

***Zhong* (Centrality):
An Everlasting Subject of Chinese Discourse**

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Abstract

Before the Chinese elite became obsessed with the concept of the *Dao*, what preoccupied their thoughts about the fundamental principle of the universe? The answer can be found in the discourse on the *Zhong* (centrality), which is crucial to understanding early intellectual, spiritual, and moral discourse as well as the growth of a specific concern for the *Dao* as the very centrality of the Chinese spiritual and moral universe. Based on a close analysis of the classical books of the Chinese and relevant works of the pre-*Qin* thinkers, this essay discusses the early existence of a powerful centrality-discourse in China, and explores its far-reaching influences. Various centrality-oriented patterns of expressions that contributed to constructing the deeply ingrained centrality myths are identified and examined.

Introduction

In very remote antiquity when the “*Dao*” (the Way) of Heaven had not yet caught the attention of the Chinese elite, what predominated their thoughts about the ultimate principles of spirituality and morality? The answer to this long-neglected question can be found in the early Chinese discourse on the *Zhong* (centrality). This form of discourse can be thought of as “*Zhong*-discourse” or “centrality-discourse,” which simultaneously points to a discourse that addresses the centrality of the universe, and to the one that assumes a central position in Chinese discursive practices.

This essay will argue the existence of this *Zhong*-discourse in China, and then to explore its early development as the key to understanding Chinese discursive practices. The most primal form of this discourse is beyond direct investigation, with its written records lost to the passage of time. A careful examination of the surviving records of early Chinese discourse, however, suggests that “the *Zhong*” was the major concern of Chinese rulers of early ages. The Chinese concept of centrality must have come into being with great power and mystery. The Chinese word for “centrality” or “center” is *zhong* which, in its original pictographic form, looks like a flag with a fluttering streamer

fastened to the top of a flagpole. Based on Tang Lan's etymological study of the word (1981), "*Zhong* originally represents a flag...In remote antiquity when something important happened and people needed to assemble together in an open country, they first established the flag of *zhong*. People came over from all directions when they saw *zhong*. Thus they founded the place with the flag of *zhong* as the centrality (or center)...This became the meaning of the term *zhong*, all other senses of the term were inferred from this original meaning" (p. 53-54). Indeed, a puzzling statement that "the emperor established the *Zhong*" was repeatedly recorded in the surviving inscriptions on tortoise shells of the Shang dynasty (16th-11th century BC) (Tang, 1981, pp. 48-50).

An atmosphere of mystery and intrigue also shrouded discussions on the *Zhong* in the earliest Chinese historical text, *the Book of History* (*Shu jing* or *Shang shu*). It is said that Emperor Pan Geng tried to establish a real *Zhong* by relocating his capital several times. Nonetheless, he urged his followers "to establish the *Zhong* in your heart" (pt. 5, bk. 4).¹ Such an important "*Zhong*" had to be the focus of all political, intellectual, spiritual, and moral discourses at the time. The well-known Neo-Confucian scholars of the Song (960-1279) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties such as Zhu Xi and Zhan Ruoshui understood this very well. They conceded that "there was only one doctrine taught by the sage kings, i.e., the doctrine of the *Zhong*" (Zhu, 1986, vol. 97). "What the wise have been teaching throughout the entire history is merely the concept of the *Zhong*" (Zhan, cited from Huang, 1965, 37: 394).²

From the Spring and Autumn period (722-481 BC) onward, the term "*Zhong*" was gradually withdrawn from the front stage of Chinese scholarly, spiritual, and moral discourses. The pre-Qin thinkers tended to talk about the *Zhong* in a more concrete fashion, often in terms of "*Zhong-He*" (the central harmony) and of "*Zhong-Yong*" (the constant practice of centralization). They were also enthusiastic about other subjects, especially big topics such as "the *Dao*" (the Way), "*ren*" (humanity, humaneness, benevolence), and "*li*" (propriety, rites). After the pre-Qin speakers, many lingered about the concept of the *Zhong*. However, their notion of the *Zhong* (mostly in the sense of "*Zhong-He*" or "*Zhong-Yong*") became a subcategory of a broader subject such as "the *Dao*," "*ren*," or "*Tian-li*" (the Principle of Heaven). The twelfth century Neo-Confucian scholar Chen Chun (1983), for instance, listed a number of topics he thought of as crucial for the Neo-Confucian discourse. "The *Zhong*" was not on his list. Instead, "*Zhong-He*" and "*Zhong-Yong*" were selected but placed after "the *Dao*," "*Li*" (the principle), "virtue" (*de*), and many others. The subject of "*Zhong*" is also absent in a contemporary list of significant topics. Mainland Chinese scholar such as Zhang Dainian (2002) and Ge Gongjin (2001) identified more than twenty important categories of Chinese philosophy; "*Zhong-Yong*," not *Zhong* in general, is on the back row of the list. As such, "the *Zhong*" is no

longer seen as a “central” subject of discourse.

Does this indicate anything that the time for *Zhong*-discourse had passed after the Qin dynasty (221-206 BC)? The answer is no. The turn of the Chinese speakers toward “the *Dao*,” “*ren*,” “*li*,” and the like marked a new development of *Zhong*-discourse in China. The Chinese have never given up their dominant concern for the *Zhong*. However, we should consider *Zhong*-discourse in a broad sense; it is not limited to speech that addresses the exact term “*Zhong*.” A speech can be identified as part of *Zhong*-discourse whenever the speaker believes that he or she is talking about the centrality of a spiritual or a material universe, whatever it is called, and whenever certain patterns of expression are applied. Talking about the central is different from talking about the marginal, and thus a *Zhong*-discourse must have its own patterns or modes of expression.

This essay is unique in that it comes to view “the *Zhong*,” “the *Dao*,” “*ren*,” and other core concepts of Chinese culture as subjects of a *Zhong*-discourse, not as bare philosophical and ethical categories. This approach has been rarely attempted. Among the few contemporary scholars in mainland China (e.g., Chen, 2000; Dong, 2001; Pang, 1999), Hong Kong (e.g., Wang, 1967), and Taiwan (e.g., Chen, 1980; Gao, 1988; Tan, 1995; Yang, 1990) who are interested in the term “*Zhong*,” most have tended to see it as a category of Confucian philosophy and ethics. This positioning of the term is regrettably narrow, since its cultural significance far outweighs its implications for philosophy and ethics. The viewing of the term as a recurrent topic of our discursive practice, in contrast, should expand our understanding of the concept of the *Zhong*.

Firstly, it can assist in our re-examination of the relationship between “the *Zhong*” and “the *Dao*” in particular. Scholars today tend to attribute “*Zhong*” to “the *Dao*” as one of its characteristic features, thus expressing “the *Zhong*” or “*Zhong-Yong*” in terms of “the central *Dao*,” “the Middle *Dao*,” or “the *Dao* of practicing centralization” (Chen, 2000; Cheng, 1983; Ge, 2000; Wang, 1985). From the perspective of *Zhong*-discourse, however, we should come to understand “the *Dao*” in the context of “the *Zhong*,” not *vice versa*.

Secondly, this approach takes a dynamic perspective. From this perspective, no concept is constant. The so-called “*Zhong*” is no more than a myth constructed by discourse. When the emperors of the Western Zhou dynasty (11th–8th century BC), after a painful search, finally reached what they declared as “the center of the world” (*Di-Zhong*) and accordingly built a capital on it, we have to consider this “center of the world” as discursively constructed in the first place. It was by no means the real center of the world at all (Xiao, 1997, pp. 561-609). By the same token, “the *Dao*” and “*ren*” are also discursively constructed. From this constructivist point of view, concepts such as “the *Zhong*,” “the *Dao*,” and “*ren*” become less important than the discourses that serve to construct them. It is the *Zhong*-discourse that contributes to making

them the centers of the Chinese symbolic and conceptual worlds.

For this study, what is more important is that the *Zhong*-discourse perspective is conducive to revealing the nature of the Chinese cultural discourse. As mentioned above, the *Zhong*-discourse represents both a discourse on centrality and a central discourse that is itself the core of Chinese discursive practices. The two discourses are not necessarily overlapped, but they are in China. It is this coincidental overlapping that gives rise to one of the most fundamental features of Chinese discourse, i.e., its tendency toward centrality.

For a clearer understanding of this “centrality-orientation,” we really need to explore the early developments of *Zhong*-discourse in China. The following sections will examine the early Chinese discourse on the *Zhong*, its effective patterns of expression, and the far-reaching effects of those patterns. The examination is based largely on the classical books of the Chinese, especially the *Book of History* (*Shu jing*) and the *Book of Changes* (*Yi jing*), and also on relevant works of the later pre-Qin thinkers.

The Ubiquitous *Zhong* (Centrality)

The ancient Chinese enthusiasm for “the *Zhong*” is directly or indirectly corroborated by the *Book of History*, a collection of documents of the Xia (22nd-18th century BC), Shang (18th-12th century BC) and Zhou (12th-3rd century BC) dynasties, and the *Book of Changes*, a book compiled at the beginning of the Zhou dynasty. The word “*Zhong*” (centrality) appears 40 times in the *Book of History* and 11 times in the *Book of Changes*, covering a significant range of meaning from “the ultimate”(e.g., “*she zhong yu laixing*” or “to cherish the *Zhong* in your heart,” “*zhong-yao*” or “to rule from the center”), “the Good” (e.g., “*zhong-de*” or “the central morality), “justice”(e.g., “*zhong-zheng*” or “be neutral and upright”), “impartiality” (e.g., “*zhong-fa*” or “fair punishment,” “*zhong-ting*” or “unbiased hearing”), and “appropriateness” (e.g., “*xing zhi zhong*” or “the appropriateness of criminal punishment”).³ The word “*dao*” did not yet have its eventual meaning. It appears 12 times in the *Book of History* and 4 times in the *Book of Changes*, with a modest set of meanings including “road,” “word,” “method,” etc. The only case indicating the magnificence of the term is found in the *Book of History*, which reads: “without deflection, without partiality, broad and long is the Royal path [*dao*]; without partiality, without deflection, the Royal path is level and easy; without perversity, without one-sidedness, the Royal path is right and straight” (trans. Legge, 1960a, pp. 331-332). This passage best demonstrates the close relationship between “the *Zhong*” and “the *dao*.” Here “the *dao*” becomes “the Royal path” only after it has become so “centralized” that it is able to illustrate the principles of impartiality, justice, and integrity.

In early Chinese classics, the terms comparable to “*Zhong*” are “Heaven” (*Tian*), “the Sovereign on High” (*Shangdi*), and “the emperor” (*Di*). “Heaven” is the most noted word, appearing 154 times in the *Book of History* alone. A close analysis reveals, however, that “Heaven” and “*Zhong*” are intricately related. On the one hand, “Heaven” dominates from above, and is often referred to as “the great Heaven above.” On the other hand, when speaking of the grandiosity and justice of Heaven, one has to refer to its “great *Zhong*” (centrality). The *Book of History*, for instance, repeatedly expresses the view: Heaven does not really rule the world from its “highness,” but rather inspires the people with its “*Zhong*” (or central integrity) (see trans. Legge, 1960a). Emperor Muwang of the Zhou dynasty made a good case for this view: “it is not Heaven that does not deal impartially with men, but men ruin themselves” (trans. Legge, p. 610). This defense of the *Zhong* (or impartiality) of Heaven actually places “the *Zhong*” in a greater position, which is precisely what accounts for the legitimacy of Heaven ruling from above.

The other words that are frequently associated with “the *Zhong*” in the *Book of History* are “the Sovereign on High,” “the emperors,” and “the king” (*Wang*). “The Sovereign on High” refers to the anthropomorphic deity who “sent blessings or calamities, gave protection in battles, sanctioned undertakings, and passed on the appointment or dismissal of officials” (Chan, 1963, p. 4). “The emperor” refers to a great imperial ruler before the Xia dynasty, in most cases Emperor Yao or Emperor Shun. “The king” refers to a given emperor of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties. All three categories have some connection with “the *Zhong*.” “The Sovereign on High” commands the *Zhong* in Heaven, whence he casts impartial judgments (trans. Legge, 1960a, pp. 173-176, 243-247); while “the emperor” or “the king” comes to “undertake himself *the duties of government* in the center [*Zhong*] of the land” and “in this central spot administer successful government” (p. 428).

“*Zhong*” is not only a god-term in early Chinese literature, it is actually the common theme of the Six Classics of the Chinese, namely the *Book of History*, the *Book of Changes*, the *Book of Poetry* (*Shi jing*), the *Book of Music* (*Yue jing*), the *Book of Rites* (*Li jing*), and the *Spring and Autumn* (*Chunqiu*). The *Book of History* is concerned with the “impartial” (*zhong-zheng*) king’s way, the *Book of Rites* stresses the “appropriateness” (*shi-zhong*) of human conduct, and the *Book of Music* emphasizes the value of “central harmony” (*Zhong-He*).⁴ Even the *Book of Changes*, which was originally a divination manual and later became a book of wisdom, explains the mysterious hexagrams and the signs of Heaven based primarily on the principle of the *Zhong*. Among the six lines that form a hexagram, those in the central or middle positions are often regarded as indicating “good fortune.”⁵ Later on when Confucius came to revise the Six Classics, he, too, set his criteria for revision on the basis of his understanding of

the *Zhong*. In the process of re-editing the *Book of Poetry*, for instance, he deleted all of the “wicked poems” that were considered excessive or distressing and kept those “having no depraved thoughts” (trans. Legge, 1971, p. 146). Consequently, only three hundred poems were selected out of the original three thousand.⁶ He did much the same to the *Spring and Autumn*, the annuals of the Spring and Autumn period, when he came to compile it. Numerous records of perceived “wicked” actions that threatened the centrality of the State were concealed, suppressed, and even misrepresented as results of his compilation (Legge, 1960c).

The time of the pre-Qin thinkers witnessed a dramatic turn in Chinese scholarly, spiritual, and moral discourse. Discussions of “the *Dao*,” “*ren*,” “*li*” and other terms of ethical significance became fashionable. The *Zhong*-discourse seemed to have given way to the emerging discourses on the *Dao*, *ren*, *li*, and so forth, but such was not the case. “The *Zhong*” remained the ultimate concern of the pre-Qin thinkers.

As a matter of fact, the pre-Qin thinkers carried the long tradition of transmitting the secret message of “the *Zhong*” down from the early sage rulers. Thinkers such as Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, Laozi, Zhuangzi, and Guanzi continued to talk about the esoteric “*Zhong*” in much the same language as their forebears. They called upon the people to “sincerely hold fast the *Zhong*” (*Analects*; cf. 1971a, p. 350), to “stand in the center of the world” (*Mencius*; cf. Legge, 1970, p. 459), to “follow the *Zhong* in one’s conduct” (*Xunzi*),⁷ to “to keep what is in the *Zhong*” (*Laozi*),⁸ to “respect what lies within the *Zhong* to communicate with what lies without” (*Zhuangzi*),⁹ and to “regulate the heart according to the *Zhong*” (*Guanzi*).¹⁰

The pre-Qin speakers were also turning themselves toward a more concrete and sophisticated way of discussing the *Zhong*. Topics such as “*Zhong-He*” and “*Zhong-Yong*”, which were generated from the general concern for the *Zhong*, began to attract more attention. Confucius went as far as to say that “perfect is the virtue which is the constant practice of centralization” (*Analects*; cf. Legge, 1971a, p. 193). It is not surprising that “the constant practice of centralization” soon became the theme and title of an important Confucian classic, *Zhongyong*, which was allegedly written by Confucius’s grandson Zisi. This Confucian classic was the first Chinese work devoted specifically to the topic of *Zhong* (regretfully, it has been misleadingly translated as “The Doctrine of the Mean”). Another topic, “the central harmony,” was no less significant and appealing at the time. According to *Zhongyong*, “*Zhong* is the great root from which grow all the human actions in the world, and *He* is the universal *Dao* which they all should pursue. Let the states of *Zhong* and *He* exist in perfection, and a happy order will prevail throughout heaven and earth, and all things will be nourished and flourish” (cf. Legge, 1971b, pp. 384-385). The emergence of these two

important topics, with their strong implications for moral cultivation, thus marked a new trend in *Zhong*-discourse—the tendency to moralize and popularize the originally imperial subject into topics of everyday life.

Other discussions of the *Dao*, *ren*, and *li* at the time can also be seen as products of this moralization and popularization. Confucius was a fanatic for these topics. “The *Dao*,” “*ren*,” and “*li*” appear in his *Analects* 85, 99, and 85 times respectively. That the original “*dao*” quickly rose to be a popular and sublime subject of discourse (“the *Dao*”) in Confucius’ time is not surprising. It was associated with the concept of Heaven, and hence signified “the *Dao* of Heaven.” More significantly, it came to be connected with the “*Zhong*” and thus referred in particular to “*Zhong-Dao*” (“the central *Dao*” or “the middle *Dao*”). Gongsun Chou once lamented that the *Dao* was lofty and admirable, as though it led to the heavens. Mencius responded by saying that there was no need for a gentleman to seek a high and distant “*Dao*.” Instead, he “stands exactly in the middle of the path” (trans. Legge, 1970, p. 474). Xunzi expressed a similar view. Although for him the *Dao* of the ancestral kings was so profound and deep, to follow it, one simply needed to “follow the *Zhong* in one’s conduct” (cf. Knoblock, 1990, p. 71).

Other key topics such as “*ren*” and “*li*,” too, were attached to the concept of the *Zhong* in certain ways. For the Confucians, the so-called “*Zhong-Dao*” was exactly what they meant by “*ren-Dao*” (“the *Dao* of *ren*”), i.e., the *Dao* leading to the perfect state of humanity. As Confucius put it: “if a man can for one day master himself and return to propriety, all under heaven will return to humanity” (trans. Chan, 1963, p. 38). This perfect “returning” already implied that “*ren*” was the *Zhong* of all under heaven. The Daoist Zhuangzi knew all about his opponent’s rhetorical trick to “centralize” the idea of *ren*. He faked a conversation and had Laozi ask Confucius: “what is *ren*?” He expected the Confucius to respond that “to have the *Zhong* in one’s heart and be without conflict, to show universal love and be without partiality—these are the characteristics of humaneness and righteousness” (*Zhuangzi*; cf. Mair, 1994, pp. 125-26). For Confucius, *li* was also of topical importance, simply because it “defines and determines the due *Zhong*” (*Liji*; cf. Legge, 1967, p. 271). His great disciple Xunzi, who became the firmest advocate of *li* among the pre-Qin thinkers, went further to state that “*li* is itself the *Zhong*” (*Xunzi*; cf. Knoblock, 1990, p. 71).

Thus “the *Dao*,” “*ren*” and “*li*,” as described by the pre-Qin thinkers, are nothing more than concrete expressions of the “*Zhong*.” Hence, they were able to quickly become predominant in scholarly, spiritual, and moral discourse in the time of the pre-Qin thinkers. The long tradition of *Zhong*-discourse actually did not die away after a new set of topics were established. On the contrary, it found a new form of life in discourses on the *Dao*, *ren*, *li*, and the like.

Constructing the “Zhong” Myth

The question of particular concern in this essay is how this ubiquitous and seemingly all-encompassing “Zhong” was constructed. Specifically, how was it constructed as the “centrality” of all under Heaven? The construction must have been very sophisticated and time-consuming. The very early Chinese art of painted pottery, found in the Neolithic Chinese cultures, abounded in whirlpool designs. A major element of the design is a continuous line that slowly whirls out of a center (see Figs. 1, 2, and 3).¹¹ The designers must have contributed to constructing the concept of *Zhong* as the living source of the world. The records of “the emperor established the *Zhong*” in the oracle inscriptions of the Shang dynasty and the profound advice from the sage kings to “sincerely hole fast the *Zhong*” (*Analects*; cf. Legge, 1971, p. 350) must have had a role in the making of the *Zhong* myth. However, this essay is interested in more indirect and subtle ways of construction.



Fig. 1 Majiayao
Paint Pottery
(c. 3190-1715 BC)



Fig. 2 Majiayao
Paint Pottery
(c. 2000 BC)



Fig. 3 Banshan
Paint Pottery
(c. 2200 BC)

In *Laozi* (or *Daode jing*), a riddle passage concerning the ultimate source of the universe reads: “the Tao (*Dao*) produced One; One produced Two; Two produced Three; Three produced All things”(trans. Legge, 1962, p. 85). Among the numbers Laozi mentioned, “Two” is most important, at least for the discussion here. “Two” accounts for the birth of all if we consider “Three” as synonymous with myriad things. It is also the gateway to the province of the Ultimate Source, i.e., “the *Dao*” in Laozi’s terminology.

Indeed, for the ancient Chinese, a meaningful search for the source of life starts with two, not with one. There is a considerable amount of discussion on the source of life in early Chinese literature, but seldom have we heard that the Ultimate Source gave birth to the myriad things directly and immediately. It would seem that the Ultimate Source has to undergo a course of “producing Two” before it finally produces all. This suggests that “Two” rather than “One” is the direct cause of life. Actually, One is not the direct opposite of Many in Chinese philosophical thinking. “Two and Many” is more appropriate to account

for the Chinese perception of the fundamental relationships of things in the world. With regard to who is responsible for the production of life, even the most extremist Chinese would rather stand in the middle. For them, Heaven, however grand and powerful, cannot give birth to life by itself; the Earth, however fertile and rich, cannot generate life alone. However, “Heaven and Earth mesh together, and the myriad things develop and reach perfect maturity; male and female blend essences together, and the myriad creatures are formed and come to life” (trans. Lynn, 1994, p. 85). In fact, the growth of any good taste or feeling also necessitates the harmonious interaction of at least two elements. To use Confucius’ contemporary Yan Ying’s analogies, “if you were to try to give water a flavor with water, who would care to partake of the result? If lutes were to be confined to one note, who would be able to listen to them?” (trans. Legge, 1960c, p. 684)

This dualistic approach to the origin of life explains the growing tendency of ancient Chinese writings to employ pairings, antitheses, and parallelisms in expression. The basic assumption of this tendency is that a singular term or a singular sentence does not suffice to produce a full meaning or a complete message. The case just cited is a typical example of this tendency, in which not only “Heaven and Earth” and “male and female” are paired within a clause, but the natural course of Heaven-Earth interaction and the human process of male-female intercourse are also paired in two antithetic clauses. Another example of this kind appears in the beginning lines of the “Commentary on the Appended Judgments” (*Xici zhuan*) in the *Book of Changes*, which has traditionally been attributed to pre-Qin scholars.

As Heaven is high and noble and Earth is low and humble, so it is that *Qian* [Pure Yang, Hexagram 1] and *Kun* [Pure Yin, Hexagram 2] are defined. The high and the low being thereby set out, the exalted and the mean have their places accordingly. There are norms for action and repose, which are determined by whether hardness or softness is involved. Those with regular tendencies gather according to kind, and things divide up according to group; so it is that good fortune and misfortune occur. In Heaven this [process] creates images, and on Earth it creates physical forms; this is how change and transformation manifest themselves...The Dao of *Qian* forms the male; the Dao of *Kun* forms the female. *Qian* has mastery over the great beginning of things, and *Kun* acts to bring things to completion. *Qian* through ease provides mastery over things, and *Kun* through simplicity provides capability. As the former is easy, it is easy to know, and as the latter is simple, it is easy to follow. If one is easy to know, he will have kindred spirits; and if one is easy to follow, he will have meritorious accomplishments. Once one has kindred spirits, he can endure, and once one has meritorious accomplishments, he can grow great (trans. Lynn, 1994).

As early as in the *Book of History*, examples of using antithetic and non-

antithetic word pairings were plentiful. Antithetic word pairings such as “Heaven-Earth,” “mountain-valley,” “yin-yang,” “ghost-deity,” “above-below,” “left-right,” “light-heavy,” and “literary-martial,” and un-antithetic word pairings such as “thunder-rain,” “son-grandson,” “grass-tree,” “state-home,” “horse-cattle,” “bird-beast,” and “respect-awe,” were but the most commonly used.

This “dualistic tendency” is pushed to extreme in the *Book of Changes*, in which all linguistic symbols are reduced to two primary forms (also *yao*): a divided line “- -” called “*yin* or *yin yao*” and an undivided line “—” called “*yang* or *yang yao*.” Both symbolize the positive and negative forces of life. According to the *Book of Changes*, anything that is above, immaterial, bright, forceful, strident, burning, hot, muscular, odd, and moving belongs on the *yang* side, and anything that is below, material, dark, weak, cold, gloomy, feminine, even, and stationary belongs on the *yin* side. As most things, being neither purely *yin* nor purely *yang*, had their places somewhere between the two “extremes, the ancient Chinese thus made various combinations of *yin* and *yang* to form the famous *Ba gua* (eight trigrams), i.e., “☰”(the *qian* trigram), “☷”(the *dui* trigram), “☲”(the *li* trigram), “☵”(the *zhen* trigram), “☱”(the *sun* trigram), “☴”(the *kan* trigram), “☶”(the *gen* trigram), and “☴”(the *kun* trigram). These were the symbols of eight basic categories of natural objects: heaven, marsh, fire (also sun), thunder, wind (also wood), water (also moon), mountain, and earth. Given that the range of these eight categories was still too limited, the ancient Chinese went further to put together any two of the eight trigrams to form sixty-four hexagrams to represent more complex phenomena. The fourth Hexagram (the *meng* hexagram), for instance, is as one with *kan* trigram below and *gen* above. The implied image that “below the Mountain emerges the Spring” thus means “something that does not yet know where to go,” or represents things in “the immature state,” or indicates a state of confusion “followed by a coming to prominence” (Lynn, 1994, pp. 158-160). With various *yin-yang* combinations, the *Book of Changes* thus successfully shows the wide variety of things in the universe and, at the same time, demonstrates their dualistic origins, i.e., the transformation of many from two.

“Two,” however, is not the end that the ancient Chinese wanted to achieve in the search for the Ultimate Source. The end is what lay between the two: that is, the place where *yin* and *yang* interplay, and where the whole transformation of things takes place. It is right there, between the two, that we come to see the *Zhong* of the universe as the Ultimate Source of all things. From this perspective, the ancient Chinese concept of *Zhong* is relational—it suggests that the world came from relationships rather than from some single ultimate element.

This approach to the ancient Chinese concept of *Zhong* as something in

between should not lead us to conceive of a middle line that divides a whole diametrically into two separate parts. In the well-known *Taiji tu* (Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate, Fig. 4), which has its origin in the double-fish design found in Neolithic pottery, an S-shaped curve is used to distinguish between the *yin* and the *yang*, which suggests that the two parts were actually interwoven. The *Zhong* thus should be seen as the locus of interdependence and interplaying of the two.



Fig. 4 *Taiji tu*

The *yin-yang* dichotomization is how the ancient Chinese thinkers came to conceive of and construct the *Zhong*. This is a very indirect method—the speaker does not have to use the word “*Zhong*.” Yet, when any kind of *yin-yang* or heaven-earth pairing or dichotomy is used, a mystical “centrality” looms up from the middle as the source of all lives and changes.

Centrality-Oriented Patterns of Description

A similar tendency is apparent in early Chinese scholarly, spiritual, and moral discourse to apply the method of pairing to describe a virtue, a state of morality, or the *Dao* of the universe. These descriptions, like the *yin-yang* dichotomy and the paired expressions discussed above, also serve to create a sense of centrality as a perfect state or the *Dao*. Four widely-used patterns of these descriptions, formulated as “neither X nor Y,” “X but not X,” “X with Y,” and “X and Y,” deserve our particular attention here.¹²

1. “Neither X nor Y.” This pattern is mostly used to define an appropriate way. For instance, “he [Emperor Tang] was neither violent nor remiss, neither hard nor soft. Gently he spread his instructions abroad, and all dignities and riches were concentrated in him” (trans. Legge, 1960b, p. 641). To cite the *Book of History* once more, “without deflection, without partiality, broad and long is the Royal path; without partiality, without deflection, the Royal path is level and easy; without perversity, without one-sidedness, the Royal path is right and straight” (trans. Legge, 1969a, pp. 331-332). Here, X and Y represent two extremes. In Confucius’ words, X “goes beyond *the due mean*” and Y “does not come up to it” (trans. Legge, 1971, p. 242). “Neither X nor Y” thus points right to the middle as an appropriate centrality. This negative approach is apparently a simple but often reliable way of locating and constructing the *Zhong*. It does not tell us what exactly the *Zhong* is. Nevertheless, it makes it clear that the

appropriate way is always with the *Zhong*.

2. “X but not X’.” In this pattern of description, X often refers to a virtue, while X’ is its extreme form. For instance, Emperor Yao advised his minister to be “the strong [but] not tyrannical, and the impetuous [but] not arrogant” (trans. Legge, 1960a, p. 48). The Gongzi Zha of Wu described his view of the perfect virtue: “this is perfect! Here are straight-forwardness without rudeness; winding but no bending; nearness without pressure; distance without estrangement; changes without license; repetitions without satiety; disconsolateness without deep sorrow; joy without wild indulgence; the use of resources without their ever failing; wide [virtue] without display; beneficence without waste; appropriation without covetousness; conservation without obstruction; and constant exercise without any dissipation” (*Zhuo zhuan*; trans. Legge, 1960c, p. 550).¹³ Here, X is in itself appropriate, but its “centrality” is never stable. The ancient Chinese realized that the good and virtuous could turn into evil if pushed to the extreme. Any excessive indulgence in something, no matter how good it is originally, can lead people to deviate from the “central” way. In this sense, “X but not X’” is another way of constructing the *Zhong*. It serves to conform the “centrality” (in particular, the justice) of a virtue by excluding its extremes.

3. “X with Y.” For instance, Gao Yao explained what he meant by the “nine virtues”: “affability combined with dignity; mildness combined with firmness; bluntness combined with respectfulness; aptness for government combined with reverence; docility combined with boldness; straightforwardness combined with gentleness; easiness combined with discrimination; vigor combined with sincerity; and valor combined with righteousness” (trans. Legge, 1960a, p. 71).¹⁴ In this “X with Y” pattern, X refers to a virtue (e.g., affability) and Y refers to another virtue (e.g., dignity) that has a close relationship with X. As a virtue, X is appropriate and just in itself, yet it falls short of multiplicity. From the point of view that the *Zhong* is integrated and receptive, X then is only one aspect of it. According to Xunzi, if a person simply adheres to a single moral conduct, he or she is still trapped in a certain paranoid state, and “scarifying the great principle to a petty detail” (*Xunzi*, chap. 15). A virtue therefore needs to be supplemented with other virtues. From this perspective, the “X with Y” pattern of description serves to locate a harmonious centrality between the two virtues. To construct a great *Zhong*, however, not only must small virtues be combined into a bigger virtue, but the bigger virtue also needs its supplements. That is why the ancient Chinese thinkers often mentioned sets of virtues rather than single virtues, as in the cases of Gao Yao’s so-called “nine virtues,” Jizi’s notion of “three virtues” (trans. Legge, 1960a, p. 324), and Confucius’ view of “five excellent things” (trans. Legge, 1971, p. 352).

4. “X and Y.” In this pattern, X and Y represent the two opposite sides of

things. They are blended, though, in one way or another, to constitute a perfect whole. For instance, Confucius said that “it is only when one’s substance and refinement are properly blended that he becomes a superior man” (trans. Chan, 1963, p. 29). “To keep it now strung and now relaxed was the way of [the sage kings] Wen and Wu” (*Liji*; cf. Legge, 1967, p. 167). The “Commentary on the Appended Judgments” in the *Book of Changes* puts it generally: “the reciprocal process of *yin* and *yang* is called the Dao” (trans. Lynn, 1994, p. 53). This pattern of description, which became popular after Confucius, is believed to have evolved from the *yin-yang* dichotomy. It must be the most thoroughgoing pattern of the four in constructing an absolute sense of centrality. In “X with Y,” the combination of virtues is still to some degree one-sided, due to their close relationship. The real centrality should thus lie between the positive and negative sides of the cosmic forces, and remain neutral to and receptive of both sides. This neutrality and receptivity fundamentally accounts for the magical power of the *Zhong*, which in turn explains the interrelationships and interactions of all things in the world.

The above four patterns of description point to four fundamental senses that are usually associated with the ancient Chinese concept of *Zhong*: appropriateness or neutrality (*shi-zhong* or *zhong-xing*), justice (*zhong-zheng*), harmony (*zhong-he*), and balance (*ping-heng*). In the first pattern, “neither X nor Y,” the *Zhong* neither goes to excess nor falls short of the mean, and does not lean toward either side. In the second pattern, “X but not X,” the *Zhong* becomes the right or correct way—any deviation from it is tantamount to wickedness. Both “X with Y” and “X and Y” focus on the inclusiveness of the *Zhong*. The latter pattern, embracing both the positive and the negative, is of course more inclusive than the former. In most cases, the four patterns are primarily concerned with a state of morality or the way of the universe. They are not used to describe the concept of the *Zhong*. However, like the dichotomous and paired expressions, these patterns of description do serve to move the attention of the Chinese audience toward the centrality of things. They suggest that the appropriate and the moral are always with or within the *Zhong*.

The Impact of the *Zhong* Construction

We can thus assume that concepts such as “the *Dao*” and “*ren*” that take up a central position in pre-Qin scholarly, spiritual, and moral discourse are all essentially *yin-yang* mixed, in the sense that they are neither *yin* nor *yang* alone, or they are both *yin* and *yang*. How they are discussed as such is the question of concern in this concluding section.

After the Six Classical Books of the Chinese, a subtle change occurred in expression of the *Zhong*. That is, people tended to discuss the *Zhong* in terms of

the *Dao*. The concept of the *Zong* was retreating and finally became the general background of centrality-discourse. When a prominent Confucian scholar, Kong Anguo of the Han dynasty (206 BC - AD 220), came to annotate the classical *Book of History*, he fell into this trend and rephrased the original statement “set up the *Zhong* before the people” to be “establish the *Dao* of the *Zhong* before the people.” Similarly, he rephrased the original statement “the people accord with the *Zhong*” to be “the people were requested to accord with the *Dao* of the *Zhong*.”¹⁵ The original “*Zhong*” then became “the *Dao* of the *Zhong*” (conventionally translated as “the path of the Mean”).

One reasonable explanation for this subtle change is that the Chinese speakers were inclined to a more concrete and dynamic mode of expression of the *Zhong*. The discussion of the *Dao* of the *Zhong*, with its specific references to the “path,” the “words,” and the “method” of the *Zhong*, is of course more concrete than the discussion of the *Zhong* itself. Furthermore, the *Zhong* can be seen as a fixed point, and there should be no wonder that the ancient Chinese thinkers discussed it as something that could be “held fast” (e.g., trans. Legge, 1971a, p. 350). The *Dao*, in contrast, has to be seen as a constantly changing process when referred to as the Way of Heaven. That is, something that cannot be “held fast,” but has to be “followed” if one wants to keep pace with the universe. Such a dynamic notion of the *Dao* thus catches the very essence of what is going on between heaven and earth. As the *Dao* “takes its own course” (*Zhongyong*, chap. 17)¹⁶ and “does not exist for the sake of [sage-emperor] Yao nor does it cease to exist because of [wicked king] Jie” (*Xunzi*, trans. Chan, 1963, p. 116), as generally held by the Confucian and the Daoist alike, it is also most suitable to express the impartiality of Heaven. The emergence of the *Dao* as a core subject of *Zhong*-discourse reflects the tendency of the Chinese to discuss the *Zhong* in the context of a cosmic process.

Although these specific meanings and dynamic connotations give the *Dao* built-in advantages over the concept of the *Zhong*, the rise in importance of the *Dao* was essentially due to its *yin-yang* mixed characters built up by the centrality-oriented *Dao*-discourse that prevailed at the time.

Zhongyong (*The constant practice of centralization*) provides a good case for the study of this new trend of centrality-discourse. The specific aim of this treatise, as its title suggests, is to practice the centralization of the *Dao*. However, there are only two occasions in the treatise where the concept of the *Dao* and the concept of the *Zhong* come to meet each other in an indirect manner:

While there are no stirrings of pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy, the mind may be said to be in the state of *Zhong*. When those feelings have been stirred, and they act in their due degree, there ensues what may be called the state of *He* (harmony). *Zhong* is the great root from which grow all the human actions in the world, and *He* is the universal *Dao*

which they all should pursue (trans. Legge, 1971b, p. 384; with my slight revision).

Sincerity is the *Dao* of Heaven. The attainment of sincerity is the *Dao* of men. He who possesses sincerity is one who, without an effort, hits what is *Zhong*, and apprehends, without the exercise of thought; he is the sage who naturally and easily embodies the central *Dao*. He who attains to sincerity is one who chooses what is good, and firmly holds it fast (trans. Legge, 1971b, p. 413; with my slight revision).

Here, the *Dao* and the *Zhong* are brought together through the mediation of a third concept, i.e., “harmony” on the first occasion and “sincerity” on the second. Neither of the two passages, however, equates the *Dao* with the *Zhong*. The *Dao* is conceptually identified with “harmony” in the first passage, and with “sincerity” in the second. As both “harmony” and “sincerity” are presumably manifestations of what lies in the very center of the universe and of the heart, so should the *Dao*. Such a conceptualization already put the *Dao* in a favorite position next to the *Zhong*.

A profound and effective centralization of the *Dao*, of course, does not rely upon this conceptualization alone. The author of *Zhongyong* has to resort primarily to various centrality-oriented patterns of expression. One indirect way of centralizing the *Dao* is adopting the “neither X nor Y” pattern of description. In the beginning of the treatise this pattern is used to introduce the idea of the moderation. The *Dao* does not prevail, because “the wise go to excess and the foolish do not go far enough” (1979, p. 17). This pattern of description, however, does not appear often in the text. Apparently, moderation is not the author’s main concern.

To make the *Dao* appear more accessible to mankind, the author tends to discuss the *Dao* in feminine terms, and to give high priority to virtues and conduct that are considered as reflecting only the *yin* or the feminine operation of the cosmic forces. He stresses, for instance, that “the workings of Heaven above have neither sound nor smell” (1979, p. 37), and that the *Dao* of the gentleman is “plain,” “simple,” and “easy” (p. 36).

Then the question is if the author still cares about the practice of centralization, how does he centralize what is now identified as the plain, simple, and easy *Dao*? He solves this problem by invoking another equally strong but opposite tendency--the tendency to speak of this plain, simple, and easy *Dao* as the great path to prominence and sacrality. A gentleman who follows this *Dao* “achieves breadth and greatness and pursues the refined and subtle to the limit,” and “seeks to reach the greatest height and brilliancy”(trans. Chan, 1963, p. 110). So frequently does the treatise try to stretch the *Dao* to its limits of greatness and brightness that the two Chinese adverbs, *ji* (extremely) and *zhi* (to the utmost) occur 15 and 7 times respectively. Such a high frequency in a treatise of less

than 4000 words was seen rarely in previous *Zhong*-discourse.

The “X with Y” and the “X and Y” patterns of description are thus understandably the most marked features of the treatise, and allow the author to harmonize and balance any of the two seemingly antithetical tendencies in description of the *Dao*. A telling example of using the Chinese conjunction “*er*” (with, and, and yet) to introduce and display a *yang*-oriented, masculine quality to balance a one-sided view of the *Dao* as being *yin*-oriented or feminine appears in chapter 33: “the Way of the gentleman is plain yet not unattractive, simple, yet full of grace, easy and yet methodical” (1979, p. 36). Many times the author does not make use of the conjunction “*er*,” but simply pairs or dichotomizes the two sides of qualities. When eulogizing the great height of the *Dao*, the author immediately glorifies its great depth as well (1979). When there is something in it that “cannot be perceived,” then there is something that is most “palpable” (p. 16). When it is “universally applicable, and yet it is subtle” (p. 19). The pairing of these polarized qualities is obviously to preserve the well-balanced centrality of the *Dao*, although “centrality” in this context has been drastically expanded to embrace both the *yin* and the *yang*.

There is always a danger, though, within these pairings or dichotomies. When the *Dao* is pushed too high and too deep away, it becomes inaccessible. Thus, the most important pairings in the treatise are used to harmonize the inherent tension between the *Dao* of man and the *Dao* of Heaven. For example,

The Way of [the gentleman] is based upon his own exertions. It is verified by the common experience of men. Tested by comparing it with the teachings of the Three Kings, there is no divergence. Applying it to the operations of heaven and earth, there is no contradiction. Confronted with the spiritual beings, a man is able to maintain it without any doubt. For the coming of a sage to confirm it, he is prepared to wait a hundred generations after him without any misgivings (1979, pp. 33-34; with my own revision).¹⁷

What is important to know about this passage is not the functioning of its gradual stretching of the *Dao* to release the tensions between the humanistic and the divine, between the particular and the universal, and between the proximate and the profound, but its syntactic and semantic structure. The six steps, stretching from a person to the people, to Kings, to the universe, to spiritual beings, and finally to the sage, are executed by three successive sets of semantically paired sentences. This kind of pairing is conventionally regarded as not only linguistically acceptable but also reasonably sound. It thus gives validity to the stretching.

Comparatively speaking, Laozi, the founder of Taoism, was a more thoroughgoing advocate of the idea of “the central *Dao*” or “the middle *Dao*.” His treatise, *Laozi* (or *Daode jing*) of 5000-odd characters, is even more a great

show of the centrality-oriented patterns of expression. Among the four patterns of description, the “X but not X” seems to be in his favorite. While *Zhongyong* emphasizes the “equanimous and yet active”(“X and yet Y”) types of conducts, Laozi preaches the virtue of “moving but not acting”(“X but not X”), as in the following examples:

Yet having produced them [the ten thousand creatures], [the *Dao*] does not take possession of them...though it covers the ten thousand things like a garment, makes no claim to be master over them (p. 77).

Rear them [the myriad things], but not lay claim to them; control them, but never lean upon them; be chief among them, but not manage them. This is called the mysterious power (p. 117).

[The wise man, by the *Dao*,] does not take further advantage of his victory. Fulfills his purpose and does not glory in what he has done; fulfils his purpose and does not boast of what he has done; fulfils his purpose, but takes no pride in what he has done; fulfils his purpose, but only as a step that could not be avoided (trans. Waley, 1994, p. 67).

Therefore the sage squares without cutting, shapes the corners without lopping, straightens without stretching, gives forth light without shining (p. 135).

However, on other occasions, with his radical uses of the “both X and Y” and the “neither X nor Y” patterns of description, Laozi becomes extremely equivocal in terms of his concept of the *Dao*. For example, he says:

For truly, Being and Not-being grow out of one another; long and short test one another; high and low determine one another. Pitch and mode give harmony to one another. Front and back give sequence to one another. Therefore, the Sage relies on actionless activity . . . (p. 5).

He who has achieved it [the state of mysterious leveling] cannot either be drawn into friendship or repelled, cannot be benefited [or] cannot be harmed, cannot either be raised or humbled, and for that very reason is highest of all creatures under heaven (p.129).

Laozi’s notion of the *Dao* has reached such a thorough state of *Zhong* that it becomes ethically neutral. He no longer speaks of it in terms of humanity and righteousness, as a Confucian does. “Of the good man I approve, but of the bad I also approve” (p. 113). Furthermore, the *Dao* is viewed as tasteless and free of any given perception and emotion. “How different the words that *Tao* [*Dao*] gives forth! So thin, so flavorless! If one looks for *Tao* [*Dao*], there is nothing solid to see; if one listens for it, there is nothing loud enough to hear. Yet if one uses it, it is inexhaustible” (p. 79). This is exactly what *Zhongyong* means by the great state of the *Zhong*, in which “there are no stirrings of [any] pleasure, anger, sorrow, or joy” (trans. Legge, 1971b, p. 384). Obviously, Laozi goes further than *Zhongyong*. The latter posits the *Dao* as the universal path to *Zhong*, but for

Laozi, the *Dao* is itself the *Zhong*.

The Confucian ideal of moral cultivation and the Daoist ideal of inaction (i.e., letting things take their own course) appear poles apart. Yet put in the context of *Zhong*-discourse, they are closely related in that there is only one step away from each other. The *Zhong*-discourse is indeed the most characteristic cultural form of discourse in China.

In the pre-Qin periods, key concepts such as “the *Dao*,” “*ren*”(humanity, humaneness, benevolence) and “*li*”(propriety, rites) were all repackaged, in one way or another, by the application of various centrality-oriented patterns of expression. The term “*Zhong*” was fading out as a subject of *Zhong*-discourse, but the centrality-oriented patterns remained. How these patterns of description worked to construct a sense of *Zhong* after the First Emperor of the Qin dynasty (221-206 BC) unified China is beyond the scope of this essay. However, it should be pointed out that the key concepts that are characteristic of the periods which followed the Qin and Han (206 BC - AD 220) dynasties, such as “Buddha” (*fo*), “Principle” (*li*), “Mind” (*xin*), and “vital force” (*qi*), all took a *yin-yang* mixed character, which must have born the far-reaching impact of the *Zhong*-discourse and its patterns of expression.

Zhong-discourse is just beginning to be explored. Our knowledge about how it operates is still very limited. We know even less about how it addresses and accepts changes. In fact, as we have seen, the fading of any core concept of Chinese culture did not jeopardize the development of *Zhong*-discourse: new concepts were soon constructed to support it. A study of the underlying mechanisms of the operation and development of *Zhong*-discourse will not only facilitate our understanding of the discursive practice, but will also help us to understand the various changes in Chinese mentality and societies.

China (*Zhongguo* in Chinese), the country of *Zhong* or the Central Kingdom, has tried very hard to live up to its name. Pan Geng, one of the greatest emperors in early Chinese history, unremittingly sought an ideal *Zhong* and relocated his capital several times. Throughout history, a ceaseless search for the *Zhong* has also been undertaken in the realm of thought. The pre-Qin thinkers sought “the *Dao*”; those of the Han (206 BC – AD 220) and the Tang (618-907) dynasties trekked far and wide for “Buddha” (*fo*); the Neo-Confucians of the Song dynasty (960-1279) and after pondered upon the “Principle of Heaven” (*Tian-li*), “the Mind-Nature” (*xin-xing*), and “the ultimate vital force” (*qi*). Modern Chinese, in contrast, looked for what they believe to be the scientific truths. Are they not following Pan Geng’s advice “to establish the *Zhong*” in their hearts? Chinese history is indeed a history of searching for the *Zhong*. In this everlasting and unrelenting discourse on *Zhong* or centrality, we should be able to decode the “genes” of Chinese cultural developments.

Notes

1. James Legge's translation reflects his ethical approach to the term "Zhong": "let every one of you set up the true rule of conduct in his heart" (1960a, p. 241). Legge (1815-1897), a Christian missionary and knowledgeable English sinologist, provided a helpful series of English translations of the Classical Chinese Books. His translation of the *Book of rites* remains the only translation available in English. Despite his particularly ethical approach to the early Chinese concept of *Zhong* (centrality) and a present-day view of his translation as generally outdated and sometimes awkward, his translation in many cases is most considerate in maintaining the syntactic structure of the original version. As we will see later on, the syntactic structures of the early Chinese writings, often left out in an contemporary English translation, are very instructive of the writers' rhetorical intentions. The English translations of the early Chinese works cited in this essay will be based largely on those of Legge.
2. According to a forged chapter of the *Book of History*, "Dayu mo"(The counsels of the Great Yu), Emperor Shun summarized his secret of ruling in sixteen characters and passed it down to the Great Yu, his heir. The sixteen characters are "Ren xin wei wei, Dao xin wei wei, wei jing wei yi, yun zhi jue zhong," which is translated in English as "the mind of man is restless, prone to err. Its affinity for the right way is small. Be discriminating, be undivided. Sincerely hold fast the Zhong"(trans. Legge, 1960a, pp. 61-62; with my slight revision). This chapter is generally believed to be written during the East Jin dynasty (317-420). The last and most important four characters, "sincerely hold fast the Zhong," was probably taken from the *Analects* (cf. trans. Legge, 1971a, p. 350).
3. The term is also referred to as "the middle" and "the mean" on some occasions (e.g., trans. Legge, 1960a, pp. 19-20, 97-105). For a detailed summary of the uses of the term "zhong" in *the Book of History*, *the Book of Changes*, *the Analects*, and *the Book of Rites*, see Chen, 1980, p. 2-16.
4. *The Book of Music*, allegedly written by the Duke of Zhou, has unfortunately been lost to the world.
5. The book consists of sixty-four hexagrams (also *cong gua*) and texts that explain them. The hexagram is a combination of two trigrams (*jing gua*), each composed of three lines (*yao*). Those in the middle of the bottom and top trigrams (i.e., lines 2 and 5, counting from bottom to top) are called the middle lines. These middle positions are usually considered as "the territory of proper and balanced behavior and action" (Lynn, 1994, p. 17). In the first hexagram (*Qian* hexagram), for instance, the explanation of the second line

reads: “[this is the time] when there appears a dragon in the fields, it is fitting to see the great man.” As for the fifth line, the explanation reads: “when a flying dragon is in the sky, it is fitting to see the great man” (trans. Lynn, 1994, pp. 133, 137). In addition to its emphasis on the middle positions, the book also lays stress on the harmonious interaction between the *yin* and the *yang*, the two fundamental forces of the cosmos. Any hexagram that brings about this interaction is considered of good auspice. The eleventh hexagram (the *meng* hexagram), for instance, is one with the *Qian* trigram below and *kun* above. *Qian* signifies the pure force of *yang* that has the tendency to move upward, and *Kun* signifies the pure force of *yin* that tends to move downward. In this hexagram, the lower *Qian* rises and the upper *kun* descends, thus making a perfect interaction and hence constituting “the image of Peace” (cf. trans. Lynn, 1994, pp. 205-206).

6. The very first of the selected three hundred poems, “*Guanju*”(Turtledove), is regarded by Confucius as a beauty of appropriateness and harmony, which “is expressive of enjoyment without being licentious, and of grief without being hurtfully excessive”(trans. Legge, 1971a, p. 161).
7. The original Chinese words refer to the *Dao* of the Ancient Kings: “[the Way of the Ancient Kings lay in exalting the principle of humanity and in] following the mean in their conduct.” Here, Knoblock (1990, p. 71) follows the majority of English translators in translating the Chinese term “*Zhong*” as “the Mean.”
8. Based on Waley’s translation (1994, p. 11), “[far better it is] to keep what is in the heart.” Cf. Legge’s somewhat different translation (1962, p. 50), “Your inner being guard, and keep it free.”
9. Based on Mair’s translation (1994, p. 231). The complete passage reads: “provided with things to succor the physical form, storing up unconcern to enliven the mind, respecting what lies within [the *Zhong*] to communicate with what lies without—if one does this and still myriad evils arrive, it is all due to heaven and not to man.”
10. This call is implied in a passage describing the *Dao* of the sage. Rickett’s translation of the passage (1965, p. 170) reads: “the sage decides about things but is not manipulated by them. His heart being at peace, the country also is at peace. His heart being well regulated, the country also is well-regulated. . . . A well-regulated heart lies within [the *Zhong*], well-regulated words issue from his mouth and well-regulated affairs are applied to the People.”
11. The three figures were respectively retrieved from <http://www>.

21ceramics.com/English/history/Enmajiyaoculture.htm;http://www.art-antiques.ch/hina/pottery/;http://cla.calpoly.edu/~jwetzl/China/slides/BuraiaUrn.html.

12. The credit for identifying the first three patterns, i.e., “neither X nor Y”(or neither A nor B), “X but not X”(A but not A’), and “X with Y”(A with B) should be given to a mainland Chinese scholar, Pang Pu (1980/1999), who, regretfully, discussed these patterns as merely Confucian modes of thinking.
13. Confucius commented in a similar manner when he explained his view of “the five excellent things.” That is, “beneficent without great expenditure; laying tasks on the people without their repining; pursuing what he desires without being covetous; maintaining a dignified case without being proud; and majestic without being fierce” (trans. Legge, 1971a, p. 352; with my slight revision). He also commented that, “the superior man is dignified, but does not wrangle. He is sociable, but not a partisan...[He] is correctly firm, and not firm merely” (pp. 300, 305).
14. The *Analects* also uses this pattern of description. For example, “he [a youth] should be earnest and truthful. He should be in sympathy with all men, and intimate with men of *ren* (humanity, benevolence)” (trans. Legge, 1971a, p. 140; with my revision). “The Master [Confucius] was mild, and yet dignified; majestic, and yet not fierce; respectful, and yet easy” (p. 207).
15. For a translation of the original statements, see Legge, 1960a, pp. 182, 59.
16. This is my translation, which I believe better corresponds to the original message than the other two available translations. Cf. 1979, p. 30; Legge, 1971b, p. 418.
17. Another example of the pairing is: “the way of the gentleman takes its rise in relations between man and woman, but in its utmost reaches it reigns supreme over heaven and earth” (1979, p. 19).

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