

How Confucius Does Things with Words: Two Hermeneutic Paradigms in the *Analects* and Its Exegeses

In Memoriam: Benjamin Schwartz

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This essay attempts to discover patterns of communicative and hermeneutic practices in the Analects, as well as in the commentary tradition, known as jingxue (classicism). The Analects contains at least two distinctive paradigms showing different ways of interpreting speech: One is Confucius's pragmatic approach, which emphasizes the intention and purpose of the speaker, and the other is Gongxi Hua's approach, which focuses on the literal meaning of the speech. Examples of each paradigm can be found in the long history of the exegeses of the Analects. Commentaries by two groups of scholars are discussed: those whose approach is similar to that of Confucius (Sima Qian, Zheng Xuan, Mouzi, Huang Kan, Cheng Yi, and Zhu Xi) and those whose approach is similar to that of Gongxi Hua (Xianqiu Meng, Han Fei, Wing-tsit Chan, Ya Hanzhang, and Wang Yousan).

HOW DID THE CLASSICAL Chinese scholars read the *Analects*? Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) suggests that when one reads the classical canon, one should look for the Sage's intentions, and one should do so as if one were listening to the Sage face to face (Zhu 1986, 162). This essay shows how Confucius emphasizes the importance of intention and purpose in his own communicative and hermeneutic practice in the *Analects* and explores how commentators from the Han to the Song dynasty adopted a similar approach in reading the *Analects*. The basic assumption of this “pragmatic approach” is that whenever one utters a sentence, this utterance is always an action, or what we call a “speech act.” Therefore, one has to pay attention not only to the literal meaning of the sentence but also to the intentions of the speaker, as well as the other pragmatic aspects of the utterance. In general, if we closely study the patterns of communicative and hermeneutic practice in the early Chinese philosophical texts, as well as in the commentary tradition, known as *jingxue* 經學 (classicism), we can see that much of the Chinese classical scholars' practice can be articulated in pragmatic terms such as “literal meaning,” “intention,” “force,” and “purpose,” as well as in classical Chinese scholarly terms such as *wenyi* 文義 (literal meaning), *yi* 意 or *zhi* 志

(intention), *zhi* 旨 (intention or purpose), *zhiyi* 旨意 (intended purpose), and *weizhi* 微旨 (subtle purpose).

More specifically, I wish to argue two related theses in this essay. The first is that the *Analects* contains at least two distinctive paradigms or exemplars showing different ways of interpreting people's utterances. Through a close reading of *Analects* 11.22, I show that the text contains two styles of hermeneutic practice: one represented by Confucius, the other by his student Gongxi Hua. I shall call them the "Confucius pragmatic paradigm" and the "Gongxi Hua nonpragmatic paradigm," respectively. Here is an outline of 11.22: Two of Confucius's students, Zilu and Ran You, ask Confucius the same question, and Confucius gives each of them a different answer. Having heard the exchange, Gongxi Hua says to Confucius that he is puzzled by his two answers. In his response, Confucius explains that his two utterances are two separate actions: One is to "hold Zilu back," the other is to "push Ran You forward." My analysis shows that even though the literal meanings (or propositional contents) of the two utterances may be contradictory, the purposes that Confucius intends to achieve with the two answers are consistent. Confucius's point is that Gongxi Hua will find coherence and unity if he turns his attention from the literal meanings of the words to the intentions—especially the intended purposes—of the speaker. The paradigm that Gongxi Hua represents focuses only on the literal meaning of the sentence, whereas the paradigm that Confucius represents regards an utterance always as an action, and it takes into account multiple pragmatic dimensions of the total speech act. Besides the literal meaning, the "total speech act" approach takes into account what the speaker intends to do with the utterance (the force), whom the speaker is addressing (the audience), as well as the ends that the speaker intends to achieve (the purpose).

The second thesis of this essay is that the *Analects* can be read as containing a hermeneutic blueprint for its own interpretation, that is, Confucius's pragmatic paradigm embodied in 11.22.¹ This study shows that in the long history of the exegeses of the *Analects*, starting in the Han dynasty, a number of commentators have interpreted Confucius's words in the *Analects* in the same pragmatic way Confucius interprets his own speeches. More specifically, the hermeneutic practice in the commentaries can be described as articulating not only the literal meaning conveyed by Confucius's utterances but also the force and the purpose of his utterances.² The examples discussed in this essay are drawn from Sima Qian 司馬遷 (ca. 145 BCE–ca. 86 BCE) and

¹This thesis is structurally parallel to one of Michael Fishbane's (1985) main theses in his influential book *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel*, which is that the Hebrew Bible contains hermeneutic models for its own interpretation.

²Because of space limitations, I cannot include a discussion of how Confucius (as well as the classical commentators) articulates the force of utterances. I have dealt with this issue elsewhere (Xiao 2005, 2006).

Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200) from the Han dynasty, Mouzi 牟子 from the Han or Weijing (according to some scholars), Huang Kan 皇侃 (448–545) from the Liang, and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) from the Song, all of whom follow the Confucius pragmatic paradigm. There are also examples from scholars who read the *Analects* in the manner of Gongxi Hua. They include classical figures such as Xianqiu Meng 咸丘蒙 (a student of Mencius) and Han Fei 韓非 (d.233 BCE), as well as contemporary scholars such as Alasdair MacIntyre, Wing-tsit Chan 陳榮捷, Ya Hanzhang 牙含章, and Wang Yousan 王友三.

This study incorporates research in different disciplines, such as the philosophy of language (including pragmatics), hermeneutics, Sinology (including Chinese classicism), religious studies, and intellectual history, to illustrate certain distinctive features of Chinese communicative and hermeneutic practice. In addition, this essay suggests a methodology that pays attention to both the nuances and large patterns in the exegesis of a canonical text, one that is applicable not only to the study of Chinese texts but also to other hermeneutic traditions. I hope this is a first step toward a general framework of comparative hermeneutics that will help us understand the varieties of linguistic practice in different cultural traditions. One might think that the *Analects* is an exceptional case, for it is a collection of recorded utterances and dialogues rather than a composed treatise such as the *Xunzi* or Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*. However, if one agrees with Quentin Skinner that a written text should be interpreted as a series of utterances by the author (Skinner 2002, vol. 1; Tully 1988), an examination of the *Analects* can shed light on the understanding of any text.

To avoid potential misunderstandings, a few words must be said about the term “Confucius” as it is used in this essay. By “Confucius,” I do not mean the historical Confucius but the character of Confucius who appears in the *Analects*. This implies that I do not share most of the assumptions that classical Chinese scholars take for granted—for example, that the Confucius of the *Analects* is the historical Confucius and that the *Analects* faithfully records the historical Sage's conversations with his disciples. Most importantly, many of these scholars also take for granted what I shall call the “myth of coherence.” This myth has at least two components: first, that the *Analects* as a text is coherent and unified, and second, that the thought of an individual thinker (e.g., Confucius) is always coherent, unified, and without contradictions. This myth is the main reason these scholars try to explain away the inconsistencies among the propositional contents of Confucius's utterances in the *Analects*. The pragmatic paradigm set by Confucius in 11.22 is crucial for them because it provides a concrete example of how to search for coherence and unity by finding the unifying purpose behind Confucius's utterances, even when the literal meanings of the utterances appear to be contradictory. As a result, the Confucius pragmatic paradigm allows these scholars to avoid adopting another strategy—that is, to explain away the inconsistencies in the *Analects* by saying that they are a result of the text's

many sources and layers, produced by different people with diverse agendas over a long period of time.³

Here, I do not deal with the general theoretical issues regarding the myth of coherence or with the particular issues of whether there is coherence and unity in the historical Confucius's thought. Nor do I discuss whether one should try to explain away the inconsistencies in the *Analects* in the first place. It is not necessary to address these issues here because my focus is the hermeneutic practice of the character of Confucius in 11.22 and its impact on the hermeneutic practice of later commentators. The task of this essay is to analyze how Confucius interprets his own communicative practice in 11.22, as well as how classical Chinese scholars read the *Analects*, not to prescribe how one ought to read the *Analects*.⁴

In other words, my perspective is that of a participant observer, with my judgments suspended. This approach is similar to that adopted by sociologist Samuel Heilman in his ethnographical study *Synagogue Life* (1973). As he puts it in the preface, "In this book I have attempted to describe from the perspective of the participant observer . . . the interaction generated within and by the members of a small modern Orthodox Jewish synagogue" (ix). Heilman describes a particularly interesting scene in which members of a weekly Torah study group are discussing a biblical passage:

When one of the group notes an apparent contradiction in the text, many possible interpretations are offered, all of them attempt to bring into line the disparate statements. The idea almost ubiquitous among modern biblical scholars, that the text was written by more than one human hand, never arises.⁵

If we put the classical Chinese scholars together in a room, we should expect to see a similar scene.

³This strategy is often adopted by scholars who practice source criticism, such as Yuan Mei 袁枚, E. Bruce Brooks, and A. Taeko Brooks. For example, this is Yuan Mei's strategy for reconciling Confucius's seemingly contradictory remarks about Guan Zhong 管仲 in the *Analects*. Yuan Mei speculates that the passages in the *Analects* condemning Guan Zhong were written by the disciples from Lu, whereas those praising Guan Zhong were written by the disciples from Qi; neither can be trusted to reflect Confucius's own view (Yuan 1736–1820, 10). Let me summarize Yuan Mei's strategy for dealing with the inconsistent views attributed to Confucius in the *Analects*. He first identifies the sources of the different views, which are two different groups (the disciples from Lu and the disciples from Qi); he then concludes that the historical Confucius is not the source of these two inconsistent views. The result is that no inconsistent idea is attributed to the same person. For a recent comprehensive project that identifies and attributes different ideas in the *Analects* to different groups of disciples and isolates the original thought of the historical Confucius from that of his disciples, see the important study *The Original Analects* (Brooks and Brooks 1998).

⁴I am grateful to one of the JAS readers for urging me to clarify this point.

⁵Here, I am using Naomi Schaefer's summary of the scene in Heilman's book (Schaefer 2003).

THE CONFUCIUS AND GONGXI HUA PARADIGMS IN THE *ANALECTS*

Now let us turn to a close reading of *Analects* 11.22. Let us divide the passage into three parts, which are referred to here as 11.22a, 11.22b, and 11.22c:

(a) Zilu asked, “Should one practice immediately what one has just learned?” The Master said, “As one’s father and elder brothers are still alive, how could one practice immediately what one has just learned?” Ran You asked, “Should one practice immediately what one has just learned?” The Master said, “One should practice immediately what one has just learned.”

(b) Gongxi Hua said [to Confucius], “When Zilu asked you, ‘Should one practice immediately what one has just learned?’ you said, ‘One’s father and elder brothers are still alive.’ When Ran You asked you, ‘Should one practice immediately what one has just learned?’ you said, ‘One should practice immediately what one has just learned.’ I am confused, and would venture to question this.”

(c) The Master said, “Ran You has a tendency of shrinking back easily. This is why I was pushing him forward [with those words]. Zilu has the energy of two men. This is why I was holding him back [with different words].”⁶

This passage has a distinct three-part structure: (a) an exchange between Confucius and his students, (b) a question asked by another student regarding the exchange, and (c) an articulation offered by Confucius about what he is doing in the exchange in the first part. It seems that any adequate interpretation of this intriguing passage should satisfy at least three conditions. First, it should provide an account of what is going on in the exchange in 11.22a. Second, it should provide the reasons that Gongxi Hua could have given for his puzzlement or confusion in 11.22b, if he had had a chance to articulate them. Third, it should provide an interpretation of Confucius’s response to Gongxi Hua in 11.22c that is able to relieve Gongxi Hua’s confusion. In other words, it should offer a good explanation of why Confucius gives two different or contradictory answers. I hope to provide an interpretation of 11.22 that will satisfy these conditions. More specifically, I first reconstruct the exchange in 11.22a and Gongxi Hua’s reasoning about why he is confused in 11.22b, then I argue that Confucius’s response provides a speech-act or pragmatic paradigm that can relieve Gongxi Hua’s confusion. But first I need to address a potential methodological objection to the use of pragmatic terms to characterize Confucius’s practice.

⁶All quotations from the *Analects* refer to the book and passage numbers in Yang Bojun (1980). I use D. C. Lau’s and Simon Leys’s translations, with modifications. I also consulted translations by James Legge, Ku Hung-ming, Arthur Waley, Raymond Dawson, Edward Slingerland, and Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr.

The Necessity of Sinological and Interpretative Inquiry

This essay shows that the hermeneutic practice of Confucius in 11.22, as well as that of generations of commentators, can be adequately described in terms of a pragmatic paradigm. However, some readers may object to this approach by saying that we should not use modern Western concepts or theories to characterize premodern Chinese practice. A brief response is in order here.

Assume that we use a concept or theory X to characterize a certain practice in premodern China, and X is something that comes from the modern Western intellectual tradition. X may be either a concept (such as the concepts of “speech act,” “literal meaning,” “propositional content,” “force,” “justice,” or “individual right”) or a theory (such as J. L. Austin’s theory of speech act, Donald Davidson’s theory of speech act, or Robert Nozick’s libertarian theory of individual rights). There are two types of arguments against the use of X. The first is an abstract philosophical argument based on the general claim that one simply cannot apply any modern Western concept or theory to premodern China. The second is a concrete argument with regard to X that is not based on philosophical doctrine but on a close examination of specific cases.

In general, the second type of argument avoids appealing to suspicious classifications such as “modern West” and “premodern China,” which are categories that are often used in the first type of argument. Therefore, one may argue that the concept of “individual right” is not an adequate interpretation of Confucius’s practice and thought based on concrete textual evidence rather than simply claiming that a modern Western concept such as individual rights cannot be used in a premodern Chinese context. The second type of argument does not rule out the possibility that certain modern Western concepts (such as the speech act) might turn out to be good interpretations of certain practices and thought in premodern China. Although it may indeed be the case that *some* modern Western concepts are inapplicable to premodern China, this does not imply that *all* such concepts must be unsuitable when we interpret premodern Chinese practice and thought, unless we rely on sweeping generalizations about the homogeneous essence of “premodern China” and “modern West” or philosophical speculations about the “radical difference” or the “radical otherness” of the classical Chinese language (for more detailed arguments, see Xiao 1997a).

In fact, there can be no philosophical substitute for nuanced sinological inquiry. This essay offers a concrete interpretation of Confucius’s linguistic practice in 11.22 in contemporary pragmatic terms. We should not dismiss these concepts based purely on abstract and speculative reasons; the proper way to assess the applicability of these concepts is to judge whether the interpretation aided by the pragmatic concepts is adequate in a concrete case such as 11.22.⁷ This implies

⁷For example, Chad Hansen argues that classical Chinese philosophers do not have concepts of the sentence, propositional content, or belief; he suggests that classical Chinese philosophers see language as “strings of names,” the only function of which is to produce effects on people’s behavior

that as a community of scholars, we need to make a judgment about which set of concepts makes the best sense of a passage. There is no knock-down philosophical proof to settle the issue once and for all—we have to get our hands dirty in the messy business of interpreting Chinese texts.

Finally, let me emphasize that what we are doing here is not using modern Western theory to vindicate Confucius's practice. In fact, our sinological and interpretative inquiry might require us to revise our theory in the process. I believe people's communicative practice, of which our philosophical theory is supposed to give an account, is always primary over theory. No theory has unquestioned authority; any theory of human communication has to be tested, adjusted, revised, or even abandoned according to how well it can cope with linguistic practice.⁸ For example, it could be argued that Austin's early theory of speech act should be rejected because it cannot deal with Confucius's speech acts in 11.22.⁹

Gongxi Hua's Reasoning Reconstructed

Let us now turn to a concrete interpretation of 11.22. In this section, we will focus primarily on the first two parts (11.22a and 11.22b), although we will also consult the third part (11.22c), in which Confucius offers his interpretation of his own communicative practice. It seems that there are two possible reconstructions of Gongxi Hua's reasoning about why he is puzzled. The first is that Gongxi Hua is puzzled because Confucius gives two *contradictory* answers to the same question; the second is that Confucius gives two *different* answers to the same question. I shall call them the "contradictory answers" account and the "different answers" account, respectively.

Let us first analyze what is going on in 11.22a. I shall use CZ to denote Confucius's answer to Zilu and CR to denote Confucius's answer to Ran You. At the beginning of 11.22, Zilu and Ran You both ask the following question of Confucius:

Wen si xing zhu 聞斯行諸?

Should one practice immediately what one has just learned?

We first hear Confucius's response to Zilu:

(Hansen 1983, 1985, 1992). As we will see in the next section, this pragmatic framework is not broad enough to give an adequate account of Confucius's communicative and hermeneutic practice in 11.22.

⁸In dealing with this issue, I was greatly helped by my conversations with the late Benjamin Schwartz, as well as by his writings (see esp. Schwartz 1996, 144–45).

⁹Here, I disagree with Herbert Fingarette (1967, 1972), who rejects Austin's later theory and accepts his early theory. The main difference between Austin's two theories is that according to the early theory, only performative utterances (such as saying "I do" during a wedding ceremony) count as speech acts, whereas the later theory holds that all utterances are speech acts. I argue elsewhere that one of the main reasons Fingarette does not read the *Analects* in a fully pragmatic manner is that he adopts Austin's early, narrow concept of the speech act, according to which there is hardly any speech act in the *Analects* (Xiao 2005).

(CZ) *You fu xiong zai, ru zhi he qi wen si xing zhi* 有父兄在，如之何其聞斯行之？

As one's father and elder brothers are still alive, how could one practice immediately what one has just learned?

We then hear Confucius's response to Ran You:

(CR) *Wen si xing zhi* 聞斯行之。

One should practice immediately what one has just learned.¹⁰

Because CR is simpler than CZ, let us start with CR. What does Confucius do when he responds to Ran You? Obviously, Confucius is telling Ran You to practice immediately what he has just learned. We can put it as follows: When Confucius responds to Ran You, he intends Ran You to interpret his words as true *if and only if* Ran You immediately practices what he has just learned. This description captures the content of what is said. This is what Austin calls the "locution" or "locutionary act." In general, to perform a locutionary act is to utter a sentence that has what we call "propositional content" or "literal meaning."¹¹

However, the propositional content is only part of what is going on in the scene. When one interprets an utterance, it is not enough to know what is being said; one must also know what the speaker is doing with the words. In saying *wen si xing zhi* 聞斯行之, Confucius *urges* or *instructs* Ran You to practice immediately what he has just learned. This description captures the action constituted by the utterance itself, which is what Austin calls an "illocutionary act" or "illocutionary force." In the *Analects*, we can find a variety of illocutionary forces in Confucius's utterances: to ask a question (12.20), to make an assertion (1.1, 1.3), to tell a joke (17.4), to express a wish (5.7), and to quote an important saying (3.12) (Xiao 2005, 2006). In 11.22, we can say that the force of the utterance (CR) is to issue an instruction or an order.

However, there could be an objection to our interpretation of CR as issuing an instruction. The objection goes something like this: It appears that our interpretation of the force of CR is not based on the original Chinese sentence but on its English translation, "One should practice immediately what one has just learned" (or "Practice immediately what has just been learned"). This is a

¹⁰Another good translation might be, "Practice immediately what has just been learned." In the original Chinese sentence, the first character, *wen*, means "to hear" or "to learn"; the second character, *si*, means "this"; the third character, *xing*, means "to practice" or "to be put into practice"; and the last character, *zhi*, means "it"—referring, in this case, to what has just been learned. A more literal translation might be, "Having heard something, [then immediately] put it into practice." I originally mistranslated *si* as "then" or "as soon as." I am grateful to P. J. Ivanhoe for correcting me on this.

¹¹For a general argument that all speech acts must have a "contentfulness" aspect, see Robert Brandom (1994).

sentence of imperative or prescriptive mood; the English verb “practice” has a variety of inflections that express different grammatical moods. Because we have a sentence of prescriptive mood here, it is easy to see that its force is to issue an instruction. However, classical Chinese is not an inflected language, and because the Chinese verb *xing* has no inflection, we do not know whether its grammatical mood is descriptive or prescriptive (or whether it has any grammatical mood at all). Hence, we cannot really tell what the pragmatic force of CR is.

I have given a detailed response to this objection elsewhere (Xiao 2006). My main point is that inflection is not the only way to indicate grammatical mood; moreover, one cannot always rely on grammatical mood to determine the pragmatic force of an utterance because there is no strict correlation between mood and force or between grammar and pragmatics. In practice, one can make a judgment about the force of an utterance based on the context of the utterance, or what Austin calls the “total speech act situation.” It is a significant fact that no translator has difficulty figuring out what the appropriate translation of CR should be; almost all of the scholars who have translated the *Analects* into English take the utterance as issuing an instruction. This is probably why all have chosen the imperative mood in their translations: “One *should* immediately put into practice what one has heard” (D.C. Lau, Arthur Waley, Raymond Dawson, and David Hinton) or “*Practice* it at once” (James Legge, Simon Leys, Bruce and Taeko Brooks, Roger Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr., and Chichung Huang). Based on the experience of their own everyday communicative practice, it is quite easy for them to make the judgment that the force of this utterance must be issuing an instruction.

Now let us turn to Confucius’s answer to Zilu (CZ). We can divide CZ into two parts: Confucius’s answer to the question and his reason for his answer.

(CZa) How could one immediately practice what one has just learned?

(CZb) As one’s father and elder brothers are still alive.

Note that CZa has the same grammatical mood as an interrogative sentence. Does this mean that its force is to ask a question? One might argue that because Chinese is not an inflected language, we cannot say that the original Chinese sentence, *Ru zhi he qi wen si xing zhi* 如之何其聞斯行之? (How could one immediately practice what one has just learned?) has the interrogative mood. However, as we have discussed, one should not assume that inflection is the only way to indicate grammatical mood, nor should one assume that there is a strict correlation between grammatical mood and pragmatic force. A closer look at the total speech act situation suggests that Confucius uses the particle phrase *ru zhi he qi* 如之何其 at the beginning of the sentence to indicate that he intends the pragmatic force of the utterance to be what is usually called a

rhetorical question.¹² Confucius is not asking Zilu a question but urging him *not* to practice immediately what he has just learned. This interpretation of the intended force of CZa can be confirmed by Confucius's response to Gongxi Hua, in which Confucius says that he wants to "hold Zilu back" with those words. We can reformulate CZa, then, in the form of an imperative sentence:

One should not practice immediately what one has just learned.

If we go back to Confucius's answer to Ran You (CR), "One should practice immediately what one has just learned," it is clear that CZa is a logical negation of CR. That is to say, the propositional contents (literal meanings or thoughts) of these two utterances contradict each other; they cannot be true at the same time. We can easily imagine Gongxi Hua, the student who observes Confucius's interactions with Ran You and Zilu, asking himself, how can the Master give two contradictory answers? Does the Master have a definitive position regarding the relationship between learning (*wen* 聞) and practice (*xing* 行)? It seems that Gongxi Hua indeed has good reason to feel confused. This is the "contradictory answers" interpretation of Gongxi Hua's confusion.

According to this interpretation, when Gongxi Hua says to Confucius, "I am confused" (*chi ye huo* 赤也惑), he means that he does not understand why Confucius has given two contradictory instructions. In fact, this is consistent with Confucius's own definition of the word 惑 (*huo*). Later, when a disciple asks Confucius how to "recognize confusion" (*bianhuo* 辨惑), Confucius replies,

You love someone and wish him to live, and yet you also hate him and wish him to die. Now you not only wish him to live but also wish him to die, this is confusion [*huo* 惑]. (*Analects* 12.30)

Judging from this passage, for Confucius, the expression of two wishes (or the issuance of two instructions) whose propositional contents contradict each other counts as "confusion."¹³ Hence, it is reasonable to assume that when Confucius hears Gongxi Hua saying "I am confused," he understands that Gongxi Hua is complaining that the Master seems to have given two contradictory instructions.

¹²Confucius often uses rhetorical question to make an assertion (as in 1.1 and 17.11) or to issue an order (as here). Christopher Harbsmeier (1981) gives a systematic analysis of the rhetorical questions in classical Chinese texts.

¹³What Confucius is dealing with is "(to wish that *p*) and (to wish that *q*)," and here, *p* and *q* have contradictory propositional contents. We should be careful not to confuse it with "to wish that (*p* and *q*)." The former means having two wishes whose propositional contents contradict each other; the latter amounts to wishing a logical contradiction. The latter is impossible, whereas the former is a common phenomenon in life: People do desire or wish inconsistent things, as Bernard Williams (1973) convincingly argues. See also John Searle (2001, esp. 30–32).

However, there is also evidence to support another interpretation of Gongxi Hua's confusion, which is the "different answers" account. The key evidence is the fact that in 11.22b, when Gongxi Hua recounts the exchange, he paraphrases Confucius's answer to Zilu as "One's father and elder brothers are still alive," which is not strictly contradictory to CR. He does not paraphrase it simply as "How could one practice immediately what one has just learned," which is strictly contradictory to CR. Thus, Gongxi Hua seems to take Confucius's answer to Zilu as different from (though not necessarily contradictory to) his answer to Ran You.¹⁴

Here, I leave open which account of Gongxi Hua's reasoning is the correct one. In the next two sections, which focus on Confucius's response to Gongxi Hua (11.22c), I assume that both are possible interpretations, and I argue that Confucius's speech-act paradigm is able to clarify Gongxi Hua's confusion on both accounts.

Confucius's Pragmatic Paradigm: Treating Utterances as Speech Acts

Now let us turn to Confucius's response to Gongxi Hua, which I refer to as CG:

(CG) Ran You has a tendency of shrinking back easily. This is why I was pushing him forward [with those words]. Zilu has the energy of two men. This is why I was holding him back [with different words].

What strikes us first about this passage is what Confucius does *not* do here. For example, he does not try to articulate the literal meanings of his two utterances to show that they do not really contradict each other. Apparently, he does not think that Gongxi Hua's confusion is caused by his not understanding (or misunderstanding) the literal meanings of the sentences. Nor does he think that Gongxi Hua's confusion is caused by his not understanding (or misunderstanding) the force of the Master's utterances, for we do not find him articulating the force of his earlier utterances here, as he does elsewhere when he is in a similar situation.¹⁵

¹⁴Many classical scholars adopt the "different answers" interpretation. For example, Kong Anguo 孔安國 (d.ca. 120 BCE), Sima Qian (ca 145BCE–ca. 86BCE), and Huang Kan 皇侃 (448–545) all comment that Gongxi Hua is puzzled by Confucius "giving different answers to the same question" (*wen tong da yi* 問同答異) (Li 1998, 449; Shiji 1997, 2191; Huang 1963, 114). Huang Kan actually takes Confucius's *wen tong da yi* as the most distinctive feature of his communicative practice in the *Analects* (1963, 1). Wang Bi 王弼 (226–49) and Yuan Mei 袁枚 (1716–98) make the same observation (Ma 1995–99, 1696; Yuan 1736–1820, 24:11). Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) comments, "There are a lot of cases in the *Analects* where the same question is answered differently [by Confucius]. Sometimes it is because the questioners have different temperaments, sometimes because Confucius sees the specific intentions of the questioners and speaks to their specific situations" (Cheng and Cheng 1981, 246).

¹⁵For example, in 17.4, when a disciple points out that two of Confucius's utterances are not consistent with each other, Confucius responds by giving a retrospective reinterpretation of the force of

There are two important features of what Confucius does in his response to Gongxi Hua: (1) He treats utterances as speech acts, and (2) he articulates the purpose of his speech acts. I will deal with the first feature in this section and with the second in the next section.

Confucius first draws Gongxi Hua's attention to the fact that his two utterances are two separate actions by using two verbs, *jin* 進 (pushing forward) and *tui* 退 (holding back), to describe his two answers. It is no stretch to assume that Confucius sees an utterance as an *action*, as *doing things with words*. What Confucius does here is to invite Gongxi Hua to move from the level of the sentence to the level of the speech act.

Let us revisit Zilu's and Ran You's original questions from this speech-act perspective. At the beginning of 11.22, both Zilu and Ran You ask Confucius a question. Let me use *QZ* to refer to the question asked by Zilu and *QR* to denote the question asked by Ran You:

(QZ) *Wen si xing zhu* 聞斯行諸? (子路)

Should one practice immediately what one has just learned?

(QR) *Wen si xing zhu* 聞斯行諸? (冉由)

Should one practice immediately what one has just learned?

If one focuses only on the literal meaning of the sentences, one will hear the same sentence twice:

Wen si xing zhu 聞斯行諸?

Should one practice immediately what one has just learned?

In other words, two different speakers appear to ask the same question—a general question about the temporal relationship between learning and practice, between what has just been learned (*wen*) and when to practice it (*xing*). This seems to be exactly what Gongxi Hua hears.

However, Confucius hears two different questions. The two utterances, *QZ* and *QR*, can be said to be the “same” only in the sense that the literal meanings of the sentences are the same. Because Confucius does not focus on sentences but utterances, and because an utterance always implies a speaker, Confucius naturally takes the speaker into account. In other words, from Confucius's pragmatic perspective, the same sentence uttered by two different speakers should be understood as two different utterances. This seems to be exactly how Confucius understands *QZ* and *QR*, and this is why he responds to them differently.¹⁶

one of his two utterances, claiming that it was actually intended as a joke and should have not been taken seriously at all.

¹⁶One might want to incorporate Confucius's interpretation into one's translation. Even though the original sentence, *wen si xing zhu* 聞斯行諸, does not contain any Chinese equivalent word for the pronoun “I,” one may still translate it as, “Should I practice immediately what I have just learned?”

Borrowing Austin's terms, we can say that when a speaker utters a sentence, the "only actual phenomenon" has to be the "total speech act in the total speech situation" (Austin 1975, 148), which includes the utterance of the sentence, the speaker, the audience, the locution (literal meaning) of the utterance, and the illocutionary force of the utterance. However, as we will see in the next section, Confucius's practice in 11.22 also suggests that there is another aspect of the utterance: the speaker's ulterior purpose in undertaking the speech act.

Confucius's Pragmatic Paradigm: Articulating the Purpose of an Utterance

We now turn to the other account of Gongxi Hua's confusion, which is that he is confused by the fact that the Master gives two *contradictory* answers to the same question. In his response to Gongxi Hua, Confucius seems to be pointing out that one should not focus on the literal meanings or propositional contents of the two utterances, which may be contradictory to each other; rather, one should pay attention to the fact that they are two different actions. Indeed, if one moves from the level of the sentence to that of the speech act, one can see that there are simply two actions: pushing Ran You forward and holding Zilu back. Obviously, there is nothing contradictory between these two actions because Confucius is not giving two contradictory answers to *one person*—that is, he is not pushing the same person forward and holding him back simultaneously.

In his response, although Confucius does not explicitly assure Gongxi Hua that there is no contradiction in his answers, he does explain to Gongxi Hua that the purposes of his two utterances are consistent.¹⁷ We can paraphrase Confucius's response as follows: Ran You has a tendency to shrink back easily; for this reason, I push him forward *so that he will not delay carrying out what he has just learned*. Zilu, on the other hand, has the energy of two men; for this reason, I hold him back *so that he will not rush to carry out what he has just learned*.

One can easily infer that the final result Confucius wants to achieve by his two utterances is to create a world in which Zilu and Ran You behave similarly—that is, both will put into practice what they have just learned, at the appropriate pace, which is neither rash nor sluggish. The specific situation Confucius faces here is

The pragmatic point becomes evident in this translation because it shows that the question is indeed different when different people utter it.

¹⁷I borrow the term "purpose" from Donald Davidson. One of the three basic intentions with which every linguistic utterance is made, according to Davidson, is the speaker's intention to accomplish a certain ulterior purpose or end (Davidson 1984a, 1984c, 1993). Here, our concept of purpose is inspired by—though not identical with—the conception of *zhi* 旨 (purpose), *zhiyi* 旨意 (intended purpose), or *weizhi* 微旨 (subtle purpose) that can be found in works by Chinese scholars such as Wang Bi, Huang Kan, Cheng Yi, and Zhu Xi. Some of them have worked out philosophical theories of language in which this concept plays a crucial role. For discussions of Wang Bi's theory, see Rudolf Wagner (2000) and Robert Ashmore (2003).

that these two disciples have opposite temperaments; therefore, in order to make them behave in the same way, Confucius has to produce opposite effects on them by saying opposite things to them. If one wants to generalize about what Confucius is doing here, one may put it the way Cheng Yi does: “Those who are strong and rash should be held back; those who are weak and sluggish should be pushed forward” (Cheng and Cheng 1981, 186; see also 1230).

It is easy to see that behind this practical thesis, there is a more general thesis: What has just been learned should be put into practice with the right speed, which is neither rash nor sluggish. This is Confucius’s philosophical doctrine of the mean regarding the temporal relationship between learning and practice. Confucius does not explicitly state such a thesis, although we can imagine that there could have been a sentence at the end of 11.22 in which the Master makes this general thesis explicit, just as he does on another occasion:

Zigong asked: “Who is better: Zizhang or Zixia?” The Master said: “Zizhang overshoots and Zixia falls short.” Zigong said: “Then Zizhang must be the better one?” The Master said: “To overshoot is as bad as to fall short.” (*Analects* 11.16)

Obviously, we can take the last sentence as another version of Confucius’s general doctrine of the mean.

There are important implications of 11.22 because it provides us with clues about how Confucius might have wanted us to understand other passages in the *Analects*. As mentioned earlier, 11.22 has a unique three-part structure: (a) an exchange between Confucius and his students, (b) a question asked by another student regarding the exchange, and (c) an articulation offered by Confucius about what he is doing in the exchange. There are only three passages in the *Analects* (11.22, 11.26, and 17.4) that have this structure; most passages have only the first part, namely, the exchange between Confucius and a student. What is unique about 11.22 is its third part, which offers a vivid illustration of how Confucius deals with a student’s confusion. It is important to note that Confucius does two things in his response: He articulates the purposes of his utterances, and he insists on the unity of the purposes behind his two utterances despite the apparent contradictions of or differences in their literal meanings.¹⁸

In the rest of this essay, I will discuss a group of scholars (Wing-tsit Chan, Ya Hangzhang, Wang Yousan, and Alasdair MacIntyre) who read the *Analects* in the manner of Gongxi Hua, focusing on the propositional contents of

¹⁸This emphasis on the unity of purposes has influenced many commentators. Besides 11.22, other passages in the *Analects* might have also encouraged them to seek the “one single thread running through” Confucius’s thought, as Confucius himself puts it in 4.15 (also see 15.3 and 15.24). I am grateful to one of the *JAS* readers for pointing out this to me. See also the discussion of these passages in Brooks and Brooks (2002, 189).

Confucius's utterances and taking them as theoretical theses held by Confucius. I will also discuss another group of scholars (Zheng Xuan, Huang Kan, Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi, and Mouzi) who interpret the *Analects* in a very different way. Following Confucius's example in 11.22, these scholars articulate the purposes behind Confucius's utterances instead of taking the propositional contents as their focal point.

TWO PARADIGMS OF HERMENEUTIC PRACTICE IN THE EXEGESES OF THE *ANALECTS*

In this part of the essay, I will examine two hermeneutic or interpretative traditions in the history of the exegeses of the *Analects*, represented by the Confucius pragmatic paradigm and the Gongxi Hua nonpragmatic paradigm. I start with a discussion of how traditions of hermeneutic practice can be transmitted through examples, and in this context, I contrast Confucius's hermeneutic *practice* with Mencius's hermeneutic *theory*. This is followed by an analysis of the hermeneutic practice of scholars who read the *Analects* in the Gongxi Hua manner. I then discuss the scholars who read the *Analects* in Confucius's pragmatic style.

Traditions of Hermeneutic Practice Transmitted through Paradigms

In 11.22a, we see Confucius communicating with his students by saying certain things to them. In 11.22c, we see Confucius interpreting his own communicative practice by articulating the purposes of his utterances. This is one of several concrete examples of Confucius's hermeneutic practice in the *Analects*. However, we rarely find Confucius stating general rules about how one should interpret texts. In other words, Confucius does not offer us a hermeneutic theory in the *Analects*; we have only concrete examples or paradigms of Confucius's hermeneutic practice. I use the term "paradigm" to refer to concrete exemplars or models that *show* how to do certain things in certain ways, not general theories or rules that *say* explicitly how to do things in certain ways.¹⁹

In the two thousand-year history of Chinese classicism (*jingxue* 經學), scholars have given concrete interpretations of classical texts, as well as theoretical

¹⁹The term "paradigm" is usually associated with Thomas Kuhn's 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. However, as Kuhn himself acknowledges, the term has too many different meanings in the book. Roughly speaking, we can find two main uses of the term in *The Structure of Scientific Revolution*. In a broad sense, it refers to a "disciplinary matrix," which consists of "an entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, and so on shared by the members of a given community" (Kuhn 1970, 182). In a narrow sense, it refers to just one of the elements in this disciplinary matrix, that is, "exemplars" (182) or "concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as a basis for the solution of the remaining puzzles of normal science" (187). In fact, Kuhn initially used the term in its narrow sense when he first introduced it in a 1959 paper, and he acknowledged recently that he should not have used it so broadly in *The Structure of Scientific Revolution* (Kuhn 2000, 298). Here, the term is used in its narrow sense.

reflections on their own hermeneutic practice. When we study a hermeneutic tradition, theories are certainly an important part, and we should take into account both theory and practice. However, in this essay, the emphasis is on concrete examples of practice rather than theoretical accounts. There are two reasons for doing so. First, a tradition of practice is usually transmitted through *paradigms* of practice, not *theories* of practice.²⁰ Second, this approach enables us to see the connection between Confucius and the history of Chinese classicism. When we focus on practice, we are able to show that even though Confucius does not have a theory of interpretation, his hermeneutic practice as a paradigm has a long-lasting effect.²¹

Confucius prefers to use concrete examples to transmit a tradition of practice, and we can find many examples of how he teaches through examples and analogical reasoning (see, e.g., *Analects* 1.15, 3.8, 5.9, 5.13, 7.8, 15.42, 16.13, 17.19). This is consistent with what he is reported to have said: “To express it in empty words would not be as deep and clear as it would if it were to be manifested in the records of deeds” (Sima Qian 1959, 3297).

Mencius's Hermeneutic Theory

We can shed light on Confucius's hermeneutic practice by contrasting it with Mencius's hermeneutic theory. Zhu Xi observes, “Mencius often speaks of general principles in his teaching, whereas Confucius teaches people how to cultivate virtues in their concrete practice” (1986, 429). As this section will show, Mencius's theory can be taken as a theory of Confucius's hermeneutic practice.

Both Confucius and Mencius comment on the canonical text the *Odes* (*Shi* 詩). In the *Analects*, we find concrete examples of Confucius interpreting the *Odes* (see, e.g., *Analects* 1.15, 2.2, 3.8, 7.18, 8.8, 13.5, 16.13, and 17.9). However, in the *Mencius*, besides concrete examples, we can also find a general rule regarding how one should read the *Odes*. When Mencius critiques

²⁰For an excellent study that makes a similar Kuhnian point, see Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Michael Nylan (2003). Hans-Georg Gadamer (1989) argues that we should understand interpretative practice in the way that Aristotle understood action or practice (*praxis*). For a discussion of the affinities between Gadamer and Kuhn on this point, see Richard Bernstein (1983). According to Bernstein, one of Gadamer's main contributions is his critique of modernity's tendency to misidentify *praxis* with *technē* (technology and science) and to reduce understanding and practical wisdom (*phronēsis*) to the mechanical application of universal rules to particular instances. As Bernstein puts it, “We can learn from Aristotle what practice really is, and why it is not to be identified with the ‘application of science to technical tasks’ . . . The type of knowledge and truth that hermeneutics yields is practical knowledge and truth that shapes our *praxis*” (1983, 149–50).

²¹The account here cannot be the whole story of how a tradition is invented, transmitted, and maintained. It would have to include factors outside the texts. In this case, it would have to include institutional factors such as the court-appointed “*Jingxue* Masters” (Qian 2001, 181–261) and the civil examination system (Elman 2000), which have institutionalized the transmission of the standard interpretations of the classics.

the way a student, Xianqiu Meng 咸丘蒙, interprets a poem from the *Odes*, Mencius provides the following rule:

A reader of the *Odes* should not allow the words to obscure the sentences, nor the sentences to obscure the intentions [of the poet]. Try to meet the intentions [of the poet] through [your own] understanding—that is the way to get the poem. (5A: 4)²²

However, one may naturally question how to get the poet's intentions right. As Wang Guowei 王國維 (1877–1927) puts it, “How can one make sure that one's understanding of the intentions of the ancient poets is the correct one?” (Wang 1997, 76). Wang Guowei suggests that Mencius has the following solution: One should try one's best to know the poet as a person, as well as the age in which the poet lived. Wang Guowei has in mind this passage from the *Mencius*:

When one reads the poems and the writings of the ancients, how could it be right not to know something about them as men? Hence one should try to understand the age in which they have lived. This can be described as “looking for friends in history.” (5B: 8)

In other words, Mencius seems to be suggesting that when we make judgments about the intentions of the ancient poets, we need to know the nonlinguistic factors about them, such as their lives, their characters, and their time.²³ One may take Mencius's theory as applicable to the interpretations of other texts as well. In fact, Zhao Qi 趙岐 (d.201), one of the earliest commentators on the *Mencius*, explicitly says that Mencius's rule for the interpretation of poetry is intended as a general one, and it should be applied to the interpretation of the *Mencius* itself. In the preface to his commentary on the *Mencius*, after citing Mencius's rule from 5A: 4, Zhao Qi says, “Mencius's saying does not just apply to interpretation of the *Poems*; it is also intended to teach us how to seek deeply into Mencius's intentions in order to understand his words” (2000, 12).

Here we have a case in which a commentator is self-consciously applying an interpretative theory that is contained in a text to the text itself.²⁴ It seems evident that Mencius is theorizing what Confucius practices in 11.22. Unlike the *Mencius*, the *Analects* does not include any explicit interpretative theory. However, it does

²²All of the passages from the *Mencius* in this essay are D. C. Lau's translation with some modifications. There have been many different interpretations of 5A: 4; here, I follow Zhao Qi's interpretation (Zhao 2000, 297–98), which is shared by scholars such as Cheng Yi (Cheng and Cheng 1981, 353), Zhu Xi (1986, 1359, 3258), and Wang Guowei (1997, 76).

²³Mencius's theory can be justified philosophically. For detailed arguments, see Davidson (1984b) and Martinich (2006). I am grateful to A. P. Martinich for helping me understand this important point.

²⁴What Zhao Qi does here is structurally parallel to Leo Strauss's adoption of Spinoza's hermeneutic practice when he reads Spinoza (Strauss 1952).

contain specific paradigms of interpretative practice, two of which we have already mentioned: the Confucius and Gongxi Hua paradigms. Let us now turn to the legacy of these two paradigms in the history of the exegeses of the *Analects*.

The Gongxi Hua Paradigm in the Exegeses of the *Analects*

In the long history of the *Analects* exegeses, some scholars have read the *Analects* in the same way that Gongxi Hua interprets Confucius's utterances. They focus only on the literal meaning of the speaker's utterances, and as a result, they easily find contradictions among the propositional contents of the utterances, just as Gongxi Hua finds contradictions in Confucius's answers. This section offers several examples from this tradition.

One of the earliest instances of a Gongxi Hua-style interpretative practice can be found in the *Mencius*. The passage cited earlier from 5A: 4 is actually from Mencius's response to a question raised by one of his students, Xianqiu Meng, who reads the *Odes* in a Gongxi Hua manner. Xianqiu Meng's question concerns the following lines from the poem *Beishan* of the *Odes*:

There is no territory under Heaven
Which is not the king's.
There is no man on the borders of the land
Who is not his subject.

Xianqiu Meng wonders whether there is a contradiction between these lines and the idea that when Shun becomes king, his father will not be his subject. As Xianqiu Meng puts it to Mencius, "Now since Shun has become the king, I would venture to ask: How on earth could his father not be a subject?" (5A: 4).

In his response, Mencius points out that there is actually no contradiction if Xianqiu Meng gives up his way of interpreting the poem:

This is not the meaning of the poem. The poem is about someone who was unable to minister to the needs of his parents as a result of having to attend to the king's business. The poet was saying, "This is all the king's business. Why am I alone overburdened?" Therefore, a reader of the *Odes* should not allow the words to obscure the sentences, nor the sentences to obscure the intentions [of the poet]. Try to meet the intentions [of the poet] through [your own] understanding—that is the way to get the poem. If one only focuses on the sentences, then there is the poem *Yunhan* which says,

Of the remaining multitudes of Zhou
Not a single man survived.

If this were to be read literally, it would mean that not a single Zhou subject survived, [which is absurd]. (5A: 4)

Mencius emphasizes two things here: First, one should look at the entire poem rather than one or two lines taken out of context in order to find the right interpretation. Second, one should not focus on the literal meaning but on the author's intended purpose in writing the poem. In this case, Mencius points out that the intention of the poet is to complain that he has devoted himself to the service of the king and has no time for his parents. We can readily agree with both of Mencius's general theoretical points—that one should not take the lines of a poem out of context and that one should not let the literal meaning obscure the intended meaning—even though we may not necessarily agree with Mencius's specific take on the poet's intention in this poem.²⁵

Although the Gongxi Hua approach was not a dominant one in premodern China,²⁶ instances of this approach are abundant when we turn to contemporary studies of Chinese thought. Here, let us take a close look at how several contemporary scholars have read *Analects* 11.12 in the Gongxi Hua style.

Scholars who take Confucius to be a humanist philosopher—someone who does not believe in spirits and gods—often refer to the following passage as their decisive evidence:

Zilu asked about how to serve the spirits and gods. The Master said: “One is not yet able to serve men, how could one serve the spirits and gods?”

Zilu said: “May I ask you about death?” The Master said: “One does not yet know life, how could one know death?” (11.12)

Wing-tsit Chan takes this passage as evidence showing that “the humanistic tendency had been in evidence long before his time, but it was Confucius who turned it into the strongest force in Chinese philosophy. He did not care to talk about spiritual beings or even about life after death” (Chan 1963, 15). One recent instance of such an interpretation of 11.12 can be found in a book on the history of Chinese atheism by Ya Hanzhang and Wang Yousan:

Confucius's idea is actually not that “One should serve man first and spirits and ghosts later,” but rather that “One should just serve man, not spirits and ghosts.” We can draw such a conclusion based on this passage alone, and we would be more convinced if we connect it with Confucius's thought as a whole. “Taking human affairs seriously, and

²⁵The Han commentators Zheng Xuan and the authors of the *xiaoxu* 小序 (small preface) give very similar interpretations of this poem (Mao 1998, 97–98). Wang Guowei argues that Mencius's interpretative theory shaped Han commentators' interpretation of the *Odes* (Wang 1997, 76–77). Although Zhu Xi's hermeneutic practice is also influenced by Mencius, he has famously expressed his disagreement with the Han commentators' specific interpretations of many individual poems in the *Odes* (Zhu 2002, 327–759). It can be argued that Zhu Xi's disagreement is still an internal one, for both Zhu Xi and the Han commentators share Mencius's general interpretative framework.

²⁶Examples of the Gongxi Hua style of interpretation can also be found in Han Fei (d.233 BCE) and Wang Chong 王充 (27–97?). See Han (1974, 795–96) and Wang (1991, 395–429).

taking spirits and ghosts lightly” is one of the fundamental traits of Confucius’s thought; this clear-minded rationalist spirit is prevailing in the *Analects*. (1992, 66)

However, 11.12 supports the humanist reading *only* when it is read in a Gongxi Hua manner. In a later section of this essay, we will find a very different interpretation of this passage by Mouzi. However, let us now turn to examples from the tradition of the Confucius pragmatic paradigm in the history of the *Analects* exegeses.

The Confucius Pragmatic Paradigm in the Exegeses of the *Analects*

In this section, I will examine commentaries on three passages in the *Analects* by several well-known commentators: Zheng Xuan, Huang Kan, Cheng Yi, and Zhu Xi.²⁷ One of the most important things we can learn from 11.22 is that we need to look for the intended purposes behind Confucius’s utterances, and this requires us to take into account many nonlinguistic factors of the speech act situation, such as the audience and what Confucius has in mind when he utters the sentences. Cheng Yi (1033–1107) thinks that this is what we should learn from 11.22:

When recording speech, it is always harmful if one only understands the words, not the mind/heart.... For example, when Confucius said [to Ran You] that one should practice immediately what one has just learned, if Gongxi Hua had not asked a question by contrasting it to what Confucius had said to Zilu, one would have believed in what Confucius said [to Ran You that one should practice immediately what one has just learned]. This would indeed have been harmful. (Cheng and Cheng 1981, 163)

Cheng Yi has obviously been influenced by Confucius’s hermeneutic practice in 11.22. Confucius explains to Gongxi Hua his intended purpose as follows:

²⁷Here, I focus only on these commentators’ practice, not their theory. As far as we know, Zheng Xuan did not leave a theory regarding his hermeneutic practice. Huang Kan’s hermeneutic theory, which is influenced by Buddhism and Daoism, is discussed in Chen Jinmu (1995), Jiang Guanghui (2003), and Robert Ashmore (2003). Cheng Yi gives a theoretical account of his own practice. If we wanted to characterize these commentators’ practice in Cheng Yi’s terms, we could say that they are articulating what he calls the “subtle purpose” of Confucius’s utterance. Cheng Yi holds that the main task of interpreting the classics is to “articulate their subtle purpose” (*fa qi weizhi* 發其微旨) (Cheng and Cheng 1981, 349). The other terms he uses are *jingzhi* 經旨 (the purpose of the classics; 205) and *shengren suoyi zhaojing zhi yi* 聖人所以作經之意 (the reason why the Sages produced the classics; 322). Besides literal meaning and purpose, Cheng Yi also explores other dimensions of a text, such as *qixiang* 氣象 (energy and image). Zhu Xi adopts most of Cheng Yi’s theory. For a discussion of Zhu Xi’s study of the classics in general, see Cai Fanglu (2004); for a discussion of Zhu Xi’s commentary on the *Analects*, as well as those of other commentators, see Daniel Gardner (2003) and John Makeham (2003).

(CG) *Qiu ye tui, gu jin zhi; you ye jianren, gu tui zhi* 求也退，故進之；由也兼人，故退之。

Ran You has a tendency of shrinking back easily. This is why I was pushing him forward [with those words]. Zilu has the energy of two men. This is why I was holding him back [with different words].

We can regard CG as a formula, which is that Confucius thinks that X has such-and-such a character, and that is why Confucius is doing P to him with certain words. We can find variations of this formula among many commentaries. Our first example comes from the commentaries on 7.11:

The Master said to Yan Hui: “To come out when needed and to hide when dismissed – only you and I can do this—isn’t that so?”

Zilu said: “If you had command of all the armies, whom would you take as your lieutenant?” The Master said: “For my lieutenant, I would not choose a man who wrestles with tigers or swims across rivers without fearing death. He should be full of apprehension before going into action and always prefer a victory achieved by strategy.” (*Analects* 7.11)

鄭注：“疾子路好勇，故以此言抑之。”

Zheng Xuan: “The Master worries that Zilu is fond of courage; this is why he says these words to hold him back.” (Wang 1991, 76)²⁸

程注：“子路自負其勇，謂夫子必與己，故夫子抑而教之。”

Cheng Yi: “Zilu is proud of his courage, saying that the Master must take him [as his lieutenant]. This is why the Master is holding him back to teach him.” (Cheng and Cheng 1981, 1144)

朱注：“言此皆以抑其勇而教之。”

Zhu Xi: “The Master is saying this to hold back Zilu’s rashness in order to help him [overcome his shortcomings].” (Zhu 1983, 95)

A second example is the commentaries on 9.27:

The Master said, “If anyone dressed in a worn-out gown padded with old silk floss can stand beside a man wearing fox or badger fur without feeling ashamed, it is, I suppose, Yu [Zilu]. As it is said in the *Odes*, ‘Neither

²⁸Zheng Xuan might be the first commentator to systematically pay attention to the pragmatic aspects of the *Analects*. His commentary on the *Analects* was finished in 184 (Wang 1983, 97–102). The text has been lost; there are fragments cited in other texts that were collected by a Qing scholar, Ma Guohan (1794–1857) (Ma 1999), and there are also fragments of the Tang handwritten copies that were discovered at Dunhuang and Turfan in 1900 and the 1950s–1970s. If we put together all of the recovered fragments and the ones cited by others, we have almost half of Zheng Xuan’s commentary on the *Analects* (Zheng Jingruo 1981). For more background information, see Makeham (1997); for a summary and bibliography of recent studies on Zheng Xuan’s commentary, see Chen (1998). In this paper, I primarily cite Wang Su (1991), though I also consulted Chen (1996), Zheng (1981), and Ma (1999).

envious nor greedy/How can he be anything but good?” From then on, Zilu constantly recited these verses. The Master said, “How can this be the recipe for goodness?” (*Analects* 9.27)

鄭注：“子路以詩士太簡略，故抑之。”

Zheng Xuan: “Zilu is too simple-minded with regard to the affairs of poetry; this is why Confucius holds him back.” (Wang 1991, 108)

皇注：“孔子見子路誦之不止，故抑之也。”

Huang Kan: “Confucius sees that Zilu constantly recites these verses; this is why he is holding him back.” (Huang 1963, 94)

As we can see, a common feature of these commentators’ hermeneutic practice is that they all try to articulate the purpose of Confucius’s utterance to Zilu by pointing out that Confucius is doing something to Zilu with his words (holding him back), and they all understand that Confucius’s concern with Zilu’s shortcomings is the main reason he is doing so. The last example comes from Zheng Xuan’s commentary on 13.28, in which we find this common feature as well:

Zilu asked, “How does one deserve to be called a *shi* (gentleman)?” The Master said, “He who shows exacting attention and cordiality deserves to be called a gentleman. Exacting attention towards his friends, and cordiality towards his brothers.” (*Analects* 13.28)

鄭注：“子路好勇，性近剛，故重說之。”

Zheng Xuan: “Zilu is fond of courage; he tends to be obstinate by nature. This is why Confucius here is emphasizing the other virtues [the virtues of exacting attention and cordiality].” (Wang 1991, 143)

In 13.28, Confucius does not mention that Zilu is fond of courage or that he naturally tends to be obstinate. Zheng Xuan’s comment shows that he is obviously making use of other passages in the *Analects* in which these characterizations of Zilu can be found (e.g., 5.7, 11.13, 11.18, and 13.3). In other words, Zheng Xuan is reading one passage in light of other ones in the *Analects*.

In fact, most classical commentators read the *Analects* in a similar fashion. For instance, when they read one passage in which the character Zilu is mentioned, they have in mind all other ones in which Zilu also appears. They are able to recognize a pattern in the *Analects*: that Confucius almost always speaks to Zilu in order to cultivate him into a virtuous person. When one passage mentions that Zilu is reckless and another says that Confucius teaches him the importance of prudence, the commentators make the connection between the apparently unrelated passages by saying that Confucius’s emphasis on prudence is motivated by his intention to change Zilu’s reckless temperament. Sima Qian has put together the passages having to do with Zilu in the *Analects* to

form a narrative about Zilu; he seems to be able to perceive a unity among these passages.

We have to be careful here not to make the argument that because one can perceive unity in one's interpretation of the *Analects*, the text must have an inherent unity. The unity of one's interpretation does not necessarily come from the unity of the text itself; one can always impose unity on a text that has no inherent unity. In the case of the *Analects*, many scholars now believe that it was written by different people over a long period of time (Brooks and Brooks 1998; Lloyd and Sivin 2002), which calls the unity of the text into question. However, it seems obvious that whether the *Analects* is a unified text bears no direct relation to the unity of one's interpretation.

In the history of the *Analects* exegeses, we can find many scholars who have been able to come up with unifying themes and theses in their interpretations of the *Analects*. The Confucius pragmatic paradigm might explain the phenomenon that even though some of these scholars are aware that the *Analects* was written by different hands over a long period of time, they continue to find coherence and unity in Confucius's thought in the *Analects*. The pragmatic hermeneutic example set by Confucius in 11.22 is crucial here because it insists on the unity of the purposes behind his two utterances, in spite of the apparent contradictions of their literal meanings. This approach enables these scholars to ignore the apparent disunity or contradictions of the literal meanings of the passages in the *Analects* and makes it possible for them to find unifying theses running through the *Analects* by giving their own interpretations of the unifying purposes of Confucius's utterances.²⁹

THE HERMENEUTIC IMPLICATIONS OF THE TWO PARADIGMS

Many issues in philosophy and intellectual history have a hermeneutic dimension, and this is indeed the case when it comes to the study of Confucius and the *Analects*. Here, I will examine two debates concerning the *Analects*. The first is whether Confucius has a thesis of the unity of virtues; the second is whether Confucius is a humanist philosopher who does not believe in gods and spirits. As this section will show, the two paradigms we have been discussing are crucial for us to get a better understanding of the debates.

The Unity of Virtues Debate: Two Readings of *Analects* 17.23

MacIntyre's reading of 17.23 is a good example of the Gongxi Hua paradigm. In his influential essay on Aristotelian and Confucian virtue ethics, MacIntyre

²⁹These scholars' faith in the existence of the unifying purposes in Confucius's utterances might be further based on their faith in the unity of Confucius's thought. I do not necessarily share their beliefs, which I call the "myth of coherence."

argues that Aristotle holds the view that defectiveness in any virtue in an individual is a sign of defectiveness with respect to other virtues, whereas Confucius denies this thesis about the unity of virtues (MacIntyre 1991, 106). MacIntyre takes 17.23 as one of the main textual evidence supporting his reading:³⁰

Zilu said, “Does a gentleman admire courage?” The Master said, “For gentleman, it is *yi* (justice, loyalty) that is supreme. A gentleman who has courage without justice is a troublemaker; a small man who has courage without justice is a brigand.” (17.23)

If one only focuses on the propositional content of Confucius’s utterance, one could agree with MacIntyre’s conclusion: “Confucianism denies this type of strong thesis about the unity of the virtues. . . . [C]ourage can, on Confucius’s view, be put to the service of wickedness, without being thereby ceasing to be courage” (1991, 106). In other words, this passage supports MacIntyre’s reading *only* when it is read in the Gongxi Hua manner—that is, only when one takes Confucius’s utterance out of its total speech act situation, without paying attention to the fact that it is Zilu who is asking the question and that it is to Zilu that Confucius is giving his answer.³¹

Several scholars interpret 17.23 in the Confucius pragmatic style. Here, let us look closely at the readings of two scholars: Zhu Xi and Sima Qian. In his comment on 17.23, Zhu Xi cites two commentators with endorsement:

Yi commented: “When one takes justice as one’s guide, one’s courage is great courage. Zilu is fond of courage; that is why the Master says those words to help him overcome his shortcomings.” Hu commented: “I suspect that this is a conversation that takes place when Zilu has just become a disciple of the Master.” (1983, 182)

Note that Yi, the scholar endorsed by Zhu Xi, phrases his remark in the same way that Confucius does in his last utterance in 11.22. Like Confucius, Yi is trying to articulate the reason behind the Master’s utterances, which is the idea that in order to have the virtue of courage, one must have the virtue of justice as well, as courage without other virtues is not true courage. This idea is just another

³⁰In his argument, MacIntyre also refers to *Analects* 14.4 and 8.10. It can be argued that these two passages support his conclusion *only* when they are interpreted in the manner of Gongxi Hua (Xiao 1997b).

³¹There is a parallel case in the interpretation of Marcus Aurelius’s *Meditations*. Focusing only on the propositional contents of certain bleak sentences in the *Meditations*, one scholar concludes that “his joyless, disillusioned *Meditations* are penetrated by a profound pessimism” (quoted in Hadot 1998, 163). As Pierre Hadot argues convincingly, these sentences are not necessarily the expression of pessimist views. Uttering such sentences or writing them down is part of Marcus’s spiritual exercise, which is derived from Epictetus’s Stoic philosophy, whose essential purpose is to produce certain effects on oneself in order to transform one’s life (Hadot 1998, 163–79). See also Arnold Davidson’s introduction to Hadot’s *Philosophy as a Way of Life* (Hadot 1995, 13).

version of what we have called the thesis of the unity of virtues.³² In other words, this idea is actually the reason behind Confucius's utterance to Zilu in 17.23.

Zhu Xi also endorses another scholar's view, that the conversation in 17.23 takes place when Zilu has just become a disciple. If one puts together all of the passages having to do with Zilu in the *Analects*, one would notice that they are all about how Confucius is trying to cultivate Zilu into a person who has not only courage but also other virtues. Interestingly, if one collects Zhu Xi's comments on these passages, one would see that Zhu Xi always interprets the passages in light of how Confucius helps Zilu achieve this goal of having a unity of virtues.

Sima Qian, a leading historian of the Han dynasty, puts together almost all of the passages in the *Analects* that have to do with Confucius in order to form a coherent narrative of Confucius.³³ He does the same with Confucius's disciples, and his narrative of Zilu is part of his biographies of the disciples, *Zhongni dizi liezhuan* 仲尼弟子列傳 (The Biographies of Confucius's Disciples). In Sima Qian's narrative of Zilu, which is largely based on passages about Zilu from the *Analects*, we find a story in which Zilu gradually acquires the unity of virtues. Sima Qian's reading of the *Analects* would not be possible without his pragmatic approach, which takes into account not only the literal meaning but also the purpose and the larger context of the passages. Zilu is arguably the most colorful character in the *Analects*. Like Hercules, Zilu is a man of great physical strength, and he has excessive emotions and a quick temper.³⁴ Zilu is described by Confucius as someone who is "fond of rashness" (5.7), "practicing deception" (9.12), "rash" (11.18), "unbending" (11.13), "having the energy of two men" (11.22), and "boorish" (13.3). This is the beginning part of Sima Qian's biography of Zilu:

Zilu's natural endowment was rustic; he was fond of raw strength and bravery, and his intentions tended to be lofty and bold. He wore rooster feathers and boar's teeth. [Before he became Confucius's student] he once insulted Confucius, but Confucius induced him with rituals. Later Zilu started to dress in the *Ru* style and sent a present [to the Master to express his loyalty]. Through Confucius's students, he pleaded to be accepted as a student. (Sima Qian 1959, 2191)

In Sima Qian's portrayal, Zilu is someone with natural courage who struggles to acquire other virtues such as *yi* (justice and loyalty) and *li* (ritual), which are the

³²I give detailed arguments elsewhere that such a version of the unity of virtues thesis can be found in both Confucius and Aristotle (Xiao 1997b).

³³*Kongzi shijia* 孔子世家 (Confucius's Hereditary House), *Shiji*, 1905–47. Besides the *Analects*, Sima Qian makes use of other materials as well.

³⁴It is interesting to note that Hercules is admired everywhere in Greece except in Athens, because Athenians (like Aristotle) believe that he lacks wisdom, hence his courage is not true courage. Confucius has a similar attitude.

necessary conditions for true courage. According to Sima Qian's story, Zilu dies for the sake of justice and loyalty, fighting against the rebels for his lord in Wei. And he dies with great dignity as well. When his cap-strings are cut apart during the battle, Zilu says, "When a gentleman dies, he should not let his cap fall off." He then ties his cap-strings and dies (Sima Qian 1959, 2193; Niehauser 1994, 69). He finally acquires the virtues of justice, loyalty, and ritual, and hence true courage.

There is no explicit statement about the unity of virtues in either the *Analects* or the *Shiji*. However, by reading a story about the moral development of such a vivid character, we not only understand the importance of acquiring the unity of virtues but also feel inspired to follow Zilu's example.³⁵ As Cheng Yi insists, the goal of reading the *Analects* is to change oneself (Cheng and Cheng 1981, 263), and the best way to achieve that goal is to identify with the disciples who come to Confucius to be cultivated:

One ought to seek deeply into the *Analects*, taking the disciples's questions as one's own questions, and hearing the Sage's answers as if they were just being said. One will naturally learn something this way. If Confucius and Mencius were to come back to life today, they would simply teach people in this way. (1981, 279)³⁶

Those who read the *Analects* in the way that Cheng Yi suggests do not read the *Analects* simply as a collection of historical facts and theoretical theses; rather, the activity of reading is a form of "spiritual exercise" in the sense that Pierre Hadot (2002) defines it, and the *Analects* becomes a living text for them. Here, we see a contrast between Cheng Yi's attitude toward a text—that it is supposed to change one's life—on one hand, and contemporary scholars' attitude toward a text—that it is purely an object of scholastic inquiry—on the other.³⁷ We now see that it is not adequate to characterize Sima Qian's narrative of Zilu as a

³⁵Charles Taylor is one of a few contemporary moral philosophers who have argued for the importance of the narratives of moral exemplars: "[E]ven more important for our moral consciousness has been the portrayal of good and bad lives in exemplary figures and stories. Our moral understanding would be crippled if we had to do without such portrayals. Christian moral theology without the Gospel would be an even stranger affair than it is" (Taylor 1996, 11).

³⁶Some biblical scholars have made a similar point with regard to reading the *New Testament* as a living text: "A reader will identify most easily and immediately with characters who seem to share the reader's situation. . . . [The author] composed his story so as to make use of this initial tendency to identify with the disciples in order to speak indirectly to the reader through the disciple's story. . . . The composition of Mark strongly suggests that the author, by the way in which he tells the disciples' story, intended to awaken his readers to their failures as disciples and call them to repentance" (Tannehill and Dewey 1977, quoted in Malbon 2000, 42–43). I am not implying here that the *Analects* must be a religious text; a text does not have to be a religious text in order to be read as a living text. For discussions of how the ancient Greek and Roman philosophers read texts as living texts, see Hadot (1995, 1998, 2002).

³⁷Pierre Bourdieu gives an interesting critique of what he calls the "scholastic point of view" (Bourdieu 1998, 2000) or "philologism" (Bourdieu 1990). One of the methodological implications of his critique is that when we as scholars study people's hermeneutic practice, we should

“historical biography,” for it is closer to early Christian hagiography (such as the *Life of Anthony*) than to “historical biography” or “history” in our modern sense.³⁸ Christoph Harbsmeier (1995) has argued that there probably was no modern concept of history in pre-Buddhist China, and Michael Nylan (1998–99) has argued against two problematic approaches to the *Shiji*, the “social scientific” and the “lyric romantic.” Nylan argues for what she calls a “religious approach”; the reading of the *Shiji* given here complements her arguments.

Reconciling Confucianism and Buddhism: Two Readings of *Analects* 11.12

As we have seen, the Gongxi Hua approach tends to limit the range of interpretations because it focuses on the propositional content of the sentences alone, whereas the Confucius pragmatic approach opens up more hermeneutic space because it focuses on the utterances, making it possible to take into account various aspects of the speech act. I have mentioned that the scholars who read Confucius as a humanist philosopher tend to adopt a Gongxi Hua style of reading by focusing on the propositional contents of Confucius’s two utterances in 11.12. We can anticipate that the speech-act strategy will be very useful for those who want to challenge this reading.

In *On Clarifying the Confusions* (*Lihuo lun* 理惑論), written by Mouzi (牟子), we can find the earliest critique of such a Gongxi Hua style of reading 11.12.³⁹ The *Lihuo lun* is generally believed to be the first known Buddhist text written by a Chinese scholar. It is also the first example of the early Buddhist apologetics, which attempted to reconcile *Ru* 儒 (Confucianism) and *Fo* 佛 (Buddhism).⁴⁰ The book consists of an introduction and thirty-seven articles, each of which contains a dialogue between a critical interlocutor and Mouzi. The Critic appeals to *Ru* canons and argues from a *Ru* perspective. Because the text he cites most often

resist the temptation to assume that their relationship to the text is the same as our relationship to the text.

³⁸Interestingly enough, Sima Qian calls his “biographies” of Confucius’s students *zhuan* 傳, which is also how he refers to the *Analects*. The genre of *zhuan* has a complicated history in China. Prior to Sima Qian, *zhuan* was one of the *jingxue* commentary genres, including *zhangju* 章句, *jianzhu* 箋注, *shuo* 說, and *ji* 記. All of them are forms of commentaries on the Five Classics. For a study of these genres and their histories, see Wang Baoxuan (1994).

³⁹We do not know much about Mouzi except that he wrote the *Lihuo lun*. There is no consensus among scholars regarding when it was written. We have the following theories: around 190–94 CE (according to Paul Pelliot), after 193 CE (Tang Yongtong), 250 CE (Maspero), or 474–93 CE (Matsumoto Bunzaburō 松本文三郎). These scholars’ papers can be found in Zhou Shujia (1999); for a summary of some of these theories, see John Keenan (1994).

⁴⁰I use the term “Confucianism” with reluctance here. For discussions of the problematic nature of the term “Confucianism,” see Nylan (1999, 2002) and Elman (2002). Both authors suggest using “classicists” to translate *Ru*. For a genealogy of the concept of Confucianism in the West, see Anna Xiao Dong Sun (2007). The Chinese terms *Ru* and *Rujia*, as well as the classification scheme itself, have a complicated and problematic history; see Geoffrey Lloyd and Nathan Sivin (2002) and Kid Smith (2003).

(close to twenty times) is the *Analects*, we may even assume that he is intended to represent the Confucian version of the *Ru* tradition. He speaks for the *Ru* scholars who believe that Buddhism is inconsistent with the *Analects*; therefore, it is confusion (*huo* 惑) to believe in both Confucianism and Buddhism. It is this confusion that Mouzi wants to clarify in his rebuttal.

The *Ru* Critic is probably the first to read 11.12 in a Gongxi Hua way, which enables him to conclude that Confucius does not care about the spirits and gods. The following is the Critic's argument based on 11.12:

The Critic asked: Confucius said, "One is not yet able to serve men, how could one serve the spirits and gods? One does not yet know life, how could one know death?" These are the recorded words of the sage. But nowadays the Buddhists blurt out discourses about the realities of life and death, and the affairs of the spirits and gods. Isn't this clearly contradictory to the words of the sage? (Mouzi 1991, 3; Keenan 1994, 100)

In his response, Mouzi tries to convince the Critic that Confucius's ideas are not inconsistent with Buddhism. Mouzi's main strategy is to point out that 11.12 can be read differently. This is his response:

Mouzi said: Your words exemplify viewing things from the outside, with no awareness of what is within. Confucius worried that Zilu did not ask about the fundamental questions, this is the reason why the Master was holding him back with those words. (Mouzi 1991, 3; Keenan 1994, 100)

The last sentence in the original reads, *Kongzi ji Zilu bu wen benmuo, yi ci yi zhi er* 孔子疾子路不問本末，以此抑之耳。The structure of this sentence clearly indicates that Mouzi is imitating the Confucius pragmatic paradigm.⁴¹ Unlike the *Ru* Critic, who focuses on the propositional content of Confucius's utterances, Mouzi takes into account other elements of the total speech act situation, such as the audience. Here, it happens to be Zilu, a person with certain temperaments and problems. The pragmatic approach allows Mouzi to claim that the Master's ulterior purpose is not to express his general position with regard to spirits and

⁴¹With regard to the punctuation of this sentence, I do not follow Zhou Shujia, the editor of the modern Chinese edition of the *Lihuo lun*, or John Keenan, the English translator of the *Lihun lun*, both of whom punctuate it as follows: "Kongzi ji, Zilu bu wen benmuo, yi ci yi zhi er 孔子疾，子路不問本末，以此抑之耳。" Keenan's translation is as follows: "When Confucius was ill, Zilu did not ask him a lot of questions [about the spirits], for he cut him off" (1994, 100). My punctuation is similar to the Japanese critical edition (Kyōto Daigaku 1973–75, 2:28); I thank Steve Miles for his help with the Japanese translation. My punctuation is based on the judgment that Mouzi seems to be imitating Confucius's last utterance in 11.22; it is also possible that he might be imitating Zheng Xuan, whose commentary on the *Analects* was very popular in Mouzi's time. Compare Mouzi's comment with Zheng Xuan's commentary on 7.11: "ji Zilu haoyong, gu yi ci yan yi zhi [孔子]疾子路好勇，故以此言抑之" ([Confucius] worried that Zilu was fond of courage; this is why he said those words to hold him back).

gods but to do something to Zilu as a teacher. In this way, Mouzi is able to claim that the propositional content of the utterances does not represent Confucius's theoretical position regarding gods and spirits. In other words, we cannot conclude based on 11.12 that Confucius does not believe in spirits and gods.⁴² The speech-act approach thus allows him to argue that the *Analects*, after all, is not inconsistent with Buddhism.

The purpose of this discussion of Mouzi is not to take sides in the ongoing theoretical debate between Chinese and Western scholars about whether Confucianism is a religion.⁴³ My point, rather, is a hermeneutic one.⁴⁴ Scholars who argue that Confucius does not care about supernatural things often cite 11.12 as the conclusive textual evidence. If there are at least two possible ways of interpreting the passage, then 11.12 supports these scholars' conclusion *only* when it is read in the Gongxi Hua manner. That is to say, the debate is as much about theoretical ideas as it is about hermeneutic practices. Perhaps the fact that both the Gongxi Hua and the Confucius paradigms can be found in the early as well as recent scholarship shows that the quarrel among modern scholars is a long-lasting echo of the original difference between Confucius's and Gongxi Hua's hermeneutic practices.

CONCLUSION

I hope this study is one of the first steps toward a systematic study of communicative and hermeneutic practice in Chinese philosophy and classicism that emphasizes its pragmatic rather than its grammatical or logical aspects.⁴⁵ The reason that not much work has been done along these lines is complicated. Contemporary Sinologists tend to focus on the grammatical and logical features of individual sentences in their study of classical Chinese texts; they emphasize the formal features of sentences, which are isolated from their substantive uses in communicative and hermeneutic practice (see, e.g., Harbsmeier 1981; Pulleyblank 1995; Yan 2001). Thus, when they study the works of classical Chinese scholars, they tend to focus on their

⁴²For contemporary scholars who read 11.12 in similar ways, see Joseph Adler (2003) and P. J. Ivanhoe 2003. Ivanhoe gives a fascinating analysis of Cheng Yi's reading of 11.12.

⁴³There has been a new round of debate among scholars in mainland China in recent years. For an interesting study of this debate from the perspective of the sociology of knowledge, see Sun (2005).

⁴⁴I am grateful to one of the JAS readers for helping me see the need to clarify this point.

⁴⁵For recent works on the hermeneutic tradition in classical China, see Cai Fanglu (2004), Huang Chun-chieh (2001a, 2001b), Li Minghui (2002), Tu Ching-I (2000, 2005), Yang Rubin (2002), and Zhou Yukai (2003). For recent works that take seriously the pragmatic aspect of Chinese classical scholarship, see Hans-George Moeller (2000) and Carine Defoort (2001). Herbert Fingarette and Chad Hansen are pioneers in the study of early Chinese philosophy from the perspective of speech act theory and pragmatics (Fingarette 1972; Hansen 1985, 1992). Although one may disagree with their theoretical frameworks, which are not broad enough to allow an adequate account of the communicative and hermeneutic practice in classical China, one can still appreciate the ingenuity of their endeavor. For a detailed critique of Fingarette's and Hansen's works, see Xiao (2005, 2006).

works on grammar and logic as well (see, e.g., Graham 1978; Hansen 1983; Harbsmeier 1998; Hu 1922; Li 1993; Sun 2002; Zheng and Mai 1964).

There is also a historical context here. Contemporary Sinologists are under the pressure of having to prove that logical and grammatical studies have existed in classical China before they were introduced from the West. They want to challenge the conventional view that, although China has a long tradition of lexicographical and phonological studies, unlike Europe and India, it has no tradition of logical analysis or grammatical studies of the formal features of sentences. According to this view, the first grammatical study of classical Chinese is Ma Jianzhong's 馬建忠1898 book *Mashi Wentong* 馬氏文通 (Ma's Grammar of Classical Chinese), which is largely modeled on Latin grammar. Several Chinese scholars have argued that grammatical studies existed in China long before Ma's book (Li 1993; Sun 2002; Zheng and Mai 1964); their conclusion is parallel to Christoph Harbsmeier's thesis that there are logical studies in ancient China (Harbsmeier 1998). These scholars have offered compelling answers to the question of whether there was grammar or logic in ancient China; their work has made it possible for us to release ourselves from the pressure and anxiety that has prevented us from asking other important questions. We can now turn to questions concerning the nuanced and diverse nature of the work of classical Chinese scholars and whether the vocabulary of grammar and logic is sufficient to capture their practice.

I hope this study of the Confucius pragmatic paradigm and its impact on the history of the *Analects* exegeses can also help us to understand what makes the hermeneutic creativity of Chinese classicism possible. The most striking feature of the history of Chinese classicism is what I call the *hermeneutic inexhaustibility* of the classical texts, which is the phenomenon that the same text can be given entirely different interpretations by many generations of scholars. Pragmatic concepts such as the force and the purpose of a speech act enable us to understand how it was possible for classical scholars to open up new space for innovative interpretation.

This study may also have interesting implications for the intellectual history of China, especially the so-called *Han-Song zhi zheng* 漢宋之爭 (Debate between the Han Learning and the Song Learning). For instance, if we are right to believe that some pre-Song scholars did articulate the purposes of Confucius's utterances and the general ideas behind them, then we have to reject the myth that the pre-Song scholarship only consists of *zhangju xungu* 章句訓詁 (dividing paragraphs and explaining the literal meanings of the classics) and that no one paid attention to the purpose of the classics (*jingzhi* 經旨) and the general ideas (*yili* 義理) in the classics until the rise of Dao learning (*daoxue* 道學) in the Song. In fact, pre-Song scholars, such as Sima Qian, Wang Chong, Zheng Xuan, Wang Bi, Huang Kan, and Mouzi, were already practicing what Cheng Yi later preaches. As we have seen, they all belong to a tradition that can be traced to Confucius's hermeneutic practice in the *Analects*. One may argue that this myth is part of

the “founding myth” of *daoxue* invented by Cheng Yi, and this essay can be seen as supporting recent scholarship on the formation of *daoxue*, which does not accept uncritically *daoxue* scholars’ own accounts (Bol 1992).

If this essay has addressed the question of how classical Chinese scholars read the *Analects*, has it also addressed the question of how we should read the *Analects* today? Perhaps the main obstacle to making the connection between the two questions is the fundamental perceived difference between contemporary and classical scholars: that scholars today regard the *Analects* as an object of scholastic curiosity and inquiry, whereas many classical scholars read it as a living text and regarded reading the *Analects* as part of a spiritual exercise that aimed to transform their lives. However, when we teach the *Analects* in the classroom, and when students start reading it in order to transform their lives, are we not helping to make it into a living text again?

It seems that we have come back to the question of whether the *Analects* is still a living text today. On one hand, we as scholars have to study the *Analects* as a complicated product of history, and we engage in purely scholastic discussions about the *Analects*. On the other hand, we as individual human beings may recognize the potential of the *Analects* as a living text, even though we are aware that it may not be a unified text, nor does it have a sacred origin. Understanding the hermeneutic paradigm exemplified by Confucius in the *Analects* helps us to interpret the exchanges between Confucius and his students not as lifeless tenets but as living words; in the end, we may still be able to identify the questions of Confucius’s students as our own and to read the *Analects* as if Confucius were speaking directly to us.

Acknowledgements

This essay is an outgrowth of a paper that I presented at the 1997 annual meeting of the American Philosophical Association in Philadelphia. A subsequent version was presented in 2003 at the Fairbank Center for East Asian Research at Harvard University during my year there as the An Wang Postdoctoral Fellow. In the long process of rethinking and revising this paper, I have been helped greatly by conversations with the late Benjamin Schwartz, Peter Strawson, Richard Bernstein, Robert Bellah, David Keightley, Tu Weiming, Robert Ashmore, Rudolf Wagner, Gary Matthews, Carine Defoort, Nick Bunnin, Joseph Adler, Bai Jianhua, Li Minghui, Steven Miles, Liu Xun, John Schrecker, Richard Arthur, and Anna Xiao Dong Sun. I am grateful for the invaluable written comments of P. J. Ivanhoe, Al Martinich, Robert Ashmore, Michael Puett, and Anna Xiao Dong Sun. In addition, I have benefited greatly from the remarks of Ann Waltner and the comments of three anonymous JAS readers, for which I am truly grateful.

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