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1. The Materials

When discussing the composition of early Chinese texts – in this case philosophical texts from the Warring States (ca. 481–222 B.C.) – it is reasonable to look into excavated materials, since it is about these texts alone that we can say with certainty that they remain unaffected by later editors’ hands.

Philosophy and politics in early China were traditionally closely interrelated, and the rise and fall of empires brought about massive changes in the intellectual domain, as well. The establishment of érudites under the Qín 秦 (ca. 221–210 B.C.), which was furthered under the Hàn 漢 (ca. 202 B.C. – A.D. 8; 23–220), probably marked the beginning of institutionalised writing, as well as the formation of philosophical “schools,” especially that of the so-called “Classicists” (rú 儒). The ban of books as promoted by Lǐ Sī 李斯 (ca. 280–208 B.C.) and the – generally assumed but not universally accepted – expulsion of competing doctrines, carried out under Hàn Wǔdì 漢武帝 (r. 141–87 B.C.) in 136 B.C., further reflect con-

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1 I wish to thank Áine McMurtry, Christian Schwermann, Michael Nylan, and Paul van Els for their helpful comments and corrections.

2 See also Kern 2000, pp. 190ff.

3 For the term “Classicists” (rú), see Nylan 1999.

4 See the account in the Hǎnshù 漢書 6.212, 88.3593. Despite of this, it is repeatedly argued that the influence of imperial patronage after 221 B.C. is heavily overstated. See Nylan (forthcoming) with further references.
scious attempts to suppress heterogeneous and uncontrolled writing and to close the canon. We must assume that texts from the Warring States period did not remain unaffected by such disturbances, since later editors such as Liú Xiàng 劉向 (79–8 B.C.) and his son Liú Xīn 劉歆 (46 B.C. – A.D. 23) could not escape the Zeitgeist of their age and homogenised received philosophical texts according to their own horizon, which was that of an elaborate manuscript culture in which writing coherent texts increasingly became the habit of the time. The Liús’ efforts to standardise the text(s) Xúnzǐ 荀子, by fusing some 322 bundles of materials into 32 bundles and discarding the rest as superfluous, repetitive or simply wrong, must be understood against this background. This shows a reception attitude that has similarities with the Romantic notion of “creativity as ‘of a piece’ inspiration” – or at least the attitude to think of philosophy in terms of concisely written texts, where any variation appears alien and thus to be discarded. Of the written remnants of thought that have been passed down to us, only those from below the ground and forgotten for millennia are demonstrably unaffected by later attempts to homogenise scholarship and thought. By implication, only when looking into the habits of writing as reflected from exhumed palaeographic materials can we be fairly sure of gaining insight into the structure and composition of the written philosophy from the Warring States period in a way that could never be true of received texts such as the Lúnyǔ 論語, the Mòzǐ 墨子, the Mèngzǐ 孟子, Xúnzǐ 荀子, or Zhuāngzǐ 莊子.

When examining strategies of meaning-construction in Warring States philosophy, the materials excavated from the Tomb Number One, Guōdiàn 郭店 (henceforth Guōdiàn One), constitute a particularly valuable resource. Tomb Guōdiàn One was sealed around 300 B.C. and so falls into the mid to late Warring States period. What makes this tomb and its textual contents so significant is that, contrary to other findings of palaeographic materials, it provides a solid point of reference for discussing the nature of philosophical texts from Warring States China. To begin with, tomb Guōdiàn One contains an entire collection of written ideas. These materials demonstrate different kinds of philosophical reasoning and thus reflect the diversity of intellectual endeavours during the Warring States. Some of

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5 For a more detailed discussion of changes in post-Warring States intellectual climate, see Petersen 1995; Kern 2000, pp. 184ff. with further references. See also Assmann – Assmann 1987 for a discussion of attempts to establish a canon in other societies.

6 Orr 2003, p. 87.

7 Tomb Guōdiàn One is located some nine km north of the old capital of the kingdom of Chǔ 楚 at Jìnán 綦南, Húběi province, close to the village Guōdiàn in the Sháyáng 沙洋 district, Sìfāng 四方, Jīngmén 城門 City. See the excavation report by the Húběi shěng Jīngmén shì bówùguǎn in WW 1997. Despite some disagreement, consensus holds that the tomb was sealed around 300 B.C. For a discussion of the date of burial, see among many others: Cuí Rén-yì 1997 and 1998; Luó Yùn-huán 1999; Péng Hào 1999a, 1999b, 1999c; Li Xuē-qīn 2000a, 2000b. Wáng Bào-xuán 1999 is rather isolated in his view that Guōdiàn One could have been closed as late as 227 B.C.

8 On the problematic concept of a “tomb-library,” see Meyer (forthcoming).
the texts from Guōdiàn One are concerned with proper rule and discuss appropriate measures of government – from both the perspective of the advisor and of the ruler himself; some of the texts engage with self-cultivation; other texts reflect on the dichotomy of heaven and man. In terms of strategies of argument-construction, Guōdiàn One contains texts that establish long and continuous disquisitions of a philosophical concern; other texts are only one or two statements in length. The broad variety of philosophical texts in Guōdiàn One provides a fuller picture of the complexity of text and thought of mid to late Warring States philosophical discourse than has previously been available.

Contrary to other major findings of philosophical texts from the Warring States, the materials from Guōdiàn One were brought to light in a scientific excavation. This allows us to locate the manuscripts fairly precisely in time and space. Other palaeographic materials from the Warring States such as, say, the Shànghǎi manuscripts, lack this solid referential framework. In sum, Guōdiàn One facilitates the study of written thought of the Warring States period with unprecedented methodological coherence. For this reason, my following discussion of strategies of text and thought in Warring States philosophical discourse is based on these finds.

2.

The Material Conditions of Meaning-construction in Warring States Period

If we accept the date of burial of Guōdiàn One at around 300 B.C., the tomb was sealed at a time of transition. Not only was the Warring States period one of intensified warfare and increasing social mobility (and permeability); but Guōdiàn One also falls into a period that saw the wide dissemination of easy-in-use writing

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9 For the importance of contexts, such as tombs, when working with palaeographic materials, see Kern 2002.

10 The Shànghǎi collection of Chū manuscripts was acquired by the Shànghǎi Museum in 1994 from unknown dealers on an antique market in Hong Kong. It contains some 1,200 inscribed bamboo strips. The Shànghǎi Museum began to publish these in 2001. So far, volumes 1–6 have come out. The provenance of these manuscripts is uncertain. After the manuscripts were made public, it was repeatedly assumed that these strips might as well stem from a site close to Guōdiàn One, or even from the same tomb. See, for instance, Mā Chéngyuán (2001), vol. 1, p. 2. The assumption that the Shànghǎi bamboo strips might stem from tomb Guōdiàn One is based on two observations: first, the chronologic proximity of their appearance with those from Guōdiàn One; second, the similarity of the texts (that is, the Shànghǎi texts also share an exclusive philosophical orientation) and the style of calligraphy (that is, Chū type of mid to late Warring States). Despite the close similarities between the strips from Guōdiàn One and those from the Shànghǎi collection of Chū manuscripts, I would rule out the possibility that the Shànghǎi strips also come from tomb Guōdiàn One. This is on the basis of the – for Guōdiàn One standards – exceptionable length of the Shànghǎi strips of up to 57 cm, and the fabricated notches in many Shànghǎi strips, which are unseen in the strips from Guōdiàn One; the fact that the two groups of strips display a considerable overlap of texts – the “Zī yī” 緇衣 (Black Robes) and the “Xìng zì mìng chū/Xìng qíng lùn” 性自命出/性情論 (Nature derives from Heaven/Treatise on Nature and Sentiment) appear in both collections of manuscripts – further suggests that the two groups of bamboo strips stem from different (but potentially spatially adjacent) sites.

11 On social mobility in Warring States period, see the still unsurpassed study by Hsu Cho-yun 1965.
materials, namely bamboo strips. Due to easy access, the Warring States – for the first time in the history of those territories that we today term China – witnessed extensive writing and, as a result, the spread of written philosophy. That writing itself has a major impact on thought has been put forward repeatedly by theoreticians of literacy and written communication. Writing is more than only the “transcription” of speech. It now is widely acknowledged that writing not only changes the way we communicate but moreover, that it also has a profound impact on the nature of what we pass on. Writing furthers the development of long and intricate lines of argument, which are not found in oral discourse. Committing thought to writing furthermore facilitates the meaningful fusion of different kinds of sources and ideas into a coherent homogenised syncretic whole. Given the obvious restraint to make a choice when combining different materials into a consistent entity, writing, finally, stimulates an additional level of reflection and hence leads to abstraction of thought that goes far beyond that of exclusively oral communication. Writing therefore advances the availability of certain types of argument-construction that remain unseen in oral communication. With the widespread use of bamboo strips for writing, pre-unification China of the Warring States Period finally saw the beginning of “written philosophy.”

3. Writing

“Written philosophy” denotes a text that is produced as an intentional composition, and that is self-contained in a meaningful way, as opposed to the compilation of traditional formulae. As a direct effect of writing, philosophy became detached from oral contexts in which particular ideas were received meaningfully. Becoming detached from certain settings, such as the conversation between master and disciple, the written philosophy of the Warring States developed other strategies to construct meaning. Conversely, in the Lûnyû, for instance, Confucius could respond differently to the same set of questions posed by his disciples, thus customising his teachings to the individual needs of his students. As a result of this highly individualised approach, anyone outside such a circle of cultural transmission would be unable to make sense of its often enigmatic pronounce-
This type of philosophical exchange between master and disciple was predominantly oral and bound to group-based communication. Anyone remaining outside such circles was therefore excluded from initiation.

Philosophy of the written type did not rely to the same degree on this type of group-based consent, since the philosophical texts no longer reflected a mere record of what had been said (or produced on the basis of what would have been said). Instead, these texts had to be designed in a way that they could communicate thought in and of themselves. Detached from the point of reference provided by the master, all kinds of specifications had to be made in the texts themselves. Innovative strategies were thus developed to combine authoritative quotations or anecdotes in these texts, to integrate recurrent building-blocks from other (possibly oral) traditions into consistent lines of argument, or to weave elements into the new text that belong to the cultural knowledge of contemporary élite groups and that were as such an indispensable element for communicating thought. All these elements were eventually received as intrinsic parts of the philosophical position put forward in the written text itself. The philosophical text of the written type thus developed into a self-contained piece of thought. It became accessible to anyone who could read and thus allowed a more “democratic” engagement with philosophy. Relieved from group-based specifications of thought, these texts acquired an explicitness unknown in oral philosophy. The potential recipient could thus approach thought in accordance with the strategies of meaning-construction advanced in these texts.

Even though I call the written philosophy of the Warring States “innovative,” I do not want also to imply that the use of the comparably lightweight writing materials, bamboo strips, was also an innovation of the Warring States. Conversely, archaeological findings suggest that bamboo strips were used as a carrier for writing long before the Warring States. Brush writing on bamboo seems to date back as early as Shāng 商 times (ca. 1600–1100 B.C.). Not only does the discovery of the writing brush or lamp-black ink corroborate this assumption, but the early occurrence of the character cè 冊 (and the allographs 策 and 筆) further indicates that bundles of bamboo were in use long before the “explosion” of texts in Warring States period; the graph already appears in inscriptions dating back as early

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20 Cf. Lúnyǔ 11:22.

21 On the systematic approach of the philosophical texts from the Warring States, see my studies on the “Zhōng xīn zhì dào” 忠信之道 (Way of Fidelity and Trustworthiness) and “Qióng dá yì shí” 廢達以時 (Failure and Success Appear at their Respective Times) in Meyer (2005) [2006]; Meyer (2005/2006) [2007].

22 For the late Shāng period, we have evidence that characters were written on smooth surfaces, for instance jade, with a brush. See KGX2 1981/4, p. 504; Bagley 1999; Boltz 1999, p. 108. See also Keightley for his assumption that some oracle-bone inscriptions were brush written before they were incised. Keightley 1985, pp. 46f. The character yù 莫 “writing brush” further corroborates the assumption that the writing brush was also in use in Shāng times.
as Shāng times. The character cè 冊 is generally assumed to represent bamboo strips bound together with a string into one bundle. The word cè 冊 (OC *[ttsh]rek) most likely was cognate with ji 积 (OC *[ts]ek) “to pile up; accumulate” – Laurent Sagart suggests that the medial *-r- might have indicated an object with a repetitive structure – and thus suggests the “piled up,” or “accumulated” nature of its object.

Despite the early use of the writing brush and bamboo as a writing carrier, extensive manuscript culture, written philosophy, and the dissociation of writing from centres of power must all be seen as developments of the Warring States Period. We must conclude that the use of bamboo was certainly a necessary, but not a sufficient condition for extensive writing in China of the Warring States Period. As discussed independently by Eric Havelock in the case of early Greece and Bernhard Karlgren, early China, it seems reasonable to postulate a correlation between abstract thought and writing. As held by Havelock, the emergence of abstract philosophy in ancient Greece is – at least in part – the product of the exegetical exercise to make sense of the mythopoeic language of Homer. The intellectual leadership of early Greece revolted from the “immemorial habit of self-identification with the poem,” and only after the “spell of the poetic tradition has already been broken” the poem became the “abstracted object of knowledge.” By destroying the “original syntax of the poem” it became a systematised “encyclopaedia,” unseen and abstract. To transform the saga into an abstract source of knowledge, “aphorisms” had to be “torn out of context, correlated, systematised, unified and harmonised” to provide more abstract and universally valid formulae, a process fundamentally linked to writing. Removing travelling concepts from original contexts and fusing them systematically into new settings does not only apply to the Greek case, but is also consistent with Bernhard Karlgren’s description of systematic thought in Hán-China. Whereas Havelock understood Greek philosophy largely as growing up from the exegetical systematisation of Homer,

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23 The character cè 冊 is conventionally rendered as “to write down” (on bamboo strips). See, for instance, Schüssler 1987, and same author 2007. In his recent article, Kern has shown, however, that this translation misses the point. As Kern convincingly argues, cè should instead be read as “to announce”; or “to recite” (the charge or bestowal). See Kern 2007, pp. 152ff.

24 See Chavannnes 1905.


27 The necessary social conditions for writing are not the focus of this article and will therefore not be dealt with here. I am currently preparing a paper that discusses these circumstances in detail.


29 Ibid., p. 218.

30 Ibid., p. 217.

31 Ibid., p. 218.

32 See Karlgren 1946 and 1968.
Karlgren viewed the systematic thought of Hân-Dynasty thinkers as being developed from legends and myths of the early Zhōu, and, again, fundamentally linked to writing.33

Based on Karlgren’s and Havelock’s observation, Steve Farmer, John B. Henderson, and Michael Witzel furthered the study of the correlation between (early) writing and abstract thought.34 As discussed by Farmer and colleagues, the remarkable parallels in the appearance of abstract thought as identified by Karlgren and Havelock could not only be made explicit for ancient Greece and China, but the evolution of abstract thought can instead be linked directly to similar exegetical processes in other cultural centres such as India and the Near East.35 These processes largely took shape around the middle of the first millennium B.C. and were advanced by “the first widespread use of lightweight writing materials, and the subsequent development of stratified textual traditions that began simultaneously in all advanced world cultures in this period.”36 Although still relatively bulky, the wide utilisation of the comparatively easy-in-use, freely extendable, and moveable material carrier for writing, viz. bamboo strips, must have been a relief for the written word. Farmer and colleagues thus make the case that the origins of abstract thought lay in the broad diffusion of lightweight writing materials, be it bamboo strips in China, palm leaves in India, parchment or papyrus in Greece, which facilitated more systematic collections of hitherto unrelated oral and written traditions.37 These processes can be dated roughly to the second half of the first millennium B.C. throughout these centres of civilisation.38 This is the approximate date of the philosophical texts from Guōdiàn One.

Overall, writing enabled the systematising fusion of mythopoetic concepts into abstract ideas, and it further facilitated a layered organisation of thought. Exegetical tendencies and highly correlative modes of processing thought typical of all cultural centres in the second half of the first millennium B.C., are a sign of writing as well as the result thereof. The syncretic syntheses of travelling concepts ultimately resulted in the emergence of highly layered texts, which, by implication, also enabled more sophisticated systems of thought. The inception of this process ultimately lies in the endeavour to comment on textual authority,39 and the repeated effort to harmonise widely known sources finally leads to ever

33 See also Farmer 1989, pp. 78f., n. 51.
36 Farmer 1989, pp. 78f.
37 Farmer 1989, p. 79, n. 52. For Goody’s hypothesis, see his work from 1977. For Havelock’s ideas, see his work from 1963. On the use of palm leaves in India, see especially Al Azharia Jahn 2006.
39 Farmer 1989, p. 29.
more correlative visions of reality. As Farmer and colleagues show, correlative thinking is deeply rooted in neurobiological processes, and the wide use of lightweight writing materials such as palm leaves, papyrus, or bamboo strips is a necessary component for developing these “default conditions” further. The lack of highly correlative and syncretic systems of thought indicate, in turn, the absence of a broad diffusion of comparably lightweight writing materials; that is, an extensive manuscript culture, without which no such developments were possible.

4. Strategies of Meaning-construction as Seen in the Materials from Guðiðàn One

40 Ibid.
42 Ibid., p. 64.
43 Ibid., p. 67.
44 In order to keep track of the length of each strip of the texts quoted and the graphs contained therein, the reader finds superscripted a letter to refer to the manuscript with a certain number to refer to the rank number of the strip in question. “zy1,” then, refers to strip one of the “Zī yī.”

45 This is the only unit, in which the “Zī yī” introduces the words of the Master with the formula fú zì yuē 夫子曰 “the honourable Master said” (or: “Now the master said;” see Meyer forthcoming). The other units introduce the Master’s words with zì yuē 子曰 “the master said.”

46 I follow the suggestion of the editors of the Shànghǎi “Zī yī” manuscript (see Mǎ Chéngyuán [2001], vol. 1, p. 175) to read zì yī/17 (see Graphic 1) with xián 總 “all” instead of zàng 藏 (“good”), as suggested by the editors of the Guðiðàn One “Zī yī” (see Húběi shěng jīngmén shì bówǔguǎn 1998, p. 131, n. 4). For the graph zì yī/18 (see Graphic 2) fú 服 (“to submit”) I follow Shaughnessy (2006, p. 94, n. 39) because the archaic forms of 服 and 孝 (the last word of the ode cited) are cognate. For the graphs zì yī/21 (“model”) and zì yī/23 (“crumble”) I follow Shaughnessy 2006, pp. 72-74 (see also Shaughnessy [Xià Hání》夏含夷] 2004, pp. 294f.).

Graphic 1 Graphic 2

47 Black robes were used as high minister’s court dress during the Zhōu dynasty (ca. 1025–256 B.C.). Moreover, “Black robes” is a song in the Odes (Máo 75).

48 Xiàng bó 千伯 is the title Senior Palace Eunuch of the Zhōu court. The name is also the title of an ode (Máo 200).
submit [to you], and [your] model will not fall down.” Odes \(^{49}\) say: “A model of propriety, that was King Wén – and the ten-thousand states [all] acted sincerely.” \(^{49}\) This is the initial unit of the “Zī yī” (Black Robes) from Guòdiàn One. Following this passage a black square appears on the strips (see Graphic 3), clearly indicating the end of this brief unit. Altogether twenty-three passages are marked off accordingly, and this number is also mentioned explicitly at the end of the text. The text has been closed. As far as we can tell, no written commentary or the like was attached to the “Zī yī” during the Warring States. It thus seems at a first sight that this enigmatic “unit of thought”\(^{50}\) would be left entirely to the whims of the reader.

The unit quoted above is typical of those that follow in the Guòdiàn One “Zī yī.” It contains a brief introductory statement, generally introduced with “the Master said” (zǐ yuē 子曰) and ranging between eleven graphs (in unit 20) to fifty-nine graphs (in unit 11) in the Guòdiàn One version, and it is only slightly longer in the received text. The master’s words, then, are substantiated by references to other authoritative sources. In the manuscript versions\(^{51}\) this can either be an ode from the anthology called shī 詩 (Odes),\(^{52}\) or a quotation from what consensus refers to as shū 書 (Documents) – or a reference to both.\(^{53}\) The author(s) of the “Zī yī” never feature in the text with their own voice, nor is there any voice that at-

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\(^{49}\) Quoting the ode “Dà yǎ: Wén wáng” 大雅:文王 (Máo 235).

\(^{50}\) For the felicitous term “unit of thought,” see Wagner 1999.

\(^{51}\) We do not only possess a manuscript version of the “Zī yī” from tomb Guòdiàn One, but the Shànghǎi collection of Chū manuscripts also yields a Warring States “Zī yī,” which is extraordinarily close to the one from Guòdiàn One.

\(^{52}\) In the present study, I shall not treat pre-Qín 秦 sources such as shī (“odes”) or shū (“documents”) as if they were consistent bodies. Concepts such as the Book of Odes were absent during the Warring States and must be seen as anachronistic. These evolved only with about the Qin and Hán dynasties, when people started to perceive history from the perspective of defined books, and not of traditions. Despite this, the collections of odes have been recognised and remembered by larger élite groups of the Warring States and thus have had an important impact on the identity formation of these groups or circles. By implication, I refer to these sources as “Odes” (instead of Odes) because I do not want to assert that these were already well-defined, or “closed” entities (not to mention “books”) in Warring States period, let alone at any earlier moment in history; but I capitalize “Odes” (and “Documents”) to show that they were already a distinct (but not necessarily well-defined) body in those days.

\(^{53}\) Unit 18 of the received text differs from this pattern: it is introduced twice by (different) statements traditionally attributed to Confucius. The first of these is not followed by a reference to any authoritative source from the shared cultural memory, the shī or the shū; the preceding part is not extant in the manuscript versions. Units 1 and 16 of the received text (both of which are not extant in the manuscript versions) also differ from the overall style of the work: unit 1 only quotes the master’s words without any further reference to an ode or a passage from Documents (on the basis of which Shaughnessy 2006, pp. 75 and 77 believes that it does indeed belong to the “Bào jì,” which heads the “Zī yī”). Unit 16, instead, lists four quotations from Documents, which is otherwise unseen in the “Zī yī.” This unit seems to be a later insertion. Beyond that, the received “Zī yī” once also quotes the Changes, yì 易, namely in the concluding line of the final unit 24, which also is not seen in the manuscripts.
tempts to contextualise the statements and quotations used. The statements and quotations remain isolated. The ideas to be expressed in the individual unit of thought only exist in the reference to the pool of a shared belief. The “Zī yī” thus points to the outside. The text as such does not aim to integrate or systematise the statements into an explicit concern.

The written text of the “Zī yī” does not feature a defined socio-philosophical position. Familiarity with the Odes is required in order to make sense of this passage. The socio-philosophical message of this unit remains largely beyond the literal meaning of the written text. By advancing the names “Black Robes” and “Senior Palace Eunuch” the author(s) of the “Zī yī” must hence be referring to cultural information behind these odes as agreed upon by some social or cultural community, if we assume that the unit of thought was meaningful – and it makes sense to suppose that it was. Composing this unit of thought, the author(s) of the “Zī yī” had to assume that within the confines of certain groups, so-called “textual communities,” to know “Black Robes” also implies that one is being informed about a particular set of cultural interpretations of the ode as defined by the social community which the author(s) had in mind when composing the “Zī yī.” Furthermore, the author(s) of the “Zī yī” also had to count on an identification with this prescribed set of interpretations (knowledge alone would not suffice to communicate thought). By implication, “Black Robes” did not only refer to the ode itself. Instead, the truncated reference alludes to the virtuous behaviours of Duke Huán of Zhèng 郑桓公 (r. 806–771 B.C.) and his son Duke Wǔ 郑武公 (r. 770–744 B.C.), as for instance suggested by the Máo reading of the ode. In the same vein, the reference to “Senior Palace Eunuch” alludes to the misdeeds of a senior palace eunuch during the reign of King Yōu of Zhōu 周幽王 (r. 781–771 B.C.) if following the Máo reading at this point. With this cultural – and group-based – interpretation in mind, the statement advanced by Confucius (or imagined by the author[s] of this unit of thought) becomes meaningful. Only when it is understood that the mention of these odes does not describe Confucius’ judgement of the odes themselves but, more importantly, points to their complex cultural interpretation by certain textual communities, can the reference to the odes as advanced in this unit be appreciated. The unit of thought thus becomes meaningful only against this cultural background, which, it must be stressed, is nowhere made explicit in the “Zī yī” itself.

In a way, the author(s) of the “Zī yī” did not create a new text – at least not explicitly. The text has always been there, namely in the form of a statement by Confucius or a song from the Odes. The “Zī yī” points to these existing sources

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54 It can be accepted that the master’s words, that is, the statements attributed to Confucius, were widely known in those circles in which the “Zī yī” was circulating.

55 On the phenomenon of communities grouping around particular texts, so-called “textual communities,” see the discussion by Stock (1983) based on medieval England. In this study, I use textual communities as denoting more or less confined (cultural) groups that would identify one (or more) corpus of texts (written or oral) consistently as authoritative, and which have agreed – in an abstract sense – on one consistent interpretation of these.
without integrating them into a reading that would be obvious to anyone who had access to the text. The ideas to be communicated therefore do not lie in the written text of the “Zī yī,” but remain in the sources referred to and, crucially, in the group-based set of interpretations around them as agreed upon by certain textual communities. Only through reference to the cultural background and not to the written text is meaning constructed in the “Zī yī.” Yet, we know that at some point the “Zī yī” was written down. Various instantiations of the text which date from the Warring States Period document the status it had at an early point in time. This fact alone allows us to believe that the construction and conveyance of meaning was successful – at least in the confines of those cultural groups whose identification, in an abstract sense, was rooted in the “Zī yī,” that is, in the textual communities around this anthologised collection of units of thought. Thus, the “Zī yī” was meaningful despite the fact that it had no written referential context. Meaning was not constructed by generating persuasive lines of argumentation explicitly, but lay in reference to authoritative sources and the – implicit – cultural interpretations of these, which appear nowhere in the written text itself.

From this follows the dilemma which we face today when reading a text like the “Zī yī.” Since the “Zī yī” contains no explicit indication of how the cultural sources used in the text should be understood, the modern reader has no clear basis on which to reconstruct these group-based interpretations. Instead, all we can do is to rely on later (similarly idiosyncratic?) interpretations of the “Zī yī.” Although we now see various written instantiations of the “Zī yī” from as early as the Warring States, we can still assume with that the “Zī yī” worked (and possibly originated) in an orally based discourse. By implication, although we cannot reconstruct the cultural background of every unit with certainty, we can still be sure that there must have been such an interpretative element. It thus becomes clear that the “Zī yī” was nothing other than a tableau combining different culture-based resources. It was a tool on the basis of which philosophy was advanced in all sorts of conversations. By implication, reading the “Zī yī” today means nothing other than to read our “Zī yī”; or at best that of later commentaries. Thus, it is only possible to hypothesise about the “original” meaning of the various units of thought. With the death of the master and his disciples the context of the text is irretrievably lost – and so the certainty about its meaningful framework.

Not all of the texts from Guódiàn One function similarly to the “Zī yī.” Indeed, with the exception of perhaps the three bundles of the so-called Guódiàn One “Lǎozǐ,” most of the excavated texts from Guódiàn One construct meaning in an entirely different fashion. Texts like the excavated “Qióng dá yī shí” (Failure and Success Appear at their Respective Times), the “Wǔ xíng” (Five Types of Conduct), or “Xìng zì mìng chū” (Nature Originates from Decree) do not only point to outside, but instead relocate the intellectual effort from the sources quoted into the written text itself. The sources used in these texts are integrated into an ongoing argument; the group-based interpretations around the sources referred to become meaningless. In the place of group-based and predominantly oral interpretations, it now is the written philosophical text
that indicates how its references should be read. Even though texts like these may still quote heavily from predominantly oral sources and use stock phrases of unknown origin, we can nevertheless postulate with good reason that these texts – for the first time in Chinese intellectual history – reflect what we may call consciously written philosophy.

In the following, I want to discuss this on the basis of the “Wǔ xíng” (Five Types of Conduct). The “Wǔ xíng” forms a representative piece of (early) written philosophy. Just like the “Zǐ yì,” it draws on external authorities to ground the argument. Yet, as opposed to what was shown above, the “Wǔ xíng” is the product of an exegetical exercise to make sense of the at times enigmatic language of the sources used. Lines from authoritative traditions are torn out of context, systematised and integrated into the argument of the “Wǔ xíng” proper by which these authoritative traditions become abstracted objects of knowledge. Destroying the “original syntax” of the references, their content becomes systematised and conceptual. The “Wǔ xíng” attempts to generate universally valid formulae.

5. The “Wǔ xíng”

The “Wǔ xíng” has attracted close attention from scholars for various reasons. To begin with, it seems to provide a key to the nature of the critique of Zǐsī 子思 (ca. 483–402 B.C.) and Mèng Kē 孟軻, Mencius (ca. 380–290 B.C.) that is pronounced so harshly in the “Fēi shì’èr zǐ” 非十二子 chapter of the Xúnzǐ 荀子.57 Because it displays intellectual affinity with both the Mèngzǐ 孟子 and also the “Zhōng yōng” 中庸, which, in turn is generally attributed to Zǐsī, some scholars consider it an important element for reconstructing the intellectual lineage of Zǐsī, about which not much is otherwise known.59 Since the “Wǔ xíng” also shows a “significant overlap” of technical terminology with the Mèngzǐ,60 many students of early Chinese thought consider it a missing link of rú 儒-thought as developed between Kōngzǐ 孔子, Confucius, and the Xúnzǐ.61 The recurrent use of quotations, many of which stem from the collection of songs, known to us as shī 詩, furthermore makes the “Wǔ xíng” an obvious source for studying the stability of this anthology in Zhōu period,62 and it also serves as a convenient source for

56 Havelock 1963, p. 218.
57 See the Xúnzǐ jījiē, pp. 94f. Due to the callousness of the critique, Homer H. Dubs holds that the passage in question must be a later insertion. This view was first expressed by Hàn Ying 韓婴 (ca. 200–120 B.C.), the compiler of the Hánshī wàizhuàn 韓詩外傳. See Dubs 1928, pp. 79f., n. 4; see also Csikszentmihalyi 2004, pp. 59ff; Páng Pú 1980, pp. 71-88.
58 See Páng Pú 1977. For a brief discussion of these positions, see Cook 2000, pp. 130, n. 42; p. 135.
59 On the tradition of Zǐsī, see Csikszentmihalyi 2004, pp. 257-276.
60 Ibid., p. 110.
62 See, for instance, Martin Kern’s study of the Odes in excavated manuscripts. Kern (2005a, p. xxi) traces the “double phenomenon of a canonical text that is as stable in its wording as it is
studies of a Chinese textuality. The fact that another copy of this text was excavated from a tomb that dates some 150 years later than Guōdiàn One, that is, the renowned Han-dynasty tomb Mǎwángduī 马王堆 number Three,\(^6^3\) shows the popularity, which the “Wǔ xíng” once enjoyed for generations, before it slipped entirely from view for roughly two thousand years. The fact that there are two excavated versions of the “Wǔ xíng” makes it a source par excellence for case studies examining the stability of philosophical texts in early China.\(^6^4\) What is of interest in the present study, however, is not so much the reconstruction of postulated intellectual lineages, or the question of a Chinese textuality. The question of the stability of a written philosophical text in early China is also only of secondary interest here.\(^6^5\) Instead, the analysis primarily makes explicit the strategies of meaning-construction in this particular piece of writing and hence describes the means by which the “Wǔ xíng” becomes a self-contained piece of thought.

The Guōdiàn One “Wǔ xíng” numbers over 50 bamboo strips. The strips are tapered towards both ends and, if not broken, have a length of ca. 32.5 cm respectively. Judging from marks on these, two cords previously connected the strips at a distance of 12.9 to 13 cm.\(^6^6\)

The “Wǔ xíng” propagates a theory of self-cultivation with the final goal of nourishing virtue (dé 德) within the individual. Central to this theory are five virtues, each of which describe one particular aspect of virtuous conduct. These five virtues are those also named in the Mèngzǐ 孟子 in combination with the notion of the unstable in its writing.” Apart from the two versions of the “Wǔ xíng,” two excavated versions of the “Zī yǐ” (one copy from the “library” Guōdiàn One, the other from the Shǎnghǎi corpus of Chǔ manuscripts), but also the “Kǒngzī shī lùn” 孔子詩論, and, to a lesser extent, the “Mín zhī fùmǔ” 民之父母 (both of which are part of the Shǎnghǎi collection of Chǔ manuscripts and were so named so by modern editors) contain fragments of Odes. Moreover, by now we also possess a badly damaged and incomplete anthology (see Kern 2003, p. 28) of the Odes from tomb Shuānggūduī 雙古堆 (Anhūi 安徽 Province, sealed 165 B.C.; see Giele 2000). The Máo 毛 tradition, which in post-Hàn 漢 period displaced the three interpretations of Lǔ 魯, Hán 韓 and Qí 齊, was first submitted to the court of Liú Dé 劉德 (r. 133 B.C.), Prince Xiàn 献 of Héjiān 河間 (see Riegel 2001, pp. 99ff.).

\(^6^3\) In winter 1973 archaeologists discovered the previously undisturbed tomb of Lì Cāng 利苍 (d. 185 B.C.), who became the Marquis of Dài 軑. With regard to its location, the tomb was dubbed no. 3, Mǎwángduī 马王堆 (henceforth Mǎwángduī Three); its locus is near Chángshā 長沙, Húnán 湖南 Province. Due to a dated letter to the netherworld that belonged to the tomb inventory, the date of burial can be fixed fairly precisely to 168 B.C. Among other objects, the tomb contained silk manuscripts inscribed with up to 125,000 graphs. Next to the “Wǔ xíng,” the tomb also contained another version of the Lǎozǐ, among other texts. For excavation reports, see Húnán shěng bówùguǎn 湖南省博物館, Zhōngguó kēxué yuàn kǎogǔ yánjū suǒ 中國科學院考古研究所 1974; Húnán shěng bówùguǎn 湖南省博物館, Zhōngguó kēxué yuàn kǎogǔ yánjū suǒ 中國科學院考古研究所 1975; Chēn Sōngcháng – Fù Jìyuàn 1992, supplement. For comprehensive bibliographies on Mǎwángduī Three, see Zuò Sōngcháo 1989; Lì Měilù 1992, among others.

\(^6^4\) See, for instance, Xíng Wén 1998; Csikszentmihalyi 2004.

\(^6^5\) For the question of the stability of written philosophy in Warring States China, see Meyer 2008.

“four sprouts,” *si duān* 四端, viz. benevolence (*rén* 仁), righteousness (*yì* 義), ritual propriety (*lǐ* 禮), and wisdom (*zhì* 智), to which the “*Wǔ xíng*” adds sagacity (*shèng* 聖).

For the author(s) of the text, self-cultivation enables a nourishing of virtue that is vital to good rule. Targeting the ruler, the author(s) of the “*Wǔ xíng*” put forward that only by cultivating his virtue, his rule can become like that of King Wén 文. Despite this, self-cultivation in the “*Wǔ xíng*” is not limited to men of high social pedigree. Instead, the text maintains that becoming aware of one’s own abilities is central to processing moral cultivation; this is something that can be achieved by every human being.

Similar to the “*Zī yǐ*” discussed above, the “*Wǔ xíng*” is composed of highly distinct textual units, which William Boltz calls “building blocks.” These building blocks remain appreciably stable in the different instantiations of the text that we now know. In contrast to the “*Zī yǐ*,” however, these units are combined into one integrated system of thought, which I call the *wǔ xíng*-theory. The building blocks, of which the “*Wǔ xíng*” is composed, generate a web of cross-referential links, through which the notions introduced at one point in the text inform those of other units, thus connecting the various building blocks into one coherent vision. The “*Wǔ xíng*” hence does not only systematise elements torn out of their original contexts and used again in the text, but it also relates different aspects advanced in the text to one another and presents a homogenised picture of universally valid concepts. Only by identifying the various cross-referential links – both between the “*Wǔ xíng*” and foreign sources on the one hand, and those of the different levels within the text itself on the other hand – can a consistent train of thought be identified, viz. a fully developed and mature *wǔ xíng*-theory.

An example of a stable building block may be seen in the initial four bamboo strips of the manuscript:

*1* 五行

仁形於內謂之德之行,
不形於內謂之行。

義形於內謂之德之行,
不形於內謂之行。

禮形於內謂之德之行,
不形於內謂之□□□*w* [行■]。†

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67 See the *Mèngzǐ* 2/A/6 and 6/A/6.
68 See strip w29/12-13.
69 See Boltz 2005, pp. 58ff. I agree with Boltz that building blocks are characteristic of early Chinese texts. However, Boltz errs in concluding that this implies a “composite nature” that opposes “integral, structurally homogeneous texts” (*ibid.*, pp. 70ff.).
70 The crux indicates that the passage is corrupt. At this juncture, apparently three characters are missing, which is due to the fact that strip w2 breaks off after the character *zhī* 之 (OC *ʔt̚[ə]*).
As for the five aspects of conduct (wǔ xíng) [it holds true that]:
When benevolence is given shape internally, it is called “virtuous conduct,”

When it is not given shape internally, it is called “conduct” [only].
When righteousness is given shape internally, it is called “virtuous conduct,”

When it is not given shape internally, it is called “conduct” [only].
When ritual propriety is given shape internally, it is called “virtuous conduct,”

When it is not given shape internally, it is called “conduct” [only].
{When wisdom is given shape} internally, it is called “virtuous conduct,” †

When sagacity is given shape internally, it is called “virtuous conduct,”

When it is not given shape internally, it is [nevertheless] called “virtuous conduct.”

The first unit introduces the five central virtues of this text. These are benevolence (rén 仁), righteousness (yì 義), ritual propriety (lǐ 礼), wisdom (zhì 智), and sagacity (shèng 聰). The structure of this passage is highly repetitive. Only the last statement on sagacity deviates slightly from this consistent pattern.71

The present passage is not isolated. Instead, together with the subsequent three building blocks72 it forms a larger unit of meaning. On this higher level of meaning-construction, which for the ease of the argument I call “meaningful unit of the second order” – I consider the individual building block to be the meaningful unit of the first order – the five virtues are systematised according to the concepts of “five aspects of conduct” (wǔ xíng 五行) versus “four aspects of conduct” (sì xíng 四行), which the “Wǔ xíng” contextualises later on in the text. The former concept is what the author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” perceive to be the accomplished conduct of virtue (dé 德); the text calls this the “Way of Heaven.” The latter forms the conduct of goodness (shàn 善), the text labels the “Way of man.” Cru-

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71 The Mǎwángduī Three version of the “Wǔ xíng” lists these virtues in a different order, viz. rén, zhì, yì, lǐ, shèng (as compared to rén, yì, lǐ, zhì, shèng in the Guódiàn One version). For the fifth of the virtues, then, the Mǎwángduī Three version holds to the pattern and reads: “When [sagacity] is not given shape internally, it is called ‘conduct’ [only]” 不形於內謂之行 (172/18-173/2; not counting lost characters), whereas the Guódiàn One version states: “When [sagacity] is not given shape internally, it is [nevertheless] called ‘virtuous conduct’” 不形於內謂之德之行 w3/15-w4/11; not counting lost or repeated characters). At this point it cannot be determined whether this represents different sets of teachings, or simply reflects a scribal mistake in either of the two manuscripts.

72 Strips w4/12-w9/2.
cially, the conduct of virtue – the Way of Heaven – can only be aspired to (zhì 志), that of goodness – the Way of man – must be acted for (wèi 為).73 This meaningful unit composed of four building blocks and written on nine bamboo strips provides the recipient of the text with the termini technici of the theoretical framework of the wǔ xíng-theory. Yet, their meaning is not self-evident. Although the reader is now equipped with the fundamental framework of the wǔ xíng-theory, the passage still can only be appreciated after reading the entire “Wǔ xíng” as unfolded over its fifty bamboo strips. Only then, the different elements can be contextualised and the reader can make full sense of the tools named on the initial bamboo strips of the text.74

6. Strategies of Meaning-construction and the wǔ xíng-theory

Put briefly, the wǔ xíng-theory of self-cultivation with its application to the realm of politics and the exertion of power is developed around the concepts of clairaudience (cóng 聰) and clairvoyance (míng 明).75 Clairaudience and clairvoyance are the vital preconditions for self-cultivation. They facilitate the ability to see (jiàn 見) the capable and to hear (wén 聞) the way of the gentleman, without which self-cultivation is impossible. If the subject is not clairaudient or clairvoyant, neither sagacity (shèng 聖) nor wisdom (zhì 智) can be obtained.76 Yet, as is stated elsewhere in the text, sagacity and wisdom are necessary to develop all five virtues within, without which the overall goal of nourishing virtue (dé 德) is not possible.

73 Strips w7/17-w8/2 read: 善弗為無近德弗志不成 “As for goodness, when refraining from acting, there will be no approaching [it], [and as for] virtue, when refraining from aspiration, [it] will not be accomplished.”

74 It is impossible at this point to describe the composition of the “Wǔ xíng” and the strategies of meaning-construction as applied therein in detail. In its place, I wish to refer the interested reader to another study of mine (see Meyer 2008). In this article I can only highlight the greater arches of composition and meaning-construction. Detailed illustrations are given only exemplarily.

75 The proper translation of the concept míng 明 always causes considerable headache. For a detailed discussion of míng 明, see Maspero 1933.

76 w20/19-w21/9 reads:
不聰不明，不聖不智;
不仁，
[不仁] 不安，
[不安] 不樂，
[不樂] 無德。■

If [man] is neither clairaudient nor clairvoyant, [he can] neither be sagacious nor wise;
[This is because] if not wise, [man] will not be benevolent [either],
If not benevolent, [man] will not be at ease [either],
If not at ease, [man] will not be happy [either],
If not happy, [man] will lack virtue.
As mentioned, clairaudience is the ability to perceive the way of the gentleman (strips 26/7-27/14). The cognitive grasp, or awareness (zhī 知) of this ability is called “sagacity.” Developing awareness of an ability to perceive the way of the gentleman (jūnzǐ dào 君子道) implies that this knowledge can be turned into appropriate action. Applying this awareness to appropriate action is what the “Wǔ xíng” calls righteousness (yì 義). To advance righteousness at its proper times, finally, is what the “Wǔ xíng” defines as virtue (dé 德), the final result of self-cultivation.

In the subsequent building block (strips 27/15-28/14), the “Wǔ xíng” goes on to elaborate the function of clairvoyance in a similar way by equating clairvoyance with the ability to see the capable person. Parallel to the above case, the present building block makes clear that developing the awareness (zhī 知) of this is called wisdom (zhì 智). Being at ease with the awareness to see the capable is what the author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” understand as benevolence (rén 仁). Showing reverence for the capable, then, is ritual propriety (lǐ 礼). In other words, according to the logic of the “Wǔ xíng,” the virtues wisdom (智) and sagacity (聖) operate in a parallel way to each other: wisdom is crucial for developing benevolence (仁) and ritual propriety (禮), whereas sagacity develops righteousness (義) and, as a final result, virtue (德) – given the fact that we should consider rén 仁, yì 義, lǐ 礼, zhì 智, and shèng 聖 as virtues, it might be best to term dé 德 in this context “potency.” Apparently, the “Wǔ xíng” distinguishes between two types

77 w26/7-27/14 reads:
聞君子道，聰也。
聞而知之，聖也。
聖人知而( <天> )道也
知而行之，義也。
行之而時，德也。
To perceive the gentleman-Way, this is being “clairaudient.”
To hear and understand it, this is being “sagacious.”
[Only] the sagacious understands the Way of Heaven.
To understand and enact it, this is “righteousness.”
To enact it according to [its appropriate] time, this is “virtue.”

78 W27/15-28/14 reads:
見賢人，明也。
見而知之，智也。
知而安之，仁也。
安而敬之，禮也。
To see a worthy, this is being “clairvoyant.”
To see and understand that he [is a worthy], this is being “wise.”
To understand and be at ease with him, this is being “benevolent.”
To be at ease and show reverence to him, this is “ritual propriety.”
of virtues: primary or key virtues, as one may want to call them, viz. wisdom and sagacity; and secondary, that is, dependent virtues, namely benevolence, righteousness and ritual propriety. Thus, the evolving of benevolence, righteousness and ritual propriety relies fully on the capacity for wisdom and sagacity.

It may thus be seen that the wǔ xíng-theory arranges these five virtues in a hierarchy. Sagacity and wisdom are the key virtues that account for the formation of the remaining three virtues. They are vital to the process of self-cultivation. Sagacity takes the lead of the virtues that must be aspired to (zhì志); this row of virtues is connected to potency (dé德), the essential aspect for ruling the state and becoming just like King Wén and the ultimate result of accomplished self-cultivation. Sagacity must therefore be the foremost of the two key virtues. After the key virtues sagacity and wisdom rank benevolence and righteousness, which account for the formation of ritual propriety (lǐ禮). Righteousness, in turn, belongs to the virtues that must be aspired to, zhì志 (in contrast to those that can be acted for, wèi為, and lead to goodness, shàn善). As such, it ranks higher than benevolence. Accordingly, the wǔ xíng-theory presents a hierarchy of virtues as follows: sagacity, wisdom; followed by righteousness, benevolence, and lastly ritual propriety. Based on the hierarchy of virtues and the distinction between what must be aspired to (zhì志), in contrary to that what can be acted for (wèi為), it becomes clear that the “Wǔ xíng” defends the following logic: sagacity takes the lead in the formation of righteousness; together with the appropriate understanding (zhī知), it ultimately leads to potency. Potency equals the “Way of Heaven.” Wisdom, for its part, takes the lead in the formation of benevolence and ritual propriety; together with the appropriate understanding, this ultimately leads to goodness. Goodness equals the “Way of man.” Whereas the Way of Heaven describes a state of sentiment, the Way of man describes concrete affairs.

It should be noted, however, that if lacking either of these virtues, sagacity cannot be developed either. Despite this, as discussed, sagacity takes the lead in the formation of other virtues and as such is the crucial factor in the entire process of self-cultivation. The wǔ xíng-theory thus expounds an idea of self-cultivation that takes circular form and in which the final result of self-cultivation is also its

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79 See Meyer 2008, p. 151.
80 Strip w30.
81 Strip w31/12-w32/4 reads:

仁義，禮所由生也，
四行之所和也。
和，[同]則同，
[同]則善。

Benevolence and righteousness, that is what ritual propriety derives from, And it is that by which the four [aspects] of conduct are harmonised. [If] harmonized, "[同] then they will be in congruence, [if] in congruence, then there will be goodness.
point of initiation. Inspired by David S. Nivison, I want to call this the “paradox of self-cultivation.” The paradox of self-cultivation hence entails that, for the individual, to realise any of the five virtues in turn depends on the accomplished cultivation of the other virtues – and vice versa. The way out of this paradox, then, lies in a human’s awareness (zhī 知) of the innate facility to bear the five virtues within.

The author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” apply various exegetic strategies – be it to outside sources or to what I want to call text-immanent exegetic efforts – to elucidate this rather complicated theory of self-cultivation, which defends the position that self-cultivation is only possible when a person is already sagacious and wise and is hence brought to realisation only due to awareness (zhī 知) of one’s innate facility to bear the five virtues within. Applying exegetic strategies to outside sources means that the author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” tear apparently generally known concepts out of their original contexts and then systematise and correlate them so that they can be received in the line of argument advanced in the “Wǔ xíng.” For the time being, I want to call these efforts “exegetic processes of the first order.” Yet, similar efforts are also processed on other levels of the text. That means that some parts of the text dwell on concepts from outside sources, for instance taken from the Odes, but the author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” also consider it necessary to explicate the descriptive tools that discuss these concepts at other points in the “Wǔ xíng”; and these explications of the descriptive tools that refer to the outside sources may even find substantiation in again other parts of the text. I call these text-immanent endeavours “exegetic processes of the second order.” This whole process is not as straightforward as it might seem because the different levels of exegetic efforts do not necessarily connect directly with each other. Even more importantly, different exegetic processes of the second order are mutually intertwined, so it is not always clear in how far different concepts relate to each other. Reading the “Wǔ xíng” hence implies that one always has to follow two different lines of argument-processing: firstly, a steady and linear development of the wǔ xíng-theory, and secondly, recurrent references to earlier passages of the text.

The first instance in which the author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” refer to the Odes considers the triangular relationship of the virtues of benevolence (rén 仁), wisdom (zhì 智) and sagacity (shèng 帝) respectively. It is composed of two building blocks. Together, these form a higher meaningful unit of the second order. The passage in question connects directly to the initial nine bamboo strips of the text. It runs over three and a half bamboo strips:

不仁，思不能清，
不智，思不能長；


From strip w9/3-w12/17.
If not benevolent, [your] thinking cannot be clear, If not wise, [your] thinking cannot grow. If neither benevolent nor wise, “while not yet having seen a gentleman,” “[My] sorrowful heart” w10 cannot be “disturbed.” “Until [I] have seen” the gentleman, [my] “heart” will not be “pleased.”85 “Let me have seen him, let me have met him, and my heart will then w11 {be pleased}.” †

{That is} what this [line] is about. †

The two building blocks are parallel almost in their entirety, though the first building block is somewhat longer. Whereas the first building block dwells on the relation between benevolence (rén 仁) and wisdom (zhì 智) for seeing the gentleman, the second building block refers to the relation between benevolence and sagacity (shèng 聖). By looking at the structure and the relation of the two building blocks

84 The three lines “不見君子，憂心不能忡忡” quote the ode “Shàoánán: Cǎochóng” 召南·草蟲 (“Grasshoppers,” Máo 14).

85 As Csikszentmihalyi (2004, p. 283) adds, there are numerous phrases of wèi jiàn jūnzi “while I have not yet seen a gentleman” throughout the Odes. When a “before/after” structure is used, the Gentleman’s effect on others is emphasised [ibid.].

86 This passage appears in “Xiǎoyá: Chū jū” 小雅·出車 (Presenting Chariots, Máo 168): 未見君子憂心忡忡 既見君子我心則降 “when I have not yet seen my lord, my grieved heart is agitated. Let me have seen my lord, and my heart will then calm down” (after Karlgren 1950, p. 113; adapted); “Shàoánán: Cǎochóng” 召南·草蟲 (“Grasshoppers,” Máo 14): 未見君子憂心忡忡 既見君子我心則降 “when I have not yet seen my lord, my grieved heart is agitated. Let me have seen my lord, and my heart will then calm down” (after Karlgren 1950, p. 9; adapted).
to one another, we gain useful insight into the techniques by which the author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” integrate the Odes into the text proper.

The unit under review most likely refers to the odes known today as “Cǎo-chóng” 草蟲 (Grasshopper)87 and “Chū jū” 出車 (Presenting the Chariots),88 both of which describe a desperate need to see the gentleman (jūnzǐ 君子) to calm a state of agitation.89 At first glance, it might seem that the two building blocks do not constitute a coherent unit, as the corresponding idea of the first building block appears to be closed with the formula: “{That is} what this [ode] is about.”90 Yet, when looking at other passages in the “Wǔ xíng,” it becomes clear that this instance may be explained differently. Throughout the text, the author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” combine parallel (or nearly parallel) passages with each other by interweaving them with a structurally alien element. This can appear on all levels of the text, that is, the structurally alien element may appear within an otherwise entirely parallel building block; between two otherwise parallel building blocks, which are thus combined into a larger meaningful unit of the second order; or between two larger otherwise parallel meaningful and units, which thus form a meaningful unit of third order (see figure 1, p. 76).91

As can be judged from the many occurrences of this feature in the “Wǔ xíng,” such a structurally alien element that cuts right through an otherwise homogeneous unit is used as a conscious device that always carries the main idea of the passage it is interwoven with.92

87 Máo 14.
88 Máo 168.
89 Note in this context a certain disparity between texts and interpretations of the Odes. On the one hand, we possess both the text of the Máo version of Odes and the correlating set of interpretations for the same, which largely represents one exegetical tradition available in Hàn times. On the other hand, we know from the “Kǒngzǐ shǐ lùn” (Mǎ Chéngyuán 2001, vol. 1, pp. 11-41, 119-168) that in the Warring States period there existed a radically different set of interpretations of the Odes. The commentary attached to the Mǎwángdū Three instantiation of the “Wǔ xíng” furthermore suggests that by 168 B.C. (the date when the silk manuscript was written at its latest) the interpretation of Odes as provided by the “Kǒngzǐ shǐ lùn” was still circulating. Given that the set of interpretation as provided by the external commentary of the Mǎwángdū Three “Wǔ xíng” despite the chronological difference of more than ca. 150 years is nevertheless in congruence with the particular reading as provided by the “Kǒngzǐ shǐ lùn,” we might assume that this approach to the Odes must have been decidedly prominent before it was probably replaced by the Máo interpretation (note the rather late advancement of the Máo tradition; see Riegel 2001, p. 100). So, whereas excavated materials inform us about the interpretation of the Odes in the Warring States period, we still largely miss its text. We have to keep this discrepancy in mind when dealing with the Odes today. I thank Martin Kern for describing this deficiency in his seminal lecture “Reading the Guójīng, Reading the ‘Kǒngzǐ shǐ lùn’,” Münster, Germany (Institut für Ostasienkunde, 12 July 2006). For a brief summary of his lecture, see Kern 2006.
90 [夫]此之謂□□ [也].
91 Compare the meaningful unit of the first order (building block) and of the second order above.
92 See Meyer 2008, chap. 4.
Understanding this as an element used intentionally in the “Wǔ xíng” for pattern-
ing thought, we recognise that the two building blocks under review together
form a larger meaningful unit of the second order. Compared to a mere linear
reading of the passage under review, this new reading helps to attain a more pre-
cise understanding as for how the passage should be demarcated, its stability, and
also its principal concern. As described, the two building blocks display a high
degree of textual overlap. The latter building block basically repeats the formula
of the former; only that it substitutes the discussion of wisdom (zhì) with that of
sagacity (shèng). This suggests a correlation of the two pairs. Only the last three
lines of the first of the two building blocks do not appear in the second building
block. These lines that cut right through an otherwise uniform pattern both signal
and formulate the fundamental ideas of a passage. Henceforth, I shall refer to this
device as “principal insertion.” The principal insertion makes clear that the stress
of the present unit lies in the fact that seeing the accomplished results in pleasure.
This notion is a central concern of the entire “Wǔ xíng” and reoccurs throughout
the text.

Feeling joy when seeing the accomplished is not an end in itself. The “Wǔ xíng”
stresses that it is the basic precondition for man to complete his process of self-
cultivation and to nourish potency (dé 德). This notion is phrased consistently
throughout the text as a chain argument consisting of a stable cluster of mutually
resonating concepts. This chain reads as follows:

93 I have highlighted this with a dashed rectangle.
If not given X, [you] will not be at ease,
If not at ease, [you] will not be happy,
If not happy, [you] will lack virtue (Taken from the building block w7/16-w9/2).

This chain of mutually resonating ideas recurs consistently throughout the “Wù xíng.” Given the enigmatic nature of this chain and its corresponding concepts, it is reasonable to assume that it reflects some sort of quotation from a commonly known source at the time. The previous passage quoting the Odes therefore does not appear out of the blue. Instead, it takes up a notion that was common in contemporary intellectual circles. By implication, the principal insertion just mentioned does more than just establish the correlation between wisdom (zhì) and sagacity (shèng) by combining two building blocks into a meaningful system and formulating the principle concern of the unit under review – remember that wisdom (zhì) and sagacity (shèng) are key virtues in the development of the dependent virtues. It also contextualises another enigmatic but apparently commonly known concept that refers to feelings necessary for cultivating one’s own potency (dé).

This shows quite plainly the highly integrated use of quotations in the “Wù xíng.” The line quoted from the Odes is not only explicated, but the reference to the ode at this point also correlates the two main concepts of the text, wisdom and sagacity, in structural terms to indicate their relatedness in the wù xíng-theory. As the “Wù xíng” integrates Odes with the text proper, there can be no doubt that it comments on the Odes, as has already been highlighted by Martin Kern.94 Note, however, that the central claim of this unit is itself phrased with lines from the Odes and at the same time refers to another – otherwise enigmatic – concept in the text. Thus, the “Wù xíng” does not only explicate Odes; Odes in turn also explicate the philosophical position of the “Wù xíng” proper. The two texts complement one another on different levels and in highly intricate ways.

As a next step, the “Wù xíng” further clarifies concepts mentioned in the meaningful unit just reviewed. The passage in question spans three building blocks, or just over three bamboo strips.95 Three argumentative chains neatly explain the precise meaning of wisdom (zhì 智), sagacity (shèng 聰), and their relation to benevolence (rén 仁) by highlighting the correlation of “clear thoughts” with benevolence, that of “growing thoughts” with wisdom, and finally, the correlation of “easy thoughts” with sagacity.96

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94 See Kern 2005b.
95 Strip w12/9 through strip w16/2.
96 Referring to the unit w9/3-w12/18 above.
The thinking of the benevolent one is clear.
[Only if thinking] is clear, \( w^{13} \) [Man] will be investigating,
[Only] if investigating, [Man] will be at ease,
[Only] if at ease, [Man] will be gentle,
[Only] if gentle, [Man] will be joyful,
[Only] if joyful, [Man] will [feel] closeness,
[Only] if feeling closeness, [Man] will be intimate,
[Only] if intimate, [Man] will be caring,
[Only] if caring, [Man] will have jade-like coloration, 97
[Only] if having jade-like coloration, [Man] will be given shape,
[Only] if given shape, [Man] will be benevolent.

w14 The thinking of the wise one is growing,
[Only if thinking] grows, [it] will be [at one’s] command,
[Only if it is at one’s] command, [Man] will not forget,
[Only] if not forgetting, [Man] will be clairvoyant,
[Only] if clairvoyant, [Man] will see the worthy,
[Only] if seeing the worthy, [Man] will be of a jade-like coloration,
[Only] if of a jade-like coloration, [Man] will be given shape,
[Only] if given shape, w15 [Man] it will be wise.

The thinking of the sagacious one is easy.
[Only if thinking] is easy, [it can] be given shape;
[Only] if given shape, [Man] will not forget,
[Only] if not forgetting, [Man] will be clairaudient,
[Only] if clairaudient, [Man] will hear the way of the gentleman,
[Only] if hearing the way of the gentleman, [Man] will have a jade-like tone,
[Only] if having a jade-like tone, [Man] will be given shape,
[Only] if given shape, w16 [Man] will be sagacious.

Together these three building blocks constitute one meaningful unit of the second order. At this point, it is interesting to see that the formal structure of a stable unit in a text like the “Wǔ xíng,” viz. a written philosophical text that correlates various building blocks into a structurally coherent vision (and as such is different from a text like the “Zǐ yì”), is clearly detached from its fixation on a material carrier, that is, bamboo strips. The number of graphs of each of the three argumentative chains closely corresponds to that of the average bamboo strip from the “Wǔ xíng.” This would have made it easy to place each string (building block) on one strip each, but in fact none of these building blocks match such a strip. We thus see that, contrary to conventional assumptions, there existed no correlation between formal structure and physical carrier. 98 For the addressee of a text


98 Dissimilar instances can only be made out for texts with isolated “units of thought,” such as the “Zǐ yì” discussed above. For instance, the fragmentary Shānggūdiān manuscript of the Odes (to which I have referred above) seems to record each ode on one individual strip respectively. Edward Shaughnessy’s (re-)construction of the “source text available to the editor of the Lǐ jì,” that is, the “source text available to the editor of the Lǐ jì,” is similarly derived from such observations. In his study, Shaughnessy insists that in this “source text,” each building block (Shaughnessy terms this “pericope”) must have been written on one individual bamboo strip respectively. Shaughnessy also conjectures that the pictured “source text” did not record more than 21 to 24 characters per strip. For the full account of his argument, see id. 2006, pp. 64-70. For an account of the attempt to explain stable textual units from the materiality of their physical carrier,
of this type, the physical appearance of an argument (and of the text overall) had no impact on its comprehensibility. Instead, rhythm was the medium that mattered.

It should be noted that although the unit under review sets out to explicate individual lines from a previous unit of the “Wǔ xíng,” the present passage remains far from comprehensible. The references to “jade-like coloration” (yù sè 玉色) and “jade-like tone” (yù yīn 玉音), especially, prove enigmatic here. It is on the text-immanent exegetic process of the second order that the “Wǔ xíng” clarifies these concepts. We must then assume that the concepts “jade-like coloration” (yù sè) and “jade-like tone” (yù yīn) are similarly taken from another source than the “Wǔ xíng” itself.99

Like the stable chain of mutually resonating correspondences referred to above,100 the concepts “jade-like coloration” (yù sè) and “jade-like tone” (yù yīn) appear at various points throughout the “Wǔ xíng.” It is some two bamboo strips after they are first mentioned that the “Wǔ xíng” contextualises the notion of “jade-like coloration” or “tone” in a meaningful unit (of the third order) of altogether four building blocks – all of which dwell on the notion of the gentleman and are related by the catchword jūnzǐ 君子:101

「淑人君子，其儀一」也。
能為一，然後能為君子。
慎其獨也。
“The polite man, the gentleman, unified he is in his deportment.”
[Only if he] is able to act for the unified, thereafter [he] can make himself into a gentleman.
[The gentleman] attends to his loneliness.

99 This is corroborated by the fact that the concepts “jade-like coloration” and “jade-like tone,” but also the “sound of bronze bells” (jīn shēng 金聲), which we will encounter below, also appear repeatedly in received texts, such as the Lǐ jì 禮記 or the Shàngshū 尚書. These concepts, it seems, once had a stately connotation and were used as attributes related to accomplished rulers.

100 [不 X]不安，
[不安]不樂，
[不樂]無德。
If not given X, [you] will not be at ease,
If not at ease, [you] will not be happy,
If not happy, [you] will lack virtue.

101 This unit of the second order runs from strip w16/3-w20/17, not counting the graphs that are no longer extant on the strips and that had to be reconstructed.
“I looked after her yet I could not see her,” and my tears fell like rain.”

[Only if] able to “disarray the wings,” [Man] is capable of utmost grieving.

The gentleman attends to his {being alone}.

君子之為善也,
有與始,有與終也。

君子之為德也,
有與始,無與終也。

As for the gentleman in his acting for goodness, there is [always something] with which [he] begins, [and something] with which [he] ends.

As for the gentleman in his acting for virtue, {there is [always something] with which [he] begins, but there is nothing with which} [he] ends.  

金聲而玉振之，有德者也。

金聲善也;
玉音聖也。
善，人道也;
德，天道也。

唯有德者,
然後能金聲而玉振之。

“Bronze [bells] may sound, but it is through jade [stones] that resonate them,” this is a person possessing virtue.

The “sounding of bronze [bells]” is goodness;
The “tone of jade” is sagaciousness.

Virtue, this is the {Way of} Heaven.  

[This is why] only if there is a person of virtue, thereafter it can be that “bronze [bells] sound, but it is through jade [stones] that ring them.”

The last two building blocks of this unit together constitute one meaningful unit of the second order. By referring to the distinction between goodness (shàn) and potency (dé) in connection with the gentleman (jūnzǐ), this unit of the second order brings together various concepts that so far have been left inexplicit and merges them in a central idea of the “Wǔ xíng.” This can be shown through more careful analysis of this unit:

1a [君] 子之為善也,
1b 有與始,有與終也。
2a 君子之為德也,
2b 有與始,無與終也。

102 The question is whether or not there is something with which he starts, or maybe “nothing with which he starts and nothing with which he ends,” since he acts according to the Way of Heaven, which is imposed on him from Heaven. The Mǎwángduī version of this sequence reads: 君子之為善也有與始也無與終也君子之為德也有與始也無與終也 [MWD 8.1-2]. The reconstruction of the present passage follows this.

103 This reading is largely influenced by Csikszentmihalyi 2004, pp. 178ff.
The first building block consists of two parallel strings, in which the second and fourth lines display a slight variation to specify the concepts used. The second building block contains two main elements: a technical introductory line, whose origin is unclear, and a referential explication of the introductory statement. The first subset of the introductory line also appears in the *Mēngzī*. From the self-contained and enigmatic nature of this subset and from the way in which the “Wū xíng” explicates its relevant references can we be fairly sure that it did not generate in the “Wǔ xíng” itself, but, as so many other elements, was taken from another source or was referring to a commonly known concept. Otherwise such an enigmatic statement could not have served as an authoritative peg for the present building block, and the author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” – like those of the *Mēngzī* – had seen no need to elaborate this line. The remaining part of this building block, in which the explanation of the introductory line of – to us – unknown origin is given, then, is phrased as an “overlapping structure,” which is almost entirely made up of elements (or notions) taken from other building blocks of the

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104 The *Mēngzī* 5/B/1 reads: *Kǒngzî is said to have ‘gathered great achievements’; ‘gathering great achievements’ is a ‘bronze bell sounding and a jade stone ringing it’. A ‘bronze bell sounding’ is the beginning of an inherent pattern, the ‘ringing it with a jade stone’ is the end of an inherent pattern. Beginning an inherent pattern is a matter of the wise; ending an inherent pattern is the matter of the sagacious."

105 Yet, as compared with the “Wǔ xíng,” the *Mēngzī* offers a different interpretation of this sequence. This suggests that the two texts were copying a different, that is, a third source; also, they must have followed different scholastic traditions prescribing how to understand this reference. In any case, this instance shows that the two texts (i.e., the “Wǔ xíng” and the *Mēngzī*) did not receive this quote from each other, nor did it originate in either of these texts. Compare this line with the extant “Xiǎo yà: Bái jū” 小雅:白驹 (Máo 186): 其人如玉毋金玉爾音 “that man is like jade; do not treat like gold and jade your sounds” (Karlgren 1950, p. 129), which, however, is situated in another context and has been understood quite differently.

106 Cf. Meyer (2005) [2006] for a more extensive account of overlapping structure. Put briefly, overlapping structure describes a parallel AB-AB-C pattern of argument construction – or to be more precise, an 1AB 2AB C-scheme – of alternating concepts. The second AB-group (2AB) thereby fulfills two functions. In the first instance, it furthers the information given in the first AB group (1AB), and in the second, it continues the argument, which then is concluded by the final component C. The pattern of an overlapping structure appears throughout philosophical texts (or texts with a persuading purpose) and is generally used whenever definitions of terms or concepts are to be generated.
“Wǔ xíng.” The building block under review is therefore a collage composed of a quote from a foreign source that is explicated by correlating it to elements from other building blocks of the “Wǔ xíng” proper, viz. the concepts of goodness and sagacity that are so central to the wǔ xíng-theory.

The way the building block just analysed rephrases the introductory statement once more corroborates the assumption that this statement must be a direct quotation. In line 1B, the author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” replace the word yīn 音 “sound” for zhèn 振 – here: “to ring” – (written as [晨] in the text; see Graphic 4), so that the two are given equal structural significance and either can be substituted for the other. Thus, when quoting shared cultural knowledge, the author(s) reproduce the original wording. Only in the explanatory parallelism can the concepts used be paraphrased. The concluding element (here indicated with C), then, reproduces the phraseology of the cryptic opening line (zhèn zhī 振之) because it is assumed that the recipient of the text will now understand the phrase in question through its parallelism. The same can also be said of for the pair sagacity (shèng 聖) and potency (dé 德). The first AB-group of the second building block has "sagacity" where – according to the parallelism of the present unit – we should expect "potency." Again, this suggests the interchangeability of these concepts. The present passage thus makes clear that being sagacious is the full realisation of potency. Lastly, the building block under review is more than just the exegetic effort to contextualise the authoritative quote in accordance with the philosophy of the “Wǔ xíng.” Like the extracts from the Odes, the line quoted in the present building block is not only to be expounded in the “Wǔ xíng,” but it also formulates a central insight in the text. Parallel to the sound of bronze, which is brought about through jade stones, goodness can only be brought about through the presence of the sagacious one – be it by his mere example of virtuous conduct or through direct acts of initiation; the “Wǔ xíng” remains silent about this matter. The present unit thus draws to a close a central insight of the “Wǔ xíng.”

I want to close this brief analysis of strategies of meaning-construction in the “Wǔ xíng” by noting that the author(s) of the text go much further than merely elaborating specific elements of authoritative value in line with the wǔ xíng-theory. The whole theory developed around the five types of conduct (wǔ xíng 五行) itself seems to be the “work up” of a well known tradition. The five virtues, benevolence (rén 仁), righteousness (yì 義), ritual propriety (lǐ 禮) as well as

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107 The 1AB-group refers to the third meaningful unit of the second order (strips w12/9-w16/2; quoted above), but also to the technical introduction of unknown origin. The 2AB-group is directly taken from the first meaningful unit of the second order (strips w4/12-w5/6).

108 Otherwise the introductory statement of this building block also had to read jīn shēng ér yù yīn 金聲而玉音 – instead of zhèn 振 – zhī 之; or the explaining parallelism had to read zhèn 振 instead of yīn 音.

109 Compare this with the notion expressed in the Mèngzǐ 6/A/7.
wisdom (zhì 智) and sagacity (shèng 聰), are dealt with in a similar fashion, in which the author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” also single out lines from the “original syntax of the poem”\(^{110}\) when quoting Odes, that is, by tearing the lines out of context and summarising them systematically as ideas and abstracted objects of knowledge. Just like the notions that were part of a common cultural capacity of contemporary elite groups, such as concepts like “jade-like tone” (yù yīn 玉音), pleasure at seeing the accomplished, “clear thoughts,” “goodness,” “potency,” the “Way of Heaven,” among others, the author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” also contextualise, correlate, and systematise the concepts benevolence, righteousness, ritual propriety, wisdom, and sagacity in the wǔ xíng-theory and so provide universally valid – but distinctive – formulae for these notions. Having provided a specific reading for each of the five virtues respectively, these virtues as a group can now be understood as a “system,” in which each of these concepts can be received in a meaningful way. From a meaningful unit of the second order that spans five and a half bamboo strips\(^{111}\) and is composed of three building blocks, we then see that the author(s) of the “Wǔ xíng” felt the urge to explicate the precise meaning of the dependent virtues, after the importance of the key virtues had already been defined in the text:

顏色容貌溫, 愧也。

以其中心與人交, 悅也。

中心悅 於兄弟, 威也。

威而信之, 親；

[親] 而篤之, 愛也。

愛父, 其繼愛人, 仁也。

When facial coloration, look, manner and appearance are gentle, this is feeling affection.

When using the inner mind when interacting with others, this is joy.

When the joy of inner mind is transferred \(^{w33}\) onto elder and younger brothers, this is closeness.

Feeling closeness and trusting in it, that is intimacy;

Feeling intimacy and being genuine about it, that is caring.

Caring for [one's] father, and, secondarily to this, caring for other people, that is benevolence.

中心 辯然而正行之, 直也。

直而遂之, 遲也。

遟而不畏強禦, 果也。

不 \(^{w35}\) 以小道害大道, 簡也。

有大罪而大誅之, 行也。

貴[貴], 其等尊賢, 義也。†

\(^{110}\) Havelock 1963, p. 218.

\(^{111}\) These run from strip w32/5 through w37/15.
When the inner mind \(_{34}\) discriminates [right from wrong] and rightly enacts this, that is uprightness.

[Being] upright and displaying this, that is resistance.

[Being] resistant and not fearing the strong and powerful, that is fruition.\(^{112}\)

When one does not \(_{35}\) harm the great way with the petty ways, that is grave demeanour.

When there is a serious crime, and it is punished severely, that is acting out [law properly].

When one honours the noble, and venerates the worthy according to his ranks, that is righteousness.\(^{113}\)

\(\_{36}\) 原外心與人交，遠也。
遠而莊之，敬也。
敬而不懼，嚴也。\(^{†}\)
嚴而畏之，尊也。
尊而不驕，恭也。
恭而博交，禮也。

The passage just quoted refers directly to another meaningful unit of second order, in which the dependent virtues benevolence, righteousness, and ritual propriety are introduced for the first time, but are not yet explained.\(^{114}\) The present unit

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\(^{112}\) That means: “having decision and daring to carry it out.” Páng Pú notes that this combination also occurs in the “Dàyǎ: Zhēng mín” 大雅: 烝民 (Máo 110): 不侮矜寡不畏彊禦 “[Zhōngshān Fǔ], he did not intimidate the widows and the poor, and did not fear the strong and powerful.”

\(^{113}\) This is a delicate passage. Ikeda Tomohisa 池田知久 (2003, pp. 164ff.) explains graph \(\_{35/20}\) (zhǐ
t) as \(\text{寺}cì\) (secondarily); this would make this sentence read: \(\text{貴}\) [貴],其次尊賢,義也 “when one honours the noble, and, secondarily, venerates the worthy, that is righteousness.” This would display a clear preference for the nobility rather than the worthy. The reading which follows the editors of Húběi shēng Jīngmén shì bówúguǎn (1998) suggests instead that honouring the worthy is just equal with venerating the worthy as to his level. Hence, in the search for appropriate men, the ruler is not urged to choose man of high social standing.

\(^{114}\) Strips w21/10-w22/18 read:
不慟不悅。

[不悅]不戚,
[不戚]不親,
[不親]不愛,
[不愛]不仁。
thus reads as an exegetical attempt to explore the conceptual meaning of these virtues and thus to generate universally valid concepts. See the following figure:

Figure 3: “Internal commentary” between two meaningful units of the second order
The **Wǔ xīng**-theory – and thus the “**Wǔ xīng**” –, we must assume, was developed in an environment in which the significance of these virtues when considered as a group was a subject of debate. Just as the “**Wǔ xīng**” defines how to read particular lines from the Odes and renders them abstract concepts that are then applied in the **Wǔ xīng**-theory, it also establishes a systematic reading for the five virtues **in toto**. Isolating these virtues from “original” contexts, in which understanding of how these concepts were related must have become blurred over time, the author(s) of the “**Wǔ xīng**” establish a referential setting in which the processes of how these concepts cohered as a group can be understood. The “**Wǔ xīng**” as a whole does not only reflect the exegetic endeavour to make sense of the enigmatic process of how these concepts cohered systematically by alienating them from authoritative traditions and processing sophisticated strategies to conceptualise these, but also reflects the exegetic endeavour to “work up” systematically shared **rú**-virtues that were common in mid to late Warring States Period élite circles.

### 7. Conclusion

Meaning-construction in early Chinese philosophy, in principle, follows two different strategies. On the one hand, meaning is constructed by stringing together various statements of authoritative value and thus locating the philosophical endeavour outside the text proper, namely the “textual communities” in which these quotes were received meaningfully. Texts like these functioned as a platform for oral communication on the basis of the statements advanced and derived their importance, as well as long-term stability, from the authoritative quality of their statements. Even though these texts provide no explicit reading for the statements they advance, we can be fairly sure that, as different palaeographic sources suggest, the strict exegetic – but oral – framework of the textual communities around these texts guarded both the proper interpretation of these and the stability of the texts themselves. Because meaning-construction relied on the authoritative nature of the statements advanced in these texts, I call these texts “authority-based.” The “**Zǐ yī**” proves representative of this ideal type of text. Although written down at some point, texts of this type must have been used – and also generated – in a predominantly oral environment.

Another way of constructing meaning was to establish all the relevant references within the text proper and thus to relocate the philosophical endeavour from the sources quoted to the text itself. Texts of this type developed sophisticated
referential – and argumentative – webs that replaced the oral commentator of the authority-based text. These webs which integrate different concepts of the text into a coherent vision account for the fact that a text like the “Wǔ xíng” becomes a self-contained entity. Because these texts could not rely on authority to construct meaning, but, instead, expounded their philosophy explicitly as a text, I call this type of text “argument-based.” “Argument” in this context should thus not be understood as a technique of proof, such as logic deduction or syllogism, but rather as a formal pattern of argumentative force. The “Wǔ xíng” proves representative of this ideal type of text. The highly layered nature of these texts and their sophisticated system of cross-referential webs furthermore suggest that the texts were composed in writing. Various references to outside sources, torn out of context, systematised and homogenised in line with the argument developed, corroborate this assumption. The diverse palaeographic texts from the tomb Guǒdiàn One that can be reconstructed meaningfully all fall into either of the two ideal types of meaning-construction as described in this study.

This article bases its argument on representative examples from the two texts in question, discussing one unit of thought for the “Zī yī,” and one string of references for the “Wǔ xíng.” This selection was not a necessary one. Nearly every unit of thought of the “Zī yī” constructs meaning as described in this study. Every building block of the “Wǔ xíng” also connects to further argumentative strings, which are conjoined at some point in the text. In view of that, viz. a text that develops different argumentative strings that, in concert, expound one coherent vision, the “Wǔ xíng” may justifiably be termed a “closed” philosophical theory. This is also substantiated by the “Wǔ xíng” as excavated from Tomb Mǎwángduī Three. Although these two instantiations of the wǔ xíng-theory differ in some respects, it can be noted that the two texts display stable meaningful units of the second and third order and contain a stable system of cross-referential links. The differences in the two manifestations of the “Wǔ xíng” simply reflect two instances of communicating the very same idea in written, but unfixed, form.

The issue remains, then, as to why a text like the “Wǔ xíng” did not generate a narrative such as that advanced in received texts like the Xǔnzǐ, but instead organises thought through a complicated system that links individual building blocks into larger meaningful units of the second and third order – and finally into the text overall. This question can be answered in two ways. In the first instance, one might point to the relatively new development of committing thought to writing. Although composed in writing, the basic constituent of the “Wǔ xíng” remains the oral stock phrase and reference to the Odes which also represent an oral corpus of songs.116 The brief units of these had to be integrated into larger

115 The main difference between these two manifestations of the wǔ xíng-theory largely lies in the converse arrangement of the sixth and seventh meaningful unit of the second order (w22/18 through w32/4; w32/5 through w37/15). For a detailed discussion of this observation, see Meyer 2008, chap. 4.

wholes, but each unit still remained a highly distinctive element that had been remembered once as a unit of thought. In line with this, one could say that a text like the “Wǔ xíng,” despite the elaborate philosophical model it advances, did not yet develop prose-like narratives. It would then represent an early stage of text development. Argumentative texts, such as the “Zhōng xīn zhī dào,” or the “Lǔ Mùgōng wèn Zìsī” from Guòdiàn One, or other brief but fully self-contained argumentative units such as anthologised in the Shànghǎi collection of Chǔ manuscripts, however, illustrate that in the Warring States period, succinct argumentative units were already used individually as demonstrations of certain politico-philosophical positions. This makes it rather unlikely that the formal structure of the “Wǔ xíng” simply results from an early date of text-composition.

Another way of dealing with this question, and neglecting such a teleological model of text, would be to ascribe this style of composition to a strategy consciously chosen by the author(s) of the text to expound their theory of self-cultivation. Each of the various meaningful units of the second order can be identified as agencies of one idea of the wǔ xíng-theory overall. Different meaningful units of the second order are connected through subtle cross-references. By making allusions which explain other parts of the text, the different units communicate with each other. This renders it impossible to consider any of these units in isolation since each of these needs references to other elements of the text to be fully meaningful. By implication, mirroring the composition of the text, the wǔ xíng-theory of self-cultivation expounds the idea that the elements of self-cultivation must be in constant interplay with one another. Self-cultivation depends on a person being sagacious and wise, which, as we have seen, already constitutes the full realisation of one’s potency (dé 德), and thus the final result of self-cultivation. Just like the theory of self-cultivation, the composition of the “Wǔ xíng” thus takes on a circular form, in which the final result is also the starting point. If lacking only one of the virtues described, self-cultivation fails. The innate capacity of each of these virtues, however, fully depends on the innate realisation of the other virtues. This “paradox of self-cultivation,” solved only by the awareness (zhī 知) of one’s innate capacity, is thus also fully expressed on the compositional level of the text, in which none of the agencies of the wǔ xíng-theory could be developed without reference to the other elements of the text. The structure of composition is thus to be explained as a formal device that, mirroring the wǔ xíng-theory itself, compounds the thought central to this text.

8. Bibliography


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書寫意義: 古代哲學的文意建構之方法

麥笛

這篇文章以戰國郭店楚墓出土的哲學文獻（緇衣）和（五行）中不同的表達方式作為出發點，論述戰國哲學文獻的文意建構的方法、戰國書寫概況、戰國書寫材料及其對中國古代哲學的影響。