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Introduction

WHAT ARE WE READING?

This book presents interpretations of the eight most important classical Chinese philosophical texts: *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), *Mozi* 墨子, *Mencius* (*Mengzi* 孟子), *Laozi* 老子, *Zhuangzi* 莊子, *Sunzi* 孫子, *Xunzi* 荀子, and *Han Feizi* 韓非子. These eight have been chosen both because they continually respond to each other's arguments and because they have exerted outsize influence on subsequent generations. Except for the *Analects*, which purports to record conversations between Confucius (551–479 BC) and his disciples, each text is named after a supposed author, honored by the term Master (*zi* 子). (*Mencius* is merely *Mengzi*, Latinized by Jesuits.) The very titles have fostered considerable misunderstanding.

Although the positions taken in these texts are never identical—the diversity of Chinese philosophy rarely fails to impress—they do address a number of central questions: What obligations do human beings have toward one another, and why? How do we construct an ideal government? What is a life well lived? Hovering over all of these is a rationalist metaquestion that reflects the crisis of the waning of the Bronze Age: How do we answer such questions for ourselves, seeing that gods and spirits, despite our richest devotions, have failed to do so?¹ And with Bronze Age rituals and diplomatic conventions no longer being recognized, at unprecedented cost of human life, what measures can states take to secure their survival?² The anxiety of a collapsing society, and the awareness that it will have to be replaced, are palpable throughout. It is no coincidence that the historical period has long been called the Warring States (*Zhanguo* 戰國).³ It ended with the unification of China under the First Emperor in 221 BC.

One traditional approach to this material has been to divide it into “schools” (*jia* 家): the Confucians said this; the Daoists said that; the Legalists said something else entirely.⁴ Sometimes one encounters the

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cliché “the contending voices of a hundred schools” (*baijia zhengming* 百家爭鳴).⁵ This conception of Warring States philosophy as a landscape of warring philosophical factions has a long history in China, where the term *jia* has been used to group philosophers into a handful of categories, sometimes in a sincere attempt to understand the complex intellectual history, but all too often as a device to caricature opposing viewpoints. In fact, the latter seems to have been the original purpose.

The historical problem with this practice is that only two of these postulated schools, namely Confucians (*Ruzhe* 儒者) and Mohists (*Mozhe* 墨者), identified themselves (and each other) as such, and can be said to have established any institutions. All the others have been reconstructed purely on the basis of their supposed stances, raising a concomitant philosophical problem: the division of texts into “schools” has served to obscure important differences among their supposed members. As I have argued elsewhere,⁶ “Legalism” is the most pernicious label of the bunch, but “Daoism” illustrates similar weaknesses: *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, the two most prominent “Daoist” sources, differ profoundly on the value of government and usefulness (see p. 151), while *dao* 道 is also one of the most important concepts in *Xunzi*, a Confucian text (see p. 182). Does this mean that *Xunzi* was a Daoist too? And if not, why not?

The sources are simply too rich, and the overall discourse exhibits too much intertextuality, for the “schools” approach to offer more than a crude sketch. At its worst, it tends toward reductionism. Hence I prefer to read each text *as a text*: not necessarily as the manifesto of a school, nor even necessarily as the work of a single brilliant mind. The modern world has developed some good methods of reading texts, and they can help with Chinese philosophy too.



One of the first questions that readers must ask themselves, regardless of their hermeneutic framework, is what they are reading. In Chinese philosophy, the question is not often raised, in part because of the long-standing but specious assumption that the eight classic philosophical texts were written by the great masters whose names they bear. This approach is congruent with a cardinal tenet of traditional Chinese aesthetics: works of art and literature are produced by talented human beings

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as a way of channeling their responses to poignant events.⁷ It follows that a great work must have been composed by a great author—and since the texts are undeniably great, each one must have been produced by a magnificently talented human being.

Far from denigrating Chinese philosophy, liberating it from these mythic suppositions only improves our understanding and appreciation of it. As we shall see, not one of the eight texts was written in its present form by the philosopher to whom it is attributed. In some cases, the attribution would not be helpful even if it were valid, since we know virtually nothing about the person who bore the name. This is clearest in the case of Laozi, the mysterious sage whose identity has been disputed since antiquity; but the supposed biography of Sunzi,⁸ that is, the great military strategist Sun Wu 孫武, also contains so few credible elements that there remains little reason to assume that he was a real person—other than that traditionalists have long believed it.

More details will be presented in each chapter below; for now, the important point is that such claims do not impugn the stature of *Laozi* or *Sunzi* because it is untrue that great texts must be written by solitary geniuses. Widespread acceptance of the composite authorship of the Bible, for example, has not led anyone to doubt that it is one of the most important texts in Western civilization. By contrast, sustaining the fiction that each classical Chinese philosophical text is the product of a great mind comes with serious interpretive costs. Most patently, it encourages a presumption of philosophical coherence where there may be scant historical warrant for it.⁹ More insidiously, it disregards the extent to which transmitters, redactors, and commentators shaped the text for their own audiences and purposes, whether by engineering new implications through new juxtapositions or by foregrounding the passages that appealed to them and mitigating—if not simply excising—those that did not. (Lest there be any doubt about the last possibility, consider that *Mencius* comes down to us in seven chapters because its redactor, Zhao Qi 趙岐 [d. AD 201], excised four others that he deemed unworthy.)¹⁰ A modern reader of classical Chinese texts must strike a fundamental balance: paying due attention to the historical circumstances of each text's transmission without losing sight of its animating ideas—for the ideas are the reason why the texts were transmitted in the first place. It is all too easy for academic interpreters to veer too far in either direction.

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Some of the most famous early passages attributing philosophical works to single authors come from the historian Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145?–86? BC):¹¹

昔，西伯拘羑里，演《周易》；孔子戾陳蔡，作《春秋》；屈原放逐，著《離騷》；左丘失明，厥有《國語》；孫子臏腳，而論《兵法》；不韋遷蜀，世傳《呂覽》；韓非囚秦，《說難》、《孤憤》；《詩》三百篇，大抵賢聖發憤之所為作也。此人皆意有所鬱結，不得通其道也，故述往事思來者。¹²

In the past, when the Earl of the West (i.e., King Wen of Zhou 周文王, d. 1050 BC) was held captive at Youli, he elaborated on the *Changes of Zhou*; when Confucius was in distress between Chen and Cai, he composed the *Springs and Autumns*; when Qu Yuan was banished, he wrote *Encountering Sorrow*; only when Zuoqiu [Ming] lost his sight was there *Discourses of the States*; when Master Sun (i.e., Sun Bin 孫臏, d. 316 BC) had his legs amputated up to the kneecaps, he expounded on *Methods of War*; [Lü] Buwei (d. 235 BC) was exiled to Shu, and generations have transmitted *Lü's Readings*; when Han Fei (d. 233 BC) was imprisoned in Qin, [he produced] *The Difficulties of Persuasion* and *Solitary Outrage*; and most of the three hundred *Odes* were created when worthies and sages expressed their outrage. All these people had something tram-meling their ambition; they were unable to propagate their Way and thus narrated past events, mindful of posterity.¹³

Today we know that this is not how most early Chinese texts were produced; in fact, Sima's own *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji* 史記) was one of the first to have been written by the kind of solitary and brooding author that he described so well. (Sima Qian inherited the grand project from his father, Sima Tan 司馬談 [d. ca. 110 BC], but then seems to have compiled most of the book single-handedly, though relying heavily on preexisting material.)¹⁴ Perhaps the oldest surviving single-authored work is *New Discourses* (*Xinyu* 新語), by Lu Jia 陸賈 (ca. 228–ca. 140 BC), which looks like what it claims to be: a sequence of twelve moralistic essays written in response to a request by Emperor Gao of Han 漢高祖 (r. 202–195 BC).¹⁵ Texts like *Records of the Historian* and *New Discourses* bespeak a sea change in cultural attitudes toward authorship, because no single-authored book is attested before the Han dynasty (206 BC–AD

220), but thereafter it was common for writers to compose in their own name.¹⁶ Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BC–AD 18)¹⁷ and Wang Chong 王充 (b. AD 27)¹⁸ are two prominent examples.

Many modern critics have observed that, Sima Qian's lament notwithstanding, pre-Han texts are more typically the product of multiple authors.¹⁹ As we have learned from bamboo and silk manuscripts excavated over the past forty-five years, textual units were originally quite small (sometimes as short as a single episode, maybe even a single artfully crafted sentence); the synthetic texts that come down to us were compiled by weaving together these shorter elements.²⁰ There are, to be sure, references to writings on bamboo as early as the Bronze Age, but they are rare and usually do not even connote what we would call books.²¹

The composite nature of such texts can explain certain features that would otherwise appear bizarre, such as the conspicuous lack of character development in the longest and most celebrated pre-imperial historical text, the *Zuo Commentary* (*Zuozhuan* 左傳)—a strong indication that the received text was not composed as a single opus, but was pieced together out of smaller exempla. In *Shiji*, much of the same material is recast so as to present believable character arcs,²² whereas in the older *Zuozhuan*, there is sometimes scant coherence between different episodes, to the point that a character can exemplify the very same errors that, a hundred pages earlier, he or she wisely identified and avoided.²³

Even more importantly, the role of redactors in the process of transmission is still inadequately appreciated.²⁴ Much of what we now know about textual formation and redaction was discerned by Yu Jiayi 余嘉錫 (1884–1955) nearly a century ago;²⁵ manuscripts from sites like Guodian 郭店 (ca. 300 BC),²⁶ which he did not live to see, have only confirmed that his model was basically correct.²⁷

The preface to a collection called *Springs and Autumns of Master Yan* (*Yanzi chunqiu* 晏子春秋), named after the statesman Yan Ying 晏嬰 (d. 500 BC), though philosophically unremarkable (and hence scarcely read),²⁸ reveals much about how such texts came into being. The imperial library, it turns out, was a crucial institution in the process, because its bibliographers produced many edited collections in their quest to impose order on the thousands of loose and uncategorized documents all around them. The most celebrated such bibliographer, Liu Xiang 劉向 (79–8 BC),²⁹ detailed his methods when he submitted his edition of *Springs and*

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Autumns of Master Yan to the throne. He begins by listing his four main sources (a–d in the translation below):

護左都水使者、光祿大夫臣向言：所校中書《晏子》十一篇，臣向謹與長社尉臣參校讎，太史書五篇，臣向書一篇，參書十三篇，凡中外書三十篇，為八百三十八章。除復重二十二篇六百三十八章，定著八篇二百一十五章。外書無有三十六章，中書無有七十一章，中外皆有以相定。中書以「夭」為「芳」，「又」為「備」，「先」為「牛」，「章」為「長」，如此類者多。謹頗略櫛，皆已定，以殺青，書可繕寫。

I, your servant Liu Xiang, Supervisor of the Left Commissioner of Waterworks and Counselor of the Palace, say: [a.] the eleven-chapter edition of *Yanzi* in the palace collection, which I carefully edited with your servant [Du] Can (d. AD 24), the Superintendent of Changshe; plus [b.] five chapters in the collection of the Grand Historian;³⁰ plus [c.] one chapter of my own; plus [d.] thirteen chapters in Can's collection came to thirty chapters in total, comprising 838 episodes. Eliminating twenty-two duplicate chapters with 638 episodes, I fixed the text at eight chapters with 215 episodes.³¹ As there were thirty-six episodes not present in the texts from outside the palace and seventy-one episodes not present in the texts from inside the palace, I used both sets complementarily in establishing [the final edition]. In the palace texts, there were many [errors], such as *yue* written as *fang*, *you* written as *bei*, *xian* written as *niu*, and *zhang* written as *chang*. After I had carefully emended each one,³² the final text was ready; once the strips were heated (a procedure to repel vermin), the book could be copied out.

Liu Xiang then tersely relates Yan Ying's life and achievements, and concludes:

其書六篇，皆忠諫其君，文章可觀，義理可法，皆合六經之義。又有復重文辭頗異，不敢遺失，復列以為一篇。又有頗不合經術，似非晏子言，疑後世辯士所為者，故亦不敢失，復以為一篇。凡八篇，其六篇可常置旁御觀，謹第錄。臣向昧死上。³³

Six chapters of the book [contain] his loyal remonstrances to his lord. These pieces are worth reading; their righteous principles can serve as a model; they all conform to the principles of the Six Canons. Then there

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are some repeated pieces whose wording is significantly different; I did not dare to dispose of them and arranged them as a separate chapter. Then there are [pieces] that do not accord with what is narrated in the canons and seem not to be Master Yan's words; I suspect that they were made by polemicists of later generations. Yet I still did not dare to discard them and placed them in a separate chapter [too]. In all, there are eight chapters, of which six can be consistently instituted, relied on, promoted, and observed. Having carefully recorded [the text] in this sequence, I, your servant Xiang, submit it at the risk of my life.³⁴

Pian 篇, the term translated above as “chapters,” denoted a set of bamboo strips sewn together and then rolled open or closed like a sushi mat. In his search for “Master Yan's words,” Liu Xiang collected thirty such bundles of lore from diverse sources.³⁵ A large proportion, he reports, consisted of “duplicates” (*fuchong* 復重).³⁶ After eliminating these, he corrected certain obvious errors³⁷ in the remaining episodes and then sorted them by judging how well they “accorded” (*he* 合) with the moral values of the Confucian canons. He does betray the traditional critical bias mentioned above: the episodes that “do not accord with what is narrated in the canons,” he says, “seem not to be Master Yan's words,” for Master Yan was a great man, and great men do not say unseemly things. But fortunately for posterity, he could not bring himself to delete them. Other redactors were not always so cautious.

This straightforward account explains many features that have perplexed readers for centuries. Once we recognize that what we are reading is not necessarily Yan Ying's own work, but more plausibly what *other people* recorded about him after his death, certain ostensible contradictions immediately become comprehensible: for example, that some episodes present him as an ally of Confucian moralism, others as inimical to Confucius, still others as indifferent.³⁸ Clearly Yan Ying's approval carried weight—but the fact that his approval was contested implies that there was no authorized repository of his viewpoints and teachings. Liu Xiang's preface also explains why the text frequently attributes to Yan Ying speeches and actions that are elsewhere attributed to other famed personages; why the text often relates multiple versions of the same story;³⁹ why some episodes take place when Yan Ying would have already been dead;⁴⁰ why some parts—but not all—are philosophically

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consistent;⁴¹ and why some parts—but, again, not all—appear in very similar form in recently excavated manuscripts, notably from Yinqueshan 銀雀山.⁴²

Liu Xiang was responsible for editing more classical texts than anyone else, and several of his prefaces to other works (including *Xunzi*) have survived as well. They relate essentially the same editorial process and permit some general inferences. The first is that the *stemma codicum* model, which aims to reconstruct a cladogram of manuscripts, is inapplicable to texts that were assembled as Liu Xiang described, and hence the very concept of an urtext is a chimera. This is not surprising, since stemmatology was pioneered by Karl Lachmann (1793–1851) and others for analyzing classical and medieval European literature,⁴³ but misapplications of the method to early Chinese texts have endured.⁴⁴

Nor is a model of accretion any more helpful. This theory likens the text to a pearl that grows ever larger within a mollusk's mantle.⁴⁵ Accretion is plainly not the method by which *Springs and Autumns of Master Yan* was compiled. Moreover, even when it is possible to demonstrate that some parts are older than others—as is often the case with classical Chinese texts—this alone does not justify a hypothesis of accretion. The varying antiquity of the material might simply reflect the varying sources that lay at the redactor's disposal.

Thus when sections of a received text are found in excavated manuscripts, it is a mistake to use this discovery as “proof” that the entire text must be assigned a very early date. This fallacy has recently been rekindled by China's rich palaeographical inventory. A good case in point is the text called *School Sayings of Confucius* (*Kongzi jiaoyu* 孔子家語). Most Western scholars—and, until this century, most Chinese scholars too—have considered it a forgery by a zealous teacher and commentator named Wang Su 王肅 (AD 195–256). Because no less than 96 percent of the received text has been shown to consist of passages with parallels in other documents,⁴⁶ the truth is not difficult to detect: Wang Su culled a few hundred passages from various sources and passed them off as a book with the pretentious title *School Sayings of Confucius*. (The remaining 4 percent of the text, presumably, was lifted from sources that are now lost.) In his preface to this pastiche,⁴⁷ Wang Su asserted that he had received the text from a descendant of Confucius himself, thereby suggesting that it contained authentic Confucian sayings that were never transmitted in

the *Analects*. Although the preface was undoubtedly intended to mislead, it is more charitable to think of Wang Su as an irresponsible redactor rather than as a forger, because he probably did not *invent* a single word. (Forgery requires some talent, after all.) Thus it is only to be expected that some sections of the *School Sayings* have been found in manuscripts since the 1970s. Of course, this does not mean that *School Sayings* is an authentic early text;⁴⁸ it means only that some of Wang Su's favorite stories were legitimately old. We know that others were not.

A final general inference to be gleaned from Liu Xiang's prefaces is that his compilations are not necessarily works by single authors (whether or not he himself thought they were).⁴⁹ But crucially, his prefaces do not preclude that possibility either. When he collected any and all snippets relating to Yan Ying, most of the resulting anthology was apocryphal at best, because nearly five centuries had elapsed since Yan Ying's death in 500. When he collected texts attributed to Xun Kuang 荀况 (d. after 238 BC),⁵⁰ however, he had a much better chance of locating authentic documents, because Xunzi was still one of the most influential philosophers in the Han dynasty, with many eminent students.⁵¹ Two further considerations suggest that Liu Xiang's edition of *Xunzi* is of a fundamentally different type from *Springs and Autumns of Master Yan*. First, the percentage of duplicate bundles is noteworthy: 90 percent (290 out of 322) for *Xunzi* as compared to 73.3 percent (22 out of 30) for *Springs and Autumns of Master Yan*. Both the higher percentage of duplicates and the much higher number of reported bundles suggest that the works of Xunzi were more widely circulated and exhibited less variation.⁵² Second, the culture and practice of writing had changed profoundly in the centuries between Yan Ying and Xunzi. Whereas the model of instruction in Yan Ying's time was still typically master-to-disciple, Xunzi lived in a much larger society (with a total population in the tens of millions) and consciously wrote for readers whom he would never meet.⁵³

In *Xunzi*, therefore, I believe we have a collection of predominantly authentic essays, but once again taken from diverse sources, and certainly not organized in a manner that Xun Kuang himself had authorized.⁵⁴ The chapter divisions, in particular, seem unreliable:⁵⁵ whereas some chapters read like self-standing essays, others do not. In "Refutation of Physiognomy" ("Feixiang" 非相), for example, only the opening lines deal with physiognomy; the rest of the chapter seems to consist of stray passages

that Liu Xiang did not quite know where to insert. There are also some chapters with generic instructional material that seems to have been assembled, in John Knoblock's words, as "a proper curriculum,"⁵⁶ as well as poems and rhymed riddles that are rarely studied.⁵⁷ As we shall see in chapter 8, one of the consequences of this arrangement is that reconstructing Xunzi's arguments requires reading across chapter boundaries: taken as a whole, the book conveys a distinctive philosophical position, but individual chapters are inadequate, indeed sometimes incoherent, on their own.⁵⁸

Han Feizi has a comparable structure and history. Unfortunately, there is no surviving preface to this text, and its redactor is unknown, but formally it looks like *Xunzi*: a posthumous assemblage of memorials, occasional writings, and fragments. It is much longer than *Xunzi*, and for this reason often suspected of including spurious sections, but its philosophical consistency, in addition to its stinging wit, have convinced most modern scholars that, with the exception of a small number of controversial chapters, it was penned by a single author.⁵⁹

Still, we do not know which chapters (if any) were written by Xunzi or Han Feizi in the same way that we know Hume wrote *An Enquiry concerning Human Understanding* and Kant wrote *Critique of Pure Reason*. There is a difference. The works that we call *Xunzi* and *Han Feizi* cannot be interpreted as direct records of a certain philosopher's cogitation. Any claim of coherence has to emerge from the texts themselves and cannot be based on an appeal to their supposed authorship.

Despite their vast philosophical differences, *Springs and Autumns of Master Yan*, *Xunzi*, and *Han Feizi* have nearly identical textual histories: they were all synthesized out of smaller, heterogeneous units by palace librarians in the Han dynasty, whereafter they were preserved and transmitted, in essentially the same recension, down to the present day. Other cases are more complex because there is both direct and indirect evidence of *multiple* recensions. For example, the received text of *Zhuangzi* is attributed to Guo Xiang 郭象 (d. AD 312),⁶⁰ but there were several earlier redactions, including one by Liu Xiang. Though some of these survived for at least a couple of centuries after Guo Xiang, they were all eventually lost, their contents now largely a matter of conjecture.⁶¹ As mentioned above, the received text of *Mencius* was produced by Zhao Qi, whose edition likewise supplanted all others.⁶²

Laozi presents yet more ramifications, because no single redaction ever reigned supreme. Hence we speak today of the Wang Bi 王弼 (AD 226–49) edition, the Heshanggong 河上公 edition, the *Xiang'er* 想爾 edition, and so on,⁶³ not to mention the two manuscript editions from Mawangdui 馬王堆 and related smaller anthologies from Guodian. The differences among these versions—both textual and philosophical—are often substantial.⁶⁴

The associated interpretive pitfalls are sometimes underestimated. A text like *Laozi*, by its nature, can hardly be read without “commentary” (*zhu* 注). Many commentaries were supplied by the earliest transmitters of a text, such as Zhao Qi and Guo Xiang. Far more of them existed in antiquity than are extant today, because the commentaries of a small number of transmitters were typically singled out by posterity as authoritative. Editions of the text would thenceforth be published only with the canonical commentaries; other commentaries would survive in fragments, if at all.⁶⁵ But ancient commentaries were not neutral. Commentators expressed their personal understanding of the text, which was often idiosyncratic and creative. The commentary could come to represent an entire tradition, with its own glosses and, not infrequently, its own version of the text itself, as one quickly discovers by perusing the spectrum of *Laozi* commentaries—among which *Xiang'er*, which was used by the Celestial Master sect (*tianshi dao* 天師道), is apt to strike modern readers as the most outlandish (p. 77).⁶⁶

Furthermore, the mechanisms of manuscript transmission help explain why received texts were furnished with commentaries. Because early manuscripts were usually produced for audiences that were already familiar with the material and its characteristic formulas, they were written with economical and underdetermined graphs.⁶⁷ Insiders, who perhaps learned the texts under the guidance of an authoritative teacher, knew when their community read the graph *dui* 兌 as *shuo/shui* 說 and not, say, *tuo* 脫 (to cite a typical example of graphic underdetermination), but to outsiders, such codicological conventions naturally left the text open to a multiplicity of interpretations. Redactors did their best to eliminate this type of ambiguity by adding, regularizing, or modernizing semantic classifiers (such as 言 in the graph *shuo/shui* 說). In this manner, they made the text intelligible to a larger number of readers, but also inevitably narrowed the range of possible interpretations. As texts

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circulated ever more widely among readers who, unlike the ancients, had no specialized knowledge or authoritative teacher to guide them orally, explanatory commentaries came to be regarded as indispensable.

Only by ignoring this gnarled background would one dare to distinguish confidently between “the text” of *Laozi* and its “commentaries.” A related methodological misstep, when encountering a difficult passage, is to rummage through attested commentaries for a reading that happens to suit one’s predilections. A traditional Chinese commentary is a network of interpretations undergirding a discrete worldview; extracted from its context, a commentarial opinion loses its very logic.⁶⁸ In the same vein, it makes little sense to speak of “the philosophy” of a constellation of texts like *Laozi* without specifying a particular perspective (or, less honestly, without stating which perspectives one is privileging—and why). *Laozi* has thrived for over two millennia precisely because generations of readers continued to find new meaning in its lapidary verses.

The purpose of highlighting such interpretive challenges is not to diminish the philosophical value of early Chinese texts or to deny that they can be read rigorously and profitably. By no means does a text require single and undisputed authorship to be meaningful: for a quotidian example, consider an ordinary Wikipedia article, but more venerated ones abound, such as the Constitution, the Old Testament,⁶⁹ the *Mahābhārata*,⁷⁰ or virtually any Mahāyāna sūtra.⁷¹ Conflicting recensions often arise in Western literature as well, particularly in cases where the author died before securing publication.⁷² Nor is historicism the only legitimate hermeneutic stance.⁷³ In the pages that follow, the emphasis will be on ideas, both because this puts the texts in their best light,⁷⁴ and because an interest in ideas is probably what prompted anyone to open this book. But philosophical readers accustomed to books unproblematically attributed to Hume or Kant need to be mindful that they are reading works from a different time and place, with radically different conceptions of authorship. *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and *Sunzi* are texts, not people.⁷⁵

The next chapter will take up a hallmark of Chinese philosophy that demands a Western reader’s cognizance: its preference for nondeductive argumentation. Then comes the core of the book, eight chapters devoted to the eight philosophical texts; and lastly an explanation of the versatile concept of *qi* 氣, which can be confusing because of its wide range of connotations.

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N.b.: Texts with standard sequences are cited by chapter number; others are cited by chapter title.

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