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"Age of Ethos": Exploring Rhetorical Practices in Early Chinese Society

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"Age of Ethos": Exploring Rhetorical Practices in Early Chinese Society

Yong-Kang Wei

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> The Tao that can be told is not the eternal Tao.
> The name that can be named is not the eternal name.
> The nameless is the beginning of heaven and earth.
> The name is the mother of ten thousand things.
>
> Good men do not argue.
> Those who argue are not good.
> Those who know are not learned.
> The learned do not know.
>
> — *Laozi (570?–480? B.C.)*

I. Introduction

This essay will be exploring the centrality of ethos to rhetorical and discourse practices in early Chinese society, but I would like to start with Western rhetoric to put the subject in perspective. Western rhetoric, especially of the Aristotelian strain, is predominately logos-based, or logocentric, for the reason that logic forms "the basis of rhetoric" (Kaplan 1966, p. 11). This logocentric turn can be traced back to Plato's idealism that assumes absolute truth can somehow be ascertained by humans. Plato asserts in the *Gorgias* that truth, like "the great power of geometrical equality among both gods and men" (Plato 1990, p. 100), is accessible to humans if a rigorous reasoning, modeled after his dialectic, is conducted. Plato is known for his hostility toward rhetoric, which he dismisses as "cookery" or, worse, "flattery" (Plato 1990, *Gorgias*); in his view, rhetoric stays outside of the province of knowledge, as "it has no account to give of the real nature of things it applies" (Plato 1990, *Gorgias*, p. 72).

Nevertheless, Plato does not appear to succeed in getting rid of rhetoric, for knowledge or truth has to rely on the means of rhetoric for its own delineation (Bizzell and Herzberg 1990, p. 56), as evidenced, ironically, by the *Phaedrus*, where Plato—brilliantly—delivers a rhetorical rendition of "love" through the character of Socrates (Plato 1990, *Phaedrus*). Apparently aware of his own dilemma, Plato somehow offers a "corrective" to his hostile view of rhetoric, for in the *Phaedrus* he accepts rhetoric as "an art which leads the soul by means of words, not only in law courts and the various public assemblages, but in private companies as well" (*Phaedrus*, p. 132). Plato's statement can be seen as an acknowledgement of rhetoric's persuasive power over audience, but, unfortunately, his view of rhetoric as a whole pales by comparison with his elevation of philosophy (dialectic). For Plato, reason, as exercised in dialectic or, to be exact, in the form of syllogistic thinking, is "the only faculty that affords an avenue to the Good" (Johnson 1984, p. 100).

Unlike his mentor Plato, Aristotle appears relatively practical in his assessment of rhetoric, which he views as "the counterpart of dialectic" (Aristotle 1990, p. 151), thus in theory reversing the pejorative role Plato has assigned to rhetoric. Apart from logos, or logical appeal, Aristotle adds ethos (appeal of one's personal character or ethical appeal) and pathos (emotional appeal) to the modes of rhetorical persuasion, leaving much more room for rhetorical maneuvering. Thus, in practice, Aristotle sets himself in marked contrast to Plato, who attempts to cleanse rhetoric of emotive or irrational elements and pushes for a more analytical, or rational, approach to rhetoric. For Plato, persuasion effected irrationally would amount to injecting "belief without knowledge" (Plato 1990, *Gorgias*, p. 66), a practice he ascribes to the sophistry of his time.

Of the three modes of persuasion (i.e., logos, pathos, and ethos), ethos, projected through a rhetor's character, "may almost be called the most effective means of persuasion he possesses," states Aristotle (1990, *Rhetoric*, p. 154). However, his statement about ethos should not be misconceived to downplay the role of logos in rhetoric; rather, it is simply a reflection of the author's pragmatic attitude and approach to rhetoric. In very pragmatic terms, Aristotle defines rhetoric as "the

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faculty of observing *in any case* the *available means* of persuasion" (1990, *Rhetoric*, p. 153; emphasis added). Apparently, Plato's "true" or "good" rhetoric is not Aristotle's cup of tea, all the more so if we look at Aristotle's insistence that ethotic persuasion "should be achieved by what the speaker says, not by what people think of his character before he begins to speak" (1990, *Rhetoric*, p. 153). This is just another way of saying that an ethos "is built by the discourse itself" (Amossy 2001, p. 1), not necessarily in line with one's real character, good or bad.

Nonetheless, readers may feel, in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, that logos, or logical means of persuasion, enjoys a central, and privileged, position, as evidenced by the author's claims about rhetoric as "an offshoot of dialectic" (1990, *Rhetoric*, p. 154) and about enthymemes[1] being "the substance of rhetorical persuasion" (1990, *Rhetoric*, p. 151), as well as by his extensive discussions on how to apply them in various rhetorical situations (1990, *Rhetoric*, pp. 184–94). Indeed, the *Rhetoric* can be read as "a popular logic" (Cooper 1960, p. xx). This may point to Aristotle's "commitment to 'reason' (logos)" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, p. 9), but privileging logos can also be explained from a pragmatic point of view, in that the rational appeal to truth, as represented through logic, has been recognized, at least civically (in law courts or on political occasions)[2], to be the most effective means of rhetorical persuasion. "That Plato and Aristotle and, by extension, the logocentrism of Western philosophy (and rhetoric) privilege logic seems self-explanatory, as logic operates, conveniently, on the premise of truth: Whoever knows how to apply logic grasps, in Derrida's words, the 'signifier' and 'signification of *truth*'" (Wei 2021, p. 8).

But as Kaplan has pointed out, "Logic… is evolved out of a culture; it is not universal" (1966, p. 12). What functions as an indication of truth in one culture may not hold true in another. Likewise, rhetoric "is not universal either, but varies from culture to culture and even from time to time within a given culture" (Kaplan 1966, p. 12). So what appears to be the most effective mode of persuasion in Aristotelian rhetoric could well fall flat in another, therefore the need to see "the history of rhetoric as culturally situated and embedded (Lipson and Binkley 2004, p. 3). It is worthy of note that, in the last few decades, scholarship has devoted a considerable amount of attention and energy to understanding non-Western forms of rhetoric, including the alternative modes of persuasion. The studies coming out of such devotion appear to support Kaplan's view about rhetoric being culture-based. One may assert, with a degree of confidence, that Aristotelian rhetoric is anything but universal, despite the fact that it has been applicable, and useful, in many Western historical-cultural settings.

This essay is meant as an attempt to add to the understanding of non-Western rhetorics by exploring, in particular, the ethocentrism of early Chinese rhetoric and discourse, as opposed to the logocentrism of Western rhetoric and discourse.[3] By ethocentrism I mean that early Chinese rhetoric is essentially ethos-driven in the sense that ethos, rather than logos as in Aristotelian rhetoric, constitutes the substance of rhetorical persuasion, or meaning of discourse. What is more, Chinese ethos works quite differently from its Western counterpart despite the fact that they are both aimed at inspiring trust: The former is indeed an invocation of a rhetor's cultural heritage, while the latter is essentially a function of a rhetor's character-based self-representation. A Chinese ethos can be understood as "a 'collective ethos,' in the sense that it has little to do with the individual qualities of a rhetor but much to do with a collective consciousness that defines, and is also defined by, Chinese culture in ancient times" (Wei 2021, p. 4). It is this "collective" nature that makes early Chinese rhetoric necessarily ethocentric.

Before going further into Chinese ethos, it may be helpful to take a closer look at how ethos has been defined in the Western tradition.

II. Definition of Ethos

As a mode of persuasion, ethos has been traditionally, and also conveniently, described as the ethical appeal (to the rhetor's character), but there is actually more than that, if we look closely at what Aristotle actually writes of ethos: "Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him *credible*. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided" (1990, *Rhetoric*, p. 153;

[1] An enthymeme is "a rhetorical syllogism," according to Aristotle (1990, *Rhetoric*, p. 154). A syllogism would run like this: "All humans are mortal (major premise); John is a human being (minor premise); so John is mortal (conclusion)." But an enthymeme would be: "John will die because he is a human being." In the latter, the general premise (all humans are mortal) is omitted. Because of this, an enthymeme is indeed a truncated syllogism or syllogism cut short. Even though not mentioned, the general premise is still implied in the enthymeme, for we all know humans are mortal. Plato prizes philosophy because of its application of syllogism as a method of reasoning, which, however, would prove impractical in everyday life. (How often do people use a syllogism in their talk?) This may explain why the enthymeme, a defining feature of rhetoric, is applied more broadly and more commonly in real-life communications.

[2] Greek rhetoric is said to have originated out of litigation needs in law courts, where lawyers engaged in debates and delivered persuasive speeches to convince the jury, and out of political needs in Greek democracy, where politicians engaged in debates and delivered persuasive speeches to win an audience or swing the public mood.

[3] Like many contemporary studies on rhetoric, this essay does not consciously distinguish rhetoric from discourse, but with an understanding that rhetoric is a special formation of discourse by which one identifies and asserts him-/herself in society.

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emphasis added). The usefulness of ethos, we can see, is its potential to create trust or credibility on the rhetor's behalf, so that the audience can "fully" and "readily" believe him. Thus, the ethical appeal, if any, may not be all that is meant by Aristotle, whose pragmatism would rather prefer the functional than the ethical. As long as persuasion is accomplished, it matters little whether the rhetor who deploys an ethotic appeal is truly ethical or not. The end is to render the audience susceptible to what he wants it to hear or react to, regardless of means.

Another (slightly less) popular definition of ethos, the appeal to trust, is probably more in line with Aristotle's initial thoughts, as he describes ethos as made of "three things": namely, "good sense, good moral character, and goodwill" (1990, *Rhetoric*, p. 161). A rhetor "who *is thought* to have all three of these good qualities will inspire *trust* in his audience," asserts Aristotle (1990, *Rhetoric*, p. 161; emphasis added). Notice that, of the "three things" mentioned, only the quality of "good moral character" may be related to the ethical appeal. The particular wording of the statement, "who *is thought* to have all three of these good qualities," also reveals Aristotle's pragmatism: that is, a rhetor does not have to possess these qualities in actuality, but as long as he appears to the audience as such, trust will be inspired. In short, it is doubtful that the ethical appeal is all that is intended by Aristotle for his scheme of ethos whose function it is to "inspire confidence in the orator's own character" (1990, *Rhetoric*, p. 161).

Ethical appeal aside, one might be wondering whether Aristotle's tripartite taxonomy of ethos is not conclusive enough, for there is a myriad of "things" that can be used, or exploited, to make one appear credible or trustworthy to an audience, in addition to the aforementioned "three goods" (i.e., good sense, good moral character, and goodwill). For instance, in traditional Chinese culture, age could add to one's credibility (because of a popular belief that people become "wiser" when growing older), but it fits barely with any of Aristotle's "three goods."[4] According to Baumlin and Meyer, "numerous terms" may convey meaning in the direction of ethos, such as "authority," "charisma," "sincerity," "expertise," "reliability," "image," "authenticity," "reputation," "cultural identity," "persona," "self-fashioning voice," and "personal style" (2018, p. 4), just to name a few. The list can go on and on, but what is significant is that those "numerous terms" also indicate a wide range of resources a rhetor can possibly appropriate when rhetorically projecting his ethos. In other words, gaining an audience's trust does not have to be confined within the "three goods" as imposed by Aristotle.

To sum it up, the term "ethical appeal" may not depict the true meaning of Aristotelian ethos, which is to serve, after all, as a "trust" strategy for the purpose of persuading an audience; on the other hand, inspiring trust ought not to be limited to the exercising of good sense, good moral character, or goodwill only. Loosely speaking, anything made use of by a rhetor can be an ethotic ploy if it is designed to make him look credible or trustworthy. I am bringing up the issue of definition here because I feel the ethical appeal alone does not adequately describe the ethos in early Chinese rhetoric, which is more of an appeal to *authority* culturally established and sanctioned, often in the form of "historical appeal," to quote Cua (2000, p. 39). Further, this appeal to authority goes beyond Aristotle's tripartite ethos, as it has little to do with a rhetor's personal qualities, be it in good sense, good moral character, or goodwill. Apparently, the Chinese ethos shifts from the personal to the cultural. For that reason, we might have to address another issue in connection with the topic of the essay: the location of ethos.

III. Location of Ethos

Aristotle places ethos, squarely, in the character of a rhetor, to be objectified through "the personal goodness revealed by the speaker" (*Rhetoric*, 1990, pp. 153–54). Thus, in Aristotelian rhetoric, the rhetor per se stands as a "signifier" of ethos (Baumlin 1994, p. xvi). This type of ethos can be categorized as "individualistic" in the sense that it "comes from within, being grounded in a rhetor's self or selfhood" (Wei 2021, p. 5). However, functioning as an artistic or discursive formation (in Aristotle's words: "achieved by what the speaker says"), the Aristotelian model does not take into account a rhetor's "prior ethos," which is "the image his audience has of him before he takes the floor" (Amossy 2001, p. 1). Prior ethos stems from "the previous reputation and social status of the speaker" (Amossy 2001, p. 2 fn. 3), among others. Its existence suggests that certain ethotic traits of the rhetor are actually independent of an artistic or rhetorical construction. So, as Baumlin and Meyer rightly point out, "Aristotle's textually-constructed ethos is an anomaly, repeated nowhere else in theory or praxis" (2018, p. 10). One reason for that anomaly is: it does not factor in the role of prior ethos that may impact how a rhetor is received by his audience, as just mentioned. But there is another reason, a more important one: that is, it does not account for cultural practices and social institutions that can both constrain and contribute to the making of one's ethos. For this latter reason, I will turn to Pierre Bourdieu, whose theory stands in direct opposition to the idea of a discursively-fashioned ethos.

[4] "Good sense" is replaced by "practical wisdom" (*phronesis*) in a different translation of the *Rhetoric*. Thus, the quality of age may seem a fit with *phronesis*, but Aristotle's *phronesis* is in essence an artistic construction by the rhetor, therefore different from age-related wisdom in Chinese culture. The latter is a given, not a construct.

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Based on Bourdieu's theory, ethos does not reside within a discourse but rather comes from outside as "the exterior authority" (Amossy 2001, p. 3) that originates in the system of social institutions where one finds himself or herself. Whether that authority will be conferred depends upon one's institutional position or, simply, where he or she is from socially. As Amossy explains, following Bourdieu, "a discourse cannot be authoritative unless it is pronounced by the person legitimated to pronounce it in a legitimate situation, hence before legitimate receivers" (2001, p. 3). If a priest is able to take the floor to preach sermons, an epidemiologist to predict virus-infection trends, or a sociology professor to speculate about causes of certain social ills, it is all because of the exterior authority granted upon him or her by the system of social institutions, just like "the *skeptron* that, in Homer, is passed to the orator who is about to speak" (Bourdieu 1991, *Language*, p. 109). Ethos in this sense is a "precondition" or a "given" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, p. 8) rather than a language creation all in the hands of a rhetor.

The Homeric *skeptron* embodies an institutional legitimacy, by which one is enabled "to claim the cultural authority, expertise, trust, and means to speak and to be heard" (Baumlin 2020, p. 1). In modern-day society, the symbolic *skeptron* has been transformed into sets of social rituals as grand as a presidential inauguration, where the executive power of a nation is formally conferred upon an individual, or as simple as a "microphone" (Bourdieu 1991, p. 193), which serves the function of granting or denying an individual "means to speak and to be heard."[5] In early Chinese society, divination would have been something equivalent to the *skeptron*. It was a routine religious practice for the court of rulers, but it can also be categorized as "the political ritual" in Bourdieuan terms (1991, *Language*, p. 193), for its role in mystifying the authority (*wei*; 威) and power of the Chinese kingship, which I will explore in more detail later in the essay.

Bourdieu's discourse theory (as well as other postmodernist ones) points out a viable alternative to the Aristotelian conception of ethos—one that is not necessarily bound up with the character or "personal goodness" of an individual. That is, ethos is now understood to be "anchored in institutional frameworks and social rituals" (Amossy 2001, p. 2). Interestingly, this alternative view does not appear a far cry from the "primal" semantics of ethos, which has to do with humans' "dwelling place," according to Heidegger (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, p. 12). In a way, to speak is to reveal where one is from socially and culturally or to "declare one's 'dwelling place'" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, p. 14). Thus, ethos can also be regarded as a metaphor for identity, conceptually close to Kenneth Burke's identification theory about rhetoric.

What becomes comprehensible now is a claim made earlier about a culturally-based, collective ethos in early Chinese rhetoric, which is not baseless in theory even by some Western accounts. The historical appeal, one of the most prominent suasive tactics deployed by ancient Chinese rhetoricians, would add to this comprehension. The tactic is founded on a cultural conviction that the remote past represented a golden age, when the state was run by the legendary sage-kings, therefore the past better than the present. Confucius,[6] for example, was a master of using history "as an archetypical *topos*" in his moral teachings, which may be formulated as: "The past informs and guides the present" (Liu and You 2009, p. 158). One of the reasons is clearly ethotic: by invoking the "wisdom" of those sage-kings, the Great Master would lend himself the *skeptron* of authority or ethos, therefore making his moral and political statements more credible to his audiences. But the ethos evoked on the basis of the historical appeal can be described as "collective," as it "has little to do with the personal character of a rhetor, upon which an Aristotelian ethos is sustained; rather, it is a cultural construct woven out of the collective consciousness of early Chinese society, a consciousness that holds fast to an inveterate belief in history" (Wei 2021, p. 5).

IV. Agency and Self

I would hesitate to characterize a "Bourdieuan" type of ethos in the same way as Chinese ethos, despite its conception of cultural or structural authority (to be conferred upon a speaker). This is because the former presupposes the participation of an individual, or an "agent,"[7] for its manifestation—at least the spokesperson must be there to take hold of the *skeptron*. In other words, individual agency is an "active" in materializing ethos in Bourdieuan terms.[8] But agency,

[5] A megaphone is replacing a microphone these days, as seen, for example, in a *CNN* political analysis about Rep. Liz Cheney after she was ousted from a House Republican leadership post: "in trying to curtail Cheney's ascent as a leader within the party, they handed her a bigger *megaphone*. She's not just a House GOP someone, she's now a national leader—with national exposure. And so Cheney is now a national story" (Borger 2021; emphasis added).

[6] Confucius (551 – 479 B.C.), an early Chinese thinker, founder of Confucianism.

[7] Bourdieu frequently employs the term "agent(s)" or "social agent(s)" in his works. To overcome the "structure vs agency" opposition, he proposes a dialectic (or perhaps a paradox) through "habitus," a notion that "expresses first the *result of an organizing action*, with a meaning close to that of words such as structure" but "also designates *a way of being*, *a habitual state* (especially of the body) and, in particular, a *predisposition*, *tendency*, *propensity* or *inclination* (Bourdieu 1977, *Outline*, p. 214, n. 1; emphases original), the latter suggestive of agency.

[8] Bourdieu appears to affirm such agency by stating that "there is no social agent who does not aspire, as far as his circumstances permit, to have *the power to name* and to create the world through naming" (1991, *Language*, p. 105; emphasis added) and by naming social

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one of the "ethotic building blocks" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, p. 16), has been perceived, and conceptualized, in Western ideologies to be something grounded in the human self or selfhood, an individuated entity that subsists distinctly with an "organized, 'characteristic' inner structure" (Alcorn 1994, p. 6).[9] Thus, "Bourdieuan" ethos,[10] it would seem, has returned full circle to the starting point of Aristotelian ethos (and Western ethos in general): the individual self. Its variance from the latter may be summarized this way: the ethotic power of the former comes from outside in, whereas the latter from inside out. But the self remains the converging point. For this reason, "Bourdieuan" ethos varies from its Chinese counterpart.

The self is at the core of Western ethos. While there are competing theories about ethos, they can all be boiled down to the affirmation of Western ideologies about the self or selfhood, whether it (the self) is as object or as subject, ontological or epistemological, existential or linguistic, an embodied entity or simply a voiced "I," and so on: "it seems that any adequate 'map' or model of ethos will include *a version of self* and of its relation to culture and language" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, p. 4; emphasis original). The statement by Baumlin and Meyer echoes an assertion made by Alcorn more than two decades earlier: "A theory of *ethos* needs to be grounded in a relatively clear, but also a relatively complex, understanding of the self" (1994, p. 4). But we may have to ask: Why are Western theories on ethos so possessed by the notion of self?

One reason may have to with the fact that rhetoric is widely seen as an individual enterprise in the west, with an avowed ownership. Functioning as self-representation on the part of the owner (rhetor, speaker, writer, etc.), ethos serves as the marker of the individual. But there is another reason, probably with more ideological import. That is, in Western society, the self has been culturally and philosophically treated as "a moral, metaphysical, and, ultimately, theological category" (Baumlin 1994, p. xviii), the theoretical basis of an "autonomous, self-present, sovereign individual" assumed to be "the originator of meaning and action" (Dissanayake, 1996, p. xi). One may sense a dualism of the self in relation to ethos: on the one hand, the former relies on the latter to assert itself (in the form of self-representation); on the other, the former also works as a source of agency, or "enabling premises" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, p. 5), to objectify or activate the latter: for example, to embody ethos through the personhood of a rhetor, as in the Aristotelian model, or to get hold of the *skeptron* of ethos through an authorized agent, as in the "Bourdieuan" model. It looks as if any theory of ethos would evaporate without some sort of self being at its basis.

But is it possible to formulate a theory of ethos without an ideology of self or selfhood attached to it? Put another way, is it possible to conceive of an ethos that is self-less, character-less, or agent-less since it is all about inspiring trust or building up authority? The answer may be yes if we take a look at rhetorical and discourse practices in early Chinese society.

V. Ethos of Early Chinese Rhetoric

In classical Chinese (as well as in modern), there is no equivalent to the Western term "ethos," just as there is no exact match with the word "rhetoric." However, this does not mean that the ancient Chinese did not engage in persuasive or argumentative practices for their social needs or did not know how to apply ethos in those practices. Rather, it just points to the fact that rhetoric in general or ethos in particular was perceived and practiced differently within a different sociocultural context, with a different meaning ascribed to it, and in a different language. For instance, Laozi's[11] *Dao De Jing* states, "Good men do not argue" (see the epigraph), apparently contradicting the Roman rhetorician Quintilian's motto of "good man speaking well," but does this mean that Laozi is anti-rhetoric? Maybe not, for what is really meant by Laozi is that rhetorical practices should be aspiring to the Dao (Way), the highest moral order for humans, and that in doing so harmony would be achieved and frivolous arguments against one another shunned. The *Dao De Jing* may give us an idea of how the ancient Chinese practiced rhetoric differently from their Athenian counterparts, who would favor an "argue-to-win" approach (Wei 2021, p. 3). As a masterpiece of rhetoric, the *Dao De Jing* also suggests that the effort appears unnecessary to prove whether Chinese rhetoric or ethos exists: It is just different.

To return to Chinese ethos, Mencius'[12] *cheng* (诚; sincereness or truthfulness) and *cheng-yan* (诚言; sincere speech/language) would be conceptually close to Western ethos, according to Lu (1998, p. 175). *Cheng*

agents as "carriers of distinctive signs," who are "capable of perceiving as significant distinctions the 'spontaneous' differences that their categories of perception lead them to consider as pertinent" (p. 121; p. 237).

[9] What is self is still very much subject to debate. According to George Mead, the Western conception of self falls into two categories: one assumes a social process as "logically prior to the individuals and their experiencing": the other assumes individuals and individual experiencing as "logically prior to the social process" (1962, pp. 222–23). Regardless, the term "individuation" or "individuated" seems to hold the key to the notion of self.

[10] To the author's knowledge, Bourdieu does not consciously theorize about ethos even though he uses the term in his writings. However, some contemporary scholars, like Ruth Amossy, have formulated a type of ethos based on his theory, hence the term "Bourdieuan" ethos.

[11] Laozi (570?–480? B.C.), an early Chinese thinker and the founder of Daoism (Taoism). The *Dao De Jing* was authored under his name.

[12] Mencius or Mengzi (390–305 B.C), an early Chinese thinker, widely considered the second most important figure in the founding of Confucianism.

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and *cheng-yan* are expressive of a speaker's "innate moral quality," central to the Mencian idealism about "human benevolence" (1998, p. 175). For that reason, they function like an ethical appeal, but they are also markedly different from the Aristotelian ethos, in that the latter is a mode of persuasion, artistically concocted and subject to manipulation. Regardless, *cheng* and *cheng-yan* bear similarity to the Aristotelian ethos for having "the effect of inspiring 'trust' in Confucian rhetoric" (Wei 2017, p. 25), The persuasive power of a sincere speech, *cheng-yan*, can best be described in Mencius' own words: "It never happens that genuine sincerity cannot move others; on the other hand, nobody would be moved if sincerity was not in place."[13]

Cheng or *cheng-yan* might have been a conscious attempt by Mencius to counter the sophist rhetoric of his time (Lu 1998, p. 175), but it clearly registers the imprint of a Confucian doctrine on rhetoric: *xiu ci li qi cheng* (修辞立其诚; to cultivate words to build trust[14]). Trust or sincerity is a defining attribute of "good rhetoric" by Confucian standards. As Roetz points out, "*Cheng* or similar terms play an important role in the Confucian concept of *rhetoric*," which presupposes such qualities, he quotes Xunzi,[15] as "self-esteem and eagerness… uprightness and sincerity (*cheng*)" (1993, p. 92). On the other hand, sincerity is also a key component of the Confucian value system: "the aim of the noble man is to be *cheng*" (Goldin 1999, p. 104). Thus, Mencius' *cheng* and *cheng-yan* are "both the means to an end and the end itself of communication" (Lu 1998, p. 175); however, Aristotle's ethos, one may recall, is a means only—just for the purpose of persuasion. Ideally, Mencius' *cheng* also carries "a transformative power," as it has the potential to be "the basis for the political order" (Shun 1997, p. 163): without *cheng*, trust would be gone; society would not be run or governed (治; *zhi*) properly as a result.[16] At this point, one might get a bigger picture of *cheng* or *cheng-yan*. It works like a "dual operative": 1) to aim to build up trust and 2) to serve to turn that trust into social order. Thus, it combines the rhetorically persuasive and the socially transformative into one organic ethos.

It is worthy of note that in the Confucian doctrine of *xiu ci li qi xin*, the emphasis is placed on the language itself (as in "cultivating *words* to build trust") rather than on the personal character of a rhetor, the latter being the case with an Aristotelian ethos. Thus, the speech (*cheng-yan*) would become the signifier of an ethos in place of the very person who speaks it. This "accords with a cultural tradition that downplays the role of an individual for the purpose of preserving social harmony" (Wei 2021, p. 3), but more importantly, it also reflects an epistemological insight among ancient Chinese thinkers about the prescriptive, performative, and transformative functions of language in shaping and conditioning human thought and conduct. While there are diverging views over some specific language issues, it is the general consensus among the Western sinologists that "the main function of language according to classical Chinese epistemology consists in erecting, initiating, motivating, and insinuating actions and action oriented attitudes, not in describing a transcendent world independent of actions and consciousness, or in transmitting representations and opinions about this world in itself" (Lenk 1993, p. 6). For Confucius, language was a social practice that institutionally constitutes (part of) *li* (礼): the "action-oriented" rituals or rites.[17] This may explain why the Great Master was so obsessed about the "rectification of names" (正名; *zheng-ming*),[18] because correctness in names (language) can structurally lead to correctness in human behavior, therefore "essential to the order and harmony of society" (Willman 2016).

We may have two implications to draw from the Confucian ethos. One is that "language, as a social practice, mediates one's conduct" (Wei 2017, p. 26). The emphasis on "sincere speech," not on "sincere personality," can thus be seen as a recognition of language's structuring power over human attitudes and actions (Hansen 1983; Graham 1989). The other, also related to the first, is that the emphasis on language affirms that human agency, if any, would play a lesser role in the Confucian model of ethos, contrasting the Western model "premised on the moral and, ultimately, theological inseparability of the speaker-agent from the speech-act" (Baumlin 1994, p. xiii).

Admittedly, the Confucian ideal of "self-cultivation" would presuppose the involvement of moral agency, but it does not come close to what is commonly understood as agency in Western conceptions. We may

[13] Author's translation, based on the original Chinese version in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995). See "Li Lou (a)," *Mencius* (p. 261): 至诚而不动者，未之有也；不诚，未有能动者也。

[14] Author's translation, based on the original Chinese version in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995). See "Wen-Yan Zhuan," *Zhou Yi* (p. 439).

[15] Xunzi (about 313–238 B.C), an early Chinese thinker, widely considered the third most important figure in the founding of Confucianism.

[16] Mencius also states, "*cheng* is the dao (way) of heaven; to long for *cheng* is the dao (way) of humans" (诚者， 天之道也； 思诚者，人之道也), suggesting that there is a natural tendency towards *cheng* among humans. This is seemingly an indirect criticism of the rulers of his time, who failed to govern with *cheng,* even though it should have been the natural way of doing so. See "Li Lou (a)," *Mencius* (p. 261) in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995).

[17] *Li* is a complicated concept in the Confucian system. In a broad sense, it concerns how one fits him-/herself into an ordered (or ritualized) society.

[18] According to Chenyang Li, Confucius "took as his mission" the restoration of *li*. "For him, the starting point was the rectification of names" (1999, p. 64).

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see the disparity by examining two conflicting views on moral agency between Mencius and Xunzi. For Mencius, human nature is innately benevolent, aligned with the ultimate good (至善; *zhi-shan*) of the Dao (Way), but in early Chinese thought, the Dao (Way) also represents the cosmic order of the universe on which "ten thousand things" are based. In Mencius' own words, doing good things, for humans, is as natural as "water flowing downward" (犹水之就下).[19] Thus, cultivating one's self morally becomes a mission of letting the Dao reveal itself or digging out the good *within*. To the contrary, Xunzi views human nature as inherently evil, taking a position directly against Mencius. According to Xunzi, humans are born with "a desire for gain" (好利; *hao-li*), "envy and hate" (疾恶; *ji-e*), and "lust for sensual pleasures" (好声色; *hao-shengse*). If unchecked, these vices would evolve into problems of "strife and contention" (争斗; *zheng-dou*), "cruelty and villainy" (残贼; *can-zei*), and "perversion and debauchery" (淫乱; *yin-luan*), all of which would further lead to "rule violation" (犯分; *fan-fen*) and "moral disorder" (乱理; *luan-li*), with a society under the threat of "violence" (暴; *bao*).[20] But Xunzi also believes that humans can rectify their "evil" nature by adhering to the rituals established by the ancient sage-kings for the purpose of maintaining moral order and social harmony. These rituals are "encapsulations" of "the fundamental patterns of the universe," known as "Heaven's Way" (Goldin 2018). Thus, for Xunzi, moral self-cultivation comes from *without*, through an inculcation of rituals, instead of from *within*, as proposed by Mencius. Nonetheless, though their points of departure are diametrically different, Mencius and Xunzi actually come to the same conclusion about self-cultivation: that is, to follow the Dao (Way).

That Mencius and Xunzi have reached the same conclusion about moral agency should come as no surprise, considering the prevalence of *wu-wei* (non-striving or non-action) in early Chinese philosophy. In today's language, the doctrine of *wu-wei* can simply mean "Don't assert yourself." However, Seok is of the view that an "active form of moral agency" can still be observed in Confucian discourse, but it is not based on "self-enclosed independency" but rather on "relational and interactive interdependency of communal agency" (2017). If Seok's view holds true, then agency as such may best be characterized as "collective agency." This is conceivable if we look at the traditional mainstream Chinese conceptions of self, where the self is "seen as holistic rather than individualistic" and "constructed through part/whole and social relationships rather than through the uniqueness of inner choice" (Hay 1998, p. 60). But no matter what, it appears that one thing is certain: "human agency, in the form of asserting an autonomous individual self, is out of the picture in the Confucian tradition, which values and puts to use the performative function of language while at the same time advocating self-cultivation, self-restraint, and self-effacement as virtues that a *jun-zi* (i.e., a nobleman or gentleman in the spiritual sense) must possess" (Wei 2021, p. 3).

I would not say that individualism or individuality has no place in early Chinese rhetoric, but rather that "self-cultivation in terms of accepted social ends," other than "man's fulfillment as an individual," is valued in the Confucian system of discourse (de Bary, et al. 1960, p. 114). To a Confucian, like Xunzi, the moral principle of *shun li-yi* (顺礼义; abiding by established social rituals and behavior codes) sets up a standard for "judging good or bad rhetoric" (Chen and Wang 1998, p. 44). Accordingly, within the Confucian (and Daoist as well) framework of rhetoric, a collective ethos would make far more sense than an individualistic one, the latter predicated largely, if not exclusively, on a metaphysical foundation of selfhood and agency.

VI. "Writing the Masters"

It is well established, and documented, that "collective workmanship" (Wei 2015) was behind the production of almost all of the pre-Qin[21] texts in ancient China.[22] Classical texts, like the *Dao De Jing*, *Zhuangzi* and Four Books and Five Classics,[23] were collectively written, often over a span of centuries, by—mostly—the anonymous disciples, and disciples of disciples,[24] of Laozi, Zhuangzi,[25] Confucius and other masters, who were, nonetheless, credited with authorship, though in many cases, the historical masters may not have contributed a single word to a work under their name. According to A. Graham, the *Zhuangzi* is actually "a collection of writings of the fourth, third, and second centuries B.C., in which only the Inner chapters can be confidently attributed to Chuang-tzu [Zhuangzi] himself" (1990, *Chinese Philosophy*, p. 283). In some cases, a text could have taken much longer time to finish, such

[19] See "Gaozi (a)," *Mencius* (p. 307) in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995).

[20] Paraphrased and translated from the original Chinese text, Chapter 23 of the *Xunzi*: Human Nature Is Evil (荀子原文：性恶篇第二十三). See chineseclassic.com (数据经典).

[21] Refers to the period up to the first imperial dynasty of China, the Qin dynasty (221–206 B.C.).

[22] Suppose a text can be attributed to one single author; however, to quote W.Y. Li, the "inevitable changes and emendations introduced" in the process of transmission still "warrant the notion of collective authorship" (Li 2017, p. 363).

[23] The Four Books: The *Great Learning*, *Zhongyong* (also *Doctrine of the Mean*), *Analects*, and *Mencius*; the Five Classics: the *Book of Changes*, *Book of Poetry*, *Book of Rites*, *Book of Documents* (also *Book of History*), and *Zuozhuan* (also *Zuo Commentary*).

[24] It is very likely that those other than the "disciples" also contributed to the making of Chinese classics.

[25] Zhuangzi (about 369 – 286 B.C.), an early Chinese thinker in the Daoist tradition.

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as *The Yellow Emperor's Classic of Internal Medicine* (*IM*).[26] This classic, notes Ding, was put to composition somewhere in the Warring States period (475–221 B.C.), but its "first appearance" was dated in the West Han dynasty (206 B.C–25 A.D.) (2014, p. 46). Though it was "finally published in 726 AD," its present-day version still came to a much later date, somewhere "between 1068 and 1078 AD" (Ding 2014, p. 46). As the title implies, the *IM* has been popularly attributed to the legendary ancestor of the Chinese, the Yellow Emperor, who obviously had no involvement whatsoever with the book. Yet, "his name renders the book authoritative," says Ding (2014, p. 46).

The physical disconnect in Chinese classics between authorship and text would pose a challenge to the Aristotelian model of ethos, which is "projected through the "identification of a speaker with/in his or her speech" (Baumlin 1994, p. xi). Clearly, such identification does not apply in the case of collective workmanship, where individual authorship is at best putative. But texts created this way (out of collective workmanship) would still carry ethotic weight due to their authorial association with historical masters, whose monikers would hold the *skeptron* of authority, like that of the Yellow Emperor mentioned above. Needless to say, the collective workmanship of pre-Qin texts is not a "habitus" for housing the attributes of ethos that are distinctively Western, such as individual agency, self or selfhood, and, above all, the character of a rhetor to personalize ethos.

Interestingly, the *skeptron* conferred nominally by virtue of a historical master provides a rhetorical leeway for the disciples to create their own texts (or agenda, using today's political jargon) with degrees of deviation or variance from the predecessors, depending on the then sociopolitical climate and scholarly trends—yet all in the name of that master. This norm of "editorial creativity" has long been observed in scholarship. Dubs, for instance, has this to say about Confucius: "Then each Confucian philosopher, and some Daoists too, read into Confucius' teaching the beliefs that this philosopher wanted to be accepted, because by putting them into the mouth of the great authority, these teachings also became authoritative (1951, p. 30). He adds, "Many sayings were put into his mouth which he never could have uttered" (Dubs 1951. P. 30). Dubs' remark explains, in a rather simple way, how a historical master can be (ab)used as a source of authority (or ethos) by his disciples to create texts of their own version, a prevailing rhetorical practice responsible for the abundance of inconsistencies or oddities in many of the Chinese classics. In what follows, I will further explore the issue of editorial creativity using the example of the *Analects* by Confucius, which is actually "a compilation of independently assembled chapters," notes Harbsmeier (2019, p. 188).

Though widely viewed as the most authoritative of the Confucian canon, the *Analects* is a collection of texts filled with oddities, as if two Confucius's or two voices, such as "didactic" versus "non-didactic" (Harbsmeier 2019, p. 217), were competing with each other. One such oddity is Confucius' remark that "fathers cover up for their sons, and sons cover up for their fathers [after misdeeds committed]" (Ivanhoe and van Norden 2001, p. 36). On the surface, the statement can be regarded as a Confucius' view about "family values," but deep down it is odd for several reasons.[27] Most notably, it is at odds with Confucius' grand vision of restoring the Zhou[28] *li* (周礼) as a measure of maintaining social order. Obviously, the Confucius figure in the *Analects* has placed family interests[29] above one's obligations to society, which, however, would go directly against the grain of his *li* restoration. Still, the question is: Did the historical Confucius really say that? Oliver Weingarten did a detailed study of textual parallels between the above mentioned "family-value" statement by Confucius and passages found in other early Chinese classics. He reached the following conclusions: 1) the *Analects*' version "is probably derived from earlier incarnations of a similar narrative plot"; and 2) "it stands in no direct relationship with the historical Confucius" (2014, p. 249). I would go too far if I dwell upon the oddities of the *Analects*, like the one just cited, but the likelihood simply cannot be ignored that somebody else had put his own idea into the mouth of the Great Master. In other words, editorial creativity played a "dirty" role.

To some students, especially Western, "[c]ontradictions abound" in the *Analects* (Hunter and Kern 2018, p. 1), but this is quite understandable given the "heterogeneous origins" of the book (Weingarten 2014, p. 225). On the negative side, it affirms Dubs' concern that "the real teaching of Confucius became distorted anew each time a new Confucian philosophy appeared" (1951, p. 30). However, on the positive side, and in a broad way, it exemplifies the "highly composite and intertextual character" (Weingarten 2014, p. 253) of early Chinese texts in general, thanks to the norm of editorial creativity under discussion. Against this

[26] *IM* can be read as classical Chinese philosophy applied to internal medicine. Chinese philosophy also saw its application in many other fields, like military, martial arts, fine arts, architecture, civil engineering, etc. So in many ways, Chinese philosophy can be understood as practical philosophy, to be distinguished from (purely) theoretical philosophy, as seen in the West.

[27] The article, "Delinquent Fathers and Philology *Lun Yun* 13.18 and Related Texts," by Oliver Weingarten (2014) gives a detailed account on this.

[28] The Zhou dynasty (1046–221 B.C.). The rituals and institutions of the early Zhou became the model for *li* to Confucians.

[29] Many scholars focus on "filial piety" when interpreting the statement, which may not tell the whole story. For filial piety can only apply to a son covering up for his father, but not the other way around. Plus, the uprightness (直; *zhi*) mentioned by the Confucius figure should be taken as a virtue meant for both father and son.

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backdrop, we can see once again, attributes usually associated with Western ethos become pointless, such as individual agency, selfhood, and the character and personhood of a rhetor. But we may realize something else is also happening: that is, when creating, altering, and adding texts under a certain master's name, the disciples, and disciples of the disciples, wittingly or unwittingly, rhetorically construct a master, befitting the philosophy they want him to represent, a unique situation that Lewis pointedly characterizes as "writing the masters" (1999, p. 53). Consequently, a new, and different, ethos associated with that master is also created. So, "writing the masters" may well be interpreted as "writing up the ethos for masters." The example of Confucius and his *Analects* may help explain how the masters can get "transformed over time" (Lewis 1999, p. 54), with their ethos "elevated" by dint of collective workmanship, very often exercised in the manner of editorial creativity.

The real-life Confucius was not a success story, to say the least. Career wise, he can be characterized as a "failure" despite his ambitions. In Harbsmeier's words, "he never got a proper job in his lifetime" (2019, p. 222). In his later years, he was forced into exile, spending about fourteen years traveling around and trying to get accepted by the rulers of the feudal states but to no avail. He preached his political vision of governance (*li*) and moral philosophy of humanly love (仁; *ren*) but only to realize that they had fallen on deaf ears. In the end, he gave up: "My way has come to its end."[30] It would be appropriate to say that the real-life Confucius was a man dogged by "suffering" and "frustration" yet obsessed with a "desire for recognition" (Kern 2018, p. 292; p. 297). Confucius finally got "redeemed," though only after death, in writings attributed to him by generations of his disciples, through which he was also transformed, from a frustrated old man to a great "sage" recognized by the imperial court of the West Han dynasty (202 B.C.–8 A.D.), hundreds of years later. Therewith, a sagely ethos was conferred upon Confucius, together with the *Analects* canonized and Confucianism institutionalized.

To this day, how the Great Master got educated in the first place still remains a "mystery," due to a lack of evidence, documented or otherwise, to prove his educational upbringing. The Confucius figure says of himself in the *Analects*: "At fifteen, I set my heart on learning. At thirty, I was firmly established. At forty, I had no more doubts. At fifty, I knew the will of Heaven. At sixty, I was ready to listen to it. At seventy, I could follow my heart's desire without transgressing what was right" (de Bary, et al. 1990, p. 22), but this self-advertising statement can best be understood as a summary of Confucius' intellectual growth, but with little intimated of his personal education. (Is it enough to set one's heart on learning?) On the other hand, Confucius' famous self-description as a teacher, "I transmit but don't create" (述而不作)[31] may be viewed as a tacit self-confession or acknowledgement that he did not have much to claim for himself: All he could do was to pass on knowledge from a third party. It appears that Hunter has made a valid point about those famous "Confucius sayings," which he takes as "venues for the re-performance of inherited wisdom" (2012, p. 8). That said, we may never get to the bottom due to the lack of surviving evidence. Yet, as the saying goes, absence of evidence is not necessarily evidence of absence. It could be reasonably assumed that Confucius' disciples, and the like, would have been happy to keep evidence that proves the "glory" of their master's education. Otherwise, they might have "deleted" it to maintain a clean record for their master. As Ching points out, "Confucius became too important for later generations to tolerate any information in his biography that might be regarded as disrespectful" (1997, p. 69). In ethotic discourse, this can be translated as "suppressing any information that would have discredited the master or undercut his ethos." At least, a possibility.

The widely observed intellectual inconsistency of the *Analects*, which prompts Gentz to declare it a work of "tesserae" (2018), may indirectly point to a less-than-glorious education in the upbringing of the historical Confucius.[32] For instance, Harbsmeier notices that the presence of the "*non-didactic*" talks has been a "salient feature" of "a nineteen-page *didactic* handbook for imperial use" (2019, p. 217; emphases added), a feature indicative of two Confucius figures in the book: one is "sagely"; the other more of a "common" type, which is probably closer to the real-life Confucius. And many small details of the book would support this suggestion. It would be digressive to go over the inconsistencies of the *Analects*, but a (hypo)thesis may be proposed: that is, the historical Confucius was an ordinary human figure, and scholar (or maybe an "inch" higher than the ordinary), but somehow he got "exalted" through the efforts made by generations of his disciples in a protracted "writing-the-master" process that spanned hundreds of years. I would add that the overall sociopolitical climate of the time also played a role in Confucius' ascendance, especially in the West Han whose imperial rulers felt the utilitarian need to adopt Confucianism as a state ideology. Naturally, along with the writing-the-master process, Confucius' status was elevated, his image polished, and his ethos "boosted."

[30] "吾道穷矣," translated from *Shiji* (Records of the Grand Historian) by Sima Qian: Kongzi Shijia 17.

[31] Translated from the original Chinese version in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995). See "Shu Er," *Lun Yu* (p. 84).

[32] According to Kern, it's possible that "ancient readers were less troubled than we are today by the textual and logical inconsistencies" (2018, p. 286), a factor that could have possibly contributed to the book's inconsistency.

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A careful reader can tell that the authors/editors of the *Analects* were at pains to cast a sagely ethos for Confucius. At one point, the Great Master is compared to a "heavenly bell" to awaken the earthly[33]; at another, he is likened to "the sun and the moon" standing untarnished against his revilers.[34] Sometimes, he is directly referred to as a "sage." Nonetheless, a slip of the pen can be detected when the reader comes across the Great Master's "flippant remark" and "intellectual defeats and insouciances" (Harbsmeier 2019, p. 217; p. 222), or something that appears to belie the sagely ethos the disciples had intentionally created for the master. The slip of the pen certainly "does not fit into [the] didactic mould" of the *Analects* (Harbsmeier 2019, p. 222), but it can be the editorial sleight of hand in disguise to give the book a "realistic" touch, as Harbsmeier (2019, p. 218) seems to imply. However, in all likelihood, it can also be an exposure of the inherent inconsistency of the *Analects* due to the fact that it had gone through so many hands in the process of compilation, coupled with material appropriated from disparate sources.[35] To me, the less-than-consummate projection of Confucius' "sagehood" is just proof to affirm its rhetorical, man-made nature. More importantly, we may conclude, through the example of Confucius, that Chinese ethos is also a *rhetorical or textual construct*, like the Western counterpart. The difference is, the former is collectively projected, thanks to an authorial/editorial process called "collective workmanship," while the latter is individually achieved or activated.

It may be assumed, based on what has been discussed in this section, that the ethos of early Chinese rhetoric is constructed interactively, though not in the way, as described by Baumlin and Meyer, between "the speaker and audience" (2018, p. 10), but between the master as author-figure and the anonymous disciples who actually do the writing, as seen in the case of Confucius and the *Analects*. The name of the master grants ethotic authority to the disciples, who then cast back that authority by writing and rewriting (or constructing and reconstructing) the master, and back and forth repeatedly. Or, it comes the other way around: The disciples construct an ethos first for the master, whose author-figure in turn passes the *skeptron* back to them, and back and forth repeatedly. The latter scenario would seem more plausible in regard to the historical Confucius, given his relatively common social status, combined with a lackluster career record.[36] One may get into a chicken-egg trap if to investigate whether it is the name of the master granting ethotic authority first or the disciples who create ethos first for the master. The most important is that ethos is constructed interactively in the practice of "writing the masters" where the two sides (author figure and disciples who wrote for such a figure) feed and contribute to one another. Without a doubt, the "masterly" ethos thus created reflects the "shared attitudes and convictions" the followers of a master held, to quote Weingarten (2014, p. 249), but institutional involvement cannot be overemphasized in the making of such ethos, as seen in the example of Confucius. Suffice to say, without the promotion of the West Han rulers, Confucius would never have become a "sage."

VII. Ethos as Spirit

One cannot help noticing that the "masterly ethos," as mentioned in the previous section, is not located anywhere in the physical world: it is built on a historical master only eponymously, much less as an individual. Sometimes, even the author figure of a text is questionable, for example, Laozi (the Old Master), the reputed author of the *Dao De Jing* and founder of Daoism. There is a strong likelihood that Laozi, as a historical figure, did not exist in the first place (e.g., Creel 1953; Watson 1968). Thus, the ethos built up in his name is like a "spirit," completely disembodied, yet it still carries ethotic weight for the classic. I would call ethos as such "ethos-as-spirit" to distinguish from the pre-Socratic/Heideggerian notion of "ethos-as-haunt," the latter regarded by some postmodernist theorists as an "alternative to the Aristotelian ethos-as-character" (Meyer 2019, p. 1). However, the two also bear some similarities. Ethos-as-haunt relates to a physical space, which can be a "dwelling place" from which one is to declare his or her identity, as mentioned earlier, or simply a "public place" which people frequent for the purpose of "gathering together" and "sharing experiences and ideas," whence a culturally shared ethos is to be built (Halloran 1982, p. 60). Thus, ethos-as-haunt can also be interpreted as "ethos as location" (Reynolds 1993), including, by extension, a cultural location. What appears significant about the idea of "ethos-as-haunt" is that it "has opened new spaces for

[33] "天将以夫子为木铎," paraphrased from the original Chinese version in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995). See "Ba Yi," *Lun Yu* (p. 61).

[34] "仲尼, 日月也, 无得而逾焉," paraphrased from the original Chinese version in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995). See "Zi Zhang," *Lun Yu* (p. 165).

[35] For example, the Confucius figure praises Shun (舜; a sagely king) for governing by non-doing (*wu-wei*), which reflects a doctrine of Daoism, a competing school of thought. See "Wei Ling Gong," *Lun Yu* (p. 139). According to de Bary, et al., "many of the most important elements of Taoist teaching were absorbed into Confucianism" (1960, p. 49).

[36] The historical Confucius may not have been a great educator, as widely claimed. There is a documented anecdote about Shao-Zheng Mao (少正卯), who attracted far more students than Confucius, to the point of making the latter's "classroom" empty. Shao-Zheng Mao was later executed for his "thought" crimes by Confucius, seven days after the latter took the office of justice ministry (司寇) in Lu. The anecdote, among others, is suggestive that the historical Confucius did not enjoy a "lofty" ethos in real life.

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contemporary theory—spaces where collectivities and group identities are fashioned and gather together" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, p. 12), a point that helps account, at least in part, for "ethos-as-spirit," as posited just above.

In the case of ethos-as-spirit, the physical space (of ethos-as-haunt) is now replaced by a textual space, the latter obviously disconnected from "dwelling" or "haunting" in a conventional sense. However, the disciples of a master are still able to declare themselves as Daoist, Confucian, etc., for ethos-as-spirit can function like some sort of "dwelling place," albeit disembodied, to provide a group identity for those who write for, and under, the same author figure (say, Confucius or Laozi). At the same time, this author figure is also a unifying signifier of a collectively developed system of thought, like Confucianism or Daoism, as well as a cultural community, of which the disciples are members. The system (Confucianism, Daoism, etc.) serves as a "location" or "public place" for the disciples, who haunt it by contributing ideas to it, through a shared experience in writing, editing, or producing. In doing so, they simulate the action of gathering together at a "location" or "place," albeit textually. In a way, the idea of ethos-as-spirit bears semblance to that of ethos-as-haunt. However, there is also a difference between them.

Ethos-as-haunt is more like a "sociological" species of ethos (Wei 2021, p. 1), by which one claims his or her identity in Burkean terms[37] or asserts his or her "positionality" in society (Baumlin and Meyer 2018). The sociological ethos may exert persuasion, but that is its secondary function at best and comes only in association with a group or community where one belongs. For example, "the professional ethos" can make one appear authoritative in certain areas, but only so because of one's membership of a professional community (Halloran 1982, p. 62). Without that membership, one loses his or her authority. In this sense, ethos-as-haunt is just another term for a Bourdieuan type of ethos. Ethos-as-spirit can also function like a sociological ethos, in that it provides one with a group identity and therefore his or her social positionality, but it operates more like a "rhetorical" ethos with persuasion being its major function, therefore also different from ethos-as-haunt. But, first, let us take a look at an excerpt from the *Xunzi* and see how ethos-as-spirit is made use of rhetorically:

> 今以夫先王之道，仁义之统，以相群居，以相持养，以相藩饰，以相安固邪。以夫桀跖之道，是其为相县也，几直夫刍豢稻粱之县糟糠尔哉!然而人力为此，而寡为彼，何也？曰：陋也。……
>
> 夫贵为天子，富有天下，是人情之所同欲也；然则从人之欲，则埶不能容，物不能赡也。故先王案为之制礼义以分之，使有贵贱之等，长幼之差，知愚能不能之分，皆使人载其事，而各得其宜。
>
> Now, shall we follow the Way of the *earlier kings*, as the fundamental principles for benevolence and righteousness, thereby to help people live socially in groups, to help them sustain themselves, to help them get clothed and dressed up, and to help them feel safe and secure? Or shall we take the paths of Jie[38] and Zhi[39]? These two roads are vastly different, far more than the difference between a meal of meat and refined grains and one filled with dregs and chaff. But, then, why do people prefer the latter to the former? This is because they are shallow and ignorant! ...
>
> Everyone wants to be so noble as to be the Son of Heaven and so rich as to own all under Heaven. All people are driven by the same desire. Although all want to follow their desire, the system of society is not set up that way to allow them to do so; plus, there is not enough wealth in the world to satisfy them. That is why the *earlier kings* established ritual and moral order, assigning people into socially stratified roles, so that they know there is a difference between the noble and humble, the old and young, the wise and ignorant, and the able and unable. That way, all will be able to do their best, with benefits and rewards meted out in accordance.[40]

In the first passage, Xunzi, the author of the *Xunzi,* directs an implicit criticism against the rulers of his time for bad governing (i.e., for "taking the paths of Jie and Zhi); the second passage is apparently a censure against those who do not know their social boundaries, therefore breaching the system of rituals. However, judging from the context (lines omitted), the blame is squarely on the absence of "a benevolent king on the throne" (仁人在上). In both situations, the "earlier kings" (先王; *xian-wang*) are invoked for an obvious reason: The current rulers, who are "shallow and ignorant," have deviated from the Way of the past. Xunzi's message is clear: follow the Way of earlier kings, and all under Heaven will turn out fine. But then a question may strike the reader: why does Xunzi frequently invoke the kings of the distant past? One answer I can think of is: Xunzi is strategically appealing to something that may exist in the name only, namely, ethos as spirit.

Those earlier kings or *xian-wang*, as opposed to the later kings or *hou-wang* (后王), refer to the legendary sage-kings of the Golden Age in a very remote past, as mentioned earlier in the essay. While legendary, the

[37] Halloran summarizes Burkean rhetoric this way: "The key term for a modern rhetoric is not persuasion but identification" (1975, p. 626).

[38] Jie, the last king of the Xia Dynasty, established around 2100 B.C. and conquered by the Shang around 1600 B.C. Jie serves as a typical example of despotism, but his existence is not positively supported by historical evidence.

[39] Zhi, also called Robber Zhi, a legendary rebel leader of Confucius' time, with 9,000 bandits under his command.

[40] Author's translation, based on the original Chinese text, Chapter 4 of the *Xunzi*: Honors and Disgrace (荀子原文：荣辱篇第四). See chineseclassic.com (数据经典).

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sage-kings, like Yao, Shun, and Yu, were culturally established in Chinese society and regarded as sources of intellectual and moral inspirations. For that reason, they became the *skeptron* to be wielded by the early thinkers of various schools of philosophy and ideology. This may explain why the historical appeal, instead of personal appeal, has prevailed in Chinese rhetoric. The sage-kings were god-like figures, characterized by supreme virtue and wisdom. They set up rituals, modeled after the principles of the Dao (Way), thus able to "turn a chaotic, conflict-ridden people into a moral society that manifests the Dao" (Kline 2000, p. 155). With "a divine afflatus" (Schwartz 1985, p. 26), the sage "heard the voice or words of the spirit, or the deity, and then transmitted it to others with his own mouth" (Ching 1983, p. 14). Thus, the earlier quoted statement by Confucius, "I transmit but don't create," may also be taken as a hint at his sagehood: The Great Master does not create knowledge; rather, it just passes through his mouth as if directly from the divine.

Creel observes, citing critical Chinese scholars, that the sage-kings are in fact "not mentioned in any document that was written at a time earlier than that of Confucius" with the exception of Yu, who appears in early works only as a "culture hero," but not as a sage-king (1953, p. 49). Creel further notices that Yu is found "mentioned as an early emperor" in the Confucian *Analects*, along with Yao and Shun, the other two sage-kings/emperors, who "are assigned to an earlier date than is Yü [Yu]," a fact that is consistent with a working "principle" in Chinese mythology: that is, "The *later* an emperor appears in the literature, the *earlier*, as a rule, is the date assigned to him." This is because "only the earlier periods [that] remained vacant" were available to "new figures" (1953, pp. 49–50; emphases original). Though Creel does not speculate further, the implication is already clear: The so-called sage-kings could have been made up by the Confucians and the like, or they are mythical figures or culture heroes at best.

Ching echoes Creel, but with a more pronounced "belief" that the sage-kings "never existed" (1997, p. xii). Ching claims that they were an invention of "later times, possibly of Confucius and Mencius" who "created this myth, for the sake of having real rulers emulate such mythical figures as Yao and Shun and Yü who were made into paragons of human virtues" (1997, p. xii). At least, the Confucians played a lead role in promoting "the sages as moral exemplars and 'philosopher-kings'" (Ching 1983, p. 14), as is evidenced by the effusive exaltations of the sage-kings in the Four Books of the Confucian canon. And they did this for a political reason: to mold society into a world based on their values and beliefs. Now we may see why on so many occasions, the earlier (sage) kings are called on by Xunzi to remedy social ills or point to the right way of moral conduct. The "extensive use" of *xian-wang* in Xunzi's argument (Cua 2000, p. 41) can be roughly formulated like this: The earlier kings were such, such a way, so we should also be such, such a way; otherwise, bad things will ensue. It appears that the sage-king invocation is a convenient, but powerful, tactic for Xunzi to employ. Without it, his argument would lose its thrust.

The early Confucians, and other pre-Qin thinkers, may have fabricated the sage-king myth for the sake of promoting their moral or political agendas, but in doing so, they also created an "ethos-as-spirit" to make their claims more authoritative—so named, because ethos as such is a completely disembodied rhetorical entity or, at best, based on a distant, mystical past. Nevertheless, those early thinkers were still able to "wield" it with impunity, as if endowed with an invincible "spirit." In the case of Xunzi, we may see that the invocation of "earlier kings" would make it hard for his opponents to launch a rebuttal against him because of an inveterate cultural belief in history in Chinese society. Apparently, the Confucians and many others have made full use of this cultural belief in promoting their ideologies and agendas

Then, Confucius' claim that "I transmit but don't create" can also be read as a rhetorical tactic. By aligning his own teachings with those of "the greatest men in the past" (Dubs 1951, p. 33), Confucius created an ethos-as-spirit, thereby to attract more students and/or to advocate his political agenda. This should be understandable given the historical context. As Dubs explains, "in his [Confucius'] time, no other except an appeal to the authority of the great past could have produced immediate results" (1951, p. 33). After his death, later generations of disciples and followers—it would seem—inherited the same tactic by creating an "ethos-as-spirit" out of their master's name despite the fact that the historical Confucius was a career failure. For example, in the *Zhong Yong* (中庸; *Doctrine of the Mean*) Confucius is described to "have taken upon himself the task of Yao and Shun and modeled his life after King Wen and King Wu,[41] observant of the laws of Heaven and seasons above and receptive to the conditions of water and earth below" (仲尼祖述尧舜，宪章文武，上律天时，下袭水土).[42] Needless to say, the Great Master is presented as an uncrowned sage-king (素王; *su-wang*). The "promotion" story of Confucius can go on and on, but we are assured of one thing: Confucius is never what he was. His sagehood is evolved out of an ethos-as-spirit.

While Dubs' complaint rings true about others imputing their beliefs to the Great Master, a scenario of epigonism would seem inevitable after the historical

[41] The founders of the Zhou dynasty (1046–221 B.C.), popularly held as "sage-kings" in Chinese culture.

[42] Author's translation, from the original Chinese version in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995). See *Zhong Yong* (p. 42).

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Confucius was transformed into a figure standing for an "authoritative remembered tradition" (Krijgsman 2014, p. 105) or, as I would call it, an ethos-as-spirit. Thoughts of later epigones or even "heresies" would have to make their way into the "Sayings of Confucius" in order to be voiced and heard. Understandably, the intrusion could have been accomplished by "usurping" Confucius' ethos, just as the Great Master had done so with the "sage-kings" of the mystical past. It may be concluded that "editorial creativity," typical of collective workmanship in early Chinese rhetorical practices, has its dual ramification: on the one hand it helps create a sagely figure; on the other it turns that figure into "a free-floating signifier, opening endless possibilities for people to recreate Confucianism" (Cai 2016, p. 82).

Thus, the statement, "I transmit but don't create," may turn out to be a literal depiction of Confucius as a mere author figure of the *Analects*. Regardless, it remains unlikely that we can veritably resolve the issue of "authenticity versus epigonism" as raised by Harbsmeier (2019, p. 214). This would be true with the *Analects* and other Confucian classics, but also with the whole body of classical Chinese texts. On the other hand, the task of verification would seem unnecessary. For those sayings attributed to Confucius, and Mozi[43] and Laozi as well, says Krijgsman, "were rather a commonly available resource in the cultural memory of the period"; assigning authorship to them "shows an attempt to appropriate this cultural heritage to the agenda of a specific group" (2014, p. 111). He adds, "Rewriting, interpreting and editing these sayings into a collection assigned to a[n] author figure thus reflects not what 'the master said,' but rather what the group thought what the master would, could, or even should have said when dealing with a particular issue…" (2014, p. 111). If Krijgsman's view is valid, then verifying authorial authenticity is anything but meaningful in exploring a collective system of thought called Confucianism, of which the historical Confucius has long been reputed to be the founder.

Confucianism in Chinese is *ru* (儒) or the *ru* school of thought (儒学; 儒家思想), a tradition that actually dates back to the early Zhou times, hundreds of years before Confucius was born, according to a study by Cai (2016) and many others. A conclusion is thus more than obvious: "Confucius did not create Confucianism" (Cai 2016, p. 62). But then who created the *ru* or Confucianism? The question may have to be answered a little differently: the *ru* is just a cultural heritage that originated in early Chinese society. It is anyone's guess how Confucius was designated to be the *ru*'s founder[44] or, in Krijgsman's words, to "appropriate this cultural heritage." But one thing would seem certain: If not Confucius, then Lifucius, Wangfucius, or whoever-fucius would be there to take his place. A figure head has to be set up to mark a system of thought, or a cultural heritage, hence the ethos-as-spirit. This may explain why the "sage-king" myth of the Golden Age was invented in ancient China and how the historical Confucius got transformed from a "career failure" all the way up to "the sage of sages" in modern China.[45]

VIII. Logic and Truth

Hunter and Kern, two Western Sinologists, have made this statement about the *Analects* that I think is worth quoting in full to start a discussion for this section:

> The *Lunyu* [*Analects*] certainly lends itself to the role of gatekeeper text. As a guide to the quotable Kongzi [Confucius], it is short (ca. 16,000 characters) and divided into 500 or so bite-sized, easily memorized bons-mots. Even its challenges are conducive to reader engagement. The text does not present Kongzi's teachings in ways that a modern academic philosopher would recognize as *rigorous*. Logical connections between and across entries are implicit at best. Contradictions abound. Entries of various formats (sayings, dialogues, discussions, anecdotes, testimonia) are strung together indiscriminately with little or no context. (2018, p. 1; emphasis added)

Hunter and Kern's assessment makes perfect sense, if we take a critical approach to it (the *Analects*) from the point of view of "modern (Western) scholarship, which privileges analysis over narrative and judges texts against its own logocentric commitments" (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, p. 1). But what appears missing in their critique is a rhetorical approach, which, put simply, is to take into account "audience" and "cultural context" when assessing the effectiveness of a speech-act. In the case of the *Analects*, one would have to address such questions as who it was meant for, in what kind of intellectual milieu it was written, and so on. Or perhaps a rhetorical question can be put forward: Did the authors of the *Analects* have to be as "rigorous" as their Western counterparts for the purpose of presenting Confucius' teachings? The answer can be a simple "no," because rhetoric, and discourse practice in general, of Chinese antiquity was ethocentric—not logocentric, as in the West. The *Analects*, like all other Chinese classics, was written and produced in an "*Age of Ethos,*" to borrow a term from Baumlin and Meyer (2018, p. 21).[46] This explains, at least in part, why the *Analects* has been

[43] An early Chinese thinker (about 480–390 B.C.), founder of Mohism, a school of thought more pragmatic and rational in comparison with Confucianism.

[44] Cai believes that Confucius' disciples made the difference.

[45] See the news article by Dai Yan on *China Daily*: "Confucius, the Sage of Sages" (2009).

[46] Baumlin and Meyer are yearning for an "Age of Ethos," instead of "the Enlightenment 'Age of Reason'—the epoch of logocentrism." The former aims to "make our discourse caring, accommodating, epideictic, iatrological, inventive, and personal" (2018, p. 21). However, the "age of ethos" in Chinese version is not the same as the authors' futuristic vision of discourse practice.

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treated as "the fountainhead of early Confucian thought and Chinese philosophy in general" (Weingarten 2014, p. 250) despite its apparent lack of "scholarly rigor" in the eye of some Westerners.

To characterize early Chinese rhetoric/discourse as ethocentric does not suggest in the least that the notions of "logic" and "truth" were foreign to the ancient Chinese, as misconstrued by some Western students. Rather, they were just not as important as ethos in early rhetorical practices, where the appeal to the Dao/Heaven, or some "heavenly" entity, appears paramount in securing a rhetorical persuasion. It seems that two "culprits" may have caused the aforementioned misconstruction by Westerners. One is the "evident mismatch" in terms of linguistic categories (Lloyd 2004, p. 27). Like "ethos" and "rhetoric," the terms "logic" and "truth" have no exact equivalent in classical Chinese, but this does not mean they were conceptually missing in early Chinese thought, just as there is no indication that ethos and rhetoric were missing in early Chinese discourse practices.[47] The other culprit is the "broad contrast" in epistemological priorities between two cultures: namely, "a Greek insistence on stable essences" versus "a Chinese focus on changes, transformation, interdependence" (Lloyd 2004, p. 116). Apparently, one whose mind is set on "stable essences" will not see the "Chinese focus" has anything to do with truth-seeking.

It has been well confirmed in scholarship that ancient Chinese thinkers were pragmatic, focusing on what is useful for all under Heaven, instead of what a thing is in itself in an abstract sense (Johnston 1976; Graham 1989; Harbsmeier 1993; Lloyd 2004; and Liu and You 2009). Conceptually, the Dao (Way) can be a Chinese equivalent to the Platonic truth in Western thought, suggesting that the ancient Chinese were aware of some sort of truth that is absolute, ultimate, and transcendent. On the other hand, "the Tao [Dao] that can be told is not the eternal Tao" (see the epigraph), meaning that the Chinese were also aware that the absolute is something truly beyond human reach and description. This may explain, in a nutshell, why the early Chinese thinkers adopted an attitude distinct from the followers of Platonism, who would insist, idealistically, that the absolute can be accessible to humans if a rigorous reasoning takes place. However, "unlike their Greek counterparts so possessed with rational demonstration in their quest for the absolute (supposedly independent of human intervention), ancient Chinese thinkers—at least the vast majority of them—appeared to take a 'let-it-go' attitude towards it, so that they could redirect their attention to the worldly, promoting their moral or political agendas utilizing what had already been accepted as true, like the Dao" (Wei 2021, p. 7).

Nonetheless, the prevalence of pragmatism did not necessarily preclude rational thinking in early Chinese discourse practices, as evidenced by the applications of "quasi-syllogism" (Graham 1989) and "syllogism" (Paul 1993; Schaberg 2001) in some of the classical texts. The Mohist school of thought, in particular, is well known for its mark of "rationalism." In fact, the "later Mohists were so logically minded," observes Feng, that "they attempted to create a pure system of epistemology and logic" (1948, p. 128). Logical reasoning, I would like to add, was not as uncommon as initially thought by some of the Western scholars, despite the "comparative lack" of logical categories (Lloyd 2004, pp. 50–51). Let us take, for example, a passage from the *Shangshu* (Book of Documents),[48] which is part of a "motivational speech" (Great Harangue; 泰誓) by King Wu delivered to his generals and soldiers right before a battle against King Zhou:

> 惟天惠民，惟辟奉天。有夏桀弗克若天，流毒下国。天乃佑命成汤，降黜夏命。惟受罪浮于桀。剥丧元良，贼虐谏辅。谓己有天命，谓敬不足行，谓祭无益，谓暴无伤。厥监惟不远，在彼夏王。天其以予乂民， 朕梦协朕卜， 袭于休祥，戎商必克。
>
> Heaven always shows its mercy to the people, and the ruler must obey the Will of Heaven. Jie of the Xia disobeyed Heaven above and therefore caused grave calamities all over on Earth. That is why Heaven granted its Mandate to Cheng Tang,[49] to terminate the dynasty of Xia. Today, the crimes of the king [Zhou][50] far exceed those committed by Jie. He persecutes the innocent and sends them into exile; he punishes and butchers his ministers who try to voice an honest opinion. He claims to have the Mandate of Heaven, yet dares to say that to revere Heaven is useless, that sacrificial ceremonies produce nothing good, and that his despotic practices won't hurt society. He is thus not far away from his own demise, as shown by the example of Jie. That is why Heaven confers the turn on me to rule the country. Plus, the dream I dreamed accords with the signs revealed through divination: They both tell good fortunes ahead, predicting an inevitable victory over the Shang.[51]

[47] Lloyd, for example, believes that the *shuo-nan* (说难; The Difficulties of Persuasion) chapter of the *Han Feizi* "shows a subtlety and sophistication that surpasses anything we can find in classical Greek handbooks of rhetoric" (2004, p. 45). The *Han Feizi* is a collection of essays attributed to Han Feizi (about 280–233 B.C.), a political philosopher of the Legalist school.

[48] The *Shangshu* is historically classified as a pre-Confucius classic, though Confucians may have played a role in its editing and even revising.

[49] Founder of the Shang dynasty (about 1600–1046 B.C.), one of the legendary sage-kings in Chinese history.

[50] King Zhou, the last ruler of the Shang, is historically viewed as personally responsible for the demise of the dynasty because of his "wicked" rule. In the *Shijing* and other early classics, he often serves to exemplify how a bad ruler is doomed by the Will of Heaven.

[51] Author's translation, based on the original Chinese version in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995). See "Tai Shi (middle section), Book of the Zhou" *Shangshu* (p. 1,434).

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One cannot help but notice the recurring invocation of "Heaven" in the speech. A closer reading may reveal that the whole speech is implicitly founded on a few Heaven-related premises, such as "Heaven represents the ultimate good"; "Heaven rewards the good people but punishes the bad"; and "anyone who goes against the Will of Heaven will get punished." These premises may sound ludicrous to modern ears, but within historical context, they were "true" and "axiomatic" and therefore made perfect sense to both the speaker and the audience. Culturally shared, these premises can be left unstated in the speech, much like that in a classic example of Western enthymeme: The major premise that "all men are mortal" can be omitted if the minor premise that "Socrates is a man" is stated, with an obvious conclusion that "Socrates is mortal." Thus, one may realize that King Wu's speech operates in a somewhat deductive fashion, like an enthymeme. In the case of Jie (桀):

1) Anyone who goes against the Will of Heaven will get punished (major premise, unstated)
2) Jie of the Xia went against the Will of Heaven, by "disobey[ing] Heaven above" and "caus[ing] grave calamities" (minor premise)
3) So Jie got punished by Heaven, with the dynasty of Xia "terminated" (conclusion)

Similarly, in the case of Zhou (纣):

1) Anyone who goes against the Will of Heaven will get punished (major premise, unstated)
2) Zhou of the Shang went against the Will of Heaven, with his crimes committed far exceeding those by Jie, with a declaration that "to revere Heave is useless," etc. (minor premise)
3) So Zhou will get punished by Heaven, "not far away from his own demise" (conclusion)

In the second case (of Zhou), the reader may notice that King Wu only makes a prediction, as the battle against Zhou has yet to start, but it is a logical one, based on an enthymematic reasoning. What is more, the prediction is also backed up, inductively, by the historical example of Jie: If Jie was doomed for going against the Will of Heaven, then Zhou will be doomed, too, for behaving the same way. The final conclusion is thus logically reached: "Heaven confers the turn on me to rule."

Similar passages, built on enthymematic reasoning, can be found elsewhere in the *Shangshu*, as well as in other pre-Qin classics. The *Xunzi*, which was cited earlier, contains many enthymematic arguments, as seen, for example, in this statement: "Heaven has its own constant way. It does not exist because of Yao, nor does it disappear because of Jie. Respond to it by good governing, and good fortune will arrive; respond to it by ill governing, and ill luck will strike" (天行有常，不为尧存，不为桀亡。应之以治则吉，应之以乱则凶).[52] Like the "motivational speech" by King Wu, Heaven is invoked; what is more, the statement is also built on a hidden premise that Xunzi's audience would know too well: "Heaven rewards the good people but punishes the bad," or "The one who follows Heaven will get rewarded, but the one who goes against Heaven will be punished." Therefore, good governing leads to good fortune, and ill governing to ill luck. Conceivably, a Western reader would miss the "logic" of Xunzi's statement if he or she had no idea of the implicit "Heaven-themed" premise on which his argument is based.

A careful reader may notice that the conclusion in Xunzi's statement is not as clear cut as the one in King Wu's speech. Strictly speaking, the statement, "Respond to it by good governing, and good fortune will arrive; respond to it by ill governing, and ill luck will strike," is just another premise. The conclusion, who-and-who will receive good fortune or ill luck, is left unsaid. Given the context of the essay ("On Heaven"), one may argue that the conclusion is not necessary, as the statement can be read as a general assertion (of an idea). Still, there can be a different reason for its omission, one to do with the way logical reasoning is carried out. Unlike the Greek syllogism or enthymeme where a conclusion is a must, Chinese reasoning does not necessarily require a conclusion if everything is already made clear. For a Chinese, something like "all swans are white, and this is a swan" is enough. The conclusion, "therefore this swan is white," is self-evident and can be omitted (Wei 2021, p. 9 fn. 10).[53] Thus, we may see the raison d'etre of a conclusion being left out in Xunzi's argument: it is just unnecessary. However, if someone insists that the Western-styled conclusion is a must for completing a reasoning process, then many "conclusion-free" propositions, as we have seen in the Chinese classics, like the *Xunzi*, could be excluded from the realm of logic.

Naturally, questions relative to the above discussion may be raised: how do we decide a reasoning is logical or not logical? does it have to be clearly stated in order to qualify as logical? or, can an implicit statement[54] be considered possibly logical? Further debates and investigations are certainly warranted, but it may be helpful to be aware that there

[52] Author's translation, based on the original Chinese text, Chapter 17 of the *Xunzi*: On Heaven (荀子原文：天论篇第十七). See chineseclassic.com (数据经典).

[53] Rhetorically, this seems a better option, as the redundancy of a conclusion can potentially ruin the "elegance" of a text. According to Kennedy, Aristotle would prefer to leave the premises implicit out of the concern that "a tight logical argument is not effective in rhetoric" (1980, p. 71), apparently contrasting the Chinese preference for an implicit conclusion.

[54] This is common in Western culture, too. As Lloyd points out, "We do not even very often communicate by means of complete propositions. Much is left implicit in the statements we make, including in the links between them" (2004, p. 41).

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should be more than one way to define logical reasoning, just as defining truth should not be limited to "the invocation of a single universal principle" (Lloyd 2004, p. 62). Further, the ancient Greek and Chinese each developed their preferred methods of reasoning that best fit into their own situations: social, cultural, intellectual, rhetorical, etc. Thus, for example, the preference to include or leave out a conclusion in a logical proposition (as in the "white swan" example) may be taken as an indication of a preferred mode of reasoning, rather than a sign of logical superiority or inferiority. Lloyd suggests a "common logic" (2004, pp. 39–51) across cultures, and Paul even argues "in favor of the universality of logic and rationality" based on his elaborate analysis of later Mohist logic (1993, pp. 119–35). I will not go that far, as I do believe that logic is culture-based, like rhetoric. Suppose there is such a thing as "common" or "universal," but what really matters is how it is applied within a cultural context and the culture-specific ramifications that come out of the application. On the other hand, the likelihood cannot be ignored that different cultures, different systems of thought and reasoning share certain features in common, just as Jesus Christ and Confucius may have had similar things to say.[55] This probably explains why "enthymeme" and "historical example" can be found in King Wu's speech, even though it is very doubtful that he applied them consciously as a logical deployment, like the ancient Greek.

Given the theme of this essay, the current section may have run into an excursus; however, I think it is necessary for two reasons. First, a definitive point shall be made that logical reasoning and its rhetorical signifier logos are not as uncommon in classical Chinese discourse as acknowledged, despite the fact that ethotic rhetoric has taken "center stage" (Wei 2021). King Wu's "motivational speech," cited earlier, is a good example of logos being adeptly employed for its "rational" appeal to a receptive audience. The fact that logical reasoning and logos are conceived, named, or applied differently does not necessarily indicate the presence of a "weak" or "strong" reasoning; rather, it reflects what has been culturally preferred or prioritized. Second, and probably more relevant, in early Chinese discourse, logos rarely goes it alone but rather blends with ethos, just as philosophy blends with rhetoric (Wei 2021). In other words, we cannot adequately discuss Chinese ethos without addressing logos at the same time, or vice versa. There is also a practical reason for this logos/ethos blend. To the Chinese, a pure application of logos, as in a logical demonstration, may well turn into a linguistic drab, so they prefer to mix rational argument with rhetorical elegance. The latter appears "paramount" (Schaberg 2001, p.30) for its role in exerting an ethotic effect.

In Greek rhetoric, logos and ethos are treated as separate discourse entities with distinctly different roles assigned to them, but in Chinese rhetoric the opposite is true. Theoretically, this "Chinese-ness" is not incomprehensible if one is familiar with the dualistic conception of Heaven in Chinese metaphysics,[56] where Heaven is believed to represent a cosmic order, viewed as the ultimate truth of the universe, or the Dao, but is also credited for prescribing a moral order for the mundane world, aligned with that cosmic order, therefore representative of the ultimate good. In the latter conception, Heaven holds a supernatural power capable of rewarding the good and punishing the bad. As such, Heaven is also a source of ultimate authority for the ancient Chinese. Apparently, the Chinese dualism has created a "double-edged" Heaven: on the one hand, it is logos, or the source of logos, for leading the way to the ultimate truth; on the other, it is also ethos, or the source of ethos, for representing the ultimate good or authority. Thus one may see why logos and ethos are one in Chinese rhetoric (and philosophy), because both can be traced, ultimately, to the "oneness" of Heaven. We can use King Wu's "motivational speech" once again to illustrate how the oneness of logos and ethos applies in early Chinese rhetoric. In that speech, Heaven is the premise of an argument that predicts, inferentially, the demise of King Wu's archenemy, King Zhou. Yet, this same premise is also the source of divine authority King Wu is invoking to punish the latter and, more importantly, to legitimate his political position as a would-be ruler. That Heaven stands for both truth and authority proves to be a rhetorical advantage for the speaker, as he is able to wield the *skeptron* conferred by Heaven and at the same time convince his audience that there is a "logical" reason for his authority.

It is beyond the scope of this essay to theorize the logos/ethos oneness, but we may think of it as a function of the Chinese *yin/yang* logic, where A is A but can also be B, as opposed to the Western logic, where A is A and B is B. A. Graham explicates this *yin/yang* "scheme" in terms of "complementary polarities" (1992, p. 64). But what I understand is, clearly, the holism of a Chinese dialectic at work, in which two seemingly antithetical concepts, the "conscious will" and the

[55] For example, "Don't do things to others that you don't want others to do to you" is found in both the *Bible* and *Analects*.

[56] Strictly speaking, Heaven is an attendant notion of the Dao (translated as the "underlying principle of an ordered universe" or "order of the universe"), the ultimate, and transcendent, truth in Chinese philosophy. Confucius' statement may illustrate the Dao's significance in Chinese thought: "I would die with no regrets in the evening, if I learned of the Dao in the morning" (朝闻道，夕死可矣). The concept of the Dao was possibly a later development in Chinese thought to distinguish from Heaven as a divine power or spirit. The latter originated from high antiquity. However, Heaven has been used interchangeably with the Dao and in many ways as a replacement of the latter.

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"impersonal order" (Schwartz 1989, p. 51), or the "ontological creativity" and the "primary cosmology" (Neville 1991, p. 72), or, in simple terms, the divine and the cosmic, can be reconciled into one: that is, the oneness of Heaven. The logos/ethos oneness shall be perceived this way, too.[57]

IX. "Age of Ethos"

In ancient Greece, logos was privileged because of an obsession with the epistemological question of *what is true*. "Heavy-duty epistemology," notes Lloyd, "seems to have been stimulated by the need to support the counter-intuitive claims by which Masters of Truth hoped to make their reputations—and they hoped to make them with the heavy-duty epistemology as well" (2004, pp. 61–2). In contrast, the ancient Chinese cared much more about *what is acceptable* (可; *ke*),[58] not because they were less capable of abstract reasoning, but because their "chief concern…is not with logic nor with language of philosophy as such, so much as with how we should live" (Lloyd 2004, p. 59). This pragmatic attitude, characteristic of mainstream Chinese philosophical thought, explains why Mohism, the "rational" school of thought, has remained at best "secondary" in status in the development of Chinese philosophy, despite its widely recognized "logical sophistication" (Graham 1989, p. 7; p. 137). It also explains why logos did not enjoy the same status as ethos did in early Chinese rhetorical practices.[59] Given the cultural faith in Heaven (as the ultimate source of truth/authority), the advantage of ethos over logos is obvious: for practical reasons, "an argument using Heaven to 'bluff' others would be easier to make than the one relying on a rigid process of rational demonstration" (Wei 2021, p. 10). We may sense a subjugation of logos to ethos in the speech by King Wu, where logical reasoning pivots on the premise of Heaven's will, "the ultimate source of the king's authority" (Schwartz 1989, p. 29). If that source of authority could not be established, there would be no way for King Wu to start an "enthymeme-like" argument.

Pragmatism aside, the central role of ethos in early Chinese rhetoric may best be understood through its close association with political power and the maintenance of social order, as seen in a dialogue about *wei-yi* (威仪; authority or dignity and deportment or manners)[60] between Duke Xiang of Wei (卫襄公) and his minister Beigong Wenzi (北宫文子), recorded in the *Zuozhuan* (左传):

> 北宫文子见令尹围之威仪，言于卫侯曰："令尹似君矣！将有他志，虽获其志，不能终也。《诗》云：'靡不有初，鲜克有终。'终之实难，令尹其将不免？"
>
> 公曰："子何以知之？"
>
> 对曰："《诗》云：'敬慎威仪，惟民之则。'令尹无威仪，民无则焉。民所不则，以在民上，不可以终。"
>
> 公曰："善哉！何谓威仪？"
>
> 对曰："有威而可畏谓之威，有仪而可像谓之仪。君有君之威仪，其臣畏而爱之，则而象之，故能有其国家，令闻长世。臣有臣之威仪，其下畏而爱之，故能守其官职，保族宜家。顺是以下皆如是，是以上下能相固也。《卫诗》曰：'威仪棣棣，不可选也。'言君臣、上下、父子、兄弟、内外、大小皆有威仪也。"
>
> Having observed the *wei-yi* manners of Wei (围), the prime minister of Chu, Beigong Wenzi said to the Duke of Wei (卫): "The Chu prime minister is acting like a ruler! He is ambitious, but he will be doomed if he gets his way with his ambitions. The *Book of Poetry* reads: 'All have their beginnings, but few end well.' It is just not easy for things to come to a good end, but can't he avoid that fate?"
>
> The Duke asked: "How do you know?"
>
> Beigong Wenzi replied: "The *Book of Poetry* reads: 'Exercise *wei-yi* with respect and caution; set a model for others,' but the prime minister is short of *wei-yi*, so people have nobody to look up to as their model. If people do not look up to the person above who rules them, then that ruler won't come to a good end."[61]
>
> The Duke asked: "Well said, but what is *wei-yi* then?"
>
> Beigong Wenzi replied: "If one has *wei*, one will hold people in awe; if one has *yi*, one will inspire others to imitate him in manners. A ruler must have *wei-yi*, so as to inspire awe among his subjects and elicit admiration from them. The subjects will follow his model and imitate his good manners. That way, he will keep his rule over a state and make a good name of himself for later generations. A subject has to have *wei-yi*, too, so as to inspire awe and reverence among his subordinates. That way, he will keep his position and therefore protect his clan and bring good to the family. This is how social relations should be managed all the way down. That way, those above and those below will stand together in solidarity. The *Wei Poetry* reads: 'in graceful solemnness, *wei-yi* is everywhere; one has to deal with it' That is to say, *wei-yi* is in all sorts of human relations, like the ruler/subject, the superior/subordinate, the father/son, the elder-brother/younger-brother, the insider/outsider, and the great/small."[62]

[57] The idea of "oneness" should not keep us from exploring logos and ethos on separate terms, just as *yin* and *yang* can be discussed separately, despite the fact that they are perceived within a unified whole in Chinese philosophy.

[58] Concern over the question of what is acceptable may account for the fact that the ancient Chinese did not consciously separate philosophy from rhetoric, unlike their Greek counterparts, who would assign the question of what is true to the task of philosophy and what is acceptable or probable to the task of rhetoric.

[59] This appears true today in the West, too. Baumlin and Meyer state that "*we live in an age of ethos*: issues of 'trust,' expertise, and 'charismatic authority' have largely supplanted Enlightenment logos or 'good reasons' as the ground of popular discourse (2018, p. 3).

[60] *Wei* and *yi* are like two sides of the same coin: one is on the authoritative; the other on the appropriate, as in one's demeanor, appearance, etc., similar to an "ethos of propriety and decency" (Bourdieu 1991, *Language*, p. 132).

[61] Beigong Wenzi's prediction turned out to be true.

[62] Author's translation, based on the original Chinese version in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by

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The dialogue provides a window into the role of ethos—in the sense of *wei-yi*—in Chinese antiquity for its association with political power and the preservation of social order. Crucial to maintaining human relations at all levels, *wei-yi* is described by Beigong Weniz to have the potential to determine whether a ruler can retain his power or whether a society or a family will run smoothly.

The two aspects of *wei-yi*, authority and deportment, are both ethotic, with *wei* focusing on power and *yi* on the propriety of one's conduct in relation to others. The latter is reminiscent of Aristotle's "three goods" of ethos. At least, it matches well with the "good moral character." However, we may also sense the difference, for whether alone or together with *wei*, *yi* is seen to underpin the harmony of society or, to be exact, the order of human relations, whereas Aristotle's "three goods" are aimed at self-projection of a rhetor in his personhood. Further, the projection of ethos through *yi* has more to do with the interpersonal than the personal, as it hinges on how one interacts with others on social occasions. Thus, *yi* accords well with *li*, the Confucian doctrine of ritualization or rules of conduct, the gist of which is expressed in a famous motto by Confucius: "*jun-jun, chen-chen, fu-fu, zi-zi*" (君君，臣臣，父父，子子; the ruler must act like a ruler; the subject like a subject; the father like a father; and the son like a son). The motto, observes Harbsmeier, "is about all well-defined roles in society," and it underlies the Confucian norm of "[g]ood governance… to be constituted by everyone properly acting out the roles they have" (2015, p. 522). But it may also be interpreted as a more pronounced rendition of *yi* due to its emphasis on the appropriateness of social manners. An excerpt from the *Analects* demonstrates how the Great Master acts out his *yi*:

> At court, when speaking with officers of lower rank, he [Confucius] was pleasant and affable; when speaking with officers of upper rank, he was formal and proper. When his ruler was present, he combined an attitude of reverential respect with graceful ease (Ivanhoe and van Norden 2001, p. 27).

It may sound a bit belittling to describe the Great Master as a "chameleon" in his mannerism, but it is significant to see how Confucius adjusts his *yi* called for on each social occasion when he interacts with others. That is, he consciously makes a "rhetorical move" by behaving in a manner befitting an interactive situation in which he finds himself. This explains why, as recorded in the *Analects*, Confucius frequently changes his *yi*, for example, from a "respectful countenance" when seeing "someone wearing a ritual cap" to a "solemn expression" when attending "a sumptuous banquet" (Ivanhoe and van Norden 2001, pp. 28–29). Apparently, *yi* is more than "acting out" one's "culturally pre-ordained" social role (Harbsmeier 2015, p. 522). Rather, it fits well into the "definition of the situation," as proposed by Goffman (1959, p. 4), which sees one's social behavior or "performance" as a function of interactions with others. Instead of being "coherent" and "stable," a person's *yi* has to be "chameleon-like," in correspondence to the fluidity of the definition of the situation, as exemplified by the Confucius figure of the *Analects*. The earlier cited Confucius motto does not necessarily suggest that one has a fixed social role: in front of one's children, one is a father, but with somebody else, one has a different role to act out; accordingly, one has to display or present a different *yi*.

Goffman would use the term "impression management" (1959, p. 208) to describe how one presents one's *yi* in relation to other interacting partners, but another term "ethos projection" may be equally descriptive, as the latter also addresses the question of how to present one's self socially. Nonetheless, we may be able to discern a poststructuralist undertone of Chinese ethos, in the sense that it is projected on the occasion of social interactions where one is involved, rather than on the basis of his or her character or a personhood within, presupposed in the traditional Western model. "Ethos is created when writers locate themselves" (Reynolds 1993, p. 336), but the question of where and how to locate may tell the difference. In Chinese tradition, ethos, as in the case of *yi*, is fluidly projected, depending on where one finds oneself socially. In the Aristotelian tradition, however, ethos becomes a verbal recreation of one's self; therefore, one must stand on his or her own, as an individual. These two versions of ethos serve different purposes as well: the Chinese is to restore *li*, the rules of conduct, for the purpose of maintaining social order, while the Aristotelian is to build up one's credibility or trustworthiness for a personal achievement.

The other part of *wei-yi*, namely, *wei*, is more directly associated with power, especially the political power of a ruler. The Chinese character *wei* (威) has many connotations, like authority, dignity, majesty, charisma, solemnity, and stateliness, to name a few, but we may thus develop a pretty good idea about *wei* in terms of its ethotic function. Politically, *wei* and *yi* complement one another, similar to the "stick and carrot" pair, with the "stick" to secure submission or obedience and the "carrot" to induce admiration and support. A statement by Confucius says a lot about the political potential of *yi*: "If a ruler can administer his state with decorum and courtesy—then what difficulty will he have?" (de Bary, et al. 1960, p. 29). Clearly, the "carrot" is preferred in the Confucian conception of good governance, but if we read the statement deconstructively, it can be seen as an implicit jab at the current rulers for their failure to observe *yi*. This may explain, at least partly, why Confucius takes as his

Han Lu, et al. (1995). See "Duke of Xiang: Year Thirty-First," the *Zuozhuan* (pp. 2,266–67).

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primary mission the restoration of *li*, the rules of conduct. As discussed earlier, the sage-king myth was likely an invention by Confucius and his followers in an attempt to create "model" rulers for others to imitate. And Beigong Wenzi's dialogue may reflect this effort through its emphasis on *yi*, which, we may recall, is depicted as a virtuous quality to be imitated by people.[63]

In all respects, *wei* or authority, constitutes the core of political ethos in early Chinese society for its obvious function in signifying power. Yao, the first of three legendary sage-kings of remote antiquity "historically" recorded in the *Shangshu* (Book of Documents),[64] may be seen as an embodiment of such ethos. He is portrayed as a sovereign with immense authority in the first chapter of the book, "Yao Dian" (the Canon of Yao), where "he emerges as a true authoritarian: by the sheer force of his personality, he overrules his advisers and makes his own decisions" (Kern 2017, p. 35). The opening of the chapter strikes the reader as highly ethotic, with epithets betokening Yao's imperial *wei* or authority: "Once upon a time, when Yao was the Emperor, he administered his rule with superior wisdom and mastery, his brilliance shining over all under Heaven" (昔在帝尧， 聪明文思，光宅天下).[65] In spite of this, above his kingly authority (君威; *jun-wei*), there is something called *tian-wei* (天畏/天威; Heaven's authority), a higher authority to which Yao has to defer, as seen when Yao issues his first command, ordering his subjects in charge of astrology to "follow the way of vast Heaven in reverence and calculate and chart (the movements of) the sun, the moon, and the stars so as to properly figure out seasons for people to observe (钦若昊天，历象日月星辰， 敬授人时).[66] Yao's action may be understood as a conscious effort to "align human activity with the mechanics of the cosmic clockwork" (Kern 2017, p. 36), but it is also reflective, in a broad sense, of a collective human desire in early Chinese society of seeking "a higher consciousness of oneness with the universe" (Ching 1997, p. xiii). Yao is revered as a "sage-king" by later generations partly because he fits into this "higher consciousness." Still, it is his *wei* that makes it all possible for him to follow Heaven's Way by fashioning the human order after the cosmic, therefore maintaining harmony of the society.

That Yao is deferential to Heaven yields a clue to the sociopolitical hierarchy of antiquity, especially of the Zhou times, where Heaven, not the king, is at the top: "Heaven can bring its will to bear on men only through the pyramidal political order in which every level conforms to those above and those on top conform to Heaven" (Schwartz 1985, p. 163).[67] Against the backdrop of a cultural belief among the ancient Chinese that "Heaven is the source of ultimate authority" (惟天明畏),[68] Yao's deference to Heaven is all "within expectations." A king's duty, states the *Shangshu*, is to "fulfill Heaven's will and display its *wei* in veneration" (将天明威).[69] Similar statements abound in the *Shangshu*, but they all point to one theme: the authority of a king is derived from Heaven. What is more, that authority is not absolute but contingent on how the king performs his Heaven-bestowed duty (天命; *tian-ming*). The earlier cited speech by King Wu appears to exploit this notion of contingency: King Zhou of the Shang is pronounced to have lost his authority to rule because he has misperformed the mandate of Heaven. Thus, an all-out battle against him is grounded in a political legitimacy.

Readers will likely notice the central role Heaven plays in the Chinese kingship, as it stands as a dual source of authority and legitimation for the king. Without Heaven, without kingship, so to speak. And yet, the function of "Heaven" is essentially rhetorical. For either as a metaphysical entity to be signified or as a linguistic symbol to signify the metaphysical, Heaven is "programmed" to serve a political purpose: that is, to project the authority, or *wei*, and therefore the power of kingship. For obvious reasons, the silent Heaven can never objectify anything for the king; nonetheless, it can be appropriated—rhetorically—into a process of signification, or manipulation, to evince the expected divine "endorsement" for his office. A simple example of such ethotic signification would be the king's self-proclaimed position as the "son of Heaven" (天子; *tian-zi*), who serves as a "mediator between Heaven and Earth" (Ching 1997, p. iii), but with a special "claim to

[63] To save space, most of the original dialogue is omitted in this essay, including the "model" of King Wen, a sage king, in his *wei-yi*. The *Zuozhuan*, where the dialogue is recorded, is one of the classics in the Confucian canon.

[64] The other two sage-kings are Shun (舜) and Yu (禹). Though the *Shangshu* as a whole can be treated as a collection of "historical" documents retrospectively written, the narrative of Emperor Yao in "Yao Dian" (尧典) is more of a mythology about a culture hero deified. "Yao Dian" was most likely a product originated in the Western Zhou period (1046–771 B.C).

[65] Author's translation, based on the original Chinese version in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995). See "Yu-Xia Shu: Yao Dian," the *Shangshu* (p. 1339).

[66] Author's translation, based on the original Chinese version in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995). See "Yu-Xia Shu: Yao Dian," the *Shangshu* (p. 1339).

[67] Schwartz is actually explicating Mozi's political thought, but I think the statement is also a precise description of the Zhou's political system. Also, "Yao Dian" and the *Shangshu* as a whole were produced in the Western Zhou. It can be inferred that they are reflective of thoughts and beliefs of that period rather than those of remote antiquity from which Yao's legend is said to have originated.

[68] Author's translation, based on the original Chinese version in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995). See "Zhou Shu: Duo Shi," the *Shangshu* (p. 1495).

[69] Same as above.

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a monopoly of access to Ti [Heaven]" (Schwartz 1985, p. 30). Hence the rhetorical advantage: the king can lay claim to virtually anything, but all under the auspices of Heaven.

In reality, the practice of ethotic signification for the royal house can be more complex, enshrined in myths and mixed with "the state religion" (Schwartz 1985, p. 39). For instance, in the *Shijing* (Book of Poetry), there is a poem in the Chapter of Da Ya (大雅) describing how *Ti* or the Lord on High (Heaven) gave birth to Hou Ji (后稷), the ancestor of the founders of the Zhou dynasty, through a female named Jiang Yuan (姜嫄),[70] along with several pieces dedicated to the "glory" of King Wen, who was "granted the Mandate by the Lord on High" (上帝既命).[71] Those poems (of Da Ya) were meant for the upper society of the Zhou (Han et al. 1995, p. 606), so we can reasonably infer that they were indicative of some state propaganda at work to manufacture a political ethos for the kingship. According to history books, the religious ceremonies and military activities were paramount in the state affairs of the Zhou (国之大事，在祀与戎).[72] The emphasis on the military appears self-explanatory, but the equally important weight of religious ceremonies exposes an institutionalized effort at manifesting the divine aura for the power, and legitimacy, of kingship, as evidenced by the heavy involvement of the Zhou bureaucracy in religious affairs. In the Zhou's bureaucratic system, most of the six ministry offices (六卿; *liu-qing*) were directly in charge of religious activities, such as divination and sacrificial ceremonies, or had some responsibility for glorifying the royal family, like the office of Grand Genealogist (太宗; *tai-zong*), which oversaw the records of royal lineage (Guo 1976, pp. 265–66). All this is apparently in support of a claim made earlier: Ethos is "anchored in institutional frameworks and social rituals" (Amossy 2001, p. 2).

There are indications that Chinese kings of the early ages were "shamanic figures"[73] (Ching 1997, p. xiii) or played the role of "the 'high priest' of the worship of Ti [Heaven]" (Schwartz 1985, pp. 35–36), suggesting that they had control over "messages" from the divine spirits or Heaven (Guo 1976, p. 213). The reference to "sacrificial ceremonies" and "divination" in that "motivational speech" by King Wu may give us a clue to the practice of shamanism, which the king appears to have taken full advantage of, as can be seen in his claim, "the dream I dreamed accords with the signs revealed through divination." The result was, of course, rhetorically in his favor: "predicting an inevitable victory over the Shang." The rhetorical nature of divination has been affirmed by many studies. For instance, a recent study by Martin Kern on early Chinese divination describes in detail "how the actual *practice* of divination was transformed… into the idealizing *account* of divination," with the former "not accurately" reported in the latter (2018, p. 255; emphases original). The representation of divination, notes Kern, was "strictly controlled" to "support claims of political legitimation," yet with an intimation of Heaven's will, hence "fundamentally rhetorical in nature" (2018, p. 255; p. 258). More importantly, it "propagated the king's capacity of communicating with the spirit world" (Kern 2018, p. 258), which, we may infer, set the stage for transforming the king into "the paradigmatic individual, reflecting in himself so much of that which is greater than himself" (Ching 1997, p. 66).

Early divination, and sacrificial ceremonies as well, may in the first place be understood as a way of knowing the world and/or coming to terms with nature and reality on the part of the ancient Chinese, but it is also appropriated and fashioned into the ritual signification of political ethos for the royal house or, in Schwartz's words, the presentation of "credible evidence of its dynastic charisma" (1985, p. 43). As a speech act or discourse formation, early Chinese divination may recall the "*rituals of social magic*," a term used by Bourdieu when he explicates how authority is conferred through the system of institutions (1991, *Language*, p. 111; emphasis original). In Bourdieuan terms, divination would be characterized as a function of "social rituals," also known as "rites of consecration, or rites of legitimation, or, quite simply, *rites of institution*" (Bourdieu 1991, *Language*, pp. 117–18; emphasis original). Put differently, it is an institutionalized ritual or speech act. But, according to Bourdieu, the authority or "magic" of such rituals actually "resides in the institutional conditions of their production and reception"; in other words, the "act of institution" itself is "magic" (1991, *Language*, p. 111; p. 119).

However, if Foucault's view holds true that discourses are "practices that systematically form the object of which they speak" (1972, p. 49), we may be able to realize that divination itself, like those sacrificial ceremonies and other rituals, also constitutes, or forms, the "magic," in the sense that being a ritualized discourse, it signifies, or speaks of, the power of Chinese kings by way of the "suggestion of charisma and of divine favour" (Ching 1997, p. xii), the latter closely associated with that power. The "magic" here, it would seem, is to present the power by actually

[70] See "Sheng Ming" of Da Ya, *Shijing* (p. 763) in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995).
[71] See "King Wen" of Da Ya, *Shijing* (p. 752) in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995).
[72] See "Duke of Cheng: Year Thirteen," *Zuozhuan* (p. 2,013) in *The Complete Four Books and Five Classics with Annotations*, edited by Han Lu, et al. (1995).
[73] For example, King Wen is credited for having contributed to the creation of the *Yijing* (Book of Changes), originally a divination handbook. This may reveal, indirectly, his background as a shaman, a claim also made by Ching (1999, p. 17).

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presenting its signifier, ethos ("charisma" or "divine favour"), or, in Bourdieu's own words, "to act on reality by acting on its representation" (1991, *Language*, p. 119). This may explain why the "dynastic charisma," as Schwartz would call it, has to be "institutionalised and routinised" in the kingship system of the early ages (Ching 1997, p. xii), obviously for its crucial role in "sustaining" the power of the king (Wei 2021, p. 13). But this may also explain why divination, sacrificial ceremonies and other rituals are institutionalized at the government level (as if run by a propaganda ministry), because of a political need to control the mechanism of ethotic signification or representation. Speaking of early Chinese divination, Kern is of the view that the oracle bone inscriptions "were, in fact, speech acts to *perform* and *constitute* royal sovereignty" (2018, p. 258; emphases added). Based on his view, the act of ritual, as in divination, is also the "magic."

While divination and other social rituals are institutionalized for their role of signifying the authority or power of kingship, they are also part of the state-run apparatus to institutionalize the office of kingship (with its authority and power) exactly for that same role. Thus, the "magic" of those rituals appears to work both ways, meaning that the institutionalized and the institutionalizing are mutually implying one another—yet all within the "totality" of discourse (Foucault 1972, p. 55). The same is true with ethos. It is institutionalized because of its function of sustaining the power of kingship, but in fulfilling this function, it also "partakes in the process of institutionalizing kingship and its power" (Wei 2021, p. 13). Or we may rephrase it in a simple way: the institutionalized (ethos) becomes institutionalizing; the institutionalizing (the office of kingship) gets institutionalized. Furthermore, the signifier (ethos) and the signified (power) are also mutually defining, with one implied in the other, hence "the 'ethocentric' system of signification in the early ages of Chinese civilization" (Wei 2021, p. 14). But let me explain this further starting with Bourdieu.

The proposition by Bourdieu of "act[ing] on reality by acting on its representation" can be taken as a recognition that reality is not of "stable essences," to borrow a term from Lloyd (2004, p. 116), but rather of something malleable, at the "whim" of its signification, or representation.[74] The story of early Chinese kingship may prove this—in its ritual action of establishing an ethos or charisma so as to project a reality of legitimacy for its rule. Once again, the point is, the "magic" mentioned by Bourdieu may also reside in discourse itself, or at least in the interplay between discourse and the system of institutions, from which "discourse derives its legitimate source and point of application" (Foucault 1972, p. 51). Nevertheless, if we follow Foucault's theory, the malleability of reality is to be imputed to the "disparity of the types of enunciation" or "enunciative modalities" (Foucault 1972, p. 54) of discourse practices. (Un)fortunately, these practices "form the object," or reality, by virtue of enunciation (in Foucault's words, "of which they speak"). However, if we replace "enunciation" with "signification," we can clearly see that Foucault is of a Derridean view that the signifier can become the signified or intertwine with the latter. I am not about to explore here Foucault's or Bourdieu's discourse/language theory, but it is important to point out what is relevant to the essay: that is, their theories, though quite "postmodern," are not "alien" at all to the ancient Chinese, noted for their "poststructuralist" insights about language. For instance, Confucius' "rectification of names" is based on a conviction that names (signifier) can impact the moral reality of human society; Laozi's statement, "The name is the mother of ten thousand things" (有名万物之母; see the epigraph), can be interpreted as a blunt declaration that the signifier (name) is the signified (ten thousand things).

Thus, there seems to be a "theoretical" basis for the Chinese obsession with ethos in antiquity just as there is one for the Greek obsession with logos. Apparently, both the ancient Chinese and Greeks were aware of the role a signifier can play in inducing or bringing about a "reality," though they clearly had different priorities. The difference, however, may best "be appreciated in light of a cultural tradition that carries its own historical complexities and philosophical intricacies" (Wei 2021, p. 1). As mentioned right at the beginning of this section, the Greeks were more epistemologically concerned about the legitimacy of their "counter-intuitive claims" (Lloyd 2004, pp. 61–62). This may explain why they were obsessed about logos, a signifier that can be conveniently employed to represent "truth." The Chinese, on the other hand, especially those in power, were more concerned about the legitimacy of their political claims or positions, but the concern is less epistemological than pragmatic. That is why they were so bent on ethos, the signifier of authority and power. To the Chinese, Heaven as the ultimate source of truth/authority was a given, a cultural reality that would make claims of legitimacy relatively easier, if one was able to establish some sort of (loose) connections with Heaven or the Will of Heaven.[75] Thus, a rigorous process of logical reasoning would prove unnecessary in seeking epistemological certainty.[76] As a

[74] This would also suggest, in simple terms, that reality is subject to rhetorical manipulation, as seen in a previously cited study by Kern on early Chinese divination, which, the author contends, is "fundamentally rhetorical" (2018, p. 258).

[75] Conceptually, Heaven is associated with "tons" of things in Chinese discourse and culture (Wei 2021), which is obviously a rhetorical advantage to those who can (mis)use the term to make a claim just about anything.

[76] Because of the "difficulty of securing self-evident axioms," using deductive reasoning to signify truth may turn out to be "wishful thinking" for the Greeks, according to Lloyd (2004, p. 57).

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result, a reader may feel "bombarded" with so much of, by, and about Heaven in classical Chinese rhetoric, most, if not all, having to do with ethotic maneuvering to legitimate a political claim or to support a philosophical argument. It appears that the claim by Confucius that he is "known—by Heaven" (de Bary, et al. 1990, p. 22) is just one of such ethotic ploys.

The "bombardment" of Heaven in early Chinese rhetoric "may point to the triumph of a language symbol and reality created within such a symbol" (Wei 2021, p. 18). As discussed earlier in the section, what indeed makes the silent Heaven central to the office of Chinese kingship is its symbolic power of projecting a *wei* or authority (i.e., ethos) for the one sitting on the throne. Thus the "centrality of Heaven" (Schwartz 1985, p. 39) is in essence the centrality of ethos (the signifier) in that it is the *wei* or authority that truly matters to the kingship system. (Heaven would lose the "centrality" if something else were in its place to signify the kingly authority.) The heavy involvement of dynastic bureaucracy in religious and shamanic activities may serve to attest to the centrality of ethos to the early Chinese political system, as it clearly indicates a deliberate, institutionalized effort to manifest a "charisma" on behalf of the king. (Does the king really care about a "message" from Heaven?) Because ethos the signifier is fundamentally a discourse entity (or a "name" in early Chinese thought), its centrality, whether rhetorically or politically, can be attributed, ultimately, to the "totality" of discourse itself. In Western culture, the system of discourse signification centers around logos, hence the logocentric turn of its rhetoric and philosophy, but in Chinese culture, that system is leaning toward ethos, hence ethocentrism or the centrality of ethos in its rhetoric and philosophy and discourse practices in general.

At this point it would seem appropriate to describe the early stages of Chinese civilization as an "age of ethos" because of the prevalence and dominance of ethos in the discourse system. Though ethos carries a variety of nuances in Chinese rhetoric, in its associations with *cheng* (trust), *cheng-yan* (sincere speech), *yi* (deportment), and many others, its defining attribute clearly has to do with the signification of power. Interestingly, the exact Chinese word for "authority," one of the numerous Western terms pointing to the semantics of ethos (Baumlin and Meyer 2018, p. 4), is *quan-wei* (权威), which is made up of two separate characters corresponding to "power" (权; *quan*) and "authority" (威; *wei*). The etymology can be traced at least to the Warring States period (475–221 B.C.) in Chinese history,[77] suggesting an awareness among the ancient Chinese of the inseparability of power and ethos (or *wei*). The combination of *quan* and *wei* may also serve as proof, to some degree, that in early Chinese thought, power (the institutionalizing) and ethos (the institutionalized) are perceived in a "mutually-defining relationship" (Wei 2021, p. 14). But, as pointed out earlier, the institutionalized can also become institutionalizing. If power relies on ethos to be signified or to become a perceived reality, it is exactly because the former is already implied in the latter (i.e., in the institutionalized).[78] So, in the end, we may say, it is ethos that makes the call, for its "magic" of sustaining the power of early Chinese kingship. But no matter what, if truth is "inseparable" from logos as its signifier in the tradition of logocentrism, as Derrida would have argued (1976, p. 10), then power is "inseparable," too, from ethos in the tradition of what may be called "ethocentrism."

X. Conclusion

This essay is my latest attempt to explore collective ethos, a notion I first raised over 20 years ago at an academic conference. Collective ethos can be summarily defined as a culturally based ethos, contrary to the one in the Aristotelian model, the latter being individually based. A culture-based, collective ethos is perhaps better conceptualized when we look at how the creation of ethos had been incorporated into the political system of early Chinese society, where rulers practiced shamanism or other religious activities "to signify, and mystify, their power and authority with the suggestion of divine and heavenly charisma" (Wei 2021, p. 19). But the reason that Heaven was so central to the projection of ethos on their behalf is because it was deeply rooted in a cultural psyche, where the human desire for a transcendental oneness with the universe had long been harbored. Thus, the significance of Heaven in its role of signifying the ultimate ethos in Chinese society can be understood as a function of a cultural tradition after all. At least, one may see, ethos as such comes from without (from Heaven), rather than from within, being grounded in the personhood of an individual.

Before ending this essay, I would like to state that I had no intention to exhaust all the explanations about collective ethos in early Chinese rhetorical practices. In fact, the more I tried to explore, the more I realized there is even more to be explored. For example, the ideal of "rectification of names," briefly mentioned in the essay, has been a very important feature of the Confucian discourse system. The famous statement by Confucius that "If names are not rectified then language will not be in accord; if language is not in accord then

[77] For example, 权威 occurs in *Lü-shi Chun-qiu* (吕氏春秋), a classic under the authorship of Lü Bu-Wei (吕不韦).

[78] This may be conceptualized with the example of Heaven, which can be regarded as an institutionalized source of ethos. Because it implies a divine power, it partakes in the process of signifying the institutional power of kingship. Thus, the institutionalized becomes institutionalizing. On the other hand, Chinese kings would have never made a fuss about Heaven if it does not imply power.

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things cannot be accomplished . . ." is widely regarded as an acknowledgment that language plays a significant role in shaping how one can reach his or her moral accomplishments. More importantly, it implies a denial of agency, deemed to be crucial to the formulations of Western ethos, in that language is recognized for its potential in regulating human behavior. We are who we are not because of some kind of essence within, as Plato might have claimed, but because of the epistemic function of language in formulating moral and metaphysical categories and in creating social reality based on those categories. Confucius' rectification of names poses an interesting comparison with Foucault's discourse theory, which also rejects human agency, together with such notions as self, ego, subject, and individual.

Another subject worthy of further research and discussion would be the "patterned rhetoric" in early Chinese classics (Schaberg 2001). A norm of "collective workmanship," patterned rhetoric exhibits rules of writing that can be attributed to the "mechanism" of collective ethos, such as what is acceptable or not acceptable. However, in my view, this norm is not uniquely Chinese. One can find numerous examples in professional or other writings in Western society that would fall into the category of patterned rhetoric, such as memo, letter, proposal, report, to name a few. And those who submit articles for publication in a scholarly journal cannot afford to ignore rules or conventions governing academic writing. For example, it is common to see a research paper written in a "patterned" way: starting with an introduction of a topic, then a review of existing literature, followed by a new something that would contribute to the on-going conversation, then a research design and/or methodology, followed by research findings, then followed by a discussion drawing on the findings, and finally followed by a conclusion in which some sort of "confession" is the norm—how imperfect the findings are, how inconclusive the conclusion is, how much remains to be done, etc., etc. All these would remind me of the eight-legged essay popular in old China!

But what interests me most is the question whether the patterned rhetoric mentioned here would also translate into a consciousness of collective ethos among the mainstream Western rhetoricians. With the movement of postmodernism, which has seriously challenged the philosophical basis of self, ego, agency, etc., and with the widespread use of the Internet and social media, which has already put to question the traditional notion of authorship, it seems possible that more and more people will come to the realization that rhetoric as social *praxis* is inherently a collective discourse action, hence the need to re-conceptualize ethos as a function of the "definition of the situation" (Goffman 1959) or group identity that is socially, culturally, and collectively built. The emerging emphasis in Western scholarship on ethos as one's "positionality" in the human world (Baumlin and Meyer 2018) or on ethos as "haunt" (Meyer 2019) may suggest a shift already happening in the conception of ethos in Western rhetorical theories. But perhaps a more prudent conclusion should be: There is still much more to be explored.

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