

## TWO

*Scenes of Instruction and Master Bodies  
in the Analects*

Any history of Masters Literature must inevitably begin with Confucius and the *Analects*, because this slim collection that shows the master in word and action is both the great model and the prominent exception in the history of the genre. The “scene of instruction,” in which the master is shown in action, instruction, or conversation with disciples, rulers, or other contemporaries, was to become the seminal narrative format of Masters Literature. Yet, the collection was compiled long after Confucius’s time. Although the *Analects* certainly preserves very early material, it probably gained its present form in the mid-second century BCE, just around the time when Emperor Wu of the Han established posts for Confucian scholars to teach the five textual traditions of the *Book of Poetry*, the *Book of Documents*, the *Record of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記), the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, and the *Book of Changes*.<sup>1</sup> Unlike the other Masters Texts, the *Analects* were not named after their master and only make up a small portion of the large body of lore that accrued around the figure of Confucius and that survives in collections like the *Record of Rites*, the *Collected Works of the Kong Family* (*Kongcongzi* 孔叢子), the *Family Conversations of Confucius* (*Kongzi jiayu* 孔子家語), and the *Garden of Sto-*

1. For the context of the Han compilation of the *Analects*, see Csikszentmihalyi, “Confucius and the *Analects* in the Han,” 144.

*ries* (*Shuoyuan* 說苑).<sup>2</sup> That the collection was compiled later than many texts influenced by its material attests to the rising fortunes of Confucius’s legacy. During the Han dynasty Confucius lore was everywhere; what came to be preserved in the *Analects* constituted only a small fraction of it. Emperor Wu’s sponsoring of the Confucian scholars and their texts might suddenly have made a choice selection of the Master’s words desirable.

*The Analects as the Exemplary Exception of  
Masters Literature*

The *Analects* are exceptional within the history of Masters Literature because early bibliographers did not consider them part of the Masters canon at all. Due to Confucius’s overawing stature as a master, a compiler-author, a sage, and an uncrowned king—to name just a few of his roles since the Han—the “Bibliographical Treatise” (*Yiwenzhi* 藝文志) of Ban Gu’s *Han History* lists the *Analects* in the Classics section. Why did the compilers of the “Treatise” place the book, together with the *Classic of Filial Piety* and writing primers, at the end of the Classics and before the Masters? They could not claim it as one of the Classics, because Confucius did not author or compile it as was assumed for the Six Classics. Neither could they comfortably label it as a Masters Text, because as they explain in the “Treatise,” Masters Literature has to be understood as a fruit of the political decline of the Zhou dynasty and the ever-increasing infighting between local rulers and hegemonies. The compilers of the “Treatise” were eager to spare the *Analects* the fate of being a by-product of the intellectual contentiousness that went along with the Zhou’s political decline. In placing it alongside the writing primers, the “Treatise” highlighted the *Analects*’ pedagogical role as a repository of cultural values, which reflects the process of Confucius’s canonization during the Han dynasty.<sup>3</sup>

2. For a convenient overview of Confucius lore in early texts, see Li Qiqian, *Kongzi jiliao huibian*.

3. For Confucius’s canonization during the Han, see Csikszentmihalyi, “Confucius and the *Analects* in the Han,” 134–162.

The Han bibliographers had their own reasons for setting the *Analects* apart and inserting them between the Confucian Classics and Masters Literature proper; but the *Analects*' representation of the master in dialogue with his admiring entourage became undeniably the most influential narrative ploy of Masters Literature. Framing Confucius in brief "scenes of instruction" was a bold rhetorical move, not the result of mere scribal record-keeping. It consciously presented Confucius as a master of oral dialogue. Before Confucius, sage rulers of antiquity and their ministers had been represented in direct speech and dialogue, as in the *Book of Documents*. In *Mencius*, Confucius acknowledges that he had infringed upon royal prerogative when compiling the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. Similarly, the authors of the scenes of instruction in the *Analects* boldly cast their master into the powerful role of an accomplished speaker and wise teacher, a worthy successor to the privilege of speech previously owned by sage rulers and worthy officials. The subsequent history of Masters Literature was to be a sequence of variations on the seminal scene of instruction that first appears in the materials preserved in the *Analects*.

The choice to represent the master in conversation with his rapt entourage profoundly shaped the meaning of Confucius's teachings. When framed in pithy scenes of instruction by his disciples' transcription of his words and actions, simple declarative sentences are transformed into words of wisdom and bodily gestures into ritual acts. Confucius becomes a charismatic master figure, confirmed in his authority in equal measure by the loving admiration of his disciples and by his own strategic downplaying of his wisdom. This disjunction—between the master's authority and the disciples' authorship of episodes that showcase his authority—enhanced Confucius's charismatic stature. Although scenes of instruction in the *Analects* are for the most part verbal, its compilers acted on Confucius's insistence on the unity of words and actions: in the middle of the collection they placed one entire book showing a silent master in ritual action. Book 10 complements the image of Confucius's rhetorical astuteness with brief vignettes of the ritual efficacy of his body in motion. Although the passages that do not name a particular master could be read as generic ritual prescriptions for the social elites of the day, their careful placement within a strategically compiled collection that is devoted to capturing the

master as a sage is evidence enough to believe that the scenes of silent action depict no other than Confucius. As the compilers embody ritual prescriptions in the shape of the ultimate master, they also put into practice Confucius's emphasis on the immediacy and sincerity of ritual action; in this way, they effectively dispel the anxiety of Confucians (and the thrust of their opponents' polemics) that ritual could amount to little more than empty etiquette.

The rhetorical format of the *Analects* is a perfectly suited tool to propagate a vision of an alternative social community of a master and his disciples that, while discussing matters of governance, is removed from contemporary political and social structures. This theme is strategically spun out in the opening sequence of the *Analects*, which conveys a vision of a community bound by learning, loyalty, and friendship, as well as by the lack of recognition from contemporary rulers. Confucius repeatedly rejects his charismatic position at the center of his community, displaying a modesty that is also part of the tension between a program of social hierarchy and loyalty and a powerful vision of equal-minded friendship that repeatedly resurfaces in the *Analects*. Confucius's masterly modesty makes him approachable as a spiritual leader who himself is actively pursuing his highest ideals, and at the same time places his ideals beyond the reach of his own historical limitation.

Confucius's role in a community of followers embodies a prominent concern in the *Analects*: the connection between proper language and proper action. The charismatic master *is* what he *does*. His body language is transparent; there is a perfect match between intention and manifestation. This transparency lies at the heart of the disarmingly simple tautology that makes "rulers to rulers, fathers to fathers, and sons to sons." The rhetorical logic of the scene of instruction through word and deed directed the attention to Confucius's body in action and implied that his utterances and acts were transparent manifestations of his intentions, even if the disciples and readers could not always immediately grasp their significance. The claim of linguistic transparency also created the social role of a model master: if there are masters and Masters Texts after Confucius, he was undeniably the most masterly master of all.

### *The Logic of Scenes of Instruction*

When framed in scenes of instruction the master often appears as an overpowering figure, remote and authoritative, yet intimate in his concern for his students' development. Confucius features in such scenes in a variety of modes: he teaches through statements prefaced simply by "The Master said," he answers questions from his audience, he delivers judgments about things he witnesses around him, and sometimes he explains or justifies himself when his listeners have been slow to comprehend.

Confucius's words and actions are just penetrable enough to make his superiority unquestionably clear to the people around him—and to the implied disciple-reader. His disciples are—with the exception of his favorite disciple Yan Hui 顏回 (ca. 522–490)—most often limited in their understanding and judgment, but occasionally graced with moments of sudden realization. The master's superior wisdom is favorably set off against their limitations, while through their occasional fits of clairvoyance they show themselves worthy of being Confucius's disciples and becoming competent transmitters of his teachings. The contrast between the brisk brevity of Confucius's words of wisdom and the often delayed understanding of his disciples works in everybody's favor. Brevity (sometimes to the point of obscurity) makes Confucius prophetic, wise, and rhetorically astute. The disciples' gradual understanding highlights the depth of Confucius's words and the honesty of the disciples' pursuit of Confucius's wisdom, and it pedagogically parallels the learning process of future disciple-readers.

In the *Analects* it is not just Confucius who plays the teacher role. Although most often he instructs his disciples, he is at times also instructed by them. Sometimes his disciples enlighten people beyond the circle of Confucius's followers, or they are in turn instructed by outsiders. But the prerogative to make authoritative statements that are not further qualified in an ensuing dialogue with other interlocutors seems limited to Confucius, the ultimate master, and to his disciples, the transmitters of his legacy and thus second-generation masters-to-be. Single utterances introduced by the lapidary formula "The Master (or a disciple-master) said" typify the minimalist format of scenes of instruction in the *Analects*. Although there is no one but the master in the scene, which ends once he has pronounced his utterance, the most basic ingredient that shapes the rhetorical logic of the scene of instruction is there: the voice of the master:

The Master said, "Who can go out without using the door? Why, then, is nobody going forth from this Way?"<sup>4</sup>

子曰：「誰能出不由戶？何莫由斯道也？」

On its own the utterance could read as a sign directing hostel guests to a previously ignored scenic path. Uttered by the Master, it becomes an allegory to guide his audience onto the proper path in a human cosmos patterned on precedents of the Zhou dynasty. His physical presence transforms truisms into truths. The seductive promise of effortlessness results from the interplay between the blunt literal meaning of the sentence and its potentized allegorical significance. To promise facility in the pursuit of the Way implies the collusion of literal with allegorical meaning, of simple phrase with wise utterance; the saying only makes sense when Confucius is placed into the scene by the prefatory formula, because the master has to claim "this Way" as his Way, or as his transmission of the Way of the Zhou.

When the master is represented in a scene of instruction, his message goes far beyond the discursive content of his utterance. In his seminal essay *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*<sup>5</sup> Herbert Fingarette has aptly described the implications that the rhetorical format of scenes of instruction have for the meaning of the master's teaching.<sup>6</sup> Fingarette does not see the *Analects* as a repository of discursive truths waiting to be synthesized into a comprehensive philosophical system, but instead as the performative utterances of a charismatic leader with a vision of a sacred human community governed through the "holy rite" (*li* 禮). Inspired by Austin's speech act theory, Fingarette interprets Confucius's utterances not as definitions of philosophical vocabulary, but as charismatic statements that effect changes in the outside world. He combines Austin's theory with the concept of magical speech to explain the characteristic effortlessness of ruling through virtue (*de* 德) and non-action (*wuwei* 無為) proposed in the

4. *Analects* 6.17. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 399. My translations of passages from the *Analects* has benefited from Lau, *Confucius: The Analects*; and Ames and Rosemont, *The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation*.

5. Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*.

6. The essay has stirred many debates, some of which have denigrated Fingarette based on disciplinary prejudices as a "professional philosopher and self-made Sinologist." (See Ruskola, "Moral Choice in the *Analects*," 285).

*Analects*—and later, even if polemically, claimed by the Daoist tradition. Fingarette does not define key concepts such as *ren* 仁 “benevolence” through their referential content, but sees them as dynamic social coefficients, adaptable signifiers:

It seems to me that the Western image that would serve best is one drawn from physics—the vector. In the case of *jen*, we should conceive of a directed force operating in actions in public space and time, and having a person as initial point-source and a person as the terminal point on which the force impinges. The forces are human forces, of course, not mechanical ones.<sup>7</sup>

In a later article, Fingarette further elaborates on Confucius’s role as authoritative leader, arguing that “Such a person teaches—not by preaching, but merely by existing, and by that alone inspiring in others the will to participate in this Way of life, a Way that they see fulfills the very genius of human nature.”<sup>8</sup> Fingarette’s vision of Confucius as a charismatic spiritual leader whose mere presence counts for more than his intellectual program alone illuminates perfectly the function of the scenes of instruction format, in which the master’s pronouncements on stage become words of effective wisdom and his body serves as the ultimate embodiment of ritual propriety.

The framing of Confucius in scenes of instruction is anything but coincidental. It is this representation of Confucius that imparts his teachings of how to be an exemplary person (*junzi* 君子), how to act properly as a human in the cosmos sketched around the master. Yet, from Han scholars to modern researchers such as Bruce and Taeko Brooks in *The Original Analects*, the *Analects* has often been read as a faithful, literal record of his actual words rather than as a carefully crafted *mise-en-scène*

by later followers of how he would look best. This myth was first formulated in the “Bibliographical Treatise” of the *Han History*:

The *Lunyu* are the words Confucius uttered in response to his disciples and people of his day and the words that the disciples spoke amongst each other and heard directly from the Master. At that time each disciple kept his own record. After the Master’s death, his followers collected them and compiled the discussions. That is why it is called *Lunyu*, “Discussions and Words [of the Master].”

論語者，孔子應答弟子時人及弟子相與言而接聞於夫子之語也。當時弟子各有所記。夫子既卒，門人相與輯而論纂，故謂之論語。<sup>9</sup>

Needless to say, it is impossible to determine the historical veracity of the claim that the *Analects* represent “class notes” of disciples. The *Analects* certainly look as if they could have been compiled by disciples who seem to be all too aware that their master’s teaching would become the fountainhead of a major tradition. Indeed, unlike most other pre-Qin Masters’ Texts, the *Analects* are not named after their central master, but claim to be unaltered transcriptions of the master’s words. It is easy to see the attractiveness of the myth of recorded speech. Undoubtedly Confucius’s students were eager to preserve as faithful a memory as possible of their foremost teacher; and later generations of Confucians desired to get as close as possible to the sage master. Mencius’s lament of not having known Confucius personally is a symptom of the longing that later generations—including modern scholars—have entertained for some form of intimacy with Confucius.

Yet the myth of faithful transcription of speech is highly problematic from the perspective of the *Analects*’ compilation history. If we accept Makeham’s argument that dates the compilation of the *Analects* to the mid-second century BCE, the myth of the *Analects* as mimetic record gets an entirely new significance.<sup>10</sup> Against the backdrop of an increasingly textualized culture of the Han and the emphasis on encyclopedic scholarship, the compilers sketched the historically innocent image of an archaic and oral Confucius. Accordingly, they selectively chose passages from the vast amount of Confucius lore that would fit this image. By arranging the

7. Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred*, 55.

8. Fingarette, “How the *Analects* Portrays the Ideal of Efficacious Authority,” 37. Fingarette rejects the term “charismatic” on the basis of its Christian undertones (“gift of the spirit”) and the positioning it presumably implies in the Western tradition of the inaccessible “charismatic” leader figure above the isolated masses. He emphasizes that the Chinese sage is not isolated but “his perfection can only exist as one whose life is integral to the community,” (39). I am less concerned about the semantic interferences and prefer to use the term “charisma” over Fingarette’s “authority-as-model,” which sounds somewhat too prosaic, especially in light of Fingarette’s own lexicon of superlative humanism.

9. *Hanshu* 30, 1717.

10. Makeham, “The Formation of *Lunyu* as a Book.”



books along a rhetorical vector that went from short and pithy statements in the earlier books to longer, more ornate dialogues in later books, the compilers inscribed their desire to emphasize a more archaic-sounding elliptic portrayal of Confucius, in preference to a more loquacious and elaborated figure. It is crucial to understand this progression in the *Analects* as a rhetorical rather than historical selection mechanism, even if it seems to make a historical claim.

By the second century BCE, Confucius's teachings could have been represented in a number of genres that had arisen in fourth- and third-century Masters Literature, such as the expository essay. Yet, the Han compilers consciously chose the scene of instruction format because it represented the Master's physical presence and was the most appropriate rhetorical format through which to convey Confucius's charismatic authority. That the compilers of the *Analects* were very aware of the rhetorical power inherent in the scene of instruction is particularly obvious in their choice of passages where the scene itself is actually omitted and the audience only witnesses the overwhelming effects of a teaching that happened behind closed doors:

A border official of Yi asked for an audience, saying, "Whenever a superior person came to this place, I always was granted an audience." The followers presented him. When leaving, he said, "You disciples, why do you worry about losing office? All Under Heaven has long been without the Way, but Heaven will make your Master into a wooden bell-tongue."<sup>11</sup>

儀封人請見。曰：「君子之至於斯也，吾未嘗不得見也。」從者見之。出曰：「二三子，何患於喪乎？天下之無道也久矣，天將以夫子為木鐸。」

We do not know what Confucius said to the border guard to bring about the mesmerizing revelation with which the border guard in turn instructs the disciples, but this omission creates an impression that is more powerful than the relating of the conversation between Confucius and the border guard could ever have been. It is mostly the image of the scene of instruction as a moment of revelation that the reader takes away, a revelation that produces a precise, prophetic metaphor: Confucius, the "wooden bell-tongue" that will set the bell to ring and will arouse the

11. *Analects* 3.24. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 219.

world. This image makes Confucius both a humble tool of the will of Heaven and an arrogating usurper of royal power: Presumably the former kings send out officials to all corners of their reign in the first month of spring with bells to remind the populace of their duties and their right to remonstrate. Thus, the sound of the bell signifies the annual renewal of the bond between the ruler and his subjects. The border guard, a liminal figure who claims to have some experience with other "exemplary persons" (*junzi*) traveling between the vassal states of the Zhou Kingdom, is instantaneously enlightened to perceive Confucius's world-shaking role to restore cosmic order to the polity. The scene of instruction is not so much omitted as transformed into a musical message of cosmic significance delivered to the disciples *post factum*.

The displacement of verbal content by a musical message marks some of the most powerful passages in the *Analects*. It inverts the common logic of the scene of instruction, bringing on stage unexpected "masters" such as the border guard who, enlightened by Confucius offstage, in turn instructs the disciples about their master's cosmic role. The inversion reinforces rather than undermines Confucius's charismatic authority, because the very absence of the more typical display of his verbal acumen sensitizes the audience to a still more compelling message.

### *Insiders and Outsiders*

#### ALTERNATIVE COMMUNITIES IN THE *ANALECTS*

Inherent in the scenes of instruction in the *Analects* is a vision of a community: Confucius resides at its center, and although its members like to discuss matters of governance, it is an alternative community ambivalently removed from contemporary political structures.<sup>12</sup> We see Confu-

12. Robert Eno in *The Confucian Creation of Heaven* has made the enticing argument that early Confucians or "Ru" lived ecstatic lives as ritual music masters in separate communities. Whereas Eno surveys the development of the "Ru" from the Western Zhou all the way to *Xunzi*, my argument is limited to the vision of an alternative community conveyed in the *Analects*. Tu Weiming emphasizes this "communal" aspect that the rhetorical format of "scenes of instruction" implies: "[T]he rhetorical situation in the *Analects* is, in an existential sense, characterized not by the formula of the teacher speaking to the student but by the ethos in which the teacher answers in response to the student's concrete questioning. And the exchange as a whole echoes a deep-rooted concern, a tacit communal

cius meet Chang Ju 長沮 and Jie Ni 桀溺, self-sufficient hermits going about their plowing, or Jie Yu 接輿, a madman from Chu wildly chanting a poem to warn his contemporaries against taking office.<sup>13</sup> Confucius is as fascinated by these antisocial figures as he feels threatened by them. They force him to justify his lifestyle:

"I cannot dwell with birds and beasts. If I don't associate with the followers of these people, with whom should I associate? As long as the Way prevails in the world, I will not change places with them."<sup>14</sup>

「鳥獸不可與同群，吾非斯人之徒與而誰與？天下有道，丘不與易也。」

Confucius knows he is not one of them, but he makes the point with enough desperation to reveal his irritation and insecurity. In the *Analects* Confucius regularly propagates the fundamental importance of active participation in political life, but he does so in a community that lives by its own rules. Jie Ni, who seems well informed about Confucius and his followers and recognizes Zilu as Confucius's disciple, does not miss the opportunity to make fun of the contradiction between Confucius's political ideals and his practice of building an alternative community apart from contemporary political structures. Speaking to Zilu, Jie Ni does not miss the opportunity to point out: "Shouldn't you, rather than following a gentleman who shuns people, follow a gentleman who shuns the world?" (與其從辟人之士也，豈若從辟世之士哉?) Confucius seems to have a reputation for setting himself apart from society in a way that is at odds with his emphasis of active involvement in the world. Thus Jie Ni jokingly offers Zilu a spot as disciple of himself, a hermit-master who takes Confucius's half-heartedness to its consequences and radically and unambiguously retreats from society.

Throughout the *Analects* there is a clear distinction between outsiders and insiders in Confucius's vision of community. The in-group is largely confined to the circle of disciples, although marginal figures such as the border guard of Yi can have visionary insights and be highly convincing

quest, for self-realization as a collaborative effort." Tu Weiming, "Jen as a Living Metaphor," 47.

13. *Analects* 18.5-7. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 1261-71. *Analects* 18.8 gives a list of "men who withdrew from society" and Confucius's appraisal of them.

14. *Analects* 18.6. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 1270.

figures because of the fresh outsider perspective they bring. Outsiders can also be laconically fobbed off with minimalist "virtue talk":

Duke Ding of Lu asked, "How should rulers employ their ministers and how should ministers serve the ruler?" Confucius answered, "Rulers should employ their ministers through ritual propriety and ministers should serve their rulers through loyalty."<sup>15</sup>

定公問：「君使臣，臣事君，如之何？」孔子對曰：「君使臣以禮，臣事君以忠。」

Duke Ding asks about the mutual responsibilities of rulers and officials in the form of a stringent chiasmus. The duke seems aware of his duties and eager to fulfill them. Confucius answers by simply repeating the words of the duke's question and only adding "through ritual propriety" and "through loyalty." Confucius may be indirectly honoring the questioner by refraining from long explanations of what "ritual propriety" and "loyalty" mean, implying that Duke Ding knows the implications of these provocatively simple key words. However, we cannot determine whether this is a case of the Master honoring the questioner or whether he is actually politely rebuffing the duke because he does not want to explain or sees no need to do so.

The vision of an alternative community that is inherent in the *Analects* covers a vast space, ranging from the vertiginous perspective of a tremendous spiritual goal, inaccessible at times even to the Master, all the way to the desire to erase social and spiritual hierarchies in exchange for a fraternal understanding and unity of purpose. Certainly the Master is teaching and instructing. But judging from the *Analects*, belonging to his community appears to have provided more than a worldview shaped by a set of ethical principles. Instead, it was a lifestyle with an Epicurean sense for appreciating what a moralist might find counterintuitive.

Confucius formulates his resistance to wrong-headed or pedantic pursuit of power and his vision of an alternative, blissful community most clearly in *Analects* 11.26, where he puts his disciples Zilu, Ran You 冉有, Gongxi Hua 公西華, and Zeng Xi 曾皙 to the test. Annoyed by their constant complaints that nobody appreciates them or would employ them, Confucius has the four disciples describe their vision of how they

15. *Analects* 3.19. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 197.

would contribute to the state if they were in office. The first three arm themselves heavily for the challenge, immediately disclosing their high-flying and detailed plans about how to bring order to a state, but the Master's palpable discontent gradually dampens their boldness. Whereas Zilu is immodest and rash, Ran You is underambitious, and Gongxi Hua ends up contenting himself with a position as a minor official. Disappointed with all three, Confucius turns to Zeng Xi, the last in the round:

"Zeng Xi, how would it be for you?" Zeng Xi, who had been playing his harp, let the echo resonate, put the harp away, rose and said, "My choice would be different from those three." The Master said, "That doesn't matter. Each of you can speak your mind (*zhi*)." Zeng Xi replied, "Well, at the end of spring, when the spring clothes are already prepared, I would take a bath in the Yi River, in the company of some young men or half a dozen boys. We would enjoy the breeze at the rain altars, and then go home singing." The master heaped a deep sigh, and said, "I am with Zeng Xi."<sup>16</sup>

「點!爾何如?」鼓瑟希,鏗爾,舍瑟而作。對曰:「異乎三子者之撰。」子曰:「何傷乎?亦各言其志也。」曰:「莫春者,春服既成。冠者五六人,童子六七人,浴乎沂,風乎舞雩,詠而歸。」夫子喟然歎曰:「吾與點也!」

Though Zeng Xi had been playing the harp during the conversation, he seems to have listened carefully to what his fellow disciples had to say. He feels like an outsider to the conversation and hesitates to answer, well aware that what he would say would sound different from the others. Zeng Xi does everything right to gain the approval of Confucius. While the others volunteer all too eagerly to instruct their master on how to run a state, Zeng Xi plucks away on his harp. While the others talk, Zeng Xi listens, and when asked to respond he lets his harp's echo finish "talking" before he begins to speak. As evidenced in his deep sigh, Confucius relishes the superiority of Zeng Xi's answer and vastly prefers a "musical" vision of the world, where people play the harp rather than sketch ambitious policy plans, and sing in chorus rather than trim their persuasions in front of a ruler.<sup>17</sup>

16. *Analects* 11.26. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 805-11.

17. In a variation on the above passage in *Analects* 5.26 (Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 353), Zilu and Yan Hui discuss their ambitions with Confucius. There is no escapist turn in the conversation like the one Zeng Xi's reply brings about, but both Zilu and Confucius mention

This is where the *Analects* meet Tao Qian 陶潛 (365-427). In one stanza of his poetic sequence "Season's Shifting (*Shi yun* 時運)," he reimagines Zeng Xi's scene at the Yi River and laments bitterly that his age is too far removed from Confucius's time to allow him to join the Master's alternative musical utopia:

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 延目中流 | My eyes run out to midstream,                |
| 悠想清沂 | I remotely fancy the clear river Yi.         |
| 童冠齊業 | Young men and boys, alike in study,          |
| 閒詠以歸 | Calmly chanting along the way home.          |
| 我愛其靜 | I wish such serenity as my own,              |
| 寤寐交揮 | Waking and sleeping I beckon to them.        |
| 但恨殊世 | Yet troubled that ours are different times,  |
| 邈不可追 | So remote I cannot reach them. <sup>18</sup> |

#### LEARNING, FRIENDSHIP, LOYALTY:

##### THE OPENING SEQUENCE OF THE *ANALECTS*

Although the musical utopia Confucius shares with Zeng Xi is about as escapist as the compilers of the *Analects* ever allow Confucius to appear, the vision of an alternative community is a fundamental theme throughout the *Analects*. The compilers open the collection with a beautifully crafted sequence of passages about the pleasures of friendship, learning, and mutual loyalty. I will illustrate this sequencing by looking at *Analects* 1.1 to 1.8, which will also serve as an example of how carefully the episodes

cultivating good friendships, rather than political aims, as their goals: "Why don't each of you tell me what ambitions are on your mind [*zhi*]?" Zilu said, "I would like to share my horses and carriages, clothing and furs, with my friends and not feel resentment if they get worn out." Yan Hui said, "I would like to refrain from bragging about my own worth and imposing onerous tasks on others." Zilu said, "We would like to hear what is on our Master's mind." The Master answered, "I would like to bring peace to the old, be trustworthy with my friends and to protect the young." 顏淵、季路侍。子曰:「盍各言爾志?」子路曰:「願車馬、衣輕裘,與朋友共。敝之而無憾。」顏淵曰:「願無伐善,無施勞。」子路曰:「願聞子之志。」子曰:「老者安之,朋友信之,少者懷之。」

18. Gong Bin, *Tao Yuanming ji jiao jian*, 7-8. Translation from Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 314.

would contribute to the state if they were in office. The first three arm themselves heavily for the challenge, immediately disclosing their high-flying and detailed plans about how to bring order to a state, but the Master's palpable discontent gradually dampens their boldness. Whereas Zilu is immodest and rash, Ran You is underambitious, and Gongxi Hua ends up contenting himself with a position as a minor official. Disappointed with all three, Confucius turns to Zeng Xi, the last in the round:

"Zeng Xi, how would it be for you?" Zeng Xi, who had been playing his harp, let the echo resonate, put the harp away, rose and said, "My choice would be different from those three." The Master said, "That doesn't matter. Each of you can speak your mind (*zhi*)." Zeng Xi replied, "Well, at the end of spring, when the spring clothes are already prepared, I would take a bath in the Yi River, in the company of some young men or half a dozen boys. We would enjoy the breeze at the rain altars, and then go home singing." The master heaped a deep sigh, and said, "I am with Zeng Xi."<sup>16</sup>

「點!爾何如?」鼓瑟希,鏗爾,舍瑟而作。對曰:「異乎三子者之撰。」子曰:「何傷乎?亦各言其志也。」曰:「莫春者,春服既成。冠者五六人,童子六七人,浴乎沂,風乎舞雩,詠而歸。」夫子喟然歎曰:「吾與點也!」

Though Zeng Xi had been playing the harp during the conversation, he seems to have listened carefully to what his fellow disciples had to say. He feels like an outsider to the conversation and hesitates to answer, well aware that what he would say would sound different from the others. Zeng Xi does everything right to gain the approval of Confucius. While the others volunteer all too eagerly to instruct their master on how to run a state, Zeng Xi plucks away on his harp. While the others talk, Zeng Xi listens, and when asked to respond he lets his harp's echo finish "talking" before he begins to speak. As evidenced in his deep sigh, Confucius relishes the superiority of Zeng Xi's answer and vastly prefers a "musical" vision of the world, where people play the harp rather than sketch ambitious policy plans, and sing in chorus rather than trim their persuasions in front of a ruler.<sup>17</sup>

16. *Analects* 11.26. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 805-11.

17. In a variation on the above passage in *Analects* 5.26 (Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 353), Zilu and Yan Hui discuss their ambitions with Confucius. There is no escapist turn in the conversation like the one Zeng Xi's reply brings about, but both Zilu and Confucius mention

This is where the *Analects* meet Tao Qian 陶潛 (365-427). In one stanza of his poetic sequence "Season's Shifting (*Shi yun* 時運)," he reimagines Zeng Xi's scene at the Yi River and laments bitterly that his age is too far removed from Confucius's time to allow him to join the Master's alternative musical utopia:

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 延目中流 | My eyes run out to midstream,                |
| 悠想清沂 | I remotely fancy the clear river Yi.         |
| 童冠齊業 | Young men and boys, alike in study,          |
| 閒詠以歸 | Calmly chanting along the way home.          |
| 我愛其靜 | I wish such serenity as my own,              |
| 寤寐交揮 | Waking and sleeping I beckon to them.        |
| 但恨殊世 | Yet troubled that ours are different times,  |
| 邈不可追 | So remote I cannot reach them. <sup>18</sup> |

#### LEARNING, FRIENDSHIP, LOYALTY:

##### THE OPENING SEQUENCE OF THE *ANALECTS*

Although the musical utopia Confucius shares with Zeng Xi is about as escapist as the compilers of the *Analects* ever allow Confucius to appear, the vision of an alternative community is a fundamental theme throughout the *Analects*. The compilers open the collection with a beautifully crafted sequence of passages about the pleasures of friendship, learning, and mutual loyalty. I will illustrate this sequencing by looking at *Analects* 1.1 to 1.8, which will also serve as an example of how carefully the episodes

cultivating good friendships, rather than political aims, as their goals: "Why don't each of you tell me what ambitions are on your mind [*zhi*]?" Zilu said, "I would like to share my horses and carriages, clothing and furs, with my friends and not feel resentment if they get worn out." Yan Hui said, "I would like to refrain from bragging about my own worth and imposing onerous tasks on others." Zilu said, "We would like to hear what is on our Master's mind." The Master answered, "I would like to bring peace to the old, be trustworthy with my friends and to protect the young." 顏淵、季路侍。子曰:「盍各言爾志?」子路曰:「願車馬、衣輕裘,與朋友共。敝之而無憾。」顏淵曰:「願無伐善,無施勞。」子路曰:「願聞子之志。」子曰:「老者安之,朋友信之,少者懷之。」

18. Gong Bin, *Tao Yuanming ji jiao jian*, 7-8. Translation from Owen, *An Anthology of Chinese Literature*, 314.



within each chapter of the *Analects* are arranged based on thematic, rhetorical, and stylistic considerations.<sup>19</sup>

The Master said, "To study and then repeatedly put into practice what you have learned—is this not what it means to have pleasure? To have friends come from afar—is this not what it means to be joyful? To go unacknowledged by others without harboring resentment—is this not what it means to be a superior person?"<sup>20</sup>

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？」

We do not know what questions or situation the statement is responding to, but that is precisely what sets it apart from an anecdote involving interlocutors, lending it the aura of gnomic wisdom. The Master is positing, not reacting or explaining. Authority of speech originates from the absence of a counter-voice. This is quite different from "scene of instruction" passages in which the master's authority inserts itself into an entourage of other speakers and their concrete concerns and questions.

The passage consists of a tripartite set of parallel rhetorical questions. The joy one experiences when applying something one has learned parallels the joy felt when a friend visits from far away. It is as difficult to overcome old habits with fresh insights as it is for a friend to journey over long distances, but when it happens, it is blissful. An opposite experience—of being neglected—can occasion a parallel joy when one manages to react to it without resentment. The joy of learning, applying one's knowledge, of spending time with friends, and of conquering self-pitying resentment opens the *Analects* programmatically on a blissful and communal note.

Master You said, "As for human beings, it is rare indeed for those who have a sense of filiality also to like defying their superiors. And it is impossible not to defy one's superiors without being keen on initiating rebellion. The superior person concentrates his efforts on the root, for when the root has taken hold, the

19. Kimura Eiichi has provided a careful and compelling analysis of the rhetorical arrangement of the *Analects*. He suggests that the thematic and rhetorical arrangement has a mnemonic function that helped students remember the text more easily. See Kimura, *Ka-shi to Rongo*.

20. *Analects* 1.1. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 1–9.

Way will emerge. Thus, filiality is the root of being human / of benevolence (*ren* 人/仁).<sup>21</sup>

有子曰：「其爲人也孝弟，而好犯上者，鮮矣；不好犯上，而好作亂者，未之有也。君子務本，本立而道生。孝弟也者，其爲仁之本與！」

After the superior person's appearance in a universe of like-minded friends in the first passage, You Ruo 有若<sup>22</sup> borrows the master-voice of Confucius and introduces the superior person into the world of hierarchical relations such as filiality. The passage benefits from the pun on *ren* as meaning both "human being" and "benevolence." In the opening phrase it naturally reads "as for human beings" (*qi wei ren* 其爲人), but at the close of the passage, the same phrase slips into the ambiguous "it is (the root) of benevolence/of being human" (*qi wei ren zhi ben* 其爲人/仁之本).<sup>23</sup> This slippage glides over into the next passage:

The Master said, "It is rare indeed for those with cunning words and an ingratiating appearance to be benevolent."<sup>24</sup>

子曰：「巧言令色，鮮矣仁！」

This passage replicates the formal structure of the previous passage in positing "as for X, it is rare to have also Y." However, it chiasmatically shifts "benevolence/human being" from its position as X in *Analects* 1.2 to its position as Y in *Analects* 1.3. This is an example of the aesthetic pleasure of sequentially arranging elements that share a similar syntactic pattern.

While both passages independently explain how to judge people and measure their benevolence based on the evidence of other character traits, their occurrence in sequence tinges the reading of *Analects* 1.3. "Cunning words and ingratiating appearance" are connected with rebelliousness, and more importantly, what would naturally only read as *ren* "benevolence" becomes also *ren* "human being" through the pun from *Analects* 1.2, which states that people using cunning words and parading their ingradi-

21. *Analects* 1.2. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 10–13.

22. A disciple of Confucius, he appears three times in the first chapter. He had presumably a leading role in the community of disciples after Confucius's death.

23. Ames and Rosemont indicate both characters in their translation: see their *The Analects of Confucius*, 71.

24. *Analects* 1.3. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 16.

ating appearance cannot even be called human beings (*ren*). This connects to *Analects* 1.4:

Master Zeng said, "Daily I examine my person on three counts. Have I failed to be loyal in my efforts on behalf of others? Have I failed to be trustworthy in my interactions with friends? Have I transmitted something that I have not put into practice myself?"<sup>25</sup>

曾子曰：「吾日三省吾身：為人謀而不忠乎？與朋友交而不信乎？傳不習乎？」

Just as *Analects* 1.2 and 1.3 share theme and pattern, *Analects* 1.4, with its three negative questions marked by *hu* 乎, replicates the texture of the opening passage, *Analects* 1.1. Two of the themes, namely learning and putting into practice, and friendship, are taken up again. But everything else is different: the master is replaced by Master Zeng, presumably Zeng Xi's son, and associated with the transmission of the *Classic of Filial Piety*.<sup>26</sup> Master Zeng, as Master You before, takes the master's place as teacher and transmitter, but this fact is diluted by the transformation of rhetorical questions into full-fledged contemplative questions: Zengzi is not bursting with joy at being a superior person in an alternative community of friends and disciples as Confucius is in *Analects* 1.1, but he reports his introspective self-examination on his way to becoming an exemplary person. He does not experience the pleasure of putting into practice what he has learned, but instead shows uncertainty about whether he has correctly applied in his own life what he is already setting forth to his disciples.

The lighthearted Confucius of the opening passage takes on the countenance of a pensive master-disciple Zeng who scrutinizes himself at every step. Kimura speculates that rules and educational guidelines from the "school" Confucius assembled around himself in his later years are particularly frequent in the first chapter of the *Analects*, which also features several of his disciples in their later role as new "masters" after the death of Confucius.<sup>27</sup> In this vein, Zengzi's appearance here facilitates the generational shift in Confucius's community, because he is shown as a pensive and self-critical "second generation master."

25. *Analects* 1.4. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 18.

26. Commentators tend to read Zengzi's third question regarding proper transmission in the context of his alleged compilation of that *Classic*.

27. Kimura, *Kōshi to Rongo*, 246.

The Master said, "The Way to lead a thousand-chariot state is to be trustworthy in carrying out official duties respectfully, to be frugal in expenditures, to love the people and to employ the populace only at the proper time of the year."<sup>28</sup>

子曰：「道千乘之國：敬事而信，節用而愛人，使民以時。」

The tripartite structure is carried over from 1.4, but the notion of "trustworthiness" (*xin* 信), which had first been associated with the non-hierarchical context of friendship, is here propelled into the space of public service and the art of governing.

The Master said, "A younger brother or son should be filial when at home and deferential when outside, be cautious and trustworthy, broadly love the multitude and befriend with benevolence/real human beings. If beyond all that he still has superfluous energy, then he should study the arts and textual learning (*wen*)."<sup>29</sup>

子曰：「弟子入則孝，出則弟，謹而信，汎愛，而親仁。行有餘力，則以學文。」

As terms and themes are restated in new aphorisms, the limits of meaning expand and oscillate. "Trustworthiness" is again placed in a context outside the private sphere and connected to "filiality," an echo from *Analects* 1.2. The necessary connection between benevolence and filiality, its root, is neglected here. Instead, the themes of benevolence in *Analects* 1.2 and friendship in *Analects* 1.1 and 1.4 are connected so that non-hierarchical friendship is marked as a source of models of benevolence. Not surprisingly, the topic of learning that recurs in precisely the same passages is immediately linked again to friendship. But here, the focus is not on putting into practice what one has learned, which is the greatest pleasure for Confucius and the trigger of self-scrutiny for Master Zeng. Instead, study of *wen*—cultural refinements such as the arts and the study of texts—is an option only for those with additional energies.

The next passage gives the theme of "learning" yet another dimension. Proper education shows in one's conduct, not in one's claim to formal training:

Zixia said, "Somebody who recognizes worthy men rather than beauty, who is able to exhaust his energies in serving his parents, who is able to give his whole

28. *Analects* 1.5. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 21.

29. *Analects* 1.6. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 27.

person in serving his ruler, and whose words are trustworthy in the interaction with friends—Even if he had never received education, I would insist upon calling him well educated.<sup>30</sup>

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。」

This statement by the disciple Zixia 子夏 (ca. 507–420), often the spokesman for book learning<sup>31</sup> and credited with the transmission of the tradition of the *Classic of Poetry*, alludes to most of the themes running through the sequence: filiality towards parents and rulers, trustworthiness in interactions with friends, learning, and worthiness as superior to beauty. The parts come together in an intriguing advocacy of proper conduct over formal education. Proper education is manifested in conduct, not time spent learning from books. Once again, friendship (*jiao* 交) is contrasted with service rendered to parents or superiors (*shi* 事).

What matters in friendship are trustworthy words, as stated before, but the visual pun on *xin* 信 and *yan* 言, with *xin* graphically indicating “people standing by their word,” is only now fully developed, although *xin* occurs in every single passage after *Analects* 1.4. With *Analects* 1.7, the pleasant outlook on applying one’s learning found in the opening passage has turned into a hidden warning against devoting too much energy to learning, energy which should instead be spent on proper conduct and service. This line of thought is played off in the following passage:

The Master said, “If a superior person lacks gravity, he will not have authority. If he studies, he will not be inflexible. Take loyalty and trustworthiness as a guiding thread, do not befriend anyone who is not as good as you, and if you have erred, do not hesitate to mend your ways.”<sup>32</sup>

子曰：「君子不重則不威，學則不固。主忠信。無友不如己者。過則勿憚改。」

The sequence ends with warnings. The superior person has to show gravity, and learning is not the pleasurable activity it was in the opening passage. Although learning is not indirectly dismissed as in *Analects* 1.6 and 1.7, it is presented as a means to avoid inflexibility. Of greater importance

30. *Analects* 1.7. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 30.

31. See *Analects* 19.5–7. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 1309–12.

32. *Analects* 1.8. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 33–36.

are the qualities of loyalty and trustworthiness in oneself and others: only equals should be accepted as friends; errors should be mended. The notion of error has been completely absent thus far from the sequence, although it now resonates somehow with Master Zeng’s self-scrutiny that is driven by anxiety over going astray.

The opening sequence of the *Analects* is intriguing for several reasons. First, it programmatically shows how carefully the compilers of the *Analects* crafted the arrangement of some parts of the collection, reminding us that interpretations have to be aware of the sequential context. All the passages are monologic utterances pronounced by a master; some share sets of tripartite phrases or other similarities in sentence pattern. They successively introduce a thickening web of select focal terms, which constantly reappear and take on new shades of meaning or even end up somewhere completely different; the most conspicuous example is the transitional devaluation of book learning in *Analects* 1.6 and 1.7, the importance of which is reinstated again in *Analects* 1.8.

Second, the opening sequence of the *Analects* is not just a stream of aphorisms, but is designed to construct the image of a community of equals beyond the economy of social hierarchies (and even master-disciple relations) defined by the importance of oral communication (“communicate among friends” *jiao* 交) and the implementation of learning for the sake of this community.

Third, the opening sequence shows how important it is to read the *Analects* “sequentially,” and not “synoptically” as is often done when trying to construct a “Confucian philosophy” by assembling passages discussing such key terms as “benevolence” or “ritual propriety” out of context and trying to arrive at a sort of strict definition of the terms. As the analysis of the opening sequence has hopefully shown, passages exist in a metonymic field of signification in which interrelations between focal terms are constantly elaborated, severed, or reinstated. The co-occurrence of friendship relations and learning is in itself more important than what is said about them. Instead of definitions we find evocations of a set vocabulary that suggests worth and value in a semantically rather indistinguishable way. This leads interpreters into trouble when trying to distinguish an essential meaning of “loyalty” (*zhong* 忠) from an equally clear-cut definition of “trustworthiness” (*xin* 信). Attempts to find hierarchies of primary and secondary virtues in the *Analects* are futile, and we cannot say

what the *summum bonum* consists of in this work because we do not even know whether there was supposed to be one. The semantic edge of the focal terms is all too often absorbed into a more diffuse sense of what is right and proper.

Apparently the compilers of the *Analects* as we have it today wanted to stress the importance of equal relationships—among “friends in learning” including the disciples and the Master—which stand out against hierarchical relations between ruler and subject, the generations and the sexes. These were the very themes they decided to place at the beginning of the *Analects*, the authoritative collection of representative pieces of Confucius lore.

### MASTERLY MODESTY

The disciples' awe at their master's sageliness stands in suggestive contrast to the vision of friendship in learning and cultivation that the compilers of the *Analects* chose to convey in the opening sequence of the collection. It is equally at odds with Confucius's overawing modesty, as exhibited in the following passages:

“How would I dare to consider myself a sage or a benevolent man? All that can be said about me is simply that I continue my studies without respite and tirelessly instruct others.” Gongxi Hua remarked: “That's precisely what we disciples are not able to learn.”<sup>33</sup>

子曰：「若聖與仁，則吾豈敢？抑爲之不厭，誨人不倦，則可謂云爾已矣。」公西華曰：「正唯弟子不能學也。」

“In culture and elegance (*wen* 文), I am perhaps like others. But when it comes to personally practicing the life of a superior person, I have not yet reached that point.”<sup>34</sup>

子曰：「文，莫吾猶人也。躬行君子，則吾未之有得。」

The Master said, “I will never get to meet a sage; meeting a superior person would satisfy me.” The Master said, “I will never get to meet a skillful and good person; meeting someone with constancy would suffice me.”<sup>35</sup>

33. *Analects* 7.34. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 500.

34. *Analects* 7.33. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 499.

35. *Analects* 7.26. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 487–88.

子曰：「聖人，吾不得而見之矣；得見君子者，斯可矣。」子曰：「善人，吾不得而見之矣；得見有恆者，斯可矣。」

Although we need not accuse Confucius of insincerity, such pronounced gestures of modesty cannot be taken at face value in a collection compiled by fervent admirers of the Master based, furthermore, on episodes written by fervent admirers. Confucius's tendency to humble himself whenever others praise and uplift him is a Socratic acknowledgment of lack of knowledge or an Augustan gesture of ostentatious renunciation that dramatically increases rather than decreases Confucius's authority. In addition, it has pedagogical value, for it magnifies the desirability of his teachings. In the passage above, the constant person, the expert, the cultivated one, the superior person, the sage—all constitute a succession of ever more ideal models in a hall of mirrors that makes the Master appear small, but in doing so allows his teachings to transcend him into limitless reflection. The Master controls the key to the mechanism whereby receding layers are multiplied, even though he humbly places himself on an inferior level within the stages of self-improvement. His ideals are more desirable at a lofty remove, while he himself is just one among others in the community of adepts devoted to his ideals. An impossibly ambitious program pursued along with an approachable teacher who is still in need of learning—what could be pedagogically more motivating?

Confucius's pedagogical modesty is even more dramatically highlighted, when, instead of subordinating himself to abstract exemplars like the “sage” or the “superior person,” he admits to his inferiority vis-à-vis certain disciples:

The Master remarked to Zigong, “Comparing yourself with Yan Hui, who is superior?” He replied, “How dare I aspire to be a Yan Hui? When he hears one thing, he knows ten, when I hear one thing, I will only know two.” The Master said, “You are not his match. Neither you nor I are a match for him.”<sup>36</sup>

子謂子貢曰：「女與回也孰愈？」對曰：「賜也何敢望回。回也聞一以知十，賜也聞一以知二。」子曰：「弗如也！吾與女弗如也。」

Yan Hui, the master-disciple, is beyond the reach of a Master who is both beyond reach and humanly close—this scenario adds one more layer of

36. *Analects* 5.9. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 307.



depth in the hall of mirrors and enhances Confucius's charisma in counterintuitive ways.

A variation on the theme of modesty that inversely magnifies Confucius is his depiction as a generalist rather than a specialist. Some keen outsider observers understand the exceptional value of Confucius's reputation as a non-expert:

A villager from Daxiang said, "How grand is Confucius! While broad in his learning, there is no particular area where he has made his name." When the master heard this, he said to his disciples, "What should I specialize in? Perhaps charioteering? Or rather archery? No, I would specialize in charioteering."<sup>37</sup>

達巷黨人曰：「大哉孔子！博學而無所成名。」子聞之，謂門弟子曰：「吾何執？執御乎？執射乎？吾執御矣。」

While taking the villager's compliment when he hears about the incident from his disciples, Confucius jokingly imagines some tracks of specialization to choose in the future. Charioteering and archery were part of the "Six Arts" of traditional elite education as described in the ritual classics, but it is hardly imaginable that Confucius would really have wanted to become an expert charioteer. By considering such a course tongue-in-cheek, Confucius makes his audience laugh and inverts the contemporary value scale that prizes professional specialists. Specialization in the *Analects* and in many texts of the Warring States period is associated with artisans and professional practitioners of some specific skill who serve as paid retainers to the local gentry. Confucius liked to sharply contrast the world of professional specialization with his community of disciples:

When the Master was severely ill, Zilu sent some of his students to serve as retainers. Once his condition had slightly improved, the Master said, "Zilu has since long been up to such deceptive behavior! If I have no retainers and yet pretend to have some, who am I going to fool? Am I going to fool Heaven? But I would much rather die in the arms of my fellow disciples than in the hands of some retainers. And even though I would not get a grand state funeral, I would hardly die on the side of the road!"<sup>38</sup>

子疾病，子路使門人爲臣。病間，曰：「久矣哉！由之行詐也，無臣而爲有臣。吾誰欺？欺天乎？且予與其死於臣之手也，無寧死於二三子之手乎？且予縱不得大葬，予死於道路乎？」

37. *Analects* 9.2. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 569–70.

38. *Analects* 9.12. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 599–601.

It is certainly humbling for Confucius that his disciple Zilu sends some of his own student-retainers to help him, but the fact that they are "retainers" at all seems to be most irritating to the Master. This failed gesture of assistance only reveals that Zilu understands neither the notion of disciples nor that of retainers: if they were disciples, they would not be interchangeable from one master to the other, but would be bound in a highly particular intellectual relationship with the one Master they are serving. If they were retainers, Confucius could not have them, because the number of retainers correlates with one's position in state service, and in this passage it is clear that Confucius could only pretend to have a social status that would entitle him to retainers. Zilu's behavior would even offend and cheat Heaven, a gravest offense indeed. In life and death Confucius wanted to commit his body and legacy into the hands of his disciples who share his vision, instead of entrusting it to paid professionals.

### *The Charismatic Body of the Master*

Confucius's physical body has preoccupied popular imagination unlike that of any other master of early China, with the exception perhaps of Laozi. This holds to the present day. In her memoir *In the Mansion of Confucius Descendants: An Oral History* written in conjunction with the 2535th anniversary of the birth of Confucius in 1984, Kong Demao, a seventy-seventh generation descendant of Confucius, dwells on the "magical properties of flesh and blood descent" that presumably give her privileged access to millennia of oral transmission of her ancestor's teachings.<sup>39</sup> One can dismiss this as a singular act of genealogical folly in the early 1980s, when Confucius had just started to be presentable again in Mainland China and his descendants could proudly reclaim him as their venerated ancestor. Ironically, the continuity of Confucius's lineage was questionable from the outset: He died without an adult male heir, since his son Boyu 伯魚 died before him and his grandson Zisi was still a little boy when Confucius died. While the *Records of the Grand Historian* states just these details, later texts, in particular the *Kongcongzi*,<sup>40</sup> consciously fill

39. Lionel Jensen, "The Genesis of Kongzi in Ancient Narrative," 176.

40. There has been considerable debate about the dating of the *Kongcongzi*. While some scholars attribute it to Kong Fu 孔鮒 (ca. 264–208 BCE) and Kong Zang 孔臧 (ca.

the generational gap with impossible dialogues between Confucius and his grown-up grandson—anachronistically promoted to the role of mature heir to the family legacy. In Zisi, physical bloodline—even if undercut by a generational gap—and spiritual lineage converge, as Zisi becomes the ancestor of a branch of transmission associating Zisi with Mencius, who, as we saw in the previous chapter, was fiercely attacked by Xunzi.<sup>41</sup>

Already by Xunzi's time legends circulated about Confucius's abnormal physique. In "Contra Physiognomy" (*Fei xiang* 非相), Xunzi cites popular beliefs that Confucius's "face looked like an exorcist's mask" (*mian ru mengqi* 面如蒙僇)<sup>42</sup> to argue against physiognomists. While this might be the earliest attempt to refute popular speculations about Confucius's physical abnormalities, Xunzi places Confucius by comparison on a par with exemplary rulers of high antiquity such as Yao, Shun, and the Duke of Zhou. In the Han, Sima Qian was to confirm the image of Confucius as "uncrowned king" marked for superior cosmic rule. His miraculous birth and the congenital deformity of his head, which inspired his mother to give him the personal name "Protuberance" (*Qiu* 丘), marks the master as an exceptional being, fated from birth for a mission equal to ruling the empire.<sup>43</sup> Sima Qian includes an anecdote in which Confucius, when in Zheng, got separated from his disciples who found him again based on a description by a person from Zheng who happened to see him standing by himself:

"There is a fellow standing at the Eastern Gate. He has a forehead like Yao, a neck like (Shun's minister) Gao Yao, shoulders like Minister Zichan, and is only three inches shorter than Yu from the waist down. He looks indeed lost like a stray dog."<sup>44</sup>

201–123 BCE), the eighth and tenth-generation descendants of Confucius, Yoav Ariel believes that it is a "pseudoepigraph" of Wang Su 王肅 (195–256), also author-compiler of the *Kongzi jiyu*. For the *Kongcongzi*'s dating and textual history, see Ariel, *K'ung-tz'ung-tzu. The K'ung Family Masters' Anthology*, 56–69.

41. For the development of the Zisi myth and its relation to Mencius and the Mawangdui and Guodian text of the *Five Elements* [*wuxing* 五行], see Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 95–100.

42. *Xunzi jijie* 5 "Fei Xiang," 74–75.

43. *Shiji* 47.1905. On popular lore about Confucius's miraculous birth see Jensen, "Wise Man of the Wilds."

44. *Shiji* 47.1921.

「東門有人，其頰似堯，其項類皋陶，其肩類子產，然自要以下不及禹三寸。累累若喪家之狗。」

When Confucius hears this from Zigong he laughs heartily and remarks that the speaker was wrong about his physique, comparing him to the sage emperors, but was right about the dog. A sage emperor, an able minister, or a stray dog—the villager is as frank as can be, and Confucius elegantly deflects the compliment by declaring himself to be the forlorn dog rather than the sage king.

Even when no specific references to his body are made, Confucius's physical presence is a fundamental, immutable element that the *Analects* share with other Confucius lore. Until well into the Han dynasty, lore about Confucius was written and compiled in works such as the *Records of Rites*, *Kongcongzi*, *Family Conversations of Confucius*, and *Han Ying's Outer Commentary* [to the Classic of Poetry] (*Hanshi waizhuan* 韓詩外傳). He always needs to be "in the scene," speaking, responding to his audience and, quite often, dazzling them with his answers. Confucius lore, a vast amount of textual material compared to the slim volume of the *Analects*, has had a bad press: scholars distrust it because Confucius is shown as saying things that outrageously contradict his teachings in the *Analects*, because it is chatty and sometimes embarrassing, and because it obviously pursues agendas germane to the Late Warring States and Han (when much of it was produced) that seem to make it useless in the eyes of scholars who seek the—however impossible—"historical Confucius." However, John Makeham has recently reminded us that it is crucial to reconsider the status of these texts.<sup>45</sup> First, rather than representing late and derivative romanticization of the figure of Confucius, they form part of the very repertoire out of which the *Analects* was compiled. To be sure, the *Analects'* compilers apparently chose their passages based on linguistic pristineness as well as rhetorical and ideological consistency. But the artificial boundary between the "authentic" and the "apocryphal" starts to

45. "Nevertheless, if my argument is sound, then clearly there is a need to reconsider the status of other early records of Confucius's sayings and conversations with his disciples, in particular writings such as the "Tang gong pian" of the *Liji*. Hitherto the aura surrounding the scriptural status afforded the *Lunyu* has tended to blind commentators to the potential value of such writings as records of Confucius's speech and actions." Makeham, *Transmitters and Creators*, 24.

fade when we take into account how Confucius lore had been floating around indiscriminately for centuries.

There is a second reason why we should take Confucius lore more seriously. The “scene of instruction” remained the basic rhetorical template for Confucius lore in the Han, although by the Late Warring States many other sophisticated rhetorical formats such as the expository essay, the instruction to rulers, and the commentary form had been developed. The tenacity of the rhetorical format says much about the master portrayed: his charismatic presence in the scene could serve as a vessel of the most contradictory stances. Thomas Wilson remarks:

[G]iven his diverse presence in the received texts of the *Analects*, *Mozi*, *Zhuangzi*, *Han Feizi*, *Huainanzi*, and *Mr. Lü's Springs and Autumns*, among others, he should be considered a free-floating signifier. In these texts, as much as in the *Zuo Commentary*, he appears as a tropic presence or plot device, a narrative voice for anecdotes pertaining to ritual meticulousness and the sanctions of traditional authority. Much like Athena in Greek legend, the Kongzi of the Pre-Qin era is full-grown, embodied, and, above all, beyond history. This history-less quality no doubt underwrote the popular view of Kongzi in the Han as an exalted, transcendent omniscience who, alas, lived as a prophet without honor in his own time, an uncrowned king (*suwang*).<sup>46</sup>

Thus, Confucius lore is a fascinating window onto the Han canonization of the figure of Confucius, who proves rhetorically extraordinarily stable and yet ideologically unusually capricious. Confucius indeed does outrageous things when compared to our cherished Confucius of the *Analects*. There are old themes in new guises. In the *Record of Rites*, the *Analects*' poignant and pithy remarks on the importance of rites become lengthy litanies on technical ritualistic details delivered to a largely silent group of walk-on disciples who, generically, leave the stage in the end with an enlightened smile playing on their lips.<sup>47</sup> Second, there is history rewritten. In the opening chapter of the *Family Conversations of Confucius*,<sup>48</sup> a suc-

cessful alter ego of the historical Confucius is serving Duke Ding of Lu as a governor; he proposes to the Duke that Confucianism is ready to take over not just Lu, but the entire world:

Duke Ding said to Confucius, “If I study these methods (*fa*) of yours, Master, how would they do for governing the State of Lu?” Confucius answered, “If you can (apply) them to the world, why should you only [use] them in the State of Lu?”<sup>49</sup>  
定公謂孔子曰：「學子此法，以治魯國何如？」孔子對曰：「雖天下可乎，何但魯國而已哉。」

Confucius becomes here a successful advisor at court in a world where rulers are eager to adopt his teachings and grant him long audiences with rulers to explain the conduct, clothing, and rituals of Confucians.<sup>50</sup>

Third, the righting of the historical record and retroactive political empowerment of Confucius introduced new traits into his personal profile that clashed disturbingly with the figure of the clement teacher of the *Analects*. In an episode in the chapter “First Punishment” (*shi zhu* 始誅) of the *Family Conversations of Confucius*, Confucius has been appointed police commissioner (*sikou* 司寇) of Lu; after his first week on the job, he executes a high official and has his body exposed in court for three days.<sup>51</sup> Even his disciples are put off by this, and Zigong comes forward to ask his master whether he hasn't made a grave mistake by punishing such a well-known man of Lu. Confucius is not at a loss for words and explains

dating and textual history see Loewe, *Early Chinese Texts: A Bibliographical Guide*, 259–61 and Kramers, *K'ung tzu chia yü: The School Sayings of Confucius*, 15–53.

49. *Kongzi jiyu* I/1B. See also Kramers, *K'ung tzu chia yü: The School Sayings of Confucius*, 201.

50. See *Kongzi jiyu* Chapter 5, “Explanations on the Conduct of a Confucian” (*Ru xing jie* 儒行解), where Confucius instructs Duke Ai of Lu at great lengths. The effect of Confucius's sermon is instantaneous: Duke Ai became more sincere in words and respectful in deeds and promises to never make fun of Confucian clothing—the opening joke—and Confucians any more. *Kongcongzi* chapter 13 “Confucian Clothes” (*Ru fu* 儒服) is less anachronistic in that it puts the instruction about Confucian demeanor and conduct into the mouth of Zigao, a third century BCE descendant of Confucius. For a table of the twenty-one generations out of the Kong family featuring in the *Kongcongzi*, see Yoav Ariel K'ung-t'ung-tzu. *The K'ung Family Masters' Anthology*, 8. Zigao stands seven positions removed from Confucius.

51. We know from references in the *Commentary of Zuo* (*Zuozhuan* 左傳) and *Mencius* that Confucius held this post, but his wielding of harsh punishments seems to be a Han dynasty fantasy that clashes with depictions of Confucius in pre-Qin sources.

46. Wilson, *On Sacred Grounds*, 214–15.

47. See for instance Chapter 28 of the *Liji*, “Confucius at Ease” (*Zhongni yanju* 仲尼燕居).

48. The “Family Sayings of Confucius” contain pre-Han and early Han Confucius lore and were compiled by Wang Su, who might have interpolated passages of his own. For

that there are five types of evils in the world and that the official he had executed exhibited them all. He then refers to cases where venerable kings and ministers of the Shang (ca. 1600–1046 BCE) and the Zhou Dynasties (1045–256 BCE) had to apply harsh punishment and tops off his historical justification with a quotation from the *Classic of Poetry*.<sup>52</sup> Rather than arguing for the uselessness of punishments and their replacement through a regime of benevolence, as his pre-Qin persona would probably have done, the politically empowered Confucius of the Han keeps to the tools of the new empires of Qin and Han—meaning laws and punishments—to deal with his subjects, and he knows his Classics and his history well enough to defend his surprising personality change.<sup>53</sup>

Fourth, Confucius lore defends the master against types of vulgar slander that even outdid the vitriolic attacks the Mohists had directed against Confucius. Not surprisingly, this tendency is particularly noticeable in the *Kongcongzi*, a Kong family collection whose compilation is traditionally attributed to the eighth generation descendant of Confucius, Kong Fu 孔鮒 (ca. 264–208 BCE), but which contains materials up to the middle of the Later Han (25–220 CE). The conjunction of intellectual and bloodline lineage made the descendants of Confucius into particularly fierce defendants of their master-ancestor's legacy. In one episode Prince Pingyuan tries to force more wine on Zigao and backs up his drinking request with an "old proverb" (*yiyān* 遺諺) about the supposedly fabulous drinking stamina of Yao and Shun and Confucius. Zigao snaps and instructs the tipsy Prince:

According to my knowledge the worthies and sages were superior by means of the Way and virtue, certainly not by food and drink." Prince Pingyuan said, "If it is as you say, what then is the origin of such sayings?" Zigao answered, "They come from the mouth of booze-lovers, they are words of bold provocation, they are not true." The Prince said smilingly, "Had I not been provocative with you, I would never have heard these refined words of yours."<sup>54</sup>

52. *Kongzi jiyu* 1/4B–5B.

53. There are also instances where Confucius orders execution in Sima Qian's biography of him, which shows that this belonged clearly to the image of the Master during the Han. See *Shiji* 47, 1915.

54. *Kongcongzi* 13.4B ("Ru Fu"), 725. Adapted from Yoav Ariel, *K'ung-t's'ung-tzu: The K'ung Family Masters' Anthology*, 136.

以穿所聞賢聖以道德兼人.未聞以飲食也.平原君曰即如先生所言.則此言何生.子高曰生於嗜酒者.蓋其勸厲獎戲之辭.非實然也.平原君欣然.曰吾不戲子無所聞此雅言也.

Although the prince praises Zigao for the "elegant" and "refined" (*ya* 雅) words of wisdom that straighten out his vulgarities, the prince nevertheless has the last word: he reminds Zigao that without his unashamed teasing he would not have received Zigao's precious instruction. In this episode and elsewhere, Zigao stands up as the voice of truth against slanderers who attribute outrageous behavior to Confucius not so much to attack him as to cover up their own flaws and lurid desires.

Some of the Confucius lore clearly addressed issues that only came to the fore with the early imperial sanctification of the Confucian curriculum. But a reverence for the physical presence of Confucius is shared by all Confucius lore. As briefly mentioned above, the fascination with Confucius's body predominates in numerous passages in Book 7 and the entirety of Book 10 in the *Analects*. Unlike the rest of the *Analects*, here the Master does not speak but is shown in action, and his looks, demeanor, and habits are meticulously described. Chapter 10 has disappointed many modern scholars looking for deeper discursive meaning.<sup>55</sup> The master "shows" his disciples how to behave during court audiences or public sacrifices, or when receiving gifts, losing friends, meeting with people in mourning, driving a chariot, or when he falls ill. True, in contrast to the particularity of the rest of the *Analects*, Book 10 provides us with a merely generic specificity that could look like a ritual code of an ossifying early Confucian school. But I would argue that Chapter 10 is key to under-

55. Arthur Waley considers the book largely a compilation of maxims from works on ritual that do not belong with the rest of the text (Waley, *Analects of Confucius*, 21). Bruce Brooks (*The Original Analects*, 67) voices his dismay more personally: "The bafflement of English-language Analects commentators at the *ethical desert* [my own emphasis] of LY 10 is echoed in that of English-language Bible explicators at having to deal with Leviticus. With LY 10, a new ritual emphasis enters Confucianism. Ethics reappears in the Analects from LY 11 on, but the tone of Confucianism is permanently altered in a ritual direction. It is with LY 10 that the later emphasis on *li* ("ritual propriety, procedure") takes over from the earlier emphasis on *ren*." Apparently, Brooks considers ch. 10 as the juncture where the Confucian "virtue ethics" of benevolence (*ren*), hypostatized by most modern interpreters, turns into a philosophically hardly accessible ritualism—certainly from his perspective for the worse.



standing the texture of Confucius's charisma and the persistent habit of later writers to capture the Master in a scene of instruction rather than presenting an expository description of his teachings. The placement of a silent Confucius in action in the very middle of the twenty books of the *Analects* seems too strategic to be coincidental. Some of the passages do not make it clear that Confucius is the agent of the described actions. However, seen in the context of the *Analects*, this homogeneous book pays tribute to the master's physical charisma and by extension provides exemplary actions to the aspiring adept.<sup>56</sup>

The opening sequence of Book 10 (*Analects* 10.1–5, also 7.4) is remarkable in its repeated use of reduplicated binoms, adjectives describing body demeanor and expressions of appearance (“as if,” “seemingly” [*ru* 如]). *Analects* 10.4 is the most elaborate in this respect:

On passing through the entrance way to the duke's court, he would bow forward as though the gateway did not admit him. He would not stand in the middle of the gateway, and would not step upon the threshold. On passing by the throne his complexion was as though suddenly changed, his steps were as if rushing about, his words seemed to be laconic. When he lifted the hem of his robe to ascend the hall, he appeared as though bending his body, while holding his *qi* flux and seemingly not breathing at all. When leaving and descending the first steps, relaxing his countenance, he seemed at ease. When reaching the bottom of the steps, he swiftly advanced as though on wings. When returning to his position, he seemed as though resuming a reverent posture.<sup>57</sup>

入公門，鞠躬如也，如不容。立不中門，行不履闕。過位，色勃如也，足躩如也，其言似不足者。攝齊升堂，鞠躬如也，屏氣似不息

56. Episodes 1, 16, 17, 27 of ch. 10 clearly refer to Confucius. The only exception is Episode 6, which does not describe the master, but states the clothing requirements of the nobility for everyday use and special occasions like the mourning period or New Year's Day. Basing his argument on a note from Arthur Waley, Bruce Brooks suggests that the material in this chapter was originally “dress and behavior prescriptions for the gentleman courtier and householder,” which only later became relabeled as descriptions of Confucius, as which they “exerted a considerable influence on his perceived historical persona” (Brooks, *The Original Analects*, 59). I would suggest that, regardless of the provenance of the material, ch. 10 is unequivocally associated with Confucius in the context of the *Analects*. The biographical connection is evident not only from the occasional direct reference to him, but also from the similarity with passages in ch. 7, which clearly refer to Confucius.

57. *Analects* 10.4. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 645–54.

者。出，降一等，逞顏色，怡怡如也。沒階趨，翼如也。復其位，蹶蹶如也。

Here the charisma of Confucius's body not only emanates from his ritualized modesty in the presence of a ruler, but is revealed through the obsessive use of expressions of approximation: “as though”/ “as if”/ “appearing to”/ “seemingly” are all translations of the same two words: *ru* 如 occurring eight times and *si* 似 twice in the space of a brief passage. Confucius's body is described through the eyes of somebody who can talk about it only as an approximation, somebody whose perception of reality is profoundly altered by watching him. The gateway is not too small for Confucius. He could have walked right through it, but in bending down to enter the gate, Confucius makes it look too small for his body, making his act of deference, in bowing down, seem much larger. At the climactic moment in ascending the steps towards the ruler's throne he certainly continues to breathe, but does not appear to do so, which shows his awe before the ruler through exaggeration. After having performed his greeting, he literally flies down the stairs with sublime effortlessness. Confucius's physical appearance—pretending to do more than his physical body could ever do—seems self-effacing, but this modesty is played off against the miracle Confucius's body effects on our perception of space and place: he appears bigger, smaller, with and without *qi* flow, moving on wings and immobile. The suspension of his body in vague approximation reshapes the reader's perception of him and the space around him, so that he inhabits a supernatural ritual space. Dichotomies between pattern versus substance, of appearance versus true nature do not hold for Confucius's charismatic body. Surface is, for once, coextensive with interiority. This ideal ritual body of the master performs the everyday surface as the sacred façade of interiority, now no longer a façade, but a true surface that is substance.

### *Tautologies and the Transparency of Body Language*

Approximate though its actions are, Confucius's body in silent action guarantees a new type of ritual authenticity: Confucius's actions are perfect ritual acts in which intention matches appearance, and thus body language is authentic and transparent. As Confucius sees himself surrounded by a world of false words and values, he has a great concern for the devaluation of the meaning of words:

Ziyou asked about filial piety. The Master replied, "Today's 'filial piety' means just to be able to feed your parents. But even dogs and horses can get fodder. So if you don't respect your parents, what's the difference?"<sup>58</sup>

子游問孝。子曰：「今之孝者，是謂能養。至於犬馬，皆能有養；不敬，何以別乎？」

Clearly, "yesterday's" filial piety embodies the truth of the matter; contemporary usage of the term is deceptive. Therefore, it is crucial for Confucius to learn again how to apply (*qu* 取) words to meanings, how to reconnect with what has been lost. The ruling elite do not make the right connections:

The Three Families [of Lu—Mengsun, Shushun, and Jisun] had the *Yong* Ode performed at the end of the sacrifice. The Master said, "In attendance were the various nobles, and the son of Heaven—how majestic!" What application does this ode have to the ancestral halls of the Three Families?<sup>59</sup>

三家者以雍徹。子曰：「『相維辟公，天子穆穆』，奚取於三家之堂？」

In usurping royal privilege, the nobles of Lu "apply" the sacrificial ode illegitimately. Words have to be applied to the corresponding phenomena, as disciples have to apply themselves to the right company of master-models:

[...] Being able to apply oneself to the example of those [models] near at hand can be said to be the method of becoming benevolent.<sup>60</sup>

「能近取譬，可謂仁之方也已。」

Benevolence is part of the facility of "correct application" and follows from it. In similar fashion, the frequent expression "this can be called" (*ke wei* 可謂 or *ke yi wei* 可以謂) in the *Analects* is a call for correct application of words. Not the definitional power that attributes universal meaning to a term matters here, but the application of one phenomenon to another through judicious ad-hoc judgment. Confucius teaches through this particular phrase to make certain connections under particular circumstances and to rectify mismatches between people's supposed roles and their actual actions.

58. *Analects* 2.7. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 85.

59. *Analects* 3.2. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 140.

60. *Analects* 6.30. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 428.

The most infallible strategy for tying words to their meaning before devaluation is of course the trope of tautology. Duke Jing of Qi is enchanted when Confucius advises him in matters of government:

The ruler must rule, the minister must be a minister, the father a father, and the son a son.<sup>61</sup>

君君，臣臣，父父，子子。

Tautology is ever vulnerable to semantic short-cutting, and can only make a statement in a world where words have fallen from the grace of their meaning. Thus, tautology only means something if it is secondary, if it constitutes a conscious retrieval of lost semantic values. This rehabilitation is certainly visionary and always creates its own story of previous decline; it needs to be in constant tension with an assumed corrupt language use to continue to signify. On the other hand, presenting itself as a repetition, the tautology suggests effortless applicability: The "father" just has to be a "father"; nothing more is asked for. Thus, this tautology benefits both from the prospect of becoming a mere repetition, short-cutting itself, but also from the tension of the inequality of identical terms that comes with the corrupted use of language.

Suspended between comfortable identity and necessary difference, the trope of tautology is vulnerable to metaphorical or phonological slippage, potentially upsetting an unstable balance. This may explain the Master's harsh repudiation of Zaiwo's explanations before Duke Ai in *Analects* 3.21:

Duke Ai asked Zaiwo about the earth altars. Zaiwo replied, "The Xia clans used pine wood (*song* 松), the Yin people cypress (*bo* 柏), and the Zhou people chestnut wood (*li* 栗). It is said that this was to make the common people tremble with fear (*zhanli* 戰栗)." When the Master heard this, he said, "Do not speak of what is already done, do not remonstrate over what has already ensued, and do not find fault with what is long past."<sup>62</sup>

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。」

The Master is harsh and dismissive in front of Duke Ai when Zaiwo describes the wood types used by the Xia, Shang, and Zhou for building the

61. *Analects* 12.11. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 855.

62. *Analects* 3.21. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 200–204.

soil altars. Where does Zaiwo go wrong? Perhaps Zaiwo's error lies in his careless use of puns: *li* 栗, with its double meaning of "chestnut wood" and "to tremble in fear," retroactively reads as *song* 悚 ("frighten") into the "pine" of the Xia, and *pa* 怕 ("fear") into the "cypress" of the Shang Yin.<sup>63</sup> By implication, Zaiwo criticizes all three dynasties for the intimidating way they governed the people. Puns are false tautologies, conflating two things behind the veil of one semantic unit. Conflating "ren" as "being human" and "benevolence" in *Analects* 1.2 was a desirable and legitimate pun, but a pun (even if unintended) that accuses the Zhou of cruelty is unacceptable to the Master. He is extremely upset, not only because it faults the Zhou, but also because it shows the danger that punning poses by creating the possibility of false alikes. It threatens the ideal of a transparent language that would guarantee the proper functioning of society.

Because of the importance of tautology, outright logical paradoxes of the type "A = non-A" are extremely rare in the *Analects*. This made paradoxes so attractive for other Master Texts and we see how texts like *Laoshi* pitted themselves against Confucian discourse through paradox, trying to establish their own rhetorical universe. Yet, there is one particular group of objects that allows for paradox in the *Analects*: vessels. Scattered throughout the book, references to vessels are paradoxical and mystifying:

The Master said, "The superior person is not a mere vessel."<sup>64</sup>

子曰：「君子不器。」

The idea that a superior person should not let others "use" or instrumentalize him without his own active participation is rather common in later texts. This commonplace may have offended Zigong, whom Confucius compares to a vessel:

Zigong asked, "What am I like?" The Master said, "You? You are a vessel." Zigong asked, "What kind of a vessel?" and the Master said in reply, "A vessel of the *hu* and *lan* type [from the Shang and Xia Dynasties]."<sup>65</sup>

63. The *Lunyu jishi* emphasizes that Zai Wo did not intend these puns, but that his faux-pas only became clear to him after he talked about how he conflated the "chestnut" of the Zhou with the "trembling" of the people. See Cheng *Lunyu jishi*, 204.

64. *Analects* 2.12. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 96.

65. *Analects* 5.4. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 292. Fingarette discusses this passage in the chapter "A Confucian Metaphor—the Holy Vessel." He takes the passage very literally, suggesting that Confucius's remark turns Zigong into a "sacred implement": "It is sacred not

子貢問曰：「賜也何如？」子曰：「女器也。」曰：「何器也？」曰：「瑚璉也。」

In two other instances *qi* 器 means something like "to utilize," "to employ according to one's capacity." These usages contain the danger of instrumentalization, but point also to the potential capacity of the person to be employed. In that case, the vessel signifies the precious "receptacle" of character and talent. Thus, the vessel image evokes contradictory semantic fields, which can be explored in diametrically opposed directions. Confucius saves Zigong from the ambiguity of the "vessel" image by making Zigong into an especially precious and venerable vessel. The double-faced use of this image may explain Confucius's utterly mystifying exclamation in *Analects* 6.25:

A *gu* vessel, which is not really a *gu* vessel—Ah, what a *gu*! What a *gu*!<sup>66</sup>

子曰：「觚不觚，觚哉！觚哉！」

In a commentary attributed to Zheng Xuan, this cryptic passage gets demystified in a refreshingly pragmatic manner:

Confucius said, "When I was carving a *gu* vessel my mind was on something else. Thus the *gu* was not finished in time, and I said, 'What a *gu*! What a *gu*!' A *gu* is only a small vessel. If one does not concentrate one's mind on it, it will not be finished in time. How much more is that the case with important matters!"<sup>67</sup>

孔子曰：「削觚而志有所念，觚不時成，故曰觚哉觚哉。觚小器耳。心不專一，尚不時成，況於大事也。」

Assuming the ambivalence of the "vessel" image, we could also imagine Confucius thinking through its possible contradictions: Persons of worth are like a *gu* vessel in their capacity, but not so much like a *gu* vessel because it implies undue utilization. But in the—not dialectical—end, it appears more valuable at this moment to use the vessel image for its precious capac-

because it is useful or handsome, but because it is a constitutive element in the ceremony. It is sacred by virtue of its participation in rite, in holy ceremony." Fingarette, *Confucius: The Secular as the Sacred*, 75. My interpretation gives less weight to the vessel image, but emphasizes Confucius's playful stirring of Zigong's curiosity; Confucius knows that Zigong almost certainly misunderstands his ambivalent statement that he is a "vessel" and will have to ask for relieving clarification.

66. *Analects* 6.25. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 412.

67. Cheng, *Lunyu jishi*, 414.

ity. This passage is about as close as the Confucius of the *Analects* ever gets to using paradoxical language to enhance his point. That commentators like Zheng Xuan explain the paradox away by simply saying that Confucius lamented his failed carving attempts that stopped short of producing a real *gu* vessel shows that paradox was not a mode deemed natural for Confucius, who placed his hopes in the trope of tautology.

### Outlook

The material preserved in the *Analects* was highly influential in shaping the most seminal rhetorical format of "Masters Literature": the "scene of instruction" in which a master is featured in dialogue with his entourage. This rhetorical format continued to be found in most of the lore that developed around Confucius in the Warring States and throughout the Han dynasty, although many other far more complex textual formats had become available by that time. This may be due to Confucius's extraordinary role as charismatic leader and ideal sage, whose very presence mattered at least as much as his words. Confucius continued to be best graspable on a narrative stage, rather than through expository prose that explained his teachings. Confucius's charismatic body resides in the middle of a community of disciples, which pits itself, with its general interest in "being human," against the contemporary community of professional specialization. The vision of this community, with its emphasis on learning, friendship, and loyalty between equals, was important enough to the compilers to spell it out in the very opening sequence of the first chapter. Confucius's body language is staged as transparent and authentic, a match between words, meanings, and actions. In an economy of signification that seeks transparency, linguistic slips such as phonetic puns were threatening, although the *Analects* use them whenever they work in favor of the point at hand.

The reverence for the living image of Confucius, which is central to the anecdotes of Confucius lore, did not allow for a systematic explication of his "doctrine." This may have been one reason why the *Analects* were compiled so astonishingly late. A whole chapter of the *Analects* is solely devoted to the careful description of Confucius's body language and his body's powers to alter the perception of the spectator. I have argued that Confucius's transparent body language in Book 10 resonates with his emphasis on the matching between words and actions, which is also reflected

in his matching of words with themselves through the trope of tautology. I hope to have shown how a program that strives to restore a healthy tautology between words and signification is replicated and strengthened by a master figure with a transparent body language. If Confucius's outer demeanor matches his intended signification of proper ritual behavior, he acts out the trope of "tautology" and is himself the first and most charismatic propagator of his program.

The seemingly passive role of Confucius, who is "authored" through recordings of his words by disciples in the form of dialogic "scenes of instruction," coexists after Mencius with Confucius the author, who presumably encrypted his most essential teachings in the *Spring and Autumn Annals*. The tension between Confucius the oral actor and Confucius the subtle author had profound attraction for literati throughout Chinese history, and allowed later Confucians to productively sway in their pedagogical vision between an emphasis on oral instruction and a concern with immersion in scripture. But we are getting far ahead of ourselves. We now return closer to Confucius's time and look at what one might call the initiator of Masters Literature: Mozi, for it was only with the attacks on Confucius and his followers in Mozi that Masters Literature was really born as a discursive space of contention.