Wen, still very much inform the political rhetoric in this mid-Western Zhou bronze inscription.

In English-language scholarship on the Western Zhou of the past couple of decades, it has been suggested that there was an expansive ritual reform first underway in the mid-tenth century that then culminated in the early ninth century which radically redefined elite privileges.²⁹ The evidence for the historicity of this ritual reform is almost entirely drawn from the bronze inscriptions and stylistic features of the vessels themselves, since it was not mentioned in the transmitted texts, and one of the key pieces of evidence is the Shi Qiang *pan* 史牆盤 inscription. It is one of the longest inscriptions from the late Western Zhou (at 284 characters), with brief descriptions for the first seven generations of the Zhou kings and five generations of a certain Wei 微 clan, whose present-day head archivist, Qiang, commissioned its casting.³⁰ Notwithstanding the historicity of this late Western Zhou ritual reform, I would suggest that the Shi Qiang *pan* inscription is largely consistent with what we have seen so far in these different Western Zhou texts in terms of how they capitalized the past. It begins, not surprisingly at all, with a description of the founding achievement of King Wen: “It is said that in antiquity, when King Wen first took control

²⁹ The most recent, and most substantial, case made for it is by Lothar von Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius: The Archaeological Evidence* (Los Angeles: Costen Institute of Archaeology, University of California – Los Angeles, 2006), 29–73. See also the discussion in Feng Li, *Landscape and Power in Early China: The Crisis and Fall of the Western Zhou 1045–771 BCE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

³⁰ Cook and Goldin, *A Source Book of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions*, 93–100. My understanding of the Shi Qiang *pan* benefited greatly from the discussion in Falkenhausen, *Chinese Society in the Age of Confucius*, 56–73; David M. Sena, “Arraying the Ancestors in Ancient China: Narratives of Lineage History in the ‘Scribe Qiang’ and ‘Qiu’ Bronzes,” *Asia Major* 25.1 (2012), 63–81; and Yin Shengping 尹盛平, *Xi Zhou Wei shi jiazou qingtongqi qun yanjiu* 西周微氏家族青銅器群研究 (Beijing: Wenwu chubanshe, 1992).

and brought harmony to governing the people, the Deity Above sent down refined virtue and grand protection, which King Wen spread out to all the spirits above and below, and thus united and received tribute from the ten thousand states” (曰古文王，初盤蘇于政，上帝降懿德大粵，匍（敷）有上下，合受受萬邦）。³¹ Then, it proceeds to give a similar description of the Zhou king of each subsequent generation: King Wu, King Cheng, King Kang 康, King Zhao 昭, King Mu 穆, and finally King Gong 共, the latter being the reigning ruler when the inscription was cast. For the first five generations of kings, brief descriptions of their work and accomplishments such as the one cited above for King Wen were given in the inscription. For King Mu and the present-day King Gong, it gives the following laudatory description:

Prayerful and illuminated, King Mu modeled (*xing*) himself [after the former kings] and followed the great plan. Continuing the pacification, the Son of Heaven respectfully maintains the long-standing glory of Kings Wen and Wu. The Son of Heaven, extending their glory without harm, loyally prays to those spirits above and below; broadening the far-reaching strategy, he shines bright like the sky without tiring. The Deity Above and Hou Ji provided special protection, giving the Son of Heaven extended long life, large fortunes, and abundant harvests. The southern (*Man*) peoples of the outer regions have all hastened to visit.

祇景穆王，井（型）帥字（訖）誨（謀）。申靈天子，天子貂（紹）鑽（鑽）文武長烈，天子眉無勾（害），審祁（祇）上下，亟（極）熙慕（謨），昊照亡斃，上帝司（后）稷尤保受（授）天子縮令，厚福豐年。方蠻亡不迅見。

Here, once again, the task for the Zhou kings is to follow precedents; for King Gong, it is very specifically the “long-standing glory” (*changci* 長刺) of the founding rulers King Wen and King Wu. Despite the much longer genealogical span, it is essentially the same relation between past and present that we first saw in the Da Yu *ding* inscription.

After the descriptions of the Zhou kings, the inscription turned to the parallel generations in the Wei clan. It begins with the “High Ancestor” (*gaozu* 高祖), who volunteered his service to King Wu in the first years of the Zhou dynasty:

³¹ Translation of the Shi Qiang *pan* follows the excellent rendition by Constance A. Cook in Cook and Goldin, *A Source Book of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions*, 93–100, with minor modifications, especially in the concluding section of the inscription.

Tranquil and somber, the High Ancestor located Wei in a numinous place and, once King Wu had cut up the Yin, my glorious ancestor Archivist Wei went to visit King Wu, who then commanded the Duke of Zhou to lodge him in Zhou and give him a place to stay. All-encompassing and kind, Ancestor Yi assisted and acted as a counterpart for his ruler and took on the ruler's distant plans as if they were as close as his own abdomen and heart.

青（靜）幽高祖，在微霽靈處，季（越）武王既戡（裁）殷，微史烈祖乃來見武王，武王則令周公舍寓（于）周俾處。甬（通）夷（惠）乙祖，速（差）匹厥辟，遠猷腹心。

Then, the inscription detailed the work of successive generations of the heads of the Wei clan, concluding with Shi Qiang (“Archivist Qiang”) himself, the current head of the clan, who commissioned the casting of this bronze vessel and the inscription. It ends as follows: “I make a precious sacrificial vessel, an adorned treasure, for expressing reverence to my floruous ancestor, my Accomplished Deceased Father, who in turn gives to me, Qiang, blessings and good fortune; and I embrace his spirit, exorcise evil, and gain prosperity to live a long life to a hoary old age, in service to his highness” (用作寶尊彝，烈祖文考弋（式）寶，受（授）牆爾戡（祉）福，懷髮（祓）泉（祿），黃耆彌生，龕（堪）事厥辟）。Just as Qiang's ancestors once served the Zhou court, Qiang himself wishes to be able to do the same in the present, extending the relationship that the two families had enjoyed, from the first years of the Zhou, when the first ancestors volunteered their services to King Wu, to the present. The relationship between King Wu and the Wei ancestor had acquired a paradigmatic significance. Historical continuity to this original moment, at the founding of the dynasty, legitimates the possibility of the continuing relationship between the Wei family and the Zhou court centuries later in the present day.

For the last part of our discussion of the Western Zhou period, I will turn to a negative narrative. Beginning in the mid- to late Western Zhou, we begin to see inscriptions that articulate the opposite of what we have just observed. That is, they bemoan the loss of historical continuity and proper inheritance from the founding rulers of the Zhou. One prominent example is the Shi Xun *gui* 師甸簋 from sometime in the ninth century BCE.³² The inscription begins in a typical

³² Various dates have been given for the Shi Xun *gui*. Guo Moruo 郭沫若 suggested that it is contemporary with the *Mao gong ding* from the reign of King Xuan (r. 827–782 BCE), as cited in Wang Hui, *Shang Zhou jinwen*, 185.

fashion; it proclaims the founding achievement of King Wen and King Wu, including the fact that they had received the Mandate from Heaven. It also mentions the great assistance that the ancestors of Shi Xun had provided for them:

The king reportedly said: “Shi Xun! The illustrious Kings Wen and Wu, having received the Mandate from Heaven, defeated King Zhou of Shang to rescue its people. Your wise ancestors provided able assistance to the former kings. They became his close associates, and they assisted him in every way. There were great accomplishments, and a harmonious order was achieved. Therefore, the Deity Above did not abandon us, and protected our Zhou kingdom. The people within the four quarters were all prosperous and at peace.”

王若曰：師旬，丕顯文武，膺受天令，亦則於（唯）汝乃聖祖考克專（傳）右先王，作厥肱股用夾召厥辟莫大令，罄（戾）蘇擘（越）政，肆皇帝亡吳（斃），臨保我又（有）周，擘（越）四方民亡不康靜。³³

After this fairly typical opening, the inscription took an unusual turn: “The king said: ‘Shi Xun! It is sad that today Heaven sends down destruction. Our virtue did not follow the model [of our ancestors], and therefore we did not inherit and continue [the work of] the former kings’” (王曰：師旬，哀才（哉）。今日天疾畏威降喪，首（慎）德不克畫，古（故）亡丞于先王). The king continues to say that because of this dire situation, he will promote Shi Xun and hope that he will be able to provide proper assistance for restoring order to the Zhou world once again. The inscription then concludes, as is customary, with a list of gifts that the king conferred upon Shi Xun and a dedication to Shi Xun’s ancestors.

In the Shi Xun *gui* inscription, we see a capitalization of the past that is the same as the type that we saw in the other Western Zhou materials, except that it did so in negative terms. Instead of a simple enjoinder to emulate the successful relations that their respective ancestors had with each other, the Zhou king urged Shi Xun to provide services to the court because of the opposite, because there was a rupture in the emulation and continuation of the exemplary work of the founders. Understanding this discontinuity as the cause of disorder in the present

More recently, Constance Cook noted that it likely dates to the first year of King Yi 懿 (r. 899–893 BCE); see Cook and Goldin, *A Source Book of Ancient Chinese Bronze Inscriptions*, 112.

³³ *Yin Zhou jinwen jicheng: xiuding buzeng ben*, 4342. The translation is my own.

underscores the predominance of this particular paradigm in the capitalization of the past during the Western Zhou. It is a model where actions by the Zhou founders were considered exemplary and inherently efficacious, and their emulation by later generations would ensure the continuation of that founding order into the present.³⁴

* * *

Now, let us summarize this reading of the Western Zhou materials. First and foremost, we see that the field of the past played an absolutely integral role. Narratives about the past were regularly mobilized as a key resource for legitimizing the political authority and actions of the ruling elite in the present. More specifically, we also saw a particular investment in the founding moment of the dynasty, the work of the founding rulers King Wen, King Wu, and their associates, as exemplary models the emulation and repetition of whom from one generation to the next would ensure the continuance of this founding order. The past, in this context, became relevant as a series of originary, exemplary moments, and a knowledge of them is essential if we wish to emulate them to perpetuate the same political order in the present.

This way of capitalizing the past by the Western Zhou political elite has a number of significant implications. First, it is fair to say that in the Western Zhou, all history must be family history. Given that the historical moments of interest are only those originary actions and the points of continuity within one's genealogical past or that of the ruling family, the past was essentially delimited to the genealogical field. Second, more implicitly, this use of the past also suggests a relatively circumscribed role for individuals as historical actors. Since the ideal is for one to identify and imitate the exemplary actions of one's ancestors and those of the ruling family, the realm of meaningful and effective political action was essentially delimited to just the contexts of the family and the state. Proper political actions were necessarily seen as genealogical inheritance, and an individual becomes politically relevant and effective only as a descendant of a family that can establish a history with the ruling family. It is a tightly closed genealogical past that we see in these different narratives that circulated

³⁴ Besides the bronze inscriptions, we can also find similar expressions of anxiety over one's failure to continue the work of the ancestors in the received texts from this period. See, for instance, the *Shijing* poems "Wen wang" 文王 and "Yun han" 雲漢. Qu Wanli, *Shijing quanshi*, 444–451, 527–530.

amongst the Western Zhou political elite. The political state was coextensive with this elite network of families, and their collective past was deemed the only meaningful history. Pieces of the past that fall outside the realm of the family or the state had little or no meaning or relevance to this political elite invested in preserving the status quo.

This, moreover, implies a radically conservative political vision amongst the Western Zhou political elite. Political ideals were always attributed to the past actions of one's ancestors, and therefore the most that an individual could achieve was to repeat past successes. The goal was to conserve what had already been achieved at the moments of origin of the dynasty. With imitation and emulation as the primary mode of political action, there was no theoretical space for any sort of innovation. Innovation would have necessitated deviation from the ordinary exemplary models, and any such deviation must ultimately lead to disorder, as we saw in the Shi Xun *gui* inscription. Except for the founding figures, historical individuals who appeared in these Western Zhou materials acquired their significance only as eager imitators of the past actions of their ancestors, and in the end, since they were only allowed to participate in the making of the political order because of their pre-existing membership of their families, they emerged as little more than secondary effects of their genealogical past.

In late Bronze Age China, under the Western Zhou, the genealogical past predominated the historical imagination of the political elite. In a state that was constituted by a complex network of clans, like the Western Zhou, this is hardly surprisingly. Out of the vastness of the past, it was this one piece that mattered to them. The past was invoked as the ground for a demonstration of genealogical continuity, and, by extension, proper membership in the political network of the Western Zhou. But this was not a genealogical past that was supposed to extend indefinitely into distant antiquity; rather it was limited to the founding moments of the Zhou order (including, of course, the triumphant conquest of the Shang). The virtuous and valorous acts of the founders of the dynasty, including King Wen, King Wu, and their associates, provided the authoritative template for political actions; it was an ordinary political order that is susceptible to corruption through deviation, and therefore it must be continually maintained through faithful emulation. This was another function of the genealogical past, besides demonstrating one's

political membership. It was also the only legitimate and authoritative repository of political action.

The Western Zhou ended in the year 771 BCE. Its disintegration, formally in that year and then gradually in effect in the decades afterwards, also marked the beginning of the end of this singular predominance of the genealogical past. This genealogical mapping of the past would not completely disappear, of course; family histories, in a variety of forms, will continue to be written and serve diverse interests in the centuries afterward.³⁵ However, we will also begin to see, in this long period after the collapse of the Western Zhou order, new and alternative ways of making sense of the past. In a way, the rest of this book is about the many new and different ways of remaking the past after the collapse of this late Bronze Age aristocratic order, and with it a dissipation of this singular focus on the genealogical past, ordinary moments, and exemplary actions. In the rest of this first chapter of the book, I will begin this account with the examples of two key texts from the early Warring States (*c.* fifth and early fourth centuries BCE), namely the *Analects* and the *Mozi*. Why these two texts, one might ask, among all the texts that came along after the fall of the Zhou order? As I hope to demonstrate in the rest of this chapter, there are special interpretive gains to be made by reading across these three sets of materials, namely the Western Zhou texts, the *Analects*, and the *Mozi*. They are vastly different texts in many respects, to be certain, yet, if we start looking at how they each relate to the idea of the past, a significant contrast emerges. The materials in the *Analects* and the *Mozi* represent two starkly different visions of the past, with two distinct political and ethical agendas; at the same time, they are both subtle, critical responses to the Western Zhou genealogical imagination of the past. Between these three sets of texts, an expansive, contentious landscape of the past emerged.

³⁵ See, for example, Guolong Lai, "Genealogical Statements on Ritual Bronzes of the Spring and Autumn Period," in *Imprints of Kinship: Studies of Recently Discovered Bronze Inscriptions from Ancient China*, ed. Edward L. Shaughnessy (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2017), 235–260, for how genealogies continued to be written and inscribed on ritual bronzes in the period immediately following the end of the Western Zhou.

The *Analects*: Past Cultural Practices, Moral Interiority, and the Deliberative Self

On first reading, one may very well mistake passages in the *Analects* as a continuation, however tenuous and imperfect they may be, of the Western Zhou paradigm of capitalizing the past towards the construction of political relations, especially with respect to its conservative stance.³⁶ The past, often denoted by the term *gu* 古 (“antiquity”) in the *Analects*, is consistently an authoritative standard, a marker for

³⁶ It is well established, at this point, that the received version of the Confucian *Analects* is a composite text, with various historical layers by multiple hands, that reached its present form only during the Han dynasty. Michael Hunter, in his monograph *Confucius beyond the Analects* (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 317, further suggested that the very idea of an *Analects* was wholly an “artifact of the Western Han period.” It remains plausible, according to Hunter (314), that the text does contain materials that date back to the early Warring States (and were then collected and fashioned into the different editions of the *Analects* in later periods). Edward Slingerland, in his review of Hunter’s book, *Early China* 41 (2018), 474, further elaborated on this point, concluding that we are “completely justified in continuing to see the *Lun yu* as the most accurate record of the historical Kongzi’s teachings, and therefore as a natural starting point for any account of pre-imperial Chinese thought.” In this study, basing myself on the philological discussion of the text in the decades past, I use the term “*Analects*” to refer to a set of ideas that very likely had some currency and circulation in the early Warring States period among the political elite. They may have gained their authoritative voice through their attribution to their putative speaker, namely Confucius, but I do not presume that they had anything to do with the historical Confucius. At the same time, I do presume the possibility of coherence across these seemingly scattered texts from this collection of putative sayings of Confucius. In this respect, my approach is akin to that of Amy Olberding in her series of work on the *Analects*: “I wish, in short, to treat the text as a received text, a text historically presented to readers as containing if not a wholly unified vision, a generally intelligible and coherent vision.” Amy Olberding, *Moral Exemplars in the Analects: The Good Person Is That* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 2. Moreover, I should note that the arguments that I will be making here are, relatively speaking, chronologically elastic. They are constructed to be robust against a degree of chronological uncertainty of the sources. See the discussion of the compositional history of the text in Tae Hyun Kim and Mark Csikszentmihalyi, “History and Formation of the *Analects*,” in *Dao Companion to the Analects*, ed. Amy Olberding (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2014), 21–36; Bryan W. van Norden’s introduction to *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays*, ed. Bryan W. van Norden (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 13–18; E. Bruce Brooks and A. Taeko Brooks, *The Original Analects: Sayings of Confucius and His Successors* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998); and D. C. Lau, trans., *Analects* (New York: Penguin Books, 1979), 220–233. For the Han history of the *Analects*, besides the aforementioned monography by Hunter, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi,

various self-evident political and ethical ideals. Take, for example, the following passage from Book Four of the *Analects*: “The Master said, ‘People of antiquity were sparing in their words. This was because they were afraid their actions may fall short’” (子曰：古者言之不出，恥躬之不逮也).³⁷ Here, an implicit connection, a positive correlation, is established between exemplary behaviors and the field of antiquity. Antiquity is taken as the temporal location for exemplary actions, and just as we are far removed from antiquity, we have also fallen from behaving in exemplary ways. Similarly, in Book Fourteen, the Master said, “In antiquity, people studied for their own sake; nowadays, they do so for the sake of others” (古之學者為己，今之學者為人).³⁸ There is a clear division between antiquity and the present, and they are self-evidently correlated with what is considered ideal and what is not.

This positive valorization of antiquity is evident in many passages of the *Analects*. The Master himself, Confucius, declared his fondness for it time and again. For instance, in Book Seven, he says, “I was not born understanding anything. I love antiquity. I work diligently to comprehend it” (我非生而知之者，好古，敏以求之者也).³⁹ Here, there is not even a specification of what exactly was good in antiquity, but the entire field of antiquity was simply considered an enlightening thing. And, of course, the idea of antiquity also figures in one of the most celebrated lines from the *Analects*: “The Master said, ‘I transmit and do not innovate. I trust and am fond of antiquity. I humbly dare to compare myself to Old Peng’” (子曰：述而不作，信而好古，竊比於我老彭).⁴⁰ Not only did Confucius profess his fondness for studying antiquity as a means for self-cultivation, but here he went one step further to claim that he does not innovate at all but only “transmit” (*shu* 述) what had already been done in the past.

One may argue for a clear resemblance here between the *Analects* and the Western Zhou materials with respect to their apparent cultural and political conservatism. They both attribute their ideals to a time before the present, for instance, and the notion of “transmission” (*shu* 述) in the *Analects* would seem to be quite comparable to the ideal of emulative and imitative actions (*xing*) espoused in the Western Zhou

“Confucius and the *Analects* in the Hàn,” in Van Norden, *Confucius and His Successors*, 134–162.

³⁷ Yang Bojun, *Lunyu yizhu*, 4.22. ³⁸ *Ibid.*, 14.24. ³⁹ *Ibid.*, 7.20.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.1.

bronze inscriptions. However, upon closer reading of the *Analects*, it would become clear that in fact these superficial resemblances are no more than structural remains of a subtle but radical deconstruction of the Western Zhou paradigm for capitalizing the past as a genealogical field. These *Analects* passages, as I will now argue, represent a deliberate departure from the Western Zhou paradigm, by transposing the source of political authority from the genealogical past to the moral center of individuals through a reversal of the relationship between men and history.

To begin with, let us return to this idea of *gu*, or antiquity, in the *Analects*. It is clear that Confucius speaks very approvingly of *gu*, that “antiquity” is something that we should learn from somehow. Suppose one agrees with Confucius; then what and how is this person supposed to learn exactly? What is the actual content of this “antiquity”? If we were to follow Confucius in “trusting” and “loving” antiquity, what exactly are we trusting and loving here? In the world of the Western Zhou, the answer would have been the exemplary actions of one’s ancestors, typically from the founding moments of the dynasty, but nothing of the kind can be identified in the *Analects*. First of all, unlike the Western Zhou texts, there appears to be virtually no interest in the significance of moments of origins, or originary actions, the type that we see in the poem “Shengmin,” with its emphasis on the first creation of agriculture, or numerous bronze inscriptions in their frequent reiterations of the founding of the Zhou. In the *Analects*, there is no interest in the founding accomplishments of King Wen and King Wu (or any other dynastic founders) as a point of positive reference. The only mention of King Wen in the *Analects* is a rumination on his passing.⁴¹

Second, despite the importance of familial relations in the *Analects* for its ethical program, there is not a single mention of an ancestor in it. There are only nuclear families in the *Analects*, while the families in Western Zhou materials were always the extended (patriarchal) lineages. A Western Zhou official may proclaim that he was emulating his distant ancestor from the first years of the dynasty, while in the *Analects*, one’s virtue is cultivated through immediate familial (or

⁴¹ Ibid., 9.5.

official) relations.⁴² There are no distant ancestors populating the landscape of the past; the family is a much smaller unit in the *Analects*.

The past – or “antiquity” – matters a great deal in the *Analects* but it is not at all the same past that we saw in Western Zhou materials. Then what is it exactly? Let us now turn to a few *Analects* passages that refer specifically to the contents of antiquity:

The Master said, “In archery hitting the target is not the point – people are not all of equal strength. That was the way of antiquity.”

子曰。射不主皮。為力不同。科古之道也。⁴³

Duke Ai asked Zai Wo about the altar to the god of the soil. Zai Wo replied, “The Xia rulers planted it with pines, the men of Yin [i.e. Shang] planted it with cedars, and the men of Zhou plant it with chestnuts. This, they say, made the common people tremble.” When the Master heard of this, he said, “Completed affairs one does not comment on; things done one does not carp over; what is past one does not criticize.”

哀公問社於宰我。宰我對曰。夏后氏以松。殷人以柏。周人以栗。曰使民戰栗。子聞之曰。成事不說。遂事不諫。既往不咎。⁴⁴

Yan Yuan asked about how to order the state. The Master said, “Use the Xia calendar, ride in the chariots of the Yin, wear the caps of the Zhou, and for music, the Shao and Wu. Do away with the Zheng tunes and stay away from artful talkers. The Zheng tunes are excessive, and artful talkers are dangerous.”

顏淵問為邦。子曰。行夏之時。乘殷之輅。服周之冕。樂則韶舞。放鄭聲。遠佞人。鄭聲淫。佞人殆。⁴⁵

This is far from an exhaustive inventory of passages from the *Analects* that refer to the past; more relevant passages will be brought up later. However, even with this limited set, we can already discern a distinct pattern in the articulation of the past in the *Analects*. Instead of moments of origins or exemplary actions of ancestors, the past is

⁴² There are numerous passages in the *Analects* devoted to this point. For a most concise statement, see passage 1.7, which says that learning is achieved through perfecting one’s relationship with one’s parents (*fumu* 父母), rulers (*jun* 君), and friends (*pengyou* 朋友).

⁴³ Yang Bojun, *Lunyu yizhu*, 3.16. ⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 3.21. ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 15.11.

painted as a repertoire of cultural practices.⁴⁶ It is interesting to note that although the text does ascribe specific cultural practices to different periods in history, there is no suggestion of a progressive narrative at all. It is not the case that one practice evolved into another one, or that there is a logic at all behind the replacement of one practice by another from one period to the next. It is simply that people did different things at different times (and places), and we, in the present day, have some knowledge of what was done in the past.

The enumeration of these different cultural practices, as in the passages cited above, serves more than just antiquarian curiosity. Rather, they are almost always shot through with an evaluative dimension. For instance, in the second passage cited above (3.21), Zai Wo criticized the Zhou practice, and Confucius criticized him in turn for being unduly critical. In the last passage (15.11), the different past practices mentioned were meant to address the question of how to govern a state, and so the endorsement of the Xia calendar, Yin chariots, and Zhou caps was effectively Confucius' positive evaluation of them. His warning against "Zheng tunes," on the other hand, implies a negative evaluation. These are inventories of cultural practices where each item is critically graded. See, for another example: "The Master said, 'Zhou studied the two [earlier] dynasties. Elegant and refined were its ways. I follow Zhou'" (子曰。周監於二代。郁郁乎文哉。吾從周).⁴⁷ The Master studied and assessed past practices in search of efficacious instruments for his own edification in the present.

A knowledge of past cultural practices *demand*s one's evaluation, in order that one decides which practice to follow in the present. At a very general level, this agrees with the Western Zhou idea that one must always follow precedents. But it also introduces a new intermediary element, namely this evaluative moment. In the Western Zhou paradigm, one identifies and imitates exemplary actions within one's genealogical past; evaluation is therefore unnecessary and irrelevant. In the *Analects*, however, one is not bound to just the genealogical past;

⁴⁶ Another term that I could use here is "rituals" (*li* 禮), a term of central importance in the *Analects* itself, to describe these various cultural practices from the past. I opted to use the term "cultural practices" instead for it is even more all-encompassing, and therefore a more accurate rendition. For the idea of *li* in the *Analects*, see Kwong-loi Shun, "Ren and Li in the Analects," in Bryan W. van Norden, *Confucius and the Analects: New Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 53–72.

⁴⁷ Yang Bojun, *Lunyu yizhu*, 3.14.

exemplary actions from any period, by whomever, are all possible models for emulation in the present. Then, after identifying them, one evaluates them against one another in order to decide which one to follow. There is a structural similarity here between the Western Zhou materials and the *Analects*: wary of harmful innovations and deviations from past practices, one should identify and follow exemplary actions in the past. But the *Analects* has abandoned the genealogical dimension integral to the Western Zhou paradigm. Moving beyond the confines of the genealogical past, the *Analects* conceives of an open, much more expansive, historical field with a diverse repository of exemplary cultural practices, all of which are potential candidates as useful models for the present.

This new model in seeing and using the past in the *Analects* depends on the feasibility of this evaluative component. How does one actually evaluate? What are the criteria for this evaluation? What is the site on which this evaluation takes place? The *Analects* passages never gesture towards the existence or even the possibility of an objective set of standards for deliberation (unlike the *Mozi*, as we shall discuss in the next section). Rather, it seems to suggest the exact opposite – the evaluations are always subjective. It is always a personal decision, one that emanates from the moral interiority of an individual. In the end, there is no impersonal, external standard that we can rely on, but the decision ultimately rests with the individual himself. Confucius chose to “follow Zhou,” and not the other two earlier dynasties; the text gave no reason for it except for his own moral certitude.

To posit the possibility of and necessity for these personal evaluations is to attribute a deliberative capacity to the figure of the individual.⁴⁸ Individuals had to deliberate too in the Western Zhou, between whether to follow or not to follow their ancestors' actions. But in the *Analects*, the individual is no longer confronted with just an either-or decision. He has to weigh alternatives against one another and decide on the one for emulation in the present. In the Western

⁴⁸ I should add that by “individuals,” I refer to all human beings. I agree with Heiner Roetz's assessment that “Confucian anthropology . . . denies any relevant natural distinction between men.” See his discussion of “The Concept of ‘Man’” in the monograph *Confucian Ethics of the Axial Age: A Reconstruction under the Aspect of the Breakthrough toward Postconventional Thinking* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), 123–126.

Zhou materials, exemplary actions are simply what one's ancestors did successfully, particularly the originary actions within one's genealogical past, but in the *Analects*, it is an open question on what is indeed exemplary and efficacious in the present; ultimately, each person decides according to moral biases interior to himself. Liberated from the confines and dictates of the genealogical past, one now faces uncertain choices.⁴⁹

"The Good Person is *That*," as Amy Olberding eloquently encapsulates, in the subtitle of her monograph, her reading of the "exemplarist virtue ethics" in the *Analects*.⁵⁰ It is a moral vision that, according to Olberding, begins not with "precise definition" or "elaborate conceptual schemata" but with our admiration and emulation of one or another moral exemplar. "The virtuous person is *that* and the theoretical charge rests in devising a satisfying account of what our various instances of *that* share."⁵¹ This is resonant with my own reading of the

⁴⁹ On the "deliberative capacity" of individuals in the *Analects* and classical Confucianism, there is a staggering amount of scholarship that focuses on the definition of the Confucian human subject and his nature. I am particularly inspired by the discussion of the distressed moral subjects in Michael D. K. Ing, *The Vulnerability of Integrity in Early Confucian Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), as well as the importance of exemplarism and emulation in Olberding, *Moral Exemplars in the Analects*. On the specific question of individualism and conformity, I found particularly helpful the discussions in Stephen A. Wilson, "Conformity, Individuality, and the Nature of Virtue: A Classical Confucian Contribution to Contemporary Ethical Reflection," in Van Norden, *Confucius and the Analects*, 94–118; and Erica Brindley, "Moral Autonomy and Individual Sources of Authority in the *Analects*," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 38.2 (2011), 257–273. More distantly, I was also inspired by the discussion of the "self" in classical Confucianism by Kwong-loi Shun, "Early Confucian Moral Psychology," in *The Dao Companion to Classical Confucian Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2014), 263–289; as well as his book chapter "Conception of the Person in Early Confucian Thought," in *Confucian Ethics: A Comparative Study of Self, Autonomy, and Community*, ed. Kwong-Loi Shun and David B. Wong (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 183–202. This view of the role and capacity of the individuals has departed significantly from the older paradigm, most influentially set by Herbert Fingarette in his *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), where he argued against the very notion of an "inner psychic life" in the *Analects*. See also the related reflections and arguments in David Hall and Roger Ames, in their *Thinking through Confucius* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1987).

⁵⁰ Olberding, *Moral Exemplars in the Analects*, 76–99. Also see her article, "Dreaming of the Duke of Zhou: Exemplarism and the *Analects*," *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 35.4 (2008), 626.

⁵¹ Olberding, "Dreaming of the Duke of Zhou," 627, emphasis in the original.

Analects, but I would add to it that these exemplars that we choose to emulate – such as the Duke of Zhou – are often figures from the past (or “historical notables,” in Olberding’s formulation).⁵² In my reading, there are also disembodied cultural practices from the past that one may emulate. There is a strong historical dimension to this “exemplarist” ethics in the *Analects*; the search for morally exemplary individuals and practices often prompts one to rummage through the field of the past.

It was in the early Warring States period that we can observe the emergence of this figure of the deliberative individual, across different texts that have survived from this period. It is a new figure whose exercise of his deliberative capacity would have great political consequences. In the case of the *Analects* passages, we see a great faith in the capability of individuals in effecting changes and establishing order. The self-cultivation program outlined in the text – pivoted around key terms such as “humaneness” (*ren* 仁) and “rituals” (*li* 禮) – can be seen as an attempt to cultivate this moral interior of individuals. Once properly cultivated, they would be able to choose and follow the right course of actions based on an educated assessment of the relative efficacy of past cultural practices.

There are many facets and expressions of this deliberative individual in the *Analects*. For instance, there is this attention to our reflective interiority as an object of cultivation:

The Master said, “When you see a worthy person, think about how you can equal him. When you see an unworthy person, reflect on your own conduct.”

子曰。見賢思齊焉。見不賢而內自省也。⁵³

The Master said, “It’s hopeless! I have yet to see anyone who can recognize his faults, look inside himself, and put the blame there.”

子曰。已矣乎。吾未見能見其過。而內自訟者也。⁵⁴

This focus on the utility of introspection, the very idea of a reflective “interior” (*nei* 內) within an individual, has a radical quality that becomes apparent when juxtaposed with materials from the Western Zhou. Once entirely irrelevant in the political imagination of the late Bronze Age under the Western Zhou, the moral interiority of men is now

⁵² Ibid., 631. ⁵³ Yang Bojun, *Lunyu yizhu*, 4.17. ⁵⁴ Ibid., 5.27.

a central concern of ethics and fully integrated into the political discourse in the *Analects*.

This deliberative capacity of individuals, situated within their moral interiority, is a primary object of cultivation in the *Analects*. Cultivation practices denoted by terms such as *xue* 學 (“learning”), *sheng* 省 (“reflection”), and perhaps most importantly *li* 禮 (“rituals”), elaborated throughout the text, all ultimately aimed at refining this responsive moral center that resides within each of us. The goal is to achieve *ren*, or “humaneness,” a proper ethical anchor within a person that enables consistently proper decision making from one context to another. To be cultivated, or to be *ren*, is not simply to be “ethical” or “good,” whatever those terms may mean in the context of the *Analects*, but more precisely, it is to have the ability to decide what is good or bad, or what is “likable” or not: “The Master said, ‘Only the humane person is able to like others and is able to hate others’” (子曰：唯仁者能好人能惡人).⁵⁵ To be *ren* is to be able to exercise one’s deliberative capacity.⁵⁶

In Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, one is said to *xing* or “emulate” past exemplary actions. That word has all but disappeared in the *Analects*. Instead, Confucius *cong* 從 or “follows” past cultural practices (e.g. the aforementioned “I follow Zhou,” 3.14). While the term *xing* suggests a mechanical imitation of something outside oneself, the term *cong* connotes choices and deliberation. To follow one thing is to not follow another. The passage from *xing* to *cong*, from rote imitation to evaluative adaptation, marked the emergence of the deliberative individual as a legitimate political subject after the fall of the Zhou order.⁵⁷

In this new world articulated through these passages of the *Analects*, individuals and their decisions are now what essentially guarantee

⁵⁵ Ibid., 4.3.

⁵⁶ This point can be considered in conjunction with Michael Puett’s argument that, in the *Analects*, individuals are born with “raw substance” that we must work on in order to give it proper patterns. Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation*, 43–51. I am, of course, isolating one meaning of the term that I found particularly prominent in the context of the discussion here. For a broader, insightful overview, see Karyn Lai, “*Ren*: An Exemplary Life,” in Olberding, *Dao Companion to the Analects*, 83–94.

⁵⁷ Contrary to my reading, Savage sees much a much greater degree of similarity and continuity between the Western Zhou model and the *Analects*, in terms of the idea of emulation. See “Archetypes, Model Emulation, and the Confucian Gentleman,” 18–25.

continuing order, in contrast to the idea that a most ideal political order always pre-exists an individual in the Western Zhou materials. It is therefore not surprising to see that the *Analects* attributes tremendous power to individual historical figures. For instance, in one of the best-known passages, Confucius ruminates on the passing of King Wen:

The Master's life was endangered in Kuang. He said, "King Wen is deceased, but his culture remains here with me. If Heaven had intended to destroy that culture, then those who come after him could not have inherited that culture. But if Heaven is not ready to destroy culture, what can the people of Kuang do to me?"

子畏於匡。曰。文王既沒文不在茲乎。天之將喪斯文也。後死者不得與於斯文也。天之未喪斯文也。匡人其如予何。⁵⁸

Here, the survival of a particular order, a whole culture, hinges on just one person. Elsewhere, Confucius lavished praise on the character and accomplishments of past sage-kings such as Yao 堯 and Yu 禹 (e.g. 8.18, 8.19, 8.21). More subtly, this is also true in his praise for Boyi and Shuqi, the two figures with whom I started this chapter. They were failed dissidents, but nevertheless, they did forcefully exercise their deliberative capacity to the point of their own death. In the *Analects*, individuals and their decisions have tremendous historical agency. In turn, past figures and their work all become part of the historical repository of cultural practices that one should study, evaluate, and follow (or not follow).

This sharp turn to individuals as a potential source of order also signals a transposition of the locus of political authority. In the Western Zhou, the recipe for establishing order lies in a set of exemplary actions in the distant genealogical past external to oneself, while in the *Analects*, the source for political order is ultimately located in the moral center of individuals and the decisions that they make. In this sense, the locus of political authority has shifted from an external set of past actions to the internal deliberative capacity of men in the present. And with this, there is also a reversal in the relation between history and individuals in the *Analects*. In the Western Zhou materials, history as a series of originary exemplary actions defines and delimits the possible realm of actions, the basic script that one must follow. One is measured by the degree of conformity with or of deviance from them.

⁵⁸ Yang Bojun, *Lunyu yizhu*, 9.5.

In the *Analects*, however, the past is now a function of one's individual deliberation; one cultivates his ethical center in order to formulate judgments about the past, and decides which particular practice is worthy to be continued in the present. The authority that the past once had over individuals is now transposed to the individuals themselves over the past.

To conclude this discussion of the *Analects*, let me briefly note the social location of this new figure of the deliberative individual. Earlier, we observed that the *Analects* has largely forsaken the genealogical dimension that was trenchant in the Western Zhou materials, where one is authorized to act only as a descendant of a certain clan or otherwise bears some genealogical ties to the royal clan. As we also noted in the conclusion to the section on the Western Zhou, the realm of meaningful and effective political actions was essentially reduced to just the contexts of the family and the state. In the *Analects*, the family and the state are still a very significant context for actions, as is evident in the famous dictum by Confucius: "The ruler should act as a ruler; the subject, a subject; the father, a father, the son, a son" (君君。臣臣。父父。子子).⁵⁹ However, while family and state are clearly still viable and important contexts for the cultivation of the self and the establishment of order, they are no longer the only contexts for effective action in the *Analects*. The decoupling of exemplary precedents and the (absent) genealogical past (in relation to the royal genealogies) in the *Analects* effectively means that it is no longer a prerequisite to be an heir or an official in order to act in a politically meaningful way. Instead of having to claim membership of a certain family or the state for any political legitimacy, individuals are now authorized to act simply based on their innate deliberative capacity, this ethical potential that we all presumably possess. Authority comes *not* from our genealogical membership but from the demonstrated refinement of our moral interiority as individuals.

One of the clearest expressions of this opening up of the contexts for politically meaningful action is the idea of friendship in the *Analects*. Of the different cardinal human relationships that are the means for and expression of one's ethical cultivation in the *Analects*, only friendship represents a horizontal association. The others, i.e. parents, rulers,

⁵⁹ Ibid., 12.13.

brothers, spouses, are socially hierarchical by definition.⁶⁰ The possibility of this voluntary horizontal association, which lies outside one's family and state, implies that there is a remainder of the self that falls outside the family and the state, that a person can and does have an identity beyond just being his father's son or his ruler's subject. Moreover, in the *Analects*, friendship is considered to be at least as powerful as any of the other cardinal relationships for self-cultivation. Being a good friend is as important as being a filial son or a loyal subject:

Zixia said, "If he treats worthy persons as worthy and is respectful to them, does all in his power to serve his father and mother, gives his best in the service of the ruler, and in dealings with friends is faithful to his word, though some may say he lacks learning, I would surely call him learned!"

子夏曰。賢賢易色。事父母能竭其力。事君能致其身。與朋友交。言而有信。雖曰未學。吾必謂之學矣。⁶¹

This passage clearly indicates that there are three social sites for self-cultivation: family, state, and friendship. The following passage gives a more elaborate description of the ethical utility of friendship. It is a pathway towards achieving the ethical ideal of *ren*: "Master Zeng said, 'The gentleman uses the arts in acquiring friends and uses friends in helping him to achieve humaneness' (曾子曰。君子以文會友。以友輔仁)。"⁶² This elevation of the significance of friendship to the same level as that of familial and political associations is a new development in the early Warring States period.⁶³ There were people who were friends too

⁶⁰ I should also mention the presence of the master–disciple relationship as the fifth kind of hierarchical human relation in addition to the four that are mentioned here. Curiously, unlike the other four, this hierarchical relationship is never theorized but only performed in the text of the *Analects* itself. See David Elstein, "Beyond the Five Relationships: Teachers and Worthy in Early Chinese Thought," *Philosophy East and West* 62.3 (2012), 375–391; and Denecke, *The Dynamics of Masters Literature*, 90–127.

⁶¹ Yang Bojun, *Lunyu yizhu*, 1.17. ⁶² *Ibid.*, 12.24.

⁶³ There is very little scholarship on the subject of friendship in early China. See Aat Vervoorn, "Friendship in Ancient China," *East Asian history* 27 (2004), 1–32; Michael Nylan, "On the Antique Rhetoric of Friendship," *Asiatische Studien–Études asiatiques* 68.4 (2014), 1225–1265; Yuanguo He, "Confucius and Aristotle on Friendship: A Comparative Study," *Frontiers of Philosophy in China* 2.2 (2007), 291–307; and Norman Kutcher, "The Fifth Relationship: Dangerous Friendships in the Confucian Context," *American Historical Review* 105.5 (2000), 1615–1629.

in the Western Zhou, of course, but with effective political action limited to just the family or the state, as we have discussed, friendship simply did not figure in the Western Zhou political imagination. This positive valorization of friendship in the *Analects*, however, points back to the primacy of this new figure of the deliberative individual that emerged in this period. It is possible now to conceive of an individual as possessing a singular identity, based upon his deliberative interiority, who can relate horizontally to other individuals, compared with being defined through vertical relations as the descendant of a certain family or the subject of a state. Individuals are now imagined as independent ethical entities who can roam around in a space outside, or between, the family and state, establishing associations with one another without risking political irrelevance or oblivion. Moreover, it is now in this new tertiary space that one can cultivate his moral interiority in order to partake in the making of political orders.⁶⁴

In this reading, the seemingly innocuous opening line of the *Analects*, on the pleasure of seeing a friend from afar, is no longer just an expression of a quotidian sentiment but an eloquent pronouncement for the arrival of a new episteme:

The Master said, “Studying, and from time to time going over what you’ve learned—that’s enjoyable, isn’t it? To have a friend come from a long way off—that’s a pleasure, isn’t it? Others don’t understand him, but he doesn’t resent it—that’s the true gentleman, isn’t it?”

子曰：「學而時習之，不亦說乎？有朋自遠方來，不亦樂乎？人不知而不慍，不亦君子乎？」⁶⁵

The use of rhetorical questions (i.e. “that’s a pleasure, isn’t it?”) invites and presumes spontaneous agreement from the audience, thus establishing the self-evident quality of this new worldview. In this new

⁶⁴ It is worth noting that this introduction of a new space outside the family and the state recalls another philosophical scheme that arose after the collapse of an aristocratic class. I have in mind G. W. F. Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, first published in 1821. There, Hegel divided the cultivation of an “ethical life” of an individual into three spheres: family, civil society, and the state. The idea of a “civil society” where individuals fraternize with one another, as an “object of his particular aims,” in the *Philosophy of Right* resonates with this sphere of friendship that we see in texts of the early Warring States period, including the *Analects*. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Hegel’s Philosophy of Right*, trans. T. M. Knox (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 122.

⁶⁵ Yang Bojun, *Lunyu yizhu*, 1.1.

world according to the *Analects*, the past is now imagined as a repertoire of cultural practices that demand evaluation and interpretation for adaptation in the present by deliberative individuals presumed to possess a moral interiority that can and must be cultivated within the family, state, or circle of friends. This deconstruction of the Western Zhou model for the capitalization of the past led to the corrosion of political authority in the originary actions in the genealogical past; the *Analects* sees in this new figure of the deliberative individual, liberated from the confines of the family and state, a new source of historical agency and political authority for imagining a new order for the future.⁶⁶

The *Mozi*: The Origin of Disorder and the Problem with the Deliberative Self

In this section we turn to the *Mozi*, not engaging with the entire received text but only with the “Core Chapters” that contain materials that likely date to the first half of the Warring States period (or, more narrowly speaking, the long fourth century BCE).⁶⁷ Similar to the

⁶⁶ I use the term “deconstruction” specifically here, in the sense that components of the original structure, namely the Western Zhou model, were retained in the *Analects* while their relationship to each other was reconfigured. The idea of exemplarism persisted, for instance, but the exemplary models were no longer situated within the genealogical past but transposed to the open historical field.

⁶⁷ For a recent state-of-the-field summary of the textual history and dating of the *Mozi*, see the “Introduction: Different Voices in the *Mozi*: Studies of an Evolving Text,” by Carine Defoort and Nicolas Standaert, in *The Mozi as an Evolving Text: Different Voices in Early Chinese Thought*, ed. Carine Defoort and Nicolas Standaert (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 1–34, esp. 1–19. The use of the term “Core Chapters” follows A. C. Graham in his series of important works on the *Mozi*. It refers to Chapters 8 to 39 of the text. See A. C. Graham, *Divisions in Early Mohism Reflected in the Core Chapters of Mo-tzu* (Singapore: Institute of East Asian Philosophies, 1985). Watanabe Takashi’s study of the evolution of the Mohist tradition remains the most detailed in modern scholarship to date; his suggestion is that the Core Chapters were produced from the late fifth century, soon after Mozi’s death, to the end of the Warring States period; see his *Kodai Chūgoku shisō no kenkyū: Kōshi den no keisei to Ju Boku shūdan no shisō to kōdō* 古代中國思想の研究: 孔子傳の形成と儒墨集團の思想と行動 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1973). My approach to using the *Mozi* for the arguments of this study is similar to those with regard to the use of the *Analects* (see note 36 above). I take it that these were ideas, now preserved in this part of the *Mozi*, possibly circulated in the early Warring States. It is not a unitary work from a single pair of hands, but that does not necessarily pre-empt the possibility of

preceding discussion of the *Analects*, we will observe a set of departures from the paradigm embodied in the Western Zhou materials. But more than that, we will also observe a complex set of differences and overlaps between the *Mozi* and the *Analects* on how they each imagine the past for their respective political visions. While the *Analects* never explicitly refers to the *Mozi*, neither the text nor the eponymous figure, the *Mozi* formulates many of its arguments as polemics against the ideas and practices of the Confucians (*ru* 儒) or even the figure of Confucius himself. There are two chapters not so subtly entitled “Against the Confucians” (“Fei Ru” 非儒) (only one of which is still extant as Chapter 39), and there are also two triads of chapters (i.e. the “Fei le” 非樂 and “Fei ming” 非命 triads) that vehemently inveighed against practices of musical performance and the idea of fate, both of which the *Mozi* attributes to the Confucian tradition of its time.⁶⁸ Given its dramatic opposition to the ideas and practices of the Confucians, one might expect to find in the *Mozi* a very different, if not entirely anti-theoretical, use of the past. This may appear to be the case on a first reading of the *Mozi*, but in fact, as we delve into the text, we shall discover no such simple diametrical opposition between the two texts at all. Instead, what we will discover first is an ideological common ground, founded on the figure of the deliberative individual that we discussed earlier. Their well-known disagreements on a range of political and ethical issues, as I hope to demonstrate, are not the result of two distinct, rival sets of philosophical beliefs or cultural commitments.⁶⁹ Instead, they stemmed from two different interpretations of this common figure of the deliberative individual as a historically and politically significant subject. It is the same basic stuff with which the *Mozi* and

coherence at a certain level behind the ideas of these various chapters. In fact, the very idea of it being an “evolving” text already implies the recognition that it is a single entity or at least a coherent ecosystem of ideas.

⁶⁸ I refer to the edition of the *Mozi* by Sun Yirang 孫詒讓, *Mozi jian gu* 墨子閒詁 (Beijing: Zhonghua shuju, 2001). Citations will include chapter number followed by page numbers.

⁶⁹ The theatre of philosophical rivalry between the “Confucians” and the “Mohists” is a staple of many accounts of early Chinese thought. See, for just a few of literally hundreds of examples, Ian Johnston’s concise account of it in his *The Mozi: A Complete Translation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), lxvii; Benjamin I. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1985), 135–172; and Yu-lan Fung, *A Short History of Chinese Philosophy* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 49–59.

the *Analects* constructed their own landscape of the past, but the edifices that they each erected in the end would be vastly different and very much at odds with each other.

Please allow me to begin at a somewhat far-fetched place, not immediately the treatment of antiquity in the Core Chapters but the method of its analysis. That, to me, is in fact one of the most striking features of the *Mozi*.⁷⁰ The Core Chapters are a sprawling whole that engages with a very diverse set of topics. They appear to cohere, in the eyes of at least this reader, not over the similarity or relatedness of these different subject matters, but for their consistent method of analysis. To put this even more strongly, the specific arguments about various subjects seem, at times, to be incidental to a demonstration of a certain supposedly universal hermeneutic that is applicable for a proper analysis of any object. One may say, for example, that the chapter “Condemning Music I” (“Fei yue shang” 非樂上) is as much a declaration of the Mohist’s distaste for lavish musical performances as it is more fundamentally a demonstration of the power of the Mohist mode of argumentation that allowed its author(s) to arrive at such an iconoclastic position. In this sense, the *Mozi* is a text about its own methodology; its teachings in the end lie not in the collective whole of its pronouncements on the various subjects, be it music, ghosts, or fatalism, but in this idea of a systematic methodology, an objective structure of reasoning, that can and should be applied to all things towards an aggregate understanding of the world.

What, then, is this methodology of the *Mozi*? For such a hermeneutically interested text, it is not surprising to find in it a declaration of its own method of analysis. It is in the chapter “Against Fate III” (“Fei ming xia” 非命下). It begins with an argument for the necessity of a pre-established “standard” (*yi* 儀) when making statements:

Master Mozi spoke, saying: “In general, it is not permissible, when making a statement, to fail to establish a standard (*yi*) first and [then] speak. If you do not establish a standard first and [then] speak, it is like using the upper part of a potter’s revolving wheel and trying to establish the direction of the sunrise and sunset with it. I think that, although there is a distinction between the sunrise and the sunset, you will, in the end, certainly never be able to find it and establish it.”

⁷⁰ To avoid being repetitious, “Mozi” refers to the Core Chapters of the *Mozi* heretofore.

子墨子言曰：凡出言談，則必可而不先立儀而言。若不先立儀而言，譬之猶運鈞之上而立朝夕焉也。我以為雖有朝夕之辯，必將終未可得而從定也。⁷¹

Then, it continues to state the three specific “criteria” (*fa* 法), constitutive of this common standard (*yi*), that must be met by any statement:

This is why, for a statement, there are three criteria (*fa*). What are the three criteria? I say there is examining it, there is determining its origin, and there is putting it to use. How do you examine it? You examine the affairs of the first sages and great kings. How do you determine its origin? You look at the evidence from the ears and eyes of the multitude. How do you put it to use? You set it out and use it in governing the state, considering its effect on the ten thousand people. These are called the “three criteria.”

是故言有三法。何謂三法？曰：有考之者，有原之者，有用之者。惡乎考之？考先聖大王之事。惡乎原之？察眾之耳目之請？惡乎用之？發而為政乎國，察萬民而觀之。此謂三法也。⁷²

The three criteria for any argument are therefore based, respectively, on historical exemplars, collective senses, and a calculus of effectiveness. Of course, one should be wary of such an overt declaration of methods; there is always the possibility of a gap between what the text says it is doing and what it actually does. Nevertheless, putting this question aside for the moment, in the context of this study, it is important to note the essential, integral role that history is given in this text the *Mozi*. It clearly declares that historical knowledge, specifically the deeds of exemplars from the past, is essential for the formulation of any truthful and meaningful statement in the present-day world.

True to its own words, we do find numerous invocations of the past as argumentative means throughout the *Mozi*. Historical figures and their deeds, often prefaced by temporal markers such as *gu* 古 (“antiquity”) and *xi* 昔 (“formerly”), are cited as compelling evidence for

⁷¹ Sun Yirang, *Mozi xiangyu*, 37.278. Unless otherwise noted, translations from the *Mozi* are adaptations from Johnston, *The Mozi: A Complete Translation*. I have also benefited from consultation of the translation by John Knoblock and Jeffrey Riegel, *Mozi: A Study and Translation of the Ethical and Political Writings* (Berkeley: Institute of East Asian Studies, University of California, Berkeley, 2013).

⁷² Sun Yirang, *Mozi xiangyu*, 37.278.

whatever arguments the text happens to be making. The ubiquity of this rhetorical strategy, this persistent recourse to the past, substantiates the essential role that historical knowledge is supposed to play in its own method. I am of course not alone in having made this observation. Mark Edward Lewis once remarked that “the Mohist canon routinely, indeed obsessively, inscribes its social program in an imagined antiquity and appeals to the authority of past writings.”⁷³ Miranda Brown expanded on this point much further, and made a provocative, persuasive suggestion that the early Mohists may have in fact remade “ancient authority,” by strategically expanding the field of antiquity and elaborating on the legendary sage-kings (*shengwang* 聖王) of the distant past for their own argumentative ends.⁷⁴ In the Core Chapters, invocations of the past are not only pervasive but also purposeful; they are essential and instrumental to the text’s arguments.

This is admittedly a simple observation to make. One only needs to read through the text to discover the ubiquity of the past in the *Mozi*. The more difficult questions would be, as we had asked of the *Analects*, what is the content of the past in the *Mozi*? What, out of the infinitude of the past, was singled out to be recounted as persuasive historical evidence for its arguments? How was the past imagined in the *Mozi* and to what end? And in this respect, how does it compare to the models in the Western Zhou materials and the near-contemporary *Analects*? Let us now address these larger questions, by an examination of how the past is represented and made to function in the Core Chapters of the *Mozi*.

Reading the passages concerning the past in the *Mozi*, one predominant theme becomes immediately apparent. It is the text’s celebratory invocations of legendary kings and sages from antiquity. References to their civilizing innovations and enlightened conduct in antiquity dominate the accounts of the past in the text. Sometime, these past legendary figures are unspecified, simply referred to as “sages” (*sheng* 聖) and “kings” (*wang* 王) from time past (*xian* 先, *xi* 昔, or, more commonly,

⁷³ Lewis, *Writing and Authority*, 111.

⁷⁴ Miranda Brown, “Mozi’s Remaking of Ancient Authority,” in Defoort and Standaert, *The Mozi as an Evolving Text: Different Voices in Early Chinese Thought*, 143–174. Brown offers a persuasive argument that it was likely the early Mohists who were responsible for the widespread use of the term “sage-kings” (*shengwang* 聖王) beginning in the fourth century, for the elaborate promotion of their accounts for political debates in this period.

gu 古). Out of the many such passages in the *Mozi*, the most elaborate would certainly be Chapter Six, “On Eschewing Faults” (“Ciguo” 辭過). It is almost entirely devoted to recounting the civilizing progress made by the “sages” (*shengren* 聖人) in antiquity, through their introduction of the ideas of shelter, clothing, agriculture, and transportation. In each case, the rationale behind the sage’s invention, his intent to improve the human condition, is described in an approving and laudatory language, followed by a critique against contemporary perversion of the same practices through their superfluous extravagance harmful to the people and the state at large.⁷⁵ Elsewhere in the *Mozi*, these unnamed “sages” are celebrated not only for their introduction of civilizing initiatives, but also for their enlightened conduct and proper rulership. Various Mohist virtues – such as frugality (*jie* 節) and impartial caring (*jian'ai* 兼愛) – are said to have been championed by these figures in the distant past. For instance, in the chapter “Moderation in Use II” (“Jie yong zhong” 節用中), the argument for the virtue of frugality was made not only in theoretical terms but also in historical terms through these legendary past figures. It suggested that this virtue was embraced by certain “enlightened kings” (*mingwang* 明王) and “sages” (*shengren*) in antiquity, which in turn account for their supposed effectiveness as rulers of their subjects.⁷⁶ The implicit but unmistakable criticism is that rulers in the present day had long lapsed into self-indulgent immoderation.

These past sages and kings that appear in the pages of the *Mozi* are not always unidentified. Occasionally, we do encounter definite historical personalities. For instance, in the following passage from the chapter “Exalting the Worthies III” (“Shang xian xia” 尚賢下), the idea of meritocracy, one of the key Mohist virtues, was said to have been embraced by historical figures from distant antiquity through the Xia dynasty to the early Zhou:

For what reason did I previously regard as honorable the way of Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu? It was because they were in touch with the

⁷⁵ After the entries on shelter, clothing, agriculture, and transportation, the fifth and last entry is not an invention per se, rather the virtuous conduct of having a limited harem. In the words of the text, the sage-kings had no “retained women” (*gounü* 拘女). Moreover, the chapter concludes with the argument that the four inventions, and this one virtuous conduct, exemplify the more general principle of frugality of the sage-kings. Sun Yirang, *Mozi xiangyu*, 6.37–38.

⁷⁶ Sun Yirang, *Mozi xiangyu*, 21.163.

multitude in issuing their decrees and bringing order to the populace, which meant that those in the world who were good could be encouraged and those who were evil could be stopped. It is in such a manner that exalting worthiness is identical with the way of Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen and Wu.

然昔吾所以貴堯舜禹湯文武之道者，何故以哉？以其唯毋臨眾發政而治民，使天下之為善者可而勸也，為暴者可而沮也。然則此尚賢者也，與堯舜禹湯文武之道同矣。⁷⁷

This passage is fairly typical of how the *Mozi* invokes past historical figures as exemplars of the virtues that it espouses. Moreover, even though this passage cites just six historical figures, namely Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang 湯, Wen, and Wu, this is in fact the entire canon of the legendary “kings” and “sages” in the *Mozi*. In most passages, only the last four – Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu – are mentioned, and only in some instances, such as this passage, would the even more ancient Yao and Shun be added to this limited canonical cast.⁷⁸ These were all great founders of states in antiquity to the time of the Zhou. Other cultural figures outside or peripheral to the history of the states, such as the likes of Boyi and Shuqi who were celebrated in the *Analects*, are notably absent in the *Mozi*. That is not to say that the text mentions no other historical individual besides these few legendary kings and sages. On the rare occasions when the text does mention them, usually either famous personalities from the past or individual rulers in the present, they are almost always noted for their negative impact rather than virtuous deeds.⁷⁹ In the Core Chapters of the *Mozi*, we find sustained attention to “sages” and “kings” from antiquity, specifically this sextet from the very distant past to the time of the founding of the Zhou dynasty.⁸⁰ The vast expanse of the past is invoked in the *Mozi* through their historic achievements, be they civilizing innovations or enlightened rulership, for the advancement of the human condition.

This attention to the civilizing innovation and enlightened rulership of past figures carries with it the implication that humanity, as it was in the time before these sagely interventions, was originally disorderly. It required deliberate interventions in order to achieve a semblance of

⁷⁷ Ibid., 10.66. ⁷⁸ For an example, see *ibid.*, 8.47–48.

⁷⁹ For an example, see *ibid.*, 4.23.

⁸⁰ There is a very useful tabulation of the distribution of these six sage-kings in the different chapters of the *Mozi*, in Brown, “Mozi’s Remaking of Ancient Authority,” 163.

order. The work of these past sage-kings, therefore, was not just gratuitous improvement over an otherwise orderly humanity, but rather essential interventions without which humanity would have lapsed into, or reverted back to, the primitive chaos and brutishness of its original condition. This abiding interest in the civilizing works of the past sage-kings in the *Mozi* is directly informed by its subscription to the idea of humanity being originally disorderly. The civilizing progress and political order established by sage-kings of the past are but momentary relief from immanent disorder.

This dismal vision of humanity is evident in its many passages on historical declines and the origin of disorder in antiquity. Besides those celebratory accounts of past sage-kings, these account for the majority of the passages concerning the past in the text. No doubt, for the *Mozi*, the present age is one that has lapsed into chaos (*luan* 亂), having either abandoned or perverted the sagely innovations and enlightened rulership of the past. “Now, when we come to the present time, the sage-kings of the Three Dynasties of former times are already dead and the world is bereft of righteousness,” (今逮至昔者三代聖王既沒，天下失義), as the text says time and again before it goes on to detail the specific maladies afflicting the present-day world (e.g. 25.169, 31.221).

This is quite a harrowing vision of ourselves; it sees humanity as perpetually bound and susceptible to various forms of disorder of our own making, with only occasional respite thanks to the few accidental sage-kings of the past. It is perhaps a depressing idea to accept, but according to the *Mozi* it is also a problem that we can ultimately overcome. How would we do that exactly? We begin by understanding the *causes* of our disorder. Then, with that knowledge, we can devise appropriate solutions to address and overcome them. In other words, the text argues for the utility and necessity of understanding the etiology of disorder:

A sage who takes the order of the world as his business must know what disorder arises from, and then he can bring order to it. If he does not know what disorder arises from, then he is not able to bring about order.

聖人以治天下為事者也，必知亂之所自起，焉能治之，不知亂之所自起，則不能治。⁸¹

⁸¹ Sun Yirang, *Mozi xiangyu*, 14.99.

Then, following this passage, the text drives the point home with a medical analogy:

It is, for example, like a doctor treating a person's illness. He must know what the illness arises from, and then he is able to treat it. If he does not know what the illness arises from, then he is not able to treat it. How can bringing order to disorder be the only thing not like this? One must know the source of the disorder, and then one is able to bring about order. If one does not know the source of the disorder, then one is not able to bring about order. A sage, in taking the ordering of the world to be his business, must examine what disorder arises from.

譬之如醫之攻人之疾者然，必知疾之所自起，焉能攻之；不知疾之所自起，則弗能攻。治亂者何獨不然，必知亂之所自起，焉能治之；不知亂之所自起，則弗能治。聖人以治天下為事者也，不可不察亂之所自起。⁸²

This medical analogy, likening our chronic disorder to cases of illness, is quite revealing for the text's larger vision of the basic problems of humanity. As human beings, we are prone to become sick from time to time; one may even say that it is in our very constitution to be susceptible to various forms of illness over time. Yet being sick is certainly not the proper way for us to live; it is something that should be treated, as much as possible, if not altogether, once and for all. To extrapolate from this metaphor, therefore, humanity may be constitutionally susceptible to chaos harmful to itself, yet it is not something that we should accept as part of our natural condition. Instead, it is an aberration from our proper historical course that impedes our flourishing over time. These periodic episodes of disorder must be overcome, and just as with any form of illness, we treat it by understanding its causes. There is a subtle identification here between the nature of disorder and the origin of disorder. To put this differently, the implicit claim here is that a knowledge of a thing's origin is equivalent to understanding its nature. In the case of an illness, an observation of the physical symptoms in the present would lead to a diagnosis of the causes, and that in turn would lead to a prescription for the appropriate cures. Similarly, disorder in the world today is the apparent effects of a more fundamental, underlying dysfunction, whose proper diagnosis

⁸² *Ibid.*, 14.99.

is essential as a first step in finding solutions that will restore order and put us back on the right path towards a more civilized world.

So, for the *Mozi*, what is this etiology of disorder? On first reading, the text seems to suggest more than one answer to this question. It accuses the rulers of its time of failing at many things; they are not frugal, their systems of government are not meritocratic, or they fail to understand the importance of impartial caring, to name just a few examples. The ignorance and stupidity of the rulers, however, are not the root causes. If only it were that simple, then educating or removing the rulers would have fixed the world. The *Mozi* does offer a more radical diagnosis, one based on a narrative of antiquity:

Master Mozi spoke, saying: “Ancient times, when people first came into being, were times when there were as yet no laws or government, so it was said that people had differing principles. This meant that, if there was one person, there was one principle; if there were two people, there were two principles; and if there were ten people, there were ten principles. The more people there were, the more things there were that were spoke of as principles. This was a case of people affirming their own principles and condemning those of other people. The consequence of this was mutual condemnation. In this way, within a household, fathers and sons, and older and younger brothers were resentful and hostile, separated and dispersed, and unable to reach agreement and accord with each other. Throughout the world, people all used water and fire, and poisons and potions to injure and harm one another. As a result, those with strength to spare did not use it to help each other in their work, surplus goods rotted and decayed and were not used for mutual distribution, and good doctrines were hidden and obscured and not used for mutual teaching. So the world was in a state of disorder comparable to that amongst birds and beasts.”

子墨子言曰：古者民始生，未有刑政之時，蓋其語人異義。是以一人則一義，二人則二義，十人則十義，其人茲眾，其所謂義者亦茲眾。是以人是其義，以非人之義，故文相非也。是以內者父子兄弟作怨惡，離散不能相和合。天下之百姓，皆以水火毒藥相虧害，至有餘力不能以相勞，腐朽餘財不以相分，隱匿良道不以相教，天下之亂，若禽獸然。⁸³

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 11.74–75. A similar passage is seen at the beginning of Chapter 12, “Exalting Unity II” (“Shang tong zhong” 尚同中) (12.78). Bryan W. van Norden compares this passage to the idea of the “state of nature” in Thomas Hobbes’s *Leviathan*. See Van Norden, *Virtue Ethics and Consequentialism in Early Chinese Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 162–166.

The problem, therefore, is the lack of “shared norms,” as Chris Fraser put it in his recent study of the philosophy of the *Mozi*.⁸⁴ Before we enjoyed the benefits of sagely interventions, we were originally prone to quarrel with others, as each of us was naturally committed to our own idiosyncratic standards. That is a fundamental cause of our disorder, once upon a time in antiquity, according to the *Mozi*. To draw out the significance of this argument, it would be helpful to contrast this to the texts that we looked at earlier, namely the Western Zhou materials and the *Analects*. That would also allow me to further delineate the landscape of the past in the *Mozi*, and begin to circle back to the larger theme of this chapter, namely the transition in how the past was imagined from the Western Zhou of the late Bronze Age to the early Warring States period in the *Analects* and the *Mozi*.

A comparison between what we have seen in the *Mozi* so far and the Western Zhou texts is relatively straightforward, for they are largely diametrically opposite. In the latter, as I argued earlier, the focus is on the origins of order; they tended to valorize the founding moment of a new order, such as the actions of the first Zhou kings, and translate their originary nature into a paradigmatic status for the later generations. One identifies and studies the origins of order in the past in order to emulate them and maintain the same order in the present. In the *Mozi*, however, the focus has shifted from the origins of order to the origins of disorder. Establishing order in the present is no longer a matter of knowing and perpetuating a founding order from a certain point in the past; rather, it depends on understanding the original disorder of humanity. If history figures as a collection of exemplary actions of one’s ancestors for faithful emulation in the Western Zhou world, it is now, at least in part, a series of etiological cases awaiting proper diagnoses in the *Mozi*.

One might object to this argument by pointing out that the *Mozi* also focuses on the sage-kings and their civilizing work. So it is not only concerned with etiological moments in history, but also attends to what was positive and exemplary. While it is true that the *Mozi* does celebrate a small cast of past sage-kings, including King Wen and King Wu, who figure prominently in Western Zhou texts, the way that it contextualizes their historical significance still betrays its etiological

⁸⁴ Chris Fraser, *The Philosophy of the Mòzǐ: The First Consequentialists* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 77–103.

investment, with a clear emphasis on the primacy of recognizing and diagnosing disorders. Take, for example, the aforementioned chapter “On Eschewing Faults” (“Ciguo”), which surveys the various civilizing innovations introduced by the sage-kings in antiquity. In each case, whether it was shelter, agriculture, transportation, or clothing, the narrative always begins with the sage-king discerning a particular deficiency in the way that human beings were living, and having understood the cause of that deficiency, he devised an appropriate solution for its fulfillment.⁸⁵ These acts of the sage-kings are not meant to be repeated ad infinitum – the idea of transportation only needed to be introduced once. The lesson that we are supposed to learn from these cases of the ancient sage-kings is that we must recognize the particular deficiencies or disorderliness of our own time, in order to arrive at the appropriate measures to create or restore proper order. These achievements of the sage-kings were ultimately grounded in their etiological approach to the world in which they found themselves. They became the sage-kings that we now celebrate precisely because they understood the causes of the disorder they saw in their own time. Both the Western Zhou materials and the *Mozi* capitalize the past for their respective political visions, but one invests in exemplarity while the other emphasizes etiology.

And what about the *Analects*? How does it compare to the *Mozi*? In these two bodies of materials, which are likely near-contemporaries of each other, we see an interesting point of convergence. It is the figure of deliberative individual that we first encountered in our discussion of the *Analects*. In the last passage that we read from the *Mozi*, on the cause of disorder in antiquity, the text identifies as the culprit literally *everyman*. Each of us is born with our own idiosyncratic standard, according to

⁸⁵ For instance, in the case of transportation, this is how the *Mozi* described its introduction: “In the times when the people of old still did not know how to make boats and carts, they could not transport heavy loads or reach distant roads. Therefore, the sage-kings brought about the making of boats and carts to facilitate the affairs of the people. The boats and carts they made were perfectly solid, swift and convenient so they could carry what was heavy and travel far. Moreover, in their making, the use of materials was slight, but their being of benefit was great, so the people were happy and benefited from them. Orders and decrees did not spur them, yet they acted. The people were not worn out, yet the ruler had enough for use, therefore the people returned to him” (古之民未知為舟車時，重任不移，遠道不至。故聖王作為舟車，以便民之事。其為舟車也，全固輕利，可以任重致遠。其為用財少而為利多，是以民樂而利之。故法令不急而行，民不勞而上足用，故民歸之). Sun Yirang, *Mozi xiangyu*, 6.37.

the text, and conflicts always arise when two or more individuals interact. “People had differing principles” (*ren yi yi* 人異義), as the text emphatically remarks.⁸⁶ We always choose to privilege our own “principle” over that of others. That is simply our nature. This understanding of human beings as idiosyncratic ideologues, I would argue, implies an attribution of deliberative capacity to individuals that is comparable to the same process that we saw in the *Analects*. Both texts subscribe to this figure of the deliberative individual, who chooses between alternatives and decides on one course of action over another, sometimes with great historical consequences for the world.

The question of individualism or the individual subject has received relatively little attention in the scholarship on the Core Chapters of the *Mozi* in past decades.⁸⁷ In a rare exception, Erica Brindley argued recently that there is a radical conception of individuals in the *Mozi* as authoritative agents capable of independent “decision-making” and “self-determination,” so much so it may have constituted one of the roots of individualism in early China.⁸⁸ I very much agree with Brindley’s argument for the centrality of this figure of the deliberative individual in the *Mozi*. And for the text, it is a problem that must be resolved. The question is not whether this or that individual arrives at the right or wrong standard; the fact that individuals are deliberating at all on their own, formulating their own standards, already constitutes incipient disorder. The authors of the *Mozi* see this individual and his deliberative capacity, but they hold a fundamentally negative view of them. This is the root cause of disorder in the world. It must be

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.75.

⁸⁷ Much of the scholarship on the philosophy of the *Mozi* in the past decades was preoccupied with the question of utilitarianism (or consequentialism), as well as with how its objectivist outlook can be reconciled with its religiosity. There has been very little discussion of its notion of selfhood or individual subjectivity. See Dennis M. Ahern, “Is Mo Tzu a Utilitarian?,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 3.2 (1976), 185–193; Rodney L. Taylor, “Religion and Utilitarianism: Mo Tzu on Spirits and Funerals,” *Philosophy East and West* 29.3 (1979), 337–346; David E. Soles, “Mo Tzu and the Foundations of Morality,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 26.1 (1999), 37–48; Daniel M. Johnson, “Mozi’s Moral Theory: Breaking the Hermeneutical Stalemate,” *Philosophy East and West* 61.2 (2011), 347–164; and most recently, Fraser, *The Philosophy of the Mōzi*.

⁸⁸ Erica Brindley, “Human Agency and the Ideal of *Shang Tong* (Upward Conformity) in Early Mohist Writings,” *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 34.3 (2007), 409–425, esp. 412–413, 417. See also the expanded treatment in her monograph *Individualism in Early China Human Agency and the Self in Thought and Politics* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2010).

overcome, as the sage-kings once did in the past, before good order can arise and flourish for the benefit of all.

This brings us back to the comparison with the *Analects*, for this point marks a striking divergence between the two texts. Recall that the *Analects*, with its dismissal of the privilege of the originary, exemplary models within the genealogical past, turns to this deliberative capacity of individuals as a potential new source for establishing order. Reflecting on the cultural practices of the past, an individual deliberates on the appropriate model to be creatively adopted in the present. The *Mozi* similarly leaves behind the genealogical past of the Western Zhou, and recognizes the presence and agency of deliberative individuals. However, while the *Analects* sees this deliberative capacity of individuals as a new source of creating order, the *Mozi* sees it as the exact opposite, the original source of disorder in the world. In the *Analects*, this deliberative capacity is one of our endowed faculties that we must cultivate; in the *Mozi*, it is an innate liability of being human that has to be controlled or perhaps even eradicated altogether.

In other words, both texts recognize the same, new political subject, namely the deliberative individual, but they diverge in their interpretations. The *Analects* calls on this person to exercise his deliberative capacity to reflect upon the cultural practices of the past in order to imagine a viable new path for the present; the *Mozi*, on the other hand, chastises this same figure for his idiosyncratic standard and reckless deliberations as the very source of disorder in antiquity, and again now in the early Warring States. The solution that the *Analects* has discovered is considered to be the very problem in the *Mozi*.

To fix this problem, the *Mozi* appeals to the idea of an impersonal, objective standard, denoted in the text by the term “Heaven” (*tian* 天). Individual principles, cultivated within the recesses of our minds, must be abandoned, by referring to this supra-human standard external to all subjective calculations. In the triad of chapters entitled “Heaven’s Intention” (“Tianzhi” 天志), this idea of “Heaven” is given this description:

So Master Mozi’s having Heaven’s intention is no different to a wheelwright having compasses or a carpenter having a square. Now a wheelwright takes hold of his compasses in order to determine whether things in the world are round or not, saying: “What accords with my compasses is called round and

what does not accord with my compasses is called not round.” In this way the roundness or non-roundness of all things can be ascertained and known. Why is this so? It is because the standard for roundness is clear. Also, a carpenter takes hold of his square in order to determine whether things in the world are square or not, saying: “What accords with my square is called square and what does not accord with my square is called not square.” In this way the squareness or non-squareness of all things can be ascertained and known. Why is this so? It is because the standard for squareness is clear.

是故子墨子之有天之，辟人無以異乎輪人之有規，匠人之有矩也。今夫輪人操其規，將以量度天下之圓與不圓也，曰：「中吾規者謂之圓，不中吾規者謂之不圓。」是以圓與不圓，皆可得而知也。此其故何？則圓法明也。匠人亦操其矩，將以量度天下之方與不方也，曰：「中吾矩者謂之方，不中吾矩者謂之不方。」是以方與不方皆可得而知之。此其故何？則方法明也。⁸⁹

This metaphor of compasses and squares for the idea of Heaven drives home the notion that it represents an objective standard that lies outside, and therefore can serve as a corrective to, our own almost always wrongheaded individual deliberations.⁹⁰ Much of the Core Chapters of the *Mozi* is, therefore, an elaboration on how the world should be organized, and how we should conduct ourselves within it, according to an understanding of this objective standard dispensed from Heaven. In order to arrive at an understanding of this “Heaven’s intention,” the text recommended the methodology of the “three criteria” (*san fa* 三法), as we discussed earlier (i.e. historical exemplars, collective senses, and a calculus of effectiveness). The end result is essentially a hierarchical, but meritocratic, bureaucratic system of laws and punishments designed to provide material subsistence for the maximum number of people at the same time.⁹¹ It is headed by the Son of Heaven (*tianzi* 天子), who comprehends and maintains Heaven’s intention in the world. “It is only that the Son of Heaven is able to make uniform the principles of the world; this is how there is

⁸⁹ Sun Yirang, *Mozi xiangyu*, 27.207.

⁹⁰ This metaphor of compasses and squares for the idea of Heaven is also in 4.20–21, 26.197, and 28.213.

⁹¹ This ideal system envisioned by the *Mozi* is elaborated throughout the Core Chapters of the *Mozi*; a detailed description can be found in the “Exalting Unity” (“Shang tong” 尚同) triad (Sun Yirang, *Mozi xiangyu*, 11–13.74–98). See also Fraser, *The Philosophy of the Mòzǐ: The First Consequentialists*, for a good summary of this political and ethical program.

order in the world” (天子唯能壹同天下之義，是以天下治也).⁹² Unlike the barbaric chaos in antiquity with each individual having his or her own principle, we now have only “shared norms,” a single impersonal principle for the entire world upheld by the Son of Heaven. A system consistent with Heaven’s intention will flourish, while ones that deviate from it inevitably breed disorder and create the conditions for their own doom, in addition to incurring natural calamities as negative responses from Heaven.⁹³

Finally, this metaphor of the compasses and squares is also notable for the ahistoricism that it implies. A square is a square no matter when or where; likewise, “Heaven’s intention,” this objective set of standards for establishing order, is presented as constant across historical contexts. Its efficacy is universal and therefore transhistorical. It means that the various virtuous principles that the text espouses, such as meritocracy, frugality, and impartial caring, all perfectly align with the objective standards of Heaven. They worked at least once before, and will always work in the future. Orders are historically realized, and humanity does fluctuate between times of relative chaos and relative peace, but the idea of order and the means of its constitution have no historical dimension in the *Mozi*.

This, again, stands in contrast to the *Analects*. There is an entrenched historical dimension in the imagination of the order of the present in the *Analects*; every measure we decide to adopt in the present should be a creative, reflective adaptation of a historical precedent.⁹⁴ The very notion of a transhistorical order is inconceivable in the *Analects*, while it is the very ideal that drives the political vision of the *Mozi*. The *Mozi* promises what the *Analects* precludes: an objective standard for establishing good order that is not susceptible to the corruption of time. This desire for a transhistorical order, however, does not diminish the significance of history in the text. In fact, it plays an essential role in the overall political vision of the *Mozi*. It is, after all, in the study of antiquity that the *Mozi* discovers the true origin of disorder, namely the contentious arbitrations of men. The past is relevant as a field of

⁹² Sun Yirang, *Mozi xiangyu*, 11.76.

⁹³ For a description of this, see, for instance, the conclusion of Chapter 11, “Exalting Unity I” (“Shang tong shang” 尚同上). Sun Yirang, *Mozi xiangyu*, 11.77–78.

⁹⁴ Recall, for instance, the emphasis on the idea of *shu* 述 (“transmission”) over *zuo* 作 (“innovation”) in the *Analects* (Yang Bojun, *Lunyu yizhu*, 7.1).

etiological investigations; it allows us to see the causes of our disorder, as the *Mozi* did itself.

Moreover, history is also where we can observe the efficacy of following the intentions of Heaven, through the work of the sage-kings, those who were able to diagnose the problems of their own age, and arrived at the correct solution by appealing to Heaven:

[This being so, then] what can be taken as a standard for bringing about order? It is said that there is no standard like Heaven. Heaven is broad and unselfish in its actions, and is generous in its bestowing without considering itself virtuous. Its radiance is enduring and does not decay. Therefore, the sage-kings took it as the standard. If Heaven is taken as the standard, then all one's actions must be measured against Heaven. What Heaven desires should be done and what it does not desire should not be done.

然則奚以為治法而可？故曰莫若法天。天之行廣而無私，其施厚而不德，其明久而不衰，故聖王法之。既以天為法，動作有為必度於天，天之所欲則為之，天所不欲則止。⁹⁵

Later on, in the conclusion of the same chapter, the text refers to specific cases of the four sage-kings, Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu:

Formerly, the sage-kings Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu were universal in loving the world's ordinary people, leading them to venerate Heaven and serve ghosts, and their benefiting people was very great. Therefore, Heaven brought them good fortune, established them as Sons of Heaven, and the feudal lords of the world all respected and served them.

昔之聖王禹、湯、文、武，兼愛天下之百姓，率以尊天事鬼，其利人多，故天福之，使立為天子，天下諸侯皆實事之。⁹⁶

Conversely, historical figures who went against Heaven's intentions suffered accordingly:

The tyrannical kings Jie, Zhou, You, and Li were universal in hating the world's ordinary people, leading them to revile Heaven and insult ghosts, and their harming people was very great. Therefore, Heaven brought them misfortune, caused them to lose their countries, to be themselves killed, and to be held in contempt in the world so that posterity continues to vilify them unceasingly to the present day.

⁹⁵ Sun Yirang, *Mozi xiangyu*, 4.22. ⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 4.23.

暴王桀、紂、幽、厲，兼惡天下之百姓，率以誦天侮鬼，其賊人多，故天禍之，使遂失其國家，身死為僂於天下，後世子孫毀之，至今不息。⁹⁷

The past in the *Mozi*, therefore, is an etiological field, and the study of history allows us to observe the causes of disorder as well as their remedies. More pragmatically, it is also a series of case studies of historical figures who either accorded with or deviated from the intentions of Heaven. The negative cases demonstrate the horrific consequences of going against Heaven; the positive examples, namely the actions of the sage-kings in the past, are specific, partial instantiations of the standards of Heaven. A comprehensive knowledge of sagely deeds from the past may aggregate to a rough outline of the order that Heaven has always intended for us. It is an inferential approximation of Heaven through a survey of exemplary and unexemplary figures and their deeds in history.⁹⁸

Finally, let me conclude this section with a speculation on the reason behind the relatively limited canon of sage-kings in the *Mozi*. Only a handful of dynastic founders are noted in the text, namely the sextet Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, Wen, and Wu, while many other cultural heroes such as Boyi and Shuqi celebrated in the *Analects* (and elsewhere in the Warring States corpus) are absent. In light of our argument about the text here, it is not hard to see why the *Mozi* would find nothing to celebrate about someone such as Boyi or Shuqi. The *Analects* may see the forceful exercises of their deliberative capacity as evidence of virtue, but the *Mozi* would certainly regard such stubborn commitment to one's own arbitrary standard as precisely the seed of disorder. The only ones who are truly worthy of celebration and adherence are the few individuals in history who, in the view of the *Mozi*, recognized the objective standards of Heaven, and subjugated their own arbitrary principles, in order to create governing institutions that gave the world a proper order. Moreover, only the works of these sages, and perhaps those who gave them significant assistance, provide accurate access to the objective order intended by Heaven. The rest are either

⁹⁷ Ibid., 4.23.

⁹⁸ This can be contextualized as an instance of “non-deductive argumentation,” to use Paul R. Goldin’s phrase, through historical anecdotes in early China. See Paul R. Goldin, “Non-deductive Argumentation in Early Chinese Philosophy,” in *Between History and Philosophy: Anecdotes in Early China*, ed. Sarah A. Queen and Paul van Els (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2017), 54–77.

irrelevant or negative examples, which the text does occasionally note, as in the case of the “tyrannical kings” (*baowang* 暴王) in the very last passage cited above.⁹⁹

The *Mozi* recognizes the historical agency of deliberative individuals – they can make or break the order of the world. The good ones, however, are those who exercise their deliberative capacity only to realize that they should subjugate it in order to yield to the objective standards of Heaven outside themselves. What the text demands, therefore, is more than just relinquishment, but a willful subjugation of our deliberative selves.

Conclusion

In the late Bronze Age period, the political elite of the Western Zhou saw the past largely as a genealogical field. It starts from the founding moments of the dynasty and marches forward to the present. Exemplary acts by the founders of the dynasty were the stuff of history. They are to be emulated by the later generations, so that the original order of the dynasty will be perpetuated. With the fall of the dynasty, and with it the hereditary aristocratic order of the political elite, this predominance of the genealogical imagination of the past also declined. In the divided world of the early Warring States, a few centuries after the Western Zhou, we begin to see alternative ways to imagine the past. In this chapter, I discussed two particularly powerful examples, namely the *Analects* and the *Mozi*. They are vastly different texts, yet interesting dialogues emerge when they are read together, with a view to their respective capitalization of the past for their political visions.

Both the *Analects* and the *Mozi* engaged with this figure of the deliberative individual. In the former, the past has become a repertoire of cultural practices; an individual evaluates and decides which is the most exemplary and efficacious for the present. In the *Mozi*, on the other hand, the past is where one goes in search of the causes of our disorder, the false and disastrous deliberations of individuals past, in order to surmise the universal, objective standards that will restore order to the world. The *Analects* sees a powerful resource in this deliberative capacity of men, while the *Mozi* considers it a key source of our trouble.

⁹⁹ Sun Yirang, *Mozi xiangyu*, 4.23. For an alternative answer to this question, see Brown, “Mozi’s Remaking of Ancient Authority.”

In other words, there were three different figurations of the past: genealogical, cultural, and etiological. Given their relative chronological proximity, we can consider the last two – the cultural past and the etiological past – as two competing voices in the debates of the early Warring States period over a range of political and ethical concerns. They both saw few resources in the old model of the genealogical past, but the trajectories of their departures are different. With the *Mozi*, we can discern a morphological resemblance between its idea of “Heaven” and the originary exemplary actions of the ancestors in the Western Zhou materials. Both represent pre-existing, incontestable ideals external to oneself that predefine the realm of proper action for the present. Perhaps with the ebbing of the genealogical past, and along with it the ideal of an objective standard embodied in the exemplary actions of the ancestors, the *Mozi* turns to this idea of Heaven as a way to preserve or even radicalize this ideal of an external objective standard.

This preservation of an old ideal through a proxy concept in the *Mozi* makes the *Analects*, in comparison, a much more radical departure from the Western Zhou model. The entire edifice built on the foundation of a genealogical past in the Western Zhou has completely vanished in the *Analects*. There is no genealogical continuity, no exemplary founding moments, or any external objective standard that any individual may rely on. Instead, we have only ourselves, with our reflective minds, looking back on the repertoire of past cultural practices for guidance on what to do in the present. There is a lot more deliberative freedom at the individual level in the *Analects*, compared to both the Western Zhou paradigm and the *Mozi*, but with it there is also an uncertainty over the rectitude of one’s choices.

Finally, I would like to briefly comment on an issue that has only been implied but never explicitly discussed throughout this chapter. It is the issue of historical continuity and discontinuity. In the Western Zhou materials, there is a presumption of historical continuity between the past and present. Or, more precisely, there is a tacit understanding that the present order is continuous to the original order inaugurated by one’s ancestors at a particular moment in the past. The task is to maintain a historical knowledge of the founding moments in order to extend the original paradigmatic order into the present.

In the early Warring States period, however, at least in these two bodies of materials the *Analects* and the *Mozi*, we no longer see this comforting belief in a continuum of order between past and present. If

anything, they are both committed to the exact opposite, namely the idea of historical ruptures. The orderly existence that once flourished – whether in the early Zhou or in distant antiquity – was so fully corrupted that we are now completely disconnected from it. It was never a matter of inheriting or restoring an old order, for it is beyond repair by this point in time. This is a time of rupture from a superior past. Historical course was radically disrupted; past and present are disjunct.

Time is out of joint, from the perspectives of both the *Analects* and the *Mozi*. In this light, we can appreciate the politics of both texts as driven by a desire to overcome this perceived historical discontinuity. In the *Mozi*, the exhortation to deduce and abide by the intentions of Heaven comes with the promise that we will be reunited with a long line of sage-kings who succeeded in doing so from distant antiquity. By adhering to the exact same transhistorical standard that they too discovered in the past, we will simply be re-establishing and furthering the order that they created. A new genealogy of sagely individuals is therefore forged, stretching from the distant past to the present. Its membership is not defined by blood ties but by one's proper understanding of Heaven.

The *Analects'* attempt at re-establishing historical continuity is subtler and more circumscribed in its scope. If its strategy is to look back in time and deliberate upon a particular cultural practice to follow, the present would always be an extension of particular pieces of the past. The text does valorize a certain idea of historical continuity, as Confucius himself declares a preference for transmission (*shu*) over creation (*zuo*).¹⁰⁰ Compared to the *Mozi*, however, this re-established historical continuity in the *Analects* is much more tenuous and fragmentary. It is contingent on particular individuals, mediated by their idiosyncratic preferences for historical precedents. And in the end, even in the most ideal scenario, there can never be a perfect continuity between the past and present. This is because, for the *Analects*, the past was always already broken into many separate pieces, an imperfectly recollected repertoire of disparate cultural forms and practices. It does not appeal to anything like the idea of Heaven in the *Mozi*, which enables the identification and integration of specific historical moments and individuals into a single overarching genealogy that we can help extend into the present. In the *Analects*, the best that one can hope for is

¹⁰⁰ Yang Bojun, *Lunyu yizhu*, 7.1.

a modular type of historical continuity, where the present is informed by an individual's interpretation of a choice piece of the past.

Pervasive angst over this perceived historical rupture between the past and present informed the politics of the *Analects* and the *Mozi*. In their attempts to re-establish some sense of historical continuity for their world, and to imagine a more orderly and flourishing future, they both looked to the past. In the cultural past of the *Analects*, we are directed to curate past practices for emulation in the present; in the etiological past of the *Mozi*, we act as investigators in search of the root cause of our affliction and the components of a good order as dictated by Heaven. Neither saw much use anymore in the genealogical past that was once instrumental to the cultivation of political authority of the late Bronze Age aristocratic order of the Western Zhou.