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The Yang Mo 楊墨 dualism and the rhetorical construction of heterodoxy

Abstract: The *Mengzi* 孟子 (The Book of Mencius) served as a constant model of doctrinal argumentation and style for centuries. One of the distinctive traits that emerges from the work is the image of Mencius struggling against the disorder arising from the increasing influence of the heretical doctrines of Yang Zhu 楊朱 (ca. 4th century BC) and Mo Di 墨翟 (ca . 480–390 BC). It deserves particular attention, as the authors of the *Mengzi* – or perhaps even Mencius himself – carved a rhetorical strategy of strong emotional impact, hyperbolic in its very nature, based on the "moral balance" (*zhong* 中) of the Ru 儒 (Classicists) tradition compared to both the egoism (*wei wo* 為我) promoted by Yang Zhu and the vitiated form of indiscriminate and unbalanced concern for others supported by Mo Di's followers.

To date, the *Mengzi* seems to be the first text in which the "Yang Mo 楊墨" symbol for Yang (Zhu) and Mo (Di) occurs. It became proverbial in Chinese literature for the two prototypes of ethical drift from which traditions that had allegedly strayed from the Ru should be retracted. The importance of both thinkers within a Mencian framework is evident: it is around these two figures that the text structures a highly sophisticated rhetorical framework, characterized by implicit and explicit strategies of *inventio* and *dispositio*.

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1 *Mencius* versus Yang-Mo 楊墨

When analyzing the symbol "Yang Mo 楊墨" (i.e. Yang Zhu 楊朱 and Mo Di 墨翟),[1] the *Mengzi* 孟子 (The Book of Mencius) should be taken as the starting point, not only because it is probably the most ancient textual witness to this expression, but mainly because the *status* the two thinkers assumed is, partly at least, due to their profiles outlined in the *Mengzi*. In the case of Yang Zhu (ca.

1 For a detailed investigation on the meaning of the Yang-Mo symbol, see Lyell 1962.

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395–335 B.C.) in particular, the influence of the *Mengzi*'s judgment is even more significant: his egoism[2] (*wei wo* 為我 "to act for one's own sake" or "each one for himself") has become proverbial on the basis of the *Mengzi*.

Yang Zhu is probably most famous because of the criticism he suffered, rather than for his actual influence on pre-imperial thought. Mencius (Meng Ke 孟軻, ca. 390–305 B.C.)[3] affirmed that "the doctrines of Yang Zhu and Mo Di (ca. 480–390 B.C.) fill the world",[4] but there is no proof that these words reflected reality. In fact, Mencius considered Yang's doctrine to be one of the most dangerous sophistries with which he was forced to contend, and the *Mengzi* probably overstressed the impact of Yang Zhu's theories to reinforce its strenuous defense of the Ru 儒 "Classicists'" doctrines. In A.C. Graham's (1919–1991) view, Yang's intervention in the philosophical debates of 4th century B.C. "provoked a metaphysical crisis which threatened the basic assumptions of the Confucians and Mohism and set them in new courses".[5] Unfortunately, the impact of his theories is hard to measure. No *Yangzi* 楊子 (Book of Master Yang) survives, and what little information there is about Yang Zhu comes from a handful of anecdotes and quotations, mostly presented in hostile sources such as the *Mengzi*, the *Han Feizi* 韓非子 (Book of Master Han Fei) and the "Waipian" 外篇 (Outer Chapters) of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 (The Book of Master Zhuang), together with a few later writings thought to be derived from his original teaching. A.C. Graham already stressed the benefits of taking "Yang Zhu" as a label instead of a historical figure, and to take "Yangism" as a broad lineage of thought not necessarily inspired by him. There is no doubt that the label "Yang Zhu" has been applied to different theories throughout the history of Chinese thought, depending on the forms of the dialectic between the Ru and their opponents.

The general picture emerging from the analysis of pre-Qin 秦 (221–210 B.C.), Han 漢 (206 B.C.–220 A.D.) and Wei-Jin 魏晉 (A.D. 265–420) sources is contradictory to the point that it seems to present a multiplicity of characters under the label "Yang Zhu".[6] In the light of the *Mengzi*, Mencius himself said that "though

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2 Graham 1989: 61.

3 By using "Mencius" I am referring to the literary portrait of Meng Ke emerging from the *Mengzi*, which is not necessarily depicted in the historical *persona* Meng Ke, who might or might not have been directly involved as the author of the received version of the *Mengzi*.

4 *Mengzi* 3B/9.

5 On the Yangist's contribution to a "metaphysical crisis" by introducing a doctrine about human nature (*xing* 性) based on individualistic and egoistic (*wei wo* 為我) assumptions, see Graham 1985; 1986b: 13–22; 1989: 53–64, 107–111; see also Scarpari 1991: 88. For a different interpretation which attenuates Yang Zhu's impact on a the philosophical debate in early China, see Andreini 2000: 66–80, Eno 1984: 370–371; 1990: 257–258 n. 41; Hansen 1992: 156–157, 162, 181, 195, 204, 397.

6 See Andreini 2000 for a deeply "contextualized" interpretation of Yang Zhu's thought.

he [Yang Zhu] might have benefited the whole world by plucking out a single hair, he would not have done it".[7] Mencius remarked that "Yang's principle of 'each one for himself' (*wei wo*) is disrespectful of [the allegiance due to] the sovereign (*wu jun* 無君)".[8] So, in Mencius's view, Yang Zhu was a radical egoist, an "anarchist", while, according to the *Zhuangzi*, he was a dangerous sophist.[9] The *Han Feizi* indirectly refers to him by criticizing his ideas, although admitting their high moral value. The "Yang Zhu" chapter from the *Liezi* 列子 (The Book of Master Lie) is another crucial source. This chapter, which is thematically distinct from the rest of the *Liezi* (where Yang Zhu sometimes appears as a shy, timid, beardless disciple of Lao Dan 老聃, and sometimes as an hedonist), has been considered as reflective of a pessimistic, cynical perspective and many scholars have dated the section to circa 300 A.D.[10] However we should not rule out the possibility that the "Yang Zhu" chapter and a few other fragments from the chapter "Shuo fu" 說符 (Explaining Conjunctions) include some early elements of the Yangist corpus of ideas.[11]

Mencius' account of Yang Zhu is only apparently analogous to the *Lüshi Chunqiu*'s 呂氏春秋 (The Annals of Lü Buwei, ca. 240 B.C.) statement that Yang Sheng 陽生 (i.e. Yang Zhu) advocated the principle of "valuing himself (*gui ji* 貴己)",[12] and also to the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 (The Masters of Huainan, ca. 139 B.C.) account, which says that "the complete realization of one's natural tendencies, the preservation of what is genuine, and not allowing external things to entangle one's person are what Master Yang maintained and Mencius refused".[13] A close comparison of the statements about Yang Zhu shows that there are slight, but nevertheless important, differences between the *Mengzi*'s and some of *Liezi*'s account on the one hand, which both portray a Yang Zhu advocating radical selfishness and hedonism, and other sources like *Huainanzi* and *Lüshi Chunqiu* on

7 拔一毛而利天下，不為也。 *Mengzi* 7A/26, transl. Legge 1895: 464, transl. mod. auct. Here, and in all other instances of passages quoted from the *Mengzi* below the translation is from James Legge (1815–1897), according to Legge 1895. Legge translations have been retranscribed into *pinyin* throughout the remainder of this paper.

8 *Mengzi* 3B/9, transl. Legge 1895: 282, transl. mod. auct.

9 *Zhuangzi* 8/22/10, 10/25/17, 10/25/19.

10 During the late-nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century the authenticity of the *Liezi* was challenged by several scholars, like Liang Qichao 梁啟超 (1873–1929), Ma Xulun 馬敍倫 (1885–1970), Yang Bojun 楊伯峻 (1909–1992), Derk Bodde (1909–2003). See Bodde 1959; Graham 1961; Liang Qichao 1922: 68–81; Ma Xulun 1933; Yang Bojun in *Liezi ji shi* 列子集釋 1979: 1–6, 323–350; In recent times the argument about the spurious nature of the *Liezi* has re-emerged in Tan Jiajian 譚家健 2000, Yang Yiliu 楊漪柳 2004, and Zhang Cangshou 章滄授 1994.

11 Graham 1959; 1960: 148–149, 153–154, 174–177; 1961.

12 *Lüshi Chunqiu* 17.7/107/4.

13 全性保真，不以物累形，楊子之所立也，而孟子非之。 *Huainanzi* 13/7a.

the other. The differences will appear even sharper in the light of the following passage from the *Han Feizi*, where Yang Zhu is not mentioned but his theories seem to be called into question:

> 今有人於此，義不入危城，不處軍旅，不以天下大利易其脛一毛，世主必從而禮之，貴其智而高其行，以為輕物重生之士也。夫上所以陳良田大宅，設爵祿，所以易民死命也。今上尊貴輕物重生之士，而索民之出死而重殉上事，不可得也。
> Suppose we have a man and he regards it as right and proper never to enter a city in danger, and he does not engage in military activities, and he would not swap a hair on his shin for the benefit of the world (or "in exchange for the great benefit of possessing the whole world"). The rulers of our time are bound to treat him with respect because of this, they will set store by his wisdom and regard his moral demeanour highly, and they will consider him a freeman who takes external things lightly and considers life as important. Now the reason why the ruler offers good agricultural land and large mansions, and establishes ranks and stipends is because it makes it easy for the people to sacrifice their lives when ordered to do so. Now if the leader honors gentlemen who take external things lightly and who consider life as important and then hopes that the people will go out and sacrifice their lives and value dying for the leader, that is quite impossible.[14]

At least two main points arise from this:

1) The principle of "does not give a hair of one's shin in exchange for the great benefit of possessing the whole world" is substantially different from what Mencius testifies concerning Yang Zhu, i.e. that he would refuse "to benefit the whole world by plucking out a single hair";
2) "A gentleman who values life and disregards external things" is in a position to avoid submission to the ruler, because he is not induced to risk his life to get any reward in terms of fame, honor, or valuable things. That kind of person refuses to engage himself in external matters and thus to become a tool in the hands of the ruler, because he is not tempted by any form of reward he could receive in exchange for his service and loyalty.

It is noteworthy that, in the *Mengzi*, Yang Zhu is constantly mentioned together with Mo Di. The central position of the two thinkers within Mencius's philosophical world is evident by his (probably unprecedented) use of the Yang-Mo symbol,[15] which indicates the leading figures associated with the two main trends of thought, which, by taking radical and antithetical positions are considered responsible for social disorder and moral decay.

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14 *Han Feizi* 50.04:01; here, and in all other instance of passages quoted from the *Han Feizi* below the translation is Christoph Harbsmeier's as found in the *Thesaurus Linguae Sericae* (http://tls.uni-hd.de/procSearch/procSearchTxt.lasso, 2014/07/22)

15 The *Mengzi* records four occurrences of "Yang Mo". See *Mengzi* 3B/9, 7B/26.

While keeping their specific roles separated, Yang Zhu and Mo Di are thus combined within an expression which would later be used very frequently in Chinese philosophical literature to refer to the enemies of both Mencius and the Ru.

1.1 *Teng wen Gong* 滕文公 II (*Mengzi* 3B/14)

The most devastating and influential criticism of Mozi and Yang Zhu is recorded in the chapter *Teng wen Gong* 滕文公 II, where the criticism presented was eventually form the core of the attitude of orthodox Neo-Confucianism with regard to both thinkers. Mencius, in this passage, presents an overview of history down to his own times in the form of a cyclical theory of alternating phases of order and disorder (*yi zhi yi luan* 一治一亂) that can be summarized as follows:

Exordium: The aim of the message, which uses refined rhetorical devices, is partially revealed in the *incipit*: the power of language as a political and moral instrument. Mencius, by means of an ill-concealed attempt at "making a virtue out of necessity",[16] already lays the basis for his own plan of action that, in a sense, follows the principle of *zheng ming* 正名 "rectification of names". In fact, by imitating Confucius (551–479 B.C.) who completed the *Chunqiu* 春秋 (Spring and Autumn) and, through his words, "rebellious ministers and villainous sons were struck with terror (*luan chen ze zi ju* 亂臣賊子懼)", Mencius is struggling for order not as a ruler resorting to political action, but as a scholar, who is trying to establishing order through his words.

Disorder I: The original chaos of the world.

Order I: Yao 堯, Shun 舜 and Yu 禹 created order out of disorder through feats of engineering.

Disorder II: Depraved rulers, such as Jie 桀 and Zhou 紂, brought disorder through their misconduct.

Order II: King Wen 文, King Wu 武, and the Duke of Zhou (Zhou Gong 周公) restored order by slaying the evil rulers of the Shang 商, re-establishing political institutions and driving away the wild beasts.

Disorder III: Evil ministers and disloyal sons brought the world into a state of disorder and Yang Zhu and Mo Di's teachings appeared.

Epilogue

16 "Me, being fond of disputing?! (*yu qi hao bian zai* 予豈好辯哉)", said Mencius in two occasions. See *Mengzi* 3B/14.

Exordium

公都子曰：「外人皆稱夫子好辯，敢問何也？」
Gong Duzi asked Mencius: "The people beyond our lineage all speak of you as being fond of disputing. I venture to ask whether it be so."

孟子曰：「予豈好辯哉？予不得已也。天下之生久矣，一治一亂。
Mencius replied: "Me, being fond of disputing? I am compelled to do it! A long time has elapsed since this world of men received its being, and there has been throughout its history a period of good order, and now a period of confusion."

Disorder I – Order I

當堯之時，水逆行，氾濫於中國。蛇龍居之，民無所定。下者為巢，上者為營窟。《書》曰：『洚水警余。』洚水者，洪水也。使禹治之，禹掘地而注之海，驅蛇龍而放之菹。水由地中行，江、淮、河、漢是也。險阻既遠，鳥獸之害人者消，然後人得平土而居之。
In the time of Yao, the waters, flowing out of their channels, inundated the Middle Kingdom. Snakes and dragons occupied it, and the people had no place where they could settle themselves. In the low grounds they made nests for themselves on the trees or raised platforms, and in the high grounds they made caves. It is said in the *Book of Documents*: 'The waters in their wild course warned me.' Those 'waters in their wild course' were the waters of the great inundation. Shun employed Yu to reduce the waters to order. Yu dug open their obstructed channels, and conducted them to the sea. He drove away the snakes and dragons, and forced them into the grassy marshes. At this, the waters pursued their course through the country, even the waters of the Jiang, the Huai, the He, and the Han, and the dangers and obstructions which they had occasioned were removed. The birds and beasts which had injured the people also disappeared, and after this humans found the plains available for them, and occupied them.

Disorder II

「堯、舜既沒，聖人之道衰。暴君代作，壞宮室以為汙池，民無所安息；棄田以為園囿，使民不得衣食。邪說暴行又作，園囿、汙池、沛澤多而禽獸至。及紂之身，天下又大亂。
After the death of Yao and Shun, the principles that mark sages fell into decay. Oppressive sovereigns arose one after another, who pulled down houses to make

ponds and lakes, so that the people knew not where they could rest in quiet; they threw fields out of cultivation to form gardens and parks, so that the people could not get clothes and food. Afterwards, corrupt speakings and oppressive deeds became more rife; gardens and parks, ponds and lakes, thickets and marshes became more numerous, and birds and beasts swarmed. By the time of the tyrant Zhou, the kingdom was again in a state of great confusion.

Order II

周公相武王，誅紂伐奄，三年討其君，驅飛廉於海隅而戮之。滅國者五十，驅虎、豹、犀、象而遠之。天下大悅。《書》曰：『丕顯哉，文王謨！丕承哉，武王烈！佑啟我後人，咸以正無缺。』

Zhou Gong assisted king Wu, and destroyed Zhou. He smote Yan, and after three years put its sovereign to death. He drove Fei Lian to a corner by the sea, and slew him. The States which he extinguished amounted to fifty. He drove far away also the tigers, leopards, rhinoceroses, and elephants – and all the people was greatly delighted. It is said in the *Book of Documents*: 'Great and splendid were the plans of king Wen! Greatly were they carried out by the energy of king Wu! They are for the assistance and instruction of us who are of an after day. They are all in principle correct, and deficient in nothing'.

Disorder III

世衰道微，邪說暴行有作，臣弒其君者有之，子弒其父者有之。孔子懼，作《春秋》。《春秋》，天子之事也。是故孔子曰：『知我者其惟春秋乎！罪我者其惟春秋乎！』

Again the world fell into decay, and principles faded away. Perverse speakings and oppressive deeds waxed rife again. There were instances of ministers who murdered their sovereigns, and of sons who murdered their fathers. Confucius was afraid, and made the *Spring and Autumn*. What the *Spring and Autumn* contains are matters proper to the sovereign. On this account Confucius said: 'It is the *Spring and Autumn* which will make men know me, and it is the *Spring and Autumn* which will make men condemn me'.

「聖王不作，諸侯放恣，處士橫議，楊朱、墨翟之言盈天下。天下之言，不歸楊，則歸墨。楊氏為我，是無君也；墨氏兼愛，是無父也。無父無君，是禽獸也。公明儀曰：『庖有肥肉，廄有肥馬，民有飢色，野有餓莩，此率獸而食人也。』楊墨之道不息，孔子之道不著，是邪說誣民，充塞仁義也。仁義充塞，

則率獸食人，人將相食。吾為此懼，閑先聖之道，距楊墨，放淫辭，邪說者不得作。作於其心，害於其事；作於其事，害於其政。聖人復起，不易吾言矣。
Sage sovereigns cease to arise, and the princes of the States give the reins to their lusts. Unemployed scholars indulge in unreasonable discussions. The doctrines of Yang Zhu and Mo Di fill the world. All doctrines in the world that do not tend towards Yang tend toward Mo. Now, Yang's principle is 'each one for himself', which does not acknowledge the authority of the sovereign. Mo's principle is 'to care equally for all', which does not acknowledge the peculiar affection due to a father. But to acknowledge neither king nor father is to be in the state of the beasts! Gong Meng Yi said: 'In their kitchens, there is fat meat. In their stables, there are fat horses. But their people have the look of hunger, and on the wilds there are those who have died of famine. This is leading on beasts to devour men'. If the principles of Yang and Mo be not stopped, and the principles of Confucius not set forth, then those perverse speakings will delude the people, and stop up the path of goodness and rightness. When goodness and rightness are stopped up, beasts will be led on to devour men, and men will devour one another. I am alarmed by these things, and address myself to the defense of the principles of the Former Sages, and to oppose Yang and Mo. I drive away their licentious expressions, so that such perverse speakers may not be able to show themselves. Their delusions spring up in men's heart/mind, and do injury to their practice of affairs. Shown in their practice of affairs, they are pernicious to their government. When sages shall rise up again, they will not change my words.

Epilogue

昔者禹抑洪水而天下平，周公兼夷狄驅猛獸而百姓寧，孔子成《春秋》而亂臣賊子懼。《詩》云：『戎狄是膺，荊舒是懲，則莫我敢承。』無父無君，是周公所膺也。我亦欲正人心，息邪說，距詖行，放淫辭，以承三聖者；豈好辯哉？予不得已也。能言距楊墨者，聖人之徒也。
In former times, Yu repressed the vast waters of the inundation, and the country was reduced to order. Zhou Gong's achievements extended even to the barbarous tribes of the east and north, and he drove away all ferocious animals, and the people enjoyed repose. Confucius completed the *Spring and Autumn*, and rebellious ministers and villainous sons were struck with terror. It is said in the *Book of Odes*: 'He smote the barbarians of the west and the north; He punished Jing and Shu; and no one dared to resist us.' These father-deniers and king-deniers would have been smitten by Zhou Goestng. I also wish to rectify men's heart/mind, and to put an end to those perverse doctrines, to oppose their one-sided actions and banish away their licentious expressions – and thus to carry on the work of the

Three Sages. Do I do so because I am fond of disputing? I am compelled to do it. Whoever is able to oppose Yang and Mo is a disciple of the sages.[17]

The epilogue could also be divided into the following stages:

> 昔者禹抑洪水而天下平
> In former times, Yu repressed the vast waters of the inundation, and the country was reduced to order
>
> 周公兼夷狄驅猛獸而百姓寧
> Zhou Gong's achievements extended even to the barbarous tribes of the east and north, and he drove away all ferocious animals, and the people enjoyed repose
>
> 孔子成《春秋》而亂臣賊子懼。《詩》云：『戎狄是膺，荊舒是懲，則莫我敢承。』
> Confucius completed the *Spring and Autumn*, and rebellious ministers and villainous sons were struck with terror. It is said in the *Book of Odes*: 'He smote the barbarians of the west and the north; he punished Jing and Shu; and no one dared to resist us.'

In the above passages, the excellence of the Three Sages (those who will be later defined by Mencius as *san shengzhe* 三聖者) is highlighted: Yu, Zhou Gong, and Confucius, i.e. three models of wisdom that, in different ways, brought order into the world.

The conclusion follows this structure:

> 無父無君，是周公所膺也。
> These father-deniers and king-deniers would have been smitten by Zhou Gong.
>
> 我亦欲正人心，息邪說，距詖行，放淫辭，以承三聖者。
> I also wish to rectify men's heart/mind, and to put an end to those perverse doctrines, to oppose their one-sided actions and banish away their licentious expressions – and thus to carry on the work of the three sages. [Explicit declaration of intents of the rhetorical message]
>
> 豈好辯哉？予不得已也。
> Do I do so because I am fond of disputing? I am compelled to do it. [Reiteration of the *incipit* for emphatic purposes; recapitulation with a strong emotional appeal]
>
> 能言距楊墨者，聖人之徒也。
> Whoever is able to oppose Yang and Mo is a disciple of the sages.

All in all, the *dispositio* of the whole section – from the beginning to the development of the central theme, which is then repeated in the conclusion – follows a

17 *Mengzi* 3B/14, transl. Legge 1895: 278–284, transl. mod. auct.

chronological order that provides nonetheless for a cyclical pattern of phases of order and disorder. We also see an example of prolepsis in the evocation of a state of affairs that has not yet occurred. Yang and Mo's behaviors and, above all, the spread of their ideas, are the beginning of a dramatic chain of events that ends up by having "men devour each other". Of course, the dramatic perspective created by means of the prolepsis is emphasized through an extreme scenario, highlighted by hyperboles.

We could also recognize an "Homeric" or "Nestorian" rhetorical scheme[18] in the light of the contents of the *exordium* and epilogue, as the strong argument lies in insisting that Mencius is not fond of disputation but he is compelled to do it in order to fight Yang and Mo through his words and act as a true disciple of the sages.

Also worth mentioning are some rhetorical devices used at the beginning of the section, which starts with the rhetorical question by the disciple Gong Duzi, who asks Mencius how it could be that outside the Ru lineage Mencius himself is identified as "being fond of disputing" (*hao bian* 好辯). It is a question asked more to produce an effect than to summon an answer. In this case, the question shows that there is complicity between Gong Duzi 公都子 and Mencius, to such an extent that the answer is obvious, thus revealing that the question itself has a different rhetorical function, as we will see later. This question, in fact, gives Mencius the opportunity to define his own position while developing an articulated and complex argument making use of *bian* 辯 ("disputing" or "distinction drawing"), a form of dialectical persuasion and activity aimed fundamentally at "distinguishing" and classifying the relations between words (*ming* 名) and actualities (*shi* 實). Although Mencius wants to distance himself from the so called *bianzhe* 辯者 – "disputers" or "dialecticians" – because he probably wants to stress that his main goal is not simply to enjoy "disputation" *per se*, it is hard to deny that he was radically different from those "disputers" who flourished throughout pre-Qin era as wandering political advisors and counselors.

The strategy adopted by Mencius to define his own position is, from the beginning, marked by the use of rhetorical figures: he uses an *anthypophora*, i.e. the practice of asking oneself a question and then immediately answering it, a rhetorical figure in which the arguments of our antagonist are anticipated and refuted. *Anthypophora* is also assimilated to a rhetorical tactic of refuting an objection with a contrary inference or allegation. Mencius' point is that he is not fond of disputation; he has no choice, he is forced to engage in disputations with his

18 The "Homeric" or "Nestorian" order puts the best argument at the beginning and at the end of the discussion. See Cornificius 1969: III, 10, 18; see also Mortara Garavelli 1989: 105.

rivals. Nevertheless, he maintains that the dialectical instrument is functional to his mission. He does not deny engaging in *bian*, yet he legitimates a practice that some consider a mere exercise of sterile rhetoric. Mencius, therefore, wants to ennoble an activity which is not always commendable by exalting the purposes for which it is carried out. We should not forget the starting point of the theoretical structure of paragraph 3B/14: the urgency to legitimize a practice not always unobjectionable when faced with the pressing needs of the historical context. The arguments are developed extensively throughout the whole section and the arrangement of the speech is complex and stratified. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the centrality of the subject-matter of the question by Gong Duzi and the answer by Mencius is confirmed by the reiteration in the closing paragraph: the pericope used as *incipit* is repeated *verbatim*, (*qi hai bian zai? Yu bu de yi ye.* 豈好辯哉? 予不得已也。). Thus, Mencius, before ending his argument, stresses that what he has explained up to that moment is aimed at clarifying his position, thus emphasizing the point that he is not disputing because he is fond of disputation, but because he is *compelled* to do it.

Moreover, by the reiteration of the *incipit*, the texts reinforce the main point of Mencius's argument: it is through "words" (*yan* 言) that is possible to "fend off" (*ju* 距) Yang and Mo and be, thereby, a disciple of the sages. We can now point out some features in the rhetorical use of the Yang-Mo category, which includes all followers of non-Ru theories, by categorizing the range of ethical deviance into two dichotomous positions and placing them at the extremes of a moral and ideological scheme in which the Ru are located right in the middle. In the passage that we will be examining below, the image of Mencius holding to the center-ground, which would become a paradigm and a point of reference for the future generations of Ru, will be demonstrated even more clearly, especially with reference to the term *zhong* 中 "mean, center". Deviances are classified either as Yang-oriented or as Mo-oriented. The "compression" of the plurality of positions into the category Yang-Mo is, of course, extremely useful from a strategic point of view; it makes the target of Mencius's critique more easily detectable. In some ways, we might even define it as a common rhetorical devise: the *synecdoche*, since the expression Yang-Mo is used to refer to all non-Ru systems of thought. There is a gradual crystallization of the *wu jun* and *wu fu* categories as criteria of identification of both individual instances of deviance (the Yang and the Mo) and of deviances in a broader sense. The two terms *wu jun* and *wu fu* are gradually exchanged: the first one with Yang and *wei wo*; the second with Mo and *jian ai* 兼愛 "to care equally for all". This process is completed in the final part of the text, when we read that "these father-deniers and king-deniers would have been smitten by Zhou Gong." The use of the term *ying* 膺 "to smite, attack; to resist, to oppose" appears to be a military metaphor: Mencius's action is similar to Zhou

Gong's 周公, when opposing – this time using words and not weapons – the spread of Yang's and Mo's doctrines. In combating the words of Yang and Mo, he was doing as the Duke of Zhou would have done, hoping to carry on the work of the Three Sages.

Clearly, Mencius felt that both Yang and Mo were threats: one to the order of the state, the other to the family. Nevertheless, we may assume that the emphasis of the Mohists on making no distinctions in their care for others (*ai wu cha deng* 愛無差等,[19] *jian ai*) appeared to be the more basic threat, because a class structured society whose advanced stage of civilization was due to a division of labor could not have existed without inequalities. Although less emphatically than Xunzi 荀子 (ca. 310–215 B.C.),[20] Mencius considered class inequality to be a necessary condition for the division of labor that had enabled the Zhou 周 to reach a high degree of culture and civilization in comparison to the nomads and the neighboring populations.[21] Mark E. Lewis notes how, in early China, the flood was associated not only with the necessity of controlling raging water, but mostly with "all the criminality, bad government, and intellectual deviance that threatened the social order."[22] The *Mengzi*'s accounts of the taming of the flood in ancient times are therefore rhetorical tools used to stress the danger of abandoning the political principles rooted in the social division of labor and in the distinction between the ruler and the subjects. The flood is a metaphor standing for the collapse of the social system of regulations and distinctions that Mencius was trying to save from Yang's and Mo's attempts to eliminate the ruler (i.e. the state) and the father (i.e. the family).

Nevertheless, it is only partially true that Mo Di's doctrines would have threatened only family stability; actually, the inauspicious social implications of the Mohist theories were just as dramatic.

1.2 *Jin xin* I 盡心上 (*Mengzi* 7A/26)

The harshness of the confrontation between Mencius and the Yang Zhu's and Mo Di's theories is made explicit in the following passage, one of the most famous in Chinese classical literature:

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19 See *Mengzi* 2A/5.

20 See *Xunzi* 70/19/1,75/19/103.

21 See *Mengzi* 3A/4. See also Lyell 1962: 14.

22 Lewis 2006: 53 (see the whole chapter two "Flood Taming and Criminality": 49–77). See also Teiser 1985–1986.

> 孟子曰：「楊子取為我，拔一毛而利天下，不為也。墨子兼愛，摩頂放踵利天下，為之。子莫執中，執中為近之，執中無權，猶執一也。所惡執一者，為其賊道也，舉一而廢百也。」
> Mencius said: "The principle of Master Yang is 'each one for himself' (*wei wo* 為我). Though he might have benefited the whole world by plucking out a single hair, he would not have done it. Master Mo cares equally for all (*jian ai* 兼愛). If by rubbing smooth his whole body from the crown to the heel, he could have benefited the world, he would have done it. Zi Mo holds a medium between these (Zi Mo *zhi zhong* 子莫執中). By holding that medium, he is nearer the right. But by holding it without leaving room for an evaluation according to the circumstances (*zhi zhong wu quan* 執中無權), it becomes like they're holding their one point. The reason why I hate that holding to one point is the injury it does to the way of right principle. It takes up one point and disregards a hundred others."[23]

As observed previously, Mencius's statements are especially significant in the case of Yang Zhu, since they have long been considered a faithful record of the core Yangist values. The image of Yang Zhu, who refuses to pluck out a single hair for the benefit of the world, has become, rightly or wrongly, the distinguishing element of his philosophical message. However, it is not clear whether this provocative position is an authentic Yangist principle or should be considered as an instructive example to clarify the level of Yang Zhu's egoism. There is also disagreement on the meaning to be given to the expression *li tianxia* 利天下,[24] commonly translated – at least in this passage – as "to benefit the world". Carine Defoort argues that "Yangist discourse in *li* concerns not 'the world' but the integrity and preservation of one's body":[25] it would be misleading to represent the Yangism as a movement that dealt with *li* 利 "benefit" in terms similar to that of the Mohists and Mencius "transpose[d] [...] Yangist themes into a Mohist mode".[26]

Feng Youlan 馮友蘭 (1895–1990) has pointed out that

> Professor Gu Jiegang 顧頡剛 holds that the account in *Mencius* of Yang Zhu, that "though he might have benefited the world ... he would not have done it", should be interpreted as meaning: "Though he might have been benefited by having the world ... he would be unwilling." The conciseness and lack of inflection in the Chinese language makes either reading possible, depending on whether we take the word *li* 利, meaning "benefit", to be an active verb (to benefit) or passive (to be benefited by). *See* his *Cong* Lüshi Chunqiu *tuize* Laozi *zhi chengshu niandai* 從《呂氏春秋》推測《老子》之成書年代, in *Gu Shi bian* 古史辨, Vol. IV, pp. 493–494. [...] It is probable that the words: "If one would benefit him by giving him the whole world, and hope thus that he would pluck out one of his hairs, he would not do so", represent Yang's actual doctrine; whereas the words: "Though he might have benefited the

23 *Mengzi* 7A/26, transl. Legge 1895: 464–465, transl. mod. auct.
24 See Andreini 2000: 49–63.
25 Defoort 2004: 56.
26 Defoort 2008: 173.

> whole world by plucking out a single hair, he would not have done it", are Mencius's interpretation of this doctrine.[27]

The same argument was resumed by Graham as well:

> It can be seen that Gu Jiegang was right in arguing that Mencius misrepresented Yang Zhu. It was not that the Yangist would not lift a finger to help the world; the point was that he would not accept the least injury to the body, even the loss of a hair, for the sake of any external possession, even the throne of the empire. [...] Why did Mencius say that Yang Zhu refused to give a hair to benefit the world? Gu Jiegang may have been right in suggesting that Yang Zhu did use the phrase *li tianxia*, but not in the sense of 'benefiting the world'; Yang's meaning was probably closer to 'treating the world as a benefit [to oneself]'.[28]

On the meaning of *li tianxia*, Graham argued:

> *Li* is translatable as 'to benefit' before animate objects, but 'to use for one's own benefit' before inanimate objects. Throughout the concordanced pre-Han texts, *li tianxia* is 'benefit the world', with *tianxia* treated consistently as animate; and the accounts of Yang Zhu's doctrines in *Mencius* (7A/26) and *Lie Zi* (SPTK ed., 7.4b) both enforce this interpretation by parallelism. Previously, therefore, I doubted the grammatical acceptability of Gu Jiegang proposal (Graham, "Dialogue between Yang Ju and Chyntzyy," p. 295). But I have since noticed in the *Lüshi chunqiu* a case of *li tianxia* where Gu Jiegang's interpretation is demanded by the parallelism (Xu Weiyu [許維遹], *Lüshi* 20.3a).[29]

The passage from *Lüshi chunqiu* ("a case of *li tianxia* where Gu Jiegang's interpretation is demanded by the parallelism") that Graham refers to is the following: "the Son of Heaven benefited from the world (*Tianzi li tianxia* 天子利天下), the prince benefited from the state (*guo jun li guo* 國君利國), the high-ranking officer benefited from his position (*guan zhang li guan* 官長利官)".[30]

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27 Feng Youlan 1952–1953: vol. 1, 134, note 2. Chinese transcriptions have been adapted to *pinyin*.

28 Graham 1985: 75–76. Chinese transcriptions have been adapted to *pinyin*. The use of the expression *li tianxia* with the meaning of "treating the world as a benefit" may be due to a putative use of the verb *li*. Considered as an intransitive verb, *li* has the meaning of "to be useful, beneficial, favorable, and profitable". When followed by a direct object, intransitive attributive verbs change their valency from active into causative with a putative or factitive "hue". In the *Mohist Canon* (*Mojing* 墨經), *li* 利 "profit, advantage, usefulness" is defined as "what one is pleased to obtain" (*li, suo de er xi ye* 利，所得而喜也). See *Mozi* 65/40/10.

29 Graham 1985: 81–82, note 25.

30 *Lüshi chunqiu* 20.1/129/8. The meaning of this translation may be inferred from the context rather than from specific syntactic elements. Another possible interpretation is "the Son of Heaven benefited the world (or "helped, favored the world"), the prince benefited the state, and the high-ranking officer benefited his office". It is clear that *li* means both "to benefit, to favor something" and "to benefit from something, to profit from something". In the *Lüshi chunqiu*

Before going back to the *Mengzi* passage referred to at the beginning of the paragraph, it is necessary to try to distinguish the authentic meaning of the Yangist doctrine from Mencius's interpretation, whose reliability is questionable. The object of the present work is to detect the specificity and, if possible, the level of consistency of Mencius's interpretation of the Yangist values and, to this end, it is useful to link the argumentative strategy developed in the *Mengzi* to the ideological and narrative structure of the text itself.

Although the debate with Yang Zhu develops in response to a definite doctrine (i.e. *wei wo*), it is also true that in dealing with such a doctrine, the *Mengzi* may also address concerns remote from the Yangist philosophy. Unfortunately, at the moment, only hypotheses can be formulated. Therefore, it would be a mistake to interpret the passage *ba yi mao er li tianxia bu wei ye* 拔一毛而利天下不為也 and the meaning of the character *li* 利 as elements that conform to an aprioristic definition of the Yangist doctrine. The figure of Yang Zhu was also associated with the principle of *qing wu zhong sheng* 輕物重生 "to despise material things and to attach utmost importance to life"; hence it is likely that he might have refused the benefits deriving from possessing anything, including the world. Nonetheless, interpreting the meaning of the expression *li tianxia* 利天下 in the passage *ba yi mao er li tianxia bu wei ye* as 'to benefit, to favor the world' still remains not only an acceptable option, but also the most plausible one, considering some ideological and linguistic peculiarities of the *Mengzi* that will now be explored.

There is some reason to believe that the occurrences of *li* 利 in the parallel sentences *ba yi mao er li tianxia* and *mo ding fang zhong li tianxia wei zhi* 摩頂放踵利天下為之 "if by rubbing smooth his whole body from the crown to the heel, he could have benefited the world, he would have done it" in section 7A/26 of *Mengzi* have the same meaning. Moreover, one would expect the verb *li* 利 in the passages being examined to mean "to benefit, to be useful to, to favor", in accordance with other occurrences of the word *li* 利 attested in the same text. In *Mengzi* 1A/1, *li* 利 appears in the expressions *li wu guo/jia/shen* 利吾國／家／身 "to benefit, to be useful to, to favor my country/family/myself". Also in the passage *li zhi er bu yong* 利之而不庸 "when he benefits them, they do not think of his merit", *li* 利 means "to favor, benefit".[31] In contrast, the only example in *Mengzi* in which *li*

there is also another passage where *li* is usually interpreted as meaning "to benefit from, to take advantage of": *jun dao bu fei zhe tianxia li zhi* 君道不廢者天下利之 "if the Way of the sovereign was not abandoned, it is because the world will take advantage of it." See *Lüshi chunqiu* 20.1/128/30.

31 *Mengzi* 7A/13, transl. Legge 1895: 455, transl. mod. auct.

means "to take advantage of" is *an qi wei er li qi zi* 安其危而利其菑 "he feels safe in dangerous situations, he is able to take advantage of adversities as well."[32]

An examination of the occurrences of *li* in pre-Qin and early-Han texts shows that it may be interpreted both with the meaning of "to benefit someone or something, to be useful to" and "to benefit from, to take advantage of".[33] This duality may be noticed in the expression *li tianxia* as well. If, in the previously mentioned example taken from the *Lüshi chunqiu*, the sentence *tianzi li tianxia* 天子利天下 should be taken to mean "the Son of Heaven considers the world useful → benefits from the world", a very similar passage in *Han Feizi* has a totally different meaning: Yu *li tianxia* 禹利天下 would not mean "Yu benefited from the world", but rather "Yu did his utmost for the world, favored the world",[34] as the sentence *jian li tianxia* 兼利天下 in *Xunzi* means "favors the whole world indiscriminately".[35] More occurrences should be taken into consideration, for example the following passage from the *Mozi*:

> 斷指與斷腕，利於天下相若，無擇也；死生利若，一無擇也。殺一人以存天下，非殺一人以利天下也。殺己以存天下，是殺己以利天下。於事為之中而權輕重之謂求，求為之，非也，害之中取小，求為義非為義也。
>
> Cutting off a finger and cutting off a hand are alike in terms of benefit to the world: there is no choosing. Dying and living, in terms of benefit are as one: there is no choosing. Killing another person to preserve the world is different from killing another person to benefit the world. If killing oneself might preserve the world, it is like killing oneself to benefit the world. With respect to the conduct of affairs, there is a weighing up of light and heavy. This is called "seeking". "Seeking" is about right and wrong. In situations where the lesser harm is chosen, the seeking may be appropriate or inappropriate.[36]

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32 *Mengzi* 4A/8, transl. Legge 1895: 298, transl. mod. auct.

33 A.C. Graham's assumption according to which *li* 利 followed by an animate object means "to take advantage of" is not fully confirmed in pre-Qin texts. See for example section 35/10/85–88 of *Xunzi*, where *li* is used both with the meaning of "to benefit (someone or something)" and "to benefit from, to take advantage of". In particular, the passage *bu li er li zhi bu ru li er hou li zhi zhi li ye* 不利而利之不如利而後利之之利 is translated by John Knoblock as "not benefiting the people yet taking benefits from them provides fewer benefits than that of benefiting from the people only after first having benefited them." See Knoblock 1990: 133.

34 *Han Feizi* 50.11.34.

35 *Xunzi* 16/6/18.

36 *Mozi* 75/44/7–8. See Graham 1978: 250–251. See also another occurrence of *li tianxia* in *Mozi* 77/24/52. The expression *li tianxia* in *Zhuangzi* should also be considered in the same way, i.e. with the meaning of "to benefit, to favour the world". See *Zhuangzi* 24/10/14, 68/24/87, 86/31/6. In the bamboo manuscript known as *Tang Yu zhi dao* 唐虞之道 "The *dao* of Tang (Yao) and Yu (Shun)" found at Guodian 郭店 tomb no. 1, the expression *li tianxia* appears several times, as in *li tianxia er fu li ye, ren zhi zhi ye* 利天下而弗利也，忎(仁)之之(致)也 "to profit the world rather than to profit the self is the height of humanity" (cf. Cook 2012, vol 1: 545, 548). This sentence seems to confirm that, in its transitive use, the verb *li* 利 has both exo- and endoactive meanings

With an eye to the major pre-Qin sources and by virtue of the balance of evidence in the *Mengzi*, the appropriate translation of the passage *ba yi mao er li tianxia bu wei ye* should be "he would refuse to pluck out a single hair to the benefit of the world, for the sake of the world's common good" instead of "he would refuse to pluck out a single hair to enjoy the benefits of possessing the world", although this second interpretation probably better expresses an authentic Yangist doctrine. But might it perhaps be possible that this issue of "offering or refusing to pluck out hairs of one's body", traditionally associated with Yang and Mo, actually has neither a Yangist nor a Mohist origin? It should be noticed that the refusal to damage even the most insignificant part of one's body as a sign of respect towards oneself is present also in *Mengzi* 2A/2:

> 曰：「有。北宮黝之養勇也，不膚撓，不目逃，思以一毫挫於人，若撻之於市朝。不受於褐寬博，亦不受於萬乘之君。視刺萬乘之君，若刺褐夫。無嚴諸侯。惡聲至，必反之。孟施舍之所養勇也，曰：『視不勝猶勝也。量敵而後進，慮勝而後會，是畏三軍者也。舍豈能為必勝哉？能無懼而已矣。』孟施舍似曾子，北宮黝似子夏。夫二子之勇，未知其孰賢，然而孟施舍守約也。昔者曾子謂子襄曰：『子好勇乎？吾嘗聞大勇於夫子矣：自反而不縮，雖褐寬博，吾不惴焉；自反而縮，雖千萬人，吾往矣。』孟施舍之守氣，又不如曾子之守約也。」
>
> "Yes", was the answer. "Bei Gong You had this way of nourishing his valour: he did not flinch from any strokes at his body. He did not turn his eyes aside from any thrusts at them. He considered that the slightest push from any one was the same as if he were beaten before the crowds in the market-place, and that what he would not receive from a common man in his loose, large garments of hair, neither should he receive from a prince of ten thousand chariots. He viewed stabbing a prince of ten thousand chariots just as stabbing a fellow dressed in cloth of hair. He feared not any of all the princes. A bad word addressed to him would be always returned. Meng Shi She had this way of nourishing his valour: he said: 'I look upon not conquering and conquering in the same way. To measure the enemy and then advance; to calculate the chances of victory and then engage – this is to stand in awe of the opposing force. How can I make certain of conquering? I can only rise superior to all fear'. Meng Shi She resembled Master Zeng. Bei Gong You resembled Zi Xia. I do not know to the valour of which of the two the superiority should be ascribed, but yet Meng Shi She attended to what was of the greater importance. Formerly, Master Zeng said to Zi Xiang: "Do you love valour? I heard an account of great valour from the Master. It speaks thus: 'If, on self-examination, I find that I am not upright, shall I not be in fear even of a poor man in his loose garments of hair-cloth? If, on self-examination, I find that I am upright, I will go forward against thousands and tens of thousands'. Yet, what Meng Shi She maintained,

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of "to favor, to benefit" and "to benefit from". I say "transitive use" because in the first case the object of the verb *li* 利 is *tianxia*, while in the second case it is "blended" in *fu* 弗 (OC *pə-t), probably a fusion of *bu* 不 (*pə) and the object pronoun *zhi* 之 (*tə). Jingmen shi bowuguan 荊門市博物館 (ed.) 1988: 157–158.

being merely his physical energy, was after all inferior to what Master Zeng maintained, which was indeed of the most importance."[37]

A.C. Graham suggested that the refusal to endanger one's life by taking on government tasks, either for a social cause or for the personal benefits of wealth and fame, represents the most typical feature of Yangist thought:

For moralists such as the Confucians and Mohists, to refuse a throne would not be a proof of high-minded indifference to personal gain, but a selfish rejection of the opportunity to benefit the people. They therefore derided Yang Zhu as a man who would not sacrifice a hair even to benefit the whole world.[38]

As has already been remarked, it is very likely that *Mengzi* is the most ancient source that contrasts Yang Zhu's refusal to sacrifice a single hair for the sake of the world's common good and Mozi's will to shave from head to foot. In the case of Yang Zhu, however, the *topos* might not be a reflection of the original Yangist doctrine. This issue, with slight, yet significant, variations, is dealt with in two more texts which were presumably compiled later than the *Mengzi*: indirectly, without mentioning Yang Zhu, in the passage 50.4.4 in *Han Feizi* that was previously translated and, more extensively, in the *Yang Zhu* chapter of *Liezi:*

楊朱曰：「伯成子高不以一毫利物，舍國而隱耕。大禹不以一身自利，一體偏枯。古之人，損一毫利天下，不與也，悉天下奉一身，不取也。人人有損一毫，人人不利天下，天下治矣。」

禽子問楊朱曰：「去子體之一毛，以濟一世，不汝為之乎？」楊子曰：「世因非一毛之所濟。」禽子曰：「假濟，為之乎？」楊子弗應。

禽子出，語孟孫陽。孟孫陽曰：「子不達夫子之心，吾請言之。有侵苦肌膚獲萬金者，若為之夫？」曰：「為之。」孟孫陽曰：「有斷若一節得一國。子為之乎？」

禽子默然有間。孟孫陽曰：「一毛微于肌膚，肌膚微于一節，省矣。然則積一毛以成肌膚，積肌膚以成一節。一毛固一體萬分中之一物，奈何輕之乎？」

禽子曰：「吾不能所以答子。然則以子之言問者聃、關尹，則子言當矣；以吾言問大禹、墨翟，則吾言當矣。」孟孫陽因顧與其徒說他事。

Yang Zhu said: "Bocheng Zigao would not benefit others (or "refuse to get any benefit by acquiring possessions of outer things"?) at the cost of one hair; he renounced his state and retired to plough the fields. Yu the Great did not keep even his body for his own benefit and one side of him was paralyzed (because he worked to drain the flood). There was a man of ancient times, who, if he could have benefited the world by the loss of one hair, would not have given it; and if everything in the world had been offered to him alone, would not have

37 *Mengzi* 2A/2, transl. Legge 1895: 186–188, transl. mod. auct.

38 Graham 1960: 135–136.

> taken it. When not *one* man would not lose a hair, and no *one* man would not benefit the empire, the world was in good order."
>
> Qinzi (Qin Guli) asked Yang Zhu: "If you could help the whole world by sacrificing one hair of your body, would you not do it?"
> "The world certainly will not be relieved by one hair."
> "But supposing it did help, would you do it?"
> Yang Zhu didn't want to answer him.
>
> When Qin Guli came out he told Mengsun Yang, who said: "You do not understand what is in my Master's mind. Let me explain. If you could win ten thousand pieces of gold by injuring your skin and flesh, would you do it?"
> "I would."
> "If you could gain a kingdom by cutting off one limb at the joint, would you do it?"
>
> Qin Guli was silent for a while. Mengsun Yang continued: "It is clear that one hair is a trifle compared with skin and flesh, and skin and flesh compared with one joint. [That is perfectly clear.] However, enough hairs are worth as much as skin and flesh, enough skin and flesh as much as one joint. You cannot deny that one hair has its place among the myriad parts of the body; how can one treat it lightly?"
>
> Qin Guli said: "I do not know how to answer you. I can only say that if you were to question Laozi and Guan Yin about your opinion they would agree with you, and if I were to question – Yu the Great and Mozi about mine they would agree with me."
> Mengsun Yang thereupon turned to his disciples and changed the subject.[39]

The three versions of the story recorded in the *Han Feizi*, the *Liezi*, and the *Mengzi* might reflect different interpretations of a principle which was originally Yangist; the first two texts seem to refer to it in a more faithful way than the latter, as confirmed by D.C. Lau:

> Mencius is certainly guilty of misrepresentation. This is not quite the point of Yang Zhu's egoism. [...] Hence in Yang Zhu's view one should not give even one hair on one's body in exchange for the possession of the Empire. [...] and the possession of the Empire will almost certainly lead to over-indulgence in one's appetites. It is true that if one refuses to give one hair in exchange for the possession of the Empire, *a fortiori* one would refuse to give a hair to benefit the Empire. Mencius' misrepresentation lies in taking what, properly speaking, is only a corollary and presenting it as the basic tenet of Yang Zhu's teaching.[40]

We should also consider the possibility that the editors of the *Mengzi* associated the name of Yang Zhu with pre-existent material, and thus that the sentence *ba yi mao er li tianxia bu wei ye* might in no way reflect philosophical content of a Yangist heritage. Mencius may have taken inspiration from the legend celebrat-

39 *Liezi* 7/41/18.
40 Lau D.C. 1970: 30.

ing the altruistic Yu 禹, patron of the Mohists and alleged founder of the Xia 夏 dynasty, who – the legend goes – lost his leg hair and became lame during the works to tame the raging waters. The stories in the *Han Feizi* and in the *Liezi* may somehow better represent the efficient adaptation of the legend of Yu to the doctrine of Yang Zhu as expressed in *Mengzi*. As John Emerson stated

> [...] even his [Yang Zhu] supposed refusal to sacrifice a hair from his leg to benefit the empire can be seen to be a transformation of a legend about the altruistic cultural hero Yu, who labored so diligently for the public good that he wore all the hairs from his thighs. Our version of Yang's refusal comes from hostile sources, but with the help of variants of the Yu legend we can guess at the original Yangist story: in many versions of the legend of Yu, Yu not only wore the hairs from his legs but also made himself lame, and in all versions he went for several years without seeing his family. The Yangist version of the story must have contrasted the good family man Yang Zhu to the masochistic, inhuman altruist Yu (representing the Mohists).[41]

Emerson's interpretation must be taken into consideration: Yang Zhu's refusal may imply a re-elaboration of the legend of Yu. Nonetheless this would not demonstrate that the Yangist version of the story – should a "Yangist" version have ever existed – "must have contrasted the good family man Yang Zhu to the masochistic, inhuman altruist Yu (representing the Mohists)."

There is no evidence that Yang Zhu criticizes Yu only for the fact that he spent eight long years working hard, without the pleasure of a family life.[42] It is much more likely, instead, that the Yangists denounced how Yu, because of his zeal, had sacrificed himself in vain for the world's sake. It is appropriate to consider these elements in light of the relationship between the holy inviolability of the self and the deceitful and superfluous utility of material goods (*wu* 物) and fame (*ming* 名). The statements in the *Liezi* and in the *Han Feizi* suggest that Yang Zhu probably conceived sacrificing a part of the body in exchange for material goods – even were they to be the whole world – as an iniquitous deed, harmful to oneself. We cannot however exclude the possibility that Yang Zhu regarded any form of altruistic deed as insufficient to achieve the common good. In his opinion, it seems, order among human beings cannot proceed from actions which are intentionally performed in favor of others, but only from the respect that each person should demonstrate to him/herself and his/her life.

Even if Yu is the patron of the Mohists, neither the *Lunyu* 論語 nor the *Mengzi* show hostility towards him, to the extent that both works present him to be an

41 Emerson 1996: 549.

42 See *Mengzi* 3A/4, 3B/9, 4B/26, 4B/29.

example of the highest sense of duty.[43] To continue with speculation Mencius structured his criticism against Yang Zhu and Mo Di such that it begins already with a legend whose main character is the founder of the Xia dynasty, an established example of devotion towards others. Mencius wished to highlight how Mozi, by observing the *jian ai* principle, would have been induced to sacrifice himself unconditionally for the sake of the world's common good, while Yang Zhu, to remain faithful to his own egoism, would not "lift a finger". Hence, the *topos* of the "hair" offered to rescue the world was used by Mencius as a criterion to measure Mo Di's altruism and Yang Zhu's egoism.

Many sources make us believe that the authors of the *Mengzi* drew inspiration from the legend that has Yu as a protagonist, narrated in a number of works, among which the *Han Feizi*:

> 禹之王天下也，身執耒臿以為民先，股無胈， 脛不生毛。 雖臣虜之勞，不苦於此矣。
> When Yu was king of the world he personally held the plough and the rammer to lead the people,[44] on his thighs there was no hair, on his shins no hair grew. Even the toil of a slave prisoner was no more bitter than this.[45]

The "Zai you" 在宥 chapter of the *Zhuangzi* has a similar passage, which, however, does not refer to Yu, but to Yao and Shun:

> 昔者黃帝始以仁義 攖人之心，堯舜於是乎股无胈，脛无毛以養天下之形，愁其五藏以為仁義，矜其血氣以規法度。
> Long ago, the Yellow Emperor disturbed the minds of men with humaneness and righteousness. Consequently, Yao and Shun worked themselves to the bone, till there was not a hair left on their legs, toiling to nourish the bodies of all under heaven. They tormented their five viscera with the exercise of humaneness and righteousness; they depleted blood and vital breath to set up laws and regulations, but still there were some who would not submit.[46]

In stressing the relationship between Yu and the Mohists, the "Tianxia" 天下 chapter of the *Zhuangzi* is not too far from what is stated in the *Han Feizi*:

> 墨子稱道曰：昔禹之湮洪水，決江河而通四夷九州也，名川三百，支川三千，小者无數。禹親自操耜而九雜天下之川；腓无胈，脛无毛 . 墨翟禽滑釐之意則是，其行則非也。 將使後世之墨者，必自苦以腓无胈脛无毛相進而已矣。亂之上也，治之下也。雖然，墨子真天下之好也，將求之不得也，雖枯槁不舍也。才士也夫！

43 See *Lunyu* 8/18, 8/21, 14/5; *Mengzi* 3A/4, 4B/20, 4B/26, 4B/29, 5A/6, 6B/11.
44 See the parallelism in *Huainanzi* 21/7a.
45 *Han Feizi* 49.3.10.
46 *Zhuangzi* 26/11/20, transl. Mair 1994: 93, transl. mod. auct.

> Mozi defends his teachings by saying that in ancient times, when Yu dammed the flood waters and opened up the courses of the Yangtze and the Yellow River so that they flowed through the lands of the four barbarians and the nine provinces, joining with the three hundred famous rivers, their three thousand tributaries, and the little streams too numerous to count – at that time Yu in person carried the basket and wielded the spade, gathering together and mingling the rivers of the world, till there was no hair down left on his calves, no hair on his shins; Mo Di and Qin Guli were all right in their ideas but wrong in their practices, with the result that the Mohists of later ages have felt obliged to subject themselves to hardship "till there is no hair down left on their calves, no hair on their shins" – their only thought being to outdo one another. Such efforts represent the height of confusion and the lowest degree of order. Nevertheless, Mozi was one who had a true love for the world. He failed to achieve all that he aimed for, yet, wasted and worn with exhaustion, he never ceased trying. He was indeed a gentleman of ability![47]

According to Wang Shumin 王叔岷 (1914–2008)[48], the author(s) of the *Han Feizi* relied neither upon the "Tianxia" chapter nor upon the "Zai you" chapter, but on another lost fragment from the *Zhuangzi* which was luckily preserved in a commentary to the *Wen xuan* 文選[49] (Selections of Refined Literature, 6th century) and in the *Taiping Yulan* 太平御覽[50] (Imperial Overview from the *Taiping* Reign, 10th century):

> 莊子曰：「兩袒女浣於白水之上，禹過之而趨，曰：『治天下奈何？』女曰：『股無胈，脛不生毛，顏色烈凍，手足胼胝，何以至是也？』」
> The *Zhuangzi* says: "Two unclothed women were bathing in crystal clear water when Yu, passing by in a hurry, asked them how it would be to rule the world. The women answered: Until there is no down left on the calves, no hair on the shins – cope with the cold and the heat, calluses on hands and feet: how can one get to this point?"

In order to better understand the implications of Yang Zhu's refusal to sacrifice one hair for the world, it is necessary to place this anecdote within the context of the wider debate on the question of sacrificing parts of the body – and, in some extreme cases, even sacrifice one's life – to keep one's morality (*yi* 義 "justice, sense of what is right, righteousness, moral appropriateness") intact or to achieve personal profit (*li* 利). All the main lineages of thought in early China debated this topic, recognizing, almost unanimously, the priority of *yi* over the preservation of physical integrity.[51] This specific topic is associated in the *Mojing* with the argu-

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47 *Zhuangzi* 91/33/26–31.

48 Wang Shumin 1998: 239–240.

49 *Wen xuan Li Shan zhu* 文選李善注 (1965), *j.* 40, "*Sima Changqing 'Nanshu fulao' zhu*" 司馬長卿《難蜀父老》注.

50 *Taiping Yulan* 63/4a.

51 See *Mozi* 82/47/1; 75/44/8; *Mengzi* 6A/10.

ment about the notion of "weighing benefits and detriments" (*quan li hai* 權利害) when defining the importance of the parts compared to the whole:

> 於所體之中，而權輕重之謂權。權，非為是也，非非為非也。權，正也。斷指以存腕，利之中取大，害之中取小也。害之中取小也，非取害也，取利也。其所取者，人之所執也。遇盜人，而斷指以免身，利也；其遇盜人害也。斷指與斷腕，利於天下相若，無擇也；死生利若，一無擇也。
> With respect to what are parts [of the body], there is the weighing of light and heavy. This is called "weighing", which is not about right and wrong: it is about "weighing" being correct (i.e. making the correct choice). In terms of benefit, cutting off a finger to preserve the hand is to choose the [benefit which is] greater; in terms of harm, it is to choose the lesser [harm]: therefore, in terms of harm, choosing the lesser [harm] is not to choose harm, but it corresponds to choosing benefit. [Sometimes] what has to be chosen depends on others: for example, in facing a robber, to cut off a finger to spare the (whole) body is a benefit, although meeting a robber is, *per se*, harmful. Cutting off a finger and cutting off a hand are alike in terms of benefit to the world: there is no choice.[52]

Mo Di's followers attributed to their Master the following definition of *yi* 義:

> 子墨子曰：「萬事莫貴於義。今謂人曰：『予子冠履，而斷子之手足，子為之乎？』必不為，何故？則冠履不若手足之貴也。又曰：『予子天下而殺子之身，子為之乎？』必不為，何故？則天下不若身之貴也。爭一言以相殺，是貴義於其身也。故曰，萬事莫貴於義也。」
> Mozi said: "Of the multitude of things none is more valuable than justice. Now, if we tell somebody: 'We shall give you a hat and shoes on the condition that you let us cut off your hands and feet. Would you agree to this?' Of course, he would not agree, but why? Just because hats and shoes are not as valuable as hands and feet. Again (if we said), we shall give you the whole world on the condition that you let us kill you. Would he agree to this? Of course he would not agree, but why? Just because the world is not as valuable as one's person. Yet if people have struggled against one another for a single principle, this shows that righteousness is even more valuable than one's person. Hence we say, of the multitude of things none is more valuable than justice".[53]

The acknowledgment that "the world is not as valuable as oneself" did not lead the Mohists to uphold principles somehow connected to "valuing the self" (*gui ji*), since the request for justice due to the need for maximizing social interest justifies, if necessary, sacrificing the person as well. In fact, as has already been remarked, "if the death or life of a man brought the same benefits, in this case too, there would be no difference between the two choices; [...] to kill oneself to save the world means, instead, to kill oneself to benefit the world."[54]

52 *Mozi* 75/44/7–8.
53 *Mozi* 82/47/1.
54 *Mozi* 75/44/8.

Such positions were almost certainly contrary to Yangist values, but it can't be excluded that also other thinkers, rightly or wrongly associated with the figure of Yang Zhu, deemed *yi* more important than life itself. For example, Zi Huazi 子華子 (ca. 380–320 B.C.) was persuaded that death is to be preferred to a repressed and tormented life (*po sheng* 迫生), maybe precisely because of non-compliance with a moral duty (*bu yi* 不義) towards oneself:

> 子華子曰：「全生為上，虧生次之，死次之，迫生為下。」[...] 所謂迫生者，六欲莫得其宜也，皆獲其所甚惡者，服是也，辱是也。辱莫大於不義，故不義，迫生也，而迫生非獨不義也，故曰迫生不若死。
> Zi Huazi said: "An intact life is best; a diminished life is next; death is lower still; a tormented life is the worst". [...] In a 'tormented life' none of the six desires obtains its proper satisfaction; rather, each desire obtains only what it has a natural aversion to. Servitude and disgrace are instances of this. No disgrace is greater than that of being treated contrary to your code of conduct. Thus, to lead a tormented life means being treated immorally. But a tormented life does not consist merely in being treated immorally; therefore, it is said that a tormented life is worse than death."[55]

This position does not seem to be so far from the one of Mencius, who admitted that the defense of *yi* might have entailed sacrificing one's life if the person was compelled to make drastic decisions, since, as affirmed in *Mozi* too, *yi* is more important than one's safety:

> 孟子曰：「魚，我所欲也；熊掌，亦我所欲也，二者不可得兼，舍魚而 取熊掌者也。生，亦我所欲也；義，亦我所欲也，二者不可得兼，舍生而取義者也。生亦我所欲，所欲有甚於生者，故不為苟得也；死亦我所惡，所惡有甚於死者， 故患有所不辟也。如使人之所欲莫甚於生，則凡可以得生者，何不用也？使人之所惡莫甚於死者，則凡可以辟患者，何不為也？由是則生而有不用也，由是則可以辟患而有不為也。是故所欲有甚於生者，所惡有甚於死者，非獨賢者有是心也，人皆有之，賢者能勿喪耳。一簞食，一豆羹，得之則生，弗得則死。嘑爾而與之，行道之人弗受；蹴爾而與之，乞人不屑也。萬鍾則不辨禮義而受之。萬鍾於我何加焉？為宮室之美、妻妾之奉、所識窮乏者得我與？鄉為身死而不受，今為宮室之美為之；鄉為身死而不受，今為妻妾之奉為之；鄉為身死而不受，今為所識窮乏者得我而為之，是亦不可以已乎？此之謂失其本心。」
> Mencius said: "I like fish, and I also like bear's paws. If I cannot have the two together, I will let the fish go, and take the bear's paws. So, I like life, and I also like rightness. If I cannot keep the two together, I will let life go, and choose rightness. I like life indeed, but there is that which I like more than life, and therefore, I will not seek to possess it by any improper ways. I dislike death indeed, but there is that which I dislike more than death, and therefore there are occasions when I will not avoid danger. If among the things which man likes there were nothing which he liked more than life, why should he not use every means by which he could preserve it? If among the things which man dislikes there were nothing which he

55 *Lüshi shi chunqiu* 2.2/8/14, transl. Knoblock and Riegel 2000: 83, transl. mod. auct. See also Andreini 1998 and 2000: 61–63, 131–136.

disliked more than death, why should he not do everything by which he could avoid danger? There are cases when men by a certain course might preserve life, and they do not employ it; when by certain things they might avoid danger, and they will not do them. Therefore, men have that which they like more than life, and that which they dislike more than death. They are not men of distinguished talents and virtue only who have this attitude of their heart/mind: all humans have it. What belongs to such men is simply that they do not lose it. Here are a small basket of rice and a platter of soup, and the case is one in which the getting them will preserve life, and the want of them will be death; if they are offered with an insulting voice, even a tramper will not receive them, or if you first tread upon them, even a beggar will not stoop to take them. And yet a man will accept of ten thousand measures of grain, without any consideration of ritual propriety or rightness. What can the ten thousand measures of grain add to him? When he takes them, is it not that he may obtain beautiful mansions, that he may secure the services of wives and concubines, or that the poor and needy of his acquaintance may be helped by him? In the former case the offered bounty was not received, though it would have saved him from death, and now the emolument is taken for the sake of beautiful mansions. The bounty that would have been preserved from death was not received, and the emolument is taken to get the service of wives and concubines. The bounty that would have saved him from death was not received, and the emolument is taken that one's poor and needy acquaintance may be helped by him. Was it then not possible likewise to decline this? This is a case of what is called 'Losing the proper nature of one's heart/mind'".[56]

Mencius believed that in order to perform one's own moral duties (*yi*), thus obeying Heaven (*tian*天), it was necessary to nourish (*yang* 養) the inclinations of one's nature (*xing* 性):

孟子曰：「盡其心者，知其性也。知其性，則知天矣。存其心，養其性，所以事天也。殀壽不貳，修身以俟之，所以立命也。」
Mencius said: "To make the most of one's heart/mind is to realize one's natural tendencies, and if one realizes one's natural tendencies, one is realizing Heaven. Sustaining one's heart/mind and nourishing one's natural tendencies is how one serves Heaven. When neither a premature death nor long life causes a man any double-mindedness, but he waits in the cultivation of his personal character for whatever issue; this is the way in which he establishes his (Heaven-)ordained being".[57]

Therefore, Mencius did not interpret the need to nourish one's natural inclinations to mean only a duty to oneself to satisfy one's passions and desires. Understanding Heaven means striving to nourish mainly those components of human nature that contribute to harmoniously develop moral qualities whose signifi-

56 *Mengzi* 6A/10, transl. Legge 1895: 411–414, transl. mod. auct.
57 *Mengzi* 7A/1, transl. Legge 1895: 448–449, transl. mod. auct.

cance is described, as in the previous passage of the *Mozi*, with the terms "big" (*da* 大) and "small" (*xiao* 小):

> 孟子曰：「人之於身也，兼所愛。兼所愛，則兼所養也。無尺寸之膚不愛焉，則無尺寸之膚不養也。所以考其善不善者，豈有他哉？於己取之而已矣。體有貴賤，有小大。無以小害大，無以賤害貴。養其小者為小人，養其大者為大人。今有場師，舍其梧檟，養其樲棘，則為賤場師焉。養其一指而失其肩背，而不知也，則為狼疾人也。飲食之人，則人賤之矣，為其養小以失大也。飲食之人無有失也，則口腹豈適為尺寸之膚哉？」
> Mencius said: "There is no part of himself which a man does not love, and as he loves all, so he must nourish all. There is not an inch of skin which he does not love, and so there is not an inch of skin which he will not nourish. For examining whether his way of nourishing be good or not, what other rule is there but this, that he determine by reflecting on himself where it should be applied? Some parts of the body are noble, and some ignoble; some great, and some small. The great must not be injured for the small, nor the noble for the ignoble. He who nourishes the little belonging to him is a little man, and he who nourishes the great is a great man. Here is a plantation-keeper, who neglects his *wu* and *jia* [the Chinese parasol tree and the catalpa], and cultivates his sour jujube-trees; he is a poor plantation-keeper. He who nourishes one of his fingers, neglecting his shoulders or his back, without knowing that he is doing so, is a man who resembles a hurried wolf. A man who only eats and drinks is counted mean by others; because he nourishes what is little to the neglect of what is great. If a man, fond of his eating and drinking, were not to neglect what is of more importance, how should his mouth and belly be considered as no more than an inch of skin?"[58]

Zi Huazi, often associated to Yang Zhu's positions, would have certainly agreed with Mencius's statement according to which death is not the worst danger that man risks, since a repressed life (*po sheng*) is surely worse, it being immoral (*bu yi*). Mencius and Zi Huazi almost certainly agreed on the fact that a deed is suitable from an ethical point of view (*yi*) when it does not betray Heaven's expectations and principles:[59] to do so, humans fulfill the potentialities of life, of natural inclinations and of their own *xin* 心 "heart/mind". In fact, Mencius claimed that one's fulfillment could be achieved through the maturing of moral inclinations, which lead one to act fairly, to cultivate *yi* and to observe the traditional rules of conduct (*li* 禮). As for Zi Huazi, he stressed that self-realization is achieved by satisfying the "six desires" (*liu yu* 六欲) and by good health, typical aspects of an "intact" or "totally fulfilled life" (*quan sheng* 全生).

The following passage from *Zhuangzi*, also extant in the *Lüshi chunqiu*, helps us understand the meaning attributed by Zi Huazi to a "totally fulfilled life":

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58 *Mengzi* 6A/14, transl. Legge 1895: 416–417, transl. mod. auct.

59 *Mengzi* 7A/1.

韓魏相與爭侵地。子華子見昭僖侯，昭僖侯有憂色。子華子曰：今使天下書銘於君之前，書之言曰：左手攫之則右手廢，右手攫之則左手廢，然而攫之者必有天下。君能攫之乎？
昭僖侯曰：寡人不攫也。
子華子曰：甚善！自是觀之，兩臂重於天下也，身亦重於兩臂。韓之輕於天下亦遠矣，今之所爭者，其輕於韓又遠。君固愁身傷生以憂戚不得也！
僖侯曰：善哉！教寡人者眾矣，未嘗得聞此言也。子華子可謂知輕重矣。
Han and Wei were competing with each other over some land that had been invaded. Zi Huazi went to see Marquis Zhaxi who had a mournful look.
Zi Huazi said, "Supposing, my lord, that all under heaven were to sign an agreement before you stating that 'Should the left hand seize it, the right hand will be disabled; should the right hand seize it, the left hand will be disabled. Yet he who seizes it will certainly gain all under heaven': Would you seize it?"
"I would not seize it," said Marquis Zhaoxi.
"Very good!" said Zi Huazi. "Judging from this, your two arms are more important than all under heaven, but your person is even more important than your two arms. Han is far less significant than all under heaven, but what you are competing over now is far less significant than Han. Why, my lord, must you worry your person and injure your life by fretting over something you can't get?"
"Excellent!" said Marquis Xi. "Many are those who have instructed me, but I have never heard this sort of advice."
Zi Huazi may be said to have known what was insignificant and what was important.[60]

Underlining the nonsense that is the bartering of any part of one's body in exchange for the world, Zi Huazi's claim is similar to Yang Zhu's position as recorded in the *Liezi*[61] and, implicitly, also in the *Han Feizi*.[62] Besides confirming a real affinity between the two thinkers, this shows that Yang Zhu, unlike what is reported in *Mengzi*, did not refuse to offer a hair to help the world, yet he probably refused, in principle, the sacrifice of a part of his body to obtain wealth and material goods.

Almost certainly, Mencius was aware of Zi Huazi's theories since they were contemporaries, and if so, the former couldn't but assimilate Yang Zhu's and Zi Huazi's doctrines. As already observed, Mencius probably borrowed the "hair" *topos* from the legend featuring Yu, patron of the Mohists and a great example of abnegation, as the protagonist. In doing so, Mencius started from an incontrovertible matter of fact: Mozi, while trying to achieve his altruistic goal, agreed to be identified with Yu, who committed himself so deeply to rescuing the world that when he tamed the great deluge there was no hair left on his calves, no hair on his shins.

60 *Zhuangzi* 77/28/18, transl. Mair 1994: 287, transl. mod. auct. See also *Lüshi chunqiu* 21.4/141/19.
61 See *Liezi* 7/41/18.
62 See *Han Feizi* 50.4.4.

Let us assume for the purposes of speculation, that the "hair" *topos* did not originally belong to Yang Zhu's message and that, upon compiling the *Mengzi*, there were no professed Yangist sources that could belie a possible biased misinterpretation of Yangist doctrines. Starting from this assumption, we can infer that Mencius, using the plot of Yu's legend in order to stress the contrast between the "indefatigable altruist" Mozi and some thinkers supporting the opposite ethical position – i.e. that would never give up anything of himself to rescue others – chose the obscure Yang Zhu. The reason was probably because, as documented in the previously translated passage, Zi Huazi was associated with the refusal to offer a hand, a not a hair, in exchange for the world.

The strategies adopted by Mencius during the process of *inventio* are, therefore, extremely sophisticated. *Inventio* is the procedure of forming and developing an argument that is compelling and persuasive. By providing the rhetorician with sets of instructions and ideas, *inventio* investigates the possible means by which the proofs appropriate for a specific rhetorical situation can be selected. Aristotle answered Plato's attack against rhetoric by arguing that rhetoric and reason are tied together.[63] While dialectic is the way for discovering truths which are supposed to be universal, rhetoric clarifies and communicates arguments using whatever strategy to produce a specific effect on the mind of the hearer or reader: to persuade. In order to communicate arguments successfully, the rhetorician must be able to produce valid sets of cases supporting his or her thesis. The systematic approach to produce persuasive discourse and generate arguments is provided through the use of a *topos*, i.e. a topic which defines "a place or store or thesaurus to which one resorted in order to find something to say on a given subject."[64] A *topos* is a category that helps to delineate the relationship among ideas. *Topoi* are "lines of arguments" or "common notions", in many cases deriving from the adaptation of traditional material, destined to constitute standardized patterns. Mencius creates new *topoi* by extending and adapting the legend of Yu and forging the Yang-Mo symbol. He was a real master of *inventio*:

> Invention is the art of discovering new arguments and uncovering new things by argument [... it] extends from the construction of formal arguments to all modes of enlarging experience by reason as manifested in awareness, emotion, interest, and appreciation.[65]

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63 "Rhetoric is the counterpart of Dialectic", Aristotle states in the *incipit* of his *Rhetoric*. See Aristotle ed. 1984: 3.

64 Corbett 1971: 35.

65 McKeon 1987: 59.

In crafting a persuasive piece of rhetoric against Yang and Mo, the legend of Yu, focused on "one single hair of the body-all the hairs" *versus/pro* "the world", was extremely effective once incorporated into his perfectly balanced rhetorical discourse. Such narrative became Mencius's main "evidence" and provided him with a solid framework upon which to elaborate a rhetorical attack against ethical deviances, which was destined to serve as model for future generations of Ru thinkers.

1.2.1 The power of imitation

> "One of the great constants in rhetoric is the doctrine of imitation".[66]

If used as an instrument of rhetorical invention, *imitatio* goes beyond an empty re-creation of old models, because imitation is "a complex process that allows historical texts to serve as equipment for future rhetorical arguments [...] Imitation of the structure and language of an old text may help introduce radically new ideas".[67] The imitative model helps authors make different texts and different theories interact and create new patterns of discourse. In order to suit circumstances, the rhetorician is similar to a "bricoleur" who assembles linguistic "bricks" to build his/her persuasive strategy. Scholars have pointed out that invention (and *a fortiori*, imitation) is a social process, a process of discovery of rhetorical strategies which takes place within a specific intellectual tradition in which the rhetorician is no longer a creator, an "originator", but rather a point of intersection of textual (and intertextual) models.[68]

Old voices and structures can be recovered as a consequence of new circumstances in order to produce "usable traditions",[69] as Mencius probably did by coining the "Yang-Mo" category.

Mencius saw himself to be imitating models from antiquity and placed himself in the line of succession of these paradigmatic figures such as Zhou Gong and Confucius. By having re-created order out of disorder, those exemplary figures had all done exactly what Mencius was aiming at through his words: rectify people's heart-mind.

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66 Winterowd 1970: 161.
67 Leff 1997: 201–203.
68 See Still and Worton 1990: 1; see also Gaonkar 1993.
69 Cox 1987: 203.

Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 B.C.–18 A.D.), during the Han period, Han Yu 韓愈 (768–824) during the Tang 唐 (618–907), and Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) during the Song 宋 (960–1279) would all have gained a position in this line of succession, celebrating the *dao* 道 of the Ru as the main path of virtue leading from antiquity to the present.

Yang Xiong's work, for example, reveals the increasing relevance of the idea of orthodoxy in the wake of Han Wudi's 武帝 (r. 141–87 BCE) appreciation of the Ru doctrine and the ensuing decrease of importance of the non-Ru traditions. Yang Xiong was extremely clear in distinguishing between "the path of right principles" (*zhengdao* 正道) and "the path of heterodox, crooked principles" (*xie dao* 邪道):

> 好書而不要諸仲尼，書肆也。好說而不要諸仲尼，說鈴也。君子言也無擇，聽也無淫，擇則亂，淫則辟。述正道而稍邪哆者有矣，未有述邪哆而稍正也。
> People who love books but do not seek instruction from Confucius are like a bookshop. Those who love to engage in persuasion but do not seek instruction from Confucius talk like *jingling* bells. What the exemplary person says does not corrupt others. What he listens to is reported without exaggeration. Corruption results in disorder. Exaggeration results in moral turpitude. There have been those who transmitted the correct *dao* but gradually went crooked; but there has never been anyone who transmitted the crooked *dao* and gradually went correct.[70]

> 或問「道」。曰：「道也者，通也，無不通也。」或曰：「可以適它與？」曰：「適堯、舜、文王者為正道，非堯、舜、文王者為它道。君子正而不它。」
> Someone asked about the *dao*. Master Yang said: "The *dao* is pervasive – there is nothing it does not penetrate."
> The other said: "Can it lead in other directions?"
> Master Yang said: "That which leads to Shun, Yao, and King Wen is the correct *dao*. Those which do not lead to Shun, Yao, and King Wen are the other *daos*. The exemplary person follows the correct one and not the others."[71]

> 或曰：「刑(形)名非道邪？何自然也？」曰：「何必刑(形)名，圍棋、擊劍、反目、眩形，亦皆自然也。由其大者作正道，由其小者作奸道。」
> Someone said: "If the doctrine of 'forms and names' does not accord with the *dao*, why is it as such?"
> Master Yang said: "Why must it be different from what it is? Chess, fencing, acrobatics, and magic are all 'as they are'. Create the correct *dao* out of its best element, while the weak point will bring to a *dao* of perversion."[72]

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70 *Yangzi fayan* 揚子法言 2.14, transl. Bullock 2011: 53 transl. mod. auct.

71 *Yangzi fayan* 4.1, transl. Bullock 2011: 69, transl. mod. auct.

72 *Yangzi fayan* 4.23, transl. Bullock 2011: 80, transl. mod. auct.

Starting from such premises, it is not surprising that Yang Xiong too placed himself in the line of succession of those who preserve the orthodox *dao* and obviously used the Yang-Mo symbol:

> 古者楊墨塞路，孟子辭而辟之，廓如也。後之塞路者有矣，竊自比於孟子。
> Among the ancients, Yang Zhu and Mo Di blocked the road, Mencius spoke and burst it open, making the road broad. There were others after him who blocked the road. I humbly compare myself to Mencius.[73]

The emergence of an "orthodoxy" implies political unity, for no single doctrine can become the ideology of a society unless there is a centralized political authority. After the fall of the Han dynasty in 220 AD, the Yang-Mo symbol faded into disuse, though it became central again during the Tang and retained relevance down through the Qing 清 (1644–1911). The Yang-Mo symbol was not so important between the Han and the re-establishment of the empire under the Sui 隋 (581–618) because the Ru ideology clearly declined and a new socio-political situation arose: the old bureaucratic ideal shaped to consolidate the position of the ruling Han elites and to protect them from the danger of the centrifugal forces was replaced by an aristocratic one.

The reunification of the empire under the Sui reestablished cultural homogeneity throughout areas where local cultures and new doctrines had proliferated over three centuries. During the Sui and the Tang dynasties, the bureaucracy tried to reestablish control over its ideology by fostering new interpretations of the Ru system, first asserting the supremacy of its deep-rooted tradition, then by systematizing Ru doctrines in such a way that they could compete with any of the religious, metaphysical and intellectual systems developed within the Daoist and Buddhist communities. Han Yu was probably the most distinguished scholar in the Tang Dynasty to re-adapt the Yang-Mo dualism. That symbol provided thinkers like Han Yu an authoritative and historical *topos* of the proper stance of the "scholar": one who fights against ethical deviance. Moreover, the Yang-Mo dualism offered a methodological framework that suited the aspirations of thinkers like Zhu Xi, who re-defined the Ru "mean-oriented" ideology and favored the adaption of the Mencian Yang-Mo symbol in order to equate Chan 禪 Buddhism to Yang Zhu's tendency to withdraw from social community and to equate mendicant and ascetic Buddhist orders with Mo, because they seemed to be totally committed to society.[74]

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73 *Yangzi fayan* 2.20. Bullock 2011: 55, transl. mod. auct.
74 See Lyell 1962: 38–54, 92–94.

1.3 *Jin xin* II 盡心下 (*Mengzi* 7B/72)

> 孟子曰：「逃墨必歸於楊，逃楊必歸於儒。歸，斯受之而已矣。今之與楊墨辯者，如追放豚，既入其苙，又從而招之。」
> Mencius said: "Those who are fleeing from Mo naturally turn to Yang, and those who are fleeing from Yang naturally turn to the Ru. When they so turn, they should at once and simply be received. Those who nowadays dispute with the followers of Yang and Mo do so as if they were pursuing a stray pig, the leg of which, after they have got it to enter the pen, they proceed to tie."[75]

Does the previous passage suggest that Mencius recognized a close connection between Yang Zhu's and Ru's teaching? This is a hypothesis expressed by Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021–1086), although he noticed that Yang Zhu, like Mo Di, diverged from the sages' moral example.[76] Nonetheless, He Jingqun 何敬群 (1903–1983)[77] maintains that Wang Anshi's analysis is reductive and does not fully grasp the real meaning of Mencius's position. Making a quite questionable assumption, He Jingqun even claims that Mencius's argument, hypothetically, should have been as follows: "those who run away from Mo, inevitably turn to Yang; those who run away from Yang, inevitably turn to the Ru and those who run away from Ru, finally go back to Mo".

A seeming convergence between the Ru and the Yangists might be detected in certain attitudes of non-cooperation with political authority and refusal to accept public offices. However, it is necessary to draw some careful distinctions. Behind the Yangist choice there seems to be a utilitarian evaluation between the benefits resulting from the acquisition of fame and wealth and the risk of endangering the most valuable personal good, i.e. life. For the Ru, instead, the imperative is basically ethical: some hermits or recluses are such only "temporarily". It is the adverse historical situation that demands the withdrawal from political life, particularly in those cases in which the sovereign and his government do not uphold the Ru values.[78]

Several scholars recognized the secular character of the eremitism in ancient China. Alan J. Berkowitz maintains that

> [...] withdrawal usually meant withdrawal from active participation in an official career in the state of bureaucracy. Reclusion was typically secular, and religious devotion was but one of any number of advocations pursued by individuals who had renounced public ser-

75 *Mengzi* 7B/72, transl. Legge 1895: 491, transl. mod. auct.
76 See *Wang Anshi quanji* 王安石全集 1974, 2: 142. See also Luan Tiaofu 欒調甫 1957: 67.
77 See He Jingqun 1979: 15.
78 *Lunyu* 5/7, 8/13, 9/7, 11/24, 15/7.

> vice [...] And renunciation in China did not necessarily imply ascetic self-denial: it meant the repudiation of a role in the service of local or state authority [...] The "Confucian" withdrew as an ethical reaction against the political or moral order of the times, thereby frustrating his personal commitment to public service; the "Taoist" withdrew out of his disdain for worldly involvement, thereby fulfilling his ambition.[79]

Confucius stated that subjects have the duty of serving their sovereign,[80] but, at the same time, he also justified disobedience, or better say, renounced government responsibilities in case of a conflict with what is morally appropriate (*yi*). As Li Chi observes:

> [...] as early as the time of Confucius the concept of recluse had begun to change from a man who had renounced the world and had hidden himself in the wilderness to one who kept himself apart from the world of affairs and yet was anxious to make himself heard. [...] it is apparent that Confucius and his followers and the recluses were each conscious of belonging to two camps. Nevertheless, Confucius had a high regard for recluses and in moments of frustration could even suggest that he withdraw from the world by floating to sea on the raft. [...] Confucius felt alone in being the only man who really knew when to seek office and when to retire, and he provided the traditional Confucian justification for reclusion with his opinion that the *junzi* should consider it shameful not to serve under an enlightened ruler and equally shameful to hold office under an unenlightened ruler.[81]

By investing man with a high degree of moral responsibility,[82] Confucius contributed to preparing the grounds for a lively debate on the question of accepting or refusing political office. This led to the primary need to draw a sharp distinction between two attitudes – the Yangist and the Ru – which risked appearing similar. Mencius's explanation, as may be expected, soon arrived.

Shun Kwong-loi examined the following passage 4B/29 in the *Mengzi*, observing that its meaning should be grasped in the light of Mencius's criticism of Yang Zhu and Mo Di.[83] Mencius implicitly wanted to stress that the stubbornness with which Yu and Ji 稷 worked for the world's sake was different from Mo Di's altruism and that Yan Hui's 顏回 behavior (ca. 521–481 B.C.) could be assimilated to Yang Zhu's only at first glance.

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79 Berkowitz 1992: 2–4.

80 *Lunyu* 2/18, 2/19, 2/20, 4/14, 5/6, 5/16, 6/8, 12/22, 13/2, 13/13, 15/32.

81 Li Chi 1962–1963: 237–238.

82 See Berkowitz (1992: 8), who stated that "withdrawal was a measure of the individual's to resolve: regardless of the dangers or attractions of service, and regardless of the motivation for avoiding it, he strove to maintain his personal integrity, autonomy and self-reliance [...] Withdrawal, then, was a form of individualism in action ...". See also Vervoorn 1990: 29.

83 See Shun Kwong-loi 1997b: 69–70, who based his criticism on Zhu Xi and Zhang Shi 張栻 (1133–1180) exegesis. See also Kano Naoki 狩野直喜 (1868–1947) ed. 1987: 38.

Mencius exalted Yu, Ji and Yan Hui precisely because they were able to answer in a different way to what circumstances imposed on them, although the three of them actually followed the same *dao*. Yan Hui's behavior would have been the same as Yu's and Ji's if only he had been in their place, and vice versa:

> 禹、稷當平世，三過其門而不入，孔子賢之。顏子當亂世，居於陋巷。一簞食，一瓢飲。人不堪其憂，顏子不改其樂，孔子賢之。孟子曰：「禹、稷、顏回同道。禹思天下有溺者，由己溺之也；稷思天下有飢者，由己飢之也，是以如是其急也。禹、稷、顏子易地則皆然。今有同室之人鬬者，救之，雖被髮纓冠而救之，可也。鄉鄰有鬬者，被髮纓冠而往救之，則惑也，雖閉戶可也。」
>
> Yu and Ji, in an age when the world was being brought back to order, thrice passed their doors without entering them. Confucius praised them. The disciple Yan, in an age of disorder, dwelt in a mean narrow lane, having his single bamboo-cup of rice, and his single gourd-dish of water; other men could not have endured the distress, but he did not allow his joy to be affected by it. Confucius praised him. Mencius said: "Yu, Ji, and Yan Hui agreed in the principle of their conduct. Yu thought that if any one in the kingdom were drowned, it was as if he drowned him. Ji thought that if any one in the kingdom suffered hunger, it was as if he famished him. It was on this account that they were so earnest. If Yu and Ji, and Yanzi, had exchanged places, each would have done what the other did. Here now in the same apartment with you are people fighting – you ought to part them. Though you part them with your cap simply tied over your unbound hair, your conduct will be allowable. If the fighting be only in the village or neighbourhood, if you go to put an end to it with your cap tied over your hair unbound, you will be in error. Although you should shut your door in such a case, your conduct would be allowable".[84]

The central issue of this passage lies, in my opinion, in the definition of the unexpressed concept of *quan* 權 "evaluate, weigh, measure". We saw how Mencius turned to *quan* just after criticizing Yang and Mo, also referring to a third figure, unfortunately ignored in the received literature, i.e. Zi Mo 子莫:[85]

> Zi Mo holds a medium between these (*zhi zhong* 執中). By holding that medium, he is nearer the right. But by holding it without leaving room for evaluating the exigency of circumstances (*wu quan* 無權), it becomes like their holding their one point. The reason why I hate that holding to one point is the injury it does to the way of right principle. It takes up one point and disregards a hundred others.[86]

Here again we have two ideal extremes with a mean position between the two. However, Mencius is fully convinced that Zi Mo is too inflexible. If Qian Mu 錢穆

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84 *Mengzi* 4B/29, transl. Legge 1895: 335–336, transl. mod. auct.

85 Carine Defoort suggested that the bamboo manuscript *Tang Yu zhi dao* from Guodian is related to Zi Mo's doctrine. See Defoort 2004.

86 *Mengzi* 7A/26, transl. Legge 1895: 464, transl. mod. auct.

(1895–1990)[87] is right in identifying Zi Mo with the son of Zi Zhang 子張 (503– ? B.C.), then this would seem to imply that in Mencius's eyes there are some Ru who hold to the doctrine of the "mean" too rigidly. In discussing this passage, Qian Mu points out that if the importance of Yang Zhu in Mencius time was as great as Mencius would have us believe, then it is surprising that there is little reference to him in pre-Qin and Han-literature. Qian Mu is of the opinion that the really dominant intellectual lineages were the Ru and the Mohists. He believes that this was generally acknowledged during the pre-imperial era, while the statement of Mencius is only one man's opinion set forth for polemical aims. For the same reasons, Qian Mu argues, Mencius pushed the doctrines of both Yang and Mo to their logical extremes before attacking them.[88] We already saw how Mencius followed a hyperbolic approach which exaggerated both the failings of Yang and Mo and the virtues of his fellows Ru.

With regard to Mencius' evaluation of Yang and Mo, Marcel Granet has written:

> Brillant écrivain, Mencius est plutôt un polémiste qu'un penseur. Il se plaît à se mettre en scène, discutant avec de grands personnages. Il se présente comme un homme qui se serait donné la tâche de publier les principes de Confucius afin d'empêcher que « les paroles de Yang tseu et de Mö tseu (ne) remplissent le Monde ». Il défendait la sagesse confucéenne en la définissant comme une *sagesse de juste milieu*, également distante de deux utopies pernicieuses. Mencius est un politicien, et il argumente en rhéteur: les adversaires qu'il attaque de front ne sont point ceux qu'il désire surtout atteindre. Ses véritables adversaires, ce sont les Légistes. Au gouvernement par les Lois, il oppose *le gouvernement par les Sages* ... A vrai dire, ce qui a fait la gloire de Mencius, ce ne sont pas ses thèses rhétoriciennes, mais son attitude. Il a été le premier champion de l'orthodoxie ... Il a été le premier des lettrés. Et il en a fixé le type.[89]

Mencius, in defining the Ru system as a celebration of *zhong* 中 (the *equilibrium*, or "sense of moral balance"), employed a powerful and evocative category in order to prove that the Ru tradition embodied all the good points of the doctrines of the rival lineages, while not reaching the same radical extremes. The Yang-Mo symbol, by virtue of its own logic, defines the Ru's path as the "middle way" – better still as the "balanced attitude" – and implies that any step which deviates

87 Qian Mu 1935: 229–233. According to Qian Mu, Zi Mo might be identified with Shen Xiang 申詳, the son of Zi Zhang, whose family name was Zhuan Sun 顓孫. By following traces of this evidence, Qian Mu argued that Zi Mo was probably the figure addressed as Zhuan Sun Zi Mo 顓孫子莫 in *Shuoyuan* 說苑 (Garden of Persuasions) 19.32/168/16.

88 On the rhetorical effects produced through *amplificatio* or *exaggeratio* in the European Classical languages, see Lausberg 1969: 49 and Mortara Garavelli 1997: 109.

89 Granet 1950: 561.

from this *dao* will necessarily lead to a rejection of both social and family institutions and the heretical excesses of Yang and Mo.

The Ru emphasis on *zhong* 中 is a constant *topos* in Ru literature.[90] However, as observed by Maurizio Scarpari, the meaning of this term should be grasped with more precision:

> Un corretto bilanciamento implica necessariamente cercare il punto di equilibrio con flessibilità e mobilità, con una libertà di movimento che rifugga ogni forma di rigidità o condizionamento, adattandosi alle circostanze che si presentano di volta in volta, senza rinunciare alla prospettiva d'insieme. Il ricorso al termine *zhong* che significa «centro» non facilita la comprensione di questo processo, richiamando a un'idea troppo geometrica di equidistanza. Se immaginiamo l'asta della stadera, il concetto risulta forse più comprensibile: pesi e contrappesi si spostano lungo l'asta e facilitano la ricerca del punto di equilibrio, garantendo così il miglior bilanciamento possibile.[91]

By examining another Ru thinker, Xunzi, we can arrive at a clearer perspective on the meaning of the Yang-Mo symbol, and the peculiar meaning of *zhong* within the *Mengzi*. Xunzi has been considered as the "moulder" of early Ruism, but he has not enjoyed great favor among the Ru themselves, probably because of the strong impact of Zhu Xi's criticism of Xunzi's doctrine of *xing* 性 "human nature", a theory that attacked Mencius's system of thought at its very heart.

The following passage taken from the *Xunzi* is suggestive in depicting a dispute between the Ru and their opponents. However, it does so against a background different to that of Mencius. There are no longer two radically opposed "heresies" to fight, but rather a strict adherence to a path defined by the pivotal values defined as *li yi* 禮義 (not *ren yi* 仁義, as in Mencius) which, by themselves, are capable of preventing the danger of the Mohist's "*li* 利/*hai* 害-oriented" moral attitude and of fulfilling both ethical and natural human expectations:

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90 Among the Tsinghua University's (Qinghua Daxue 清華大學) collection of bamboo manuscripts from the Warring States period, the *Baoxun* 保訓 (Instructions for Preservation) offers new important elements on the meaning of *zhong* in early Chinese texts. See Chan 2012; Li Ling 李零 2009; Liao Liyong 梁立勇 2010; Liao Mingchun 廖名春 2011; Liu Guangsheng 劉光勝 2013; Wang Zhiping 王志平 2011.

91 "A correct balance necessarily implies to seek the balance point with flexibility and mobility, with a freedom of movement that eschews any form of rigidity or conditioning, by adapting to circumstances without sacrificing the overall perspective. The use of the term *zhong* which means "center" does not facilitate the understanding of this process, referring to a geometric idea of equidistance. If we imagine the arm of a steelyard, the concept is perhaps more clear: weights and counterweights are moved along the arm and facilitate the search for the point of equilibrium, thus ensuring the best balance possible." (Scarpari 2010: 154–155, transl. auct).

故人苟生之為見，若者必死；苟利之為見，若者必害；苟怠惰偷懦之為安，若者必危；苟情說之為樂，若者必滅。故人一之於禮義，則兩得之矣；一之於情性，則兩喪之矣。故儒者將使人兩得之者也，墨者將使人兩喪之者也，是儒墨之分也。

Accordingly, if one acts with only preservation of his own life in view, death is inevitable. If one acts with only profit in mind, loss is certain. If one is indolent and timorous, thinking thereby he will be safe, danger is certain. If he seeks happiness through self-gratification, destruction is certain.

Thus, if a man concentrates single-mindedly on ritual and moral principles, then both his desires and ritual will be fulfilled; but if he concentrates solely on his inborn desires and emotions, then both will be lost. Hence, Ru practices will cause a man to fulfill both ritual and desires, whereas Mohist practices will cause him to lose both. Such is the distinction between the Ru and the Mohists.[92]

Xunzi points out that the central experience of human life takes place within the social community and that to preserve and protect it we all need an intentional commitment to *li yi* "ritual and moral principles", established by the Sage Kings of antiquity to end disorder. Humans need *li* "ritual, ceremonial rules of proper conduct" in order to perpetuate society. Contrary to what Mo Di believed, Xunzi argues that

先王惡其亂也，故制禮義以分之，使有貧富貴賤之等，足以相兼臨者，是養天下之本也。書曰：「維齊非齊。」此之謂也。

The Ancient Kings abhorred such disorder. Thus, they instituted regulations, ritual practices, and moral principles in order to create proper social class divisions. They ordered that there be sufficient gradations of wealth and eminence of station to bring everyone under supervision. This is the fundamental principle by which to nurture the whole world. The *Book of document* says: "There is equality only insofar as they are not equal". This expresses my point.[93]

故先王明禮義以壹之，致忠信以愛之，尚賢使能以次之，爵服慶賞以申重之，時其事，輕其任，以調齊之，潢然兼覆之，養長之，如保赤子。

Accordingly, the Ancient Kings elucidated ritual and moral principles in order to unify them, were loyal and honest in the extreme to manifest love for them, elevated the worthy and employed the able in order to put them in sequence, and created ranks, robes, commendations, and incentives in order to further emphasize to further emphasize this gradation. They undertook tasks only at proper season and lightened the people's obligations in order to make them concordant and uniformly regulated. 'Like a vast flood of surging waters, they universally covered over them.' They nourished and led them "as though they were watching over an infant."[94]

Thanks to inequality and social distinctions, such remarkable cultural achievements have been possible. Therefore, Mozi, Xunzi said, is missing the mark in

92 *Xunzi* 19/90/16, transl. Knoblock 1994: 56–57.
93 *Xunzi* 9/3/3, transl. Knoblock 1990: 96.
94 *Xunzi* 10/10/8, transl. Knoblock 1990: 132.

stressing equality and criticizing the different levels of funeral observance, the rules of proper conduct (*li* 禮), and ritual music (*yue* 樂). Mozi's attack on *li* and *yue* must have seemed to Xunzi like an attack on Zhou civilization itself:

> 墨子曰:「樂者、聖王之所非也,而儒者為之過也。」君子以為不然。樂者,聖人之所樂也,而可以善民心,其感人深,其移風易俗。故先王導之以禮樂,而民和睦。[...] 故樂者,所以道樂也,金石絲竹,所以道德也;樂行而民鄉方矣。故樂也者,治人之盛者也,而墨子非之。
>
> Mozi says: "Music was something the sage kings condemned; so the Ru err in making music." The gentleman considers that this is not true. Music was enjoyed by the sage kings; it can make the heart/mind of the people good; it deeply stirs men; and it alters their manners and changes their customs.
>
> Thus, the Ancient Kings guided the people with ritual and music, and the people became harmonious and friendly. [...] Therefore, musical performances are the means of guiding enjoyment.
>
> 'The instruments of metal, stone, silk, and bamboo are the means to guide the music, for whenever music is performed, the people sit in the direction to face it.' Thus, music is the most perfect method of bringing order to men. Yet Mozi condemns it![95]

Mozi not only condemns the institutions, practices and principles of social class division, but also attacks the harmonizing elements that accompany them. In the following passage, as we already saw in Mencius, Xunzi uses the image of the early Kings as the defenders of orthodoxy and the punishers of moral deviances and, to a certain extent, Xunzi also implies a comparison between himself and the ancient model of virtuosity:

> 且樂也者,和之不可變者也;禮也者, 理之不可易者也。樂合同, 禮別異, 禮樂之統,管乎人心矣。窮本極變,樂之情也;著誠去偽,禮之經也。墨子非之,幾遇刑也。明王已沒,莫之正也。愚者學之,危其身也。君子明樂,乃其德也。亂世惡善,不此聽也。於乎哀哉!不得成也。弟子勉學,無所營也。
>
> Furthermore, music embodies harmonies that can never be altered, just as ritual embodies principles of natural order that can never be changed. Music joins together what is common to all; ritual separates what is different. The guiding principles of ritual and music act as the pitch pipe that disciplines the human heart/mind. It is the essential nature of music to seek to exhaust the root of things and to carry change to its highest degree. It is the continuous theme of ritual to illuminate what is genuine and to eliminate what is artificial. Mozi attacks both music and ritual, he almost met with punishment, but the wise kings had already passed away, and no one corrected him. Stupid people learn his doctrines and endanger themselves. The exemplary person is clear about music, but he is born in an evil generation which hates goodness and will not listen to him.[96]

For Xunzi, *zhong* coincides precisely with the ethical imperative that inspired the former Kings in the creation of ritual and moral principles (*li yi*):

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95 *Xunzi* 20/2/5, transl. Knoblock 1994: 83.

96 *Xunzi* 20/3/7, transl. Knoblock 1994: 84, transl. mod. auct.

先王之道，仁之隆也，比中而行之。曷謂中？曰：禮義是也。道者，非天之道，非地之道，人之所以道也，君子之所道也。
The Way of the Ancient Kings lay in exalting the principle of goodness and in following *zhong* (the sense of moral balance) in their conduct. What is meant by *zhong*? I say that it is correctly identified with ritual and moral principles. The Way of which I speak is not the Way of Heaven or the Way of Earth, but rather the Way that guides the actions of mankind and is embodied in the conduct of the exemplary person.[97]

From the perspective of Xunzi's attitude toward Mozi, the meaning of Mencius's Yang-Mo symbol emerges with greater clarity. In this specific case, Xunzi's attack focused mainly – though not, of course, exclusively – on the Mohists and was based on the power of the moral authority of the legacy represented by *liyi*, a category that, in itself, defines the set of duties and relations inside and outside the family, thus covering a domain that, in other words, is both *nei* 內 "inner, private, familiar" and *wai* 外 "outer, external".

Mencius, on the contrary, develops a two-part rhetorical answer, addressing not just one target, but attacking both parties which hold, in his opinion, irreconcilable and diametrically opposed positions. Thus, he made room for the Ru tradition that necessarily had to place itself at the center of the "rhetorical space" he had conceived. From Mencius's point of view, Yang Zhu and Mo Di were stuck in antithetical, absolutist positions, far away from the preferred mean. Nevertheless, one could not arrive at this mean position *a priori*, without a previous evaluation. Just because Zi Mo held a rigorously intermediate position, he still deserved to be blamed because his choice, in Mencius's opinion, was *a priori* and prejudiced, as it was not determined by an evaluation of the circumstances.

It is clear that Mencius felt the need to state that moral action always implies an interpretation of the self, which, instead of being a unique indivisible individual, is an aggregation of specific social relations. It is therefore necessary to carefully assess (*quan*) if the situation is such as to require, for example, a sacrifice, or a minor formal violation of the rules of ritual behavior (*li* 禮):

淳于髡曰：「男女授受不親，禮與？」
孟子曰：「禮也。」
曰：「嫂溺則援之以手乎？」
曰：「嫂溺不援，是豺狼也。男女授受不親，禮也；嫂溺援之以手者，權也。」
曰：「今天下溺矣，夫子之不援，何也？」
曰：「天下溺，援之以道；嫂溺，援之以手。子欲手援天下乎？」
Chun Yu Kun said: "Is it the rule of propriety that males and females shall not allow their hands to touch in giving or receiving anything?"
Mencius replied: "It is a rule of propriety."

97 *Xunzi* 20/8/23, transl. Knoblock 1990: 71, transl. mod. auct.

> Kun asked: "If a man's sister-in-law be drowning, shall he rescue her with his hand?"
> "He who would not so rescue the drowning woman is a wolf", said Mencius. "For males and females not to allow their hands to touch in giving and receiving is the general rule of propriety; when a sister-in-law is drowning, to rescue her with the hand is a matter of evaluating a peculiar exigency."
> Kun said: "The whole kingdom is drowning. How strange it is that you will not rescue it!"
> Mencius answered: "A drowning kingdom must be rescued with right principles, as a drowning sister-in-law has to be rescued with the hand. Do you wish me to rescue the kingdom with my hand?"[98]

The exemplary person is able to mediate between his own ambitions and the demands of his context on the one hand, and between the codes of conduct crystallized over time and "peculiar exigencies" on the other. Mencius gives a balanced answer, albeit still prescriptive in its tone. The codes of conduct should be complied with whilst also taking into account the correct interpretation of subjective circumstances. In other words, we cannot always put only ourselves (as Yang Zhu wished) or only others (as Mozi wished) first.

Therefore, passage 4B/29 of the *Mengzi* provides evidence of the terms by which Mencius referred to certain pseudo-individualistic attitudes among the Ru, but a careful contextual evaluation (*quan*) removes any doubts relating to the alleged immorality of those Ru figures such as Yan Hui, which was different, despite appearances, from Yang Zhu's "non-collaborationist" position – in political terms.

2 What are Yang and Mo standing for?

The passages from *Mengzi* quoted above show how Mencius's priority was to hinder the spread of Yang and Mo's doctrines in order to create the conditions required to reaffirm the Ruist moral path. Let us now proceed to verify whether the juxtaposition between Yang and Mo emerging from the *wei wo-jian ai* and *wu jun-wu fu* categories can be clarified in relation to two core values of the Ru ethical system, namely *ren* 仁 "goodness, humanity" and *yi* 義"justice, sense of what is right, righteousness, moral appropriateness".

98 *Mengzi* 4A/17, transl. Legge 1895: 308, transl. mod. auct.

2.1 *Ren* 仁

Mencius argued that *ren* lies in the heart-mind (*xin* 心)[99] and represents the distinguishing feature of the superior man, namely the person bearing full moral authority (*renzhe* 仁者). When associated with the "emotional" and affective dimension, *ren* means "loving other" (*ai ren* 愛人)[100] and entails both the refusal to hurt one's fellow men,[101] and the inability to tolerate other people's suffering.[102] As Lin Yü-sheng claims "*ren* is a protean quality of virtue; it can only be cultivated and developed in inter-human relationships, i.e., in a social context."[103] The same author argues that Confucius extended the meaning of *ren* from "manliness, manhood" to "all-inclusive moral virtue as well as the highest moral attainment that a man can achieve in life by human effort", and also "the dynamic process of cultivation and development of what is distinctively in him."[104]

It seems that the notion of *ren* does is not limited to abiding by filial duty, but rather includes the whole balance of human relations within social institutions. Though acknowledging its central role, David L.Hall and Roger T. Ames tend to consider the family structure as a contingent factor, in the sense that "non specific formal structure, even family, is necessary", since "the institution of family is itself an abstraction from particular concrete relationships that are themselves always unique."[105]

The explication of *ren* through *qin* 親 "affection, love towards one parents; being intimate" in the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 (Explaining graphs and analyzing characters)[106] does not mean that the ultimate sense of *ren* must be found only in affection towards relatives: self-cultivation grounded in *ren* actually implies a process of diffusion throughout the whole of society and within each of its members. In analyzing the value of *ren* in the light of the first two chapters of the *Lunyu*, Robert E.Allinson pointed out that filial piety (*xiao* 孝) "is considered hypothetical and not categorical in axiological status; [...] is not characterised as an exclusive form of love, but rather is designed as an epistemological guide and as an ontological locus for our ethical feeling and values".[107] The Ru's ethical vision interprets society as an extension of the family structure, an ideal starting point

99 *Mengzi* 2A/7; 4A/10; 6A/11; 7A/33.
100 *Lunyu* 12/22.
101 *Mengzi* 7B:31; 7A:33.
102 See *Mengzi* 1A:7; 2A:6; 7A:31.
103 Lin Yü-sheng 1974–1975: 193.
104 Lin Yü-sheng 1974: 188.
105 Hall and Ames 1987: 120–121.
106 See *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 說文解字注 1988: 365.
107 Allinson 1992: 176, 184.

to implement the integration and emancipation process of each individual. Confucius stated that "might we not say that filial piety and devotion towards older brothers are the basis to become a virtuous person?" (*xiao ti ye zhe qi wei ren zhi ben yu* 孝弟也者其為仁之本與).[108]

Li Chenyang pointed out:

> Why must a person of *ren* start with loving his parents? The Confucian observe the following line of reasoning. From childhood one must begin moral self-cultivation. First social environment in which one finds oneself is the family. The first people with whom one is acquainted are, naturally, one's parents. Therefore, in order for one to become *ren*, one must first learn to be *ren* with one's parents; and *ren* in that aspect is filial piety. [...] If one fails to be *ren* at home, namely to be filial to one's parents while young, it would be difficult to be *ren* to others after one grows up. Therefore, filial piety is the fountainhead of *ren*, and the morality of *ren* first of all demands filial piety.[109]

Mencius stressed that the most important duty is fulfilling one's obligations towards parents, more precisely that "the real application of *ren* consists in serving one's own relatives" (*ren zhi shi shi qin shi ye* 仁之實事親是也).[110] Following the same path, the *Zhongyong* 中庸 (The Doctrine of the Mean) states that "*ren* is a distinguishing quality of mankind and affection for one's own parents represents its highest expression" (*ren zhe ren ye qin qin wei da* 仁者人也親親為大)[111] and the chapter "Jie" 戒 (Admonitions) of the *Guanzi* 管子 (The Book of Master Guan) testifies how "filial piety and devotion towards older brothers are the forerunners of *ren* (*xiao ti zhe ren zhi zu ye* 孝弟者仁之祖也)".[112]

Even if we acknowledge the primary position of the family, it is evident from the Ru texts that acting in compliance with the principles of filial piety does not necessarily lead to behavior inspired by *ren*: it is actually necessary to extend one's attention to the elderly members of the community and to all creatures. Mencius examined the pervasive nature of *ren* that, starting from devotion for parents, extends to others and finally to the whole society. He stated that "loving one's own parents and family means being *ren* (*qin qin ren ye* 親親仁也), respecting the elderly means behaving righteously (*jing chang yi ye* 敬長義也). There is no other thing to do than to extend these principles to the whole world."[113]

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108 *Lunyu* 1/2.

109 Li Chenyang 1997: 222–223.

110 *Mengzi* 4A/27, transl. Legge 1895: 313, transl. mod. auct.

111 *Zhongyong* 20.

112 See *Guanzi* 1b/26.

113 *Mengzi* 7A/15, transl. Legge 1895: 456, transl. mod. auct.

The present discussion of the value of *ren* does not intend to reduce the meaning of a philosophical concept – central to the Ru cultural heritage – to a mere "devotion towards parents" in order to support our hypothesis. However, it should be highlighted how two of the many implications of *ren* find expression in the practice of filial piety and the refusal of the *jian ai* principle. For instance, Yao Xinzhong confronted Mencius's conception of *ren* with the Mohist *jian ai*, trying to clarify the inadequacy of the belief that "*ren* as universal love came in the past to be perceived as graded, or partial, love."[114] Commenting on the passage 1/2 from *Lunyu* above mentioned – "filial piety and devotion towards older brothers are the fundamental principles or the root (*ben* 本) to become a virtuous person" – Yao Xinzhong pointed out how important it is to properly define *ben*, since

> *ben* (root) in this paragraph means the starting point of practicing *ren* rather that the essence of *ren*. *Ren* must be practised in a graded procession, moving from one's parents to others' parents. [...] However, 'starting with one's love for family' does not mean that this love is the whole of *ren*.[115] [...] All Confucians believe that *ren*, as love, should first be practised in one's love for one's parents and brothers, but none of them holds that *ren* is only love for parents and brothers.[116]

Thus, we can better understand the meaning of the debate between the Ru and the Mohists as expressed in the *Mengzi*. It is not a question of debating about the contrast between a mutual, universal and unreserved concern, represented by *jian ai* and a gradual, partial and disciplined type of love, typical of *ren*. In the Ruist vision of things, *ren* already implies an unlimited expansion of one's love; it *is* love to be universally expanded. The reasons for the clash between the two positions, rather, lie in the fact that, for Mencius, the principle of *jian ai* represents an aberration, an unnatural radicalization leading people to treat relatives, loved ones and senior people as if they were strangers, requiring the same duties towards everyone. We should also remember the utilitarian ground justifying the *jian ai* practice: persuaded that loving people makes people love you, that benefiting someone means having something in return, the Mohists hold a position conflicting with the Ru's. In fact, the practice of *ren* is, for Mencius, consistent with natural human inclinations and, more importantly, it should be nurtured in a continuous process of moral improvement achieved through the process of self-cultivation.

Mencius could not but oppose the utilitarian implications inherent in *jian ai* and the whole issue regarding the contrast between *ren* and *jian ai* should be

114 Yao Xinzhong 1995: 186.
115 Yao Xinzhong 1995: 186.
116 Yao Xinzhong 1995: 187.

considered within the more extensive debate in which *yi* 義 "justice, virtue of moral appropriateness" and *li* 利 "interest, utility" are opposed.

The refusal to consider morality as just a simple matter of evaluating risks and benefits represents a constant feature in Ru philosophy, drawing inspiration from a passage of the *Lunyu* in which the Master states that, contrary to the behavior of the exemplary person (*junzi* 君子), petty men (*xiaoren* 小人) typically aim at their own interest instead of striving towards a morally unexceptionable conduct.[117]

2.2 *Yi* 義

Xu Shen's 許慎 (ca. 58 CE–ca. 147) definition of *yi* 義 in terms of "the awesome decorum of one's self" (*yi ji zhi weiyi ye* 義己之威儀也)[118] adheres perfectly with the structure of the character used to express such a word. *Yi* "justice, rightness, sense of moral appropriateness" can be graphically and therefore etymologically connected to *wo* 我, insomuch as that the definition given by the *Shuowen jiezi* may be translated as "awesomeness, the dignity, the majesty" or "respectable countenance of the self". In early Chinese texts *weiyi* can denote specific rules of decorum, or simply a respectable countenance or demeanor. The meaning of *wei* 威 is usually explained as *wei* 畏 "awe-inspiring, awesome, frightening".[119] These two cognates are often used interchangeably. Awe and anxiety both recall reverence (*jing* 敬) and "there is nothing that a gentleman does not revere, but the reverence for one's own person is the most important" (*junzi wu bu jing ye jing shen wei da* 君子無不敬也，敬身為大).[120]

In his annotation to Xu Shen's definition, Duan Yucai 段玉裁 (1735–1815) interprets the character as an example of a *huiyi* 會意 "syssemantic" based on the semantics of two other characters, *yang* 羊 "sheep, goat" and *wo* 我 "I, self". Duan Yucai elaborates the definition further: "The dignity and respectable countenance (*weiyi*) emerge out of one's self [...] *Yi* refers to the self" (*weiyi chu yu ji gu cong wo [...] yi zhe wo ye* 威儀出于己，故从我[...]義者，我也). Thanks to the presence of the element *yang* 羊, *yi* "shares the same meaning as *shan* 善 'good, aus-

117 See *Lunyu* 4/16.

118 See *Shuowen jiezi zhu* 1988: 633.

119 See, for example, the passage *you wei er ke wei weizhi wei* 有威而可畏謂之威 "having attributes of awesomeness so as to deserve awe, this is what I define 'awesomeness'", *Zuozhuan* 左傳, Xianggong 襄公 31. See *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu* 春秋左傳注 (1981)[Jahreszahl wirklich hierhin?]: 1194.

120 *Liji* 禮記 8.3.

picious' and *mei* 美 'beautiful'" (*cong yang zhe yu shan mei tongyi* 从羊者，與善美同意)" concludes Duan Yucai.

Unlike other first-person pronouns, in the opinion of some scholars, *wo* refers exactly to the *status* of pre-eminence of the subject, to the fact that he/she stands out while affirming him/herself in the process of personal achievement as a subject endowed with moral authority.[121] It is no coincidence that Mencius stressed that "the Ten Thousand Creatures are completed in me" (*wanwu jie bei yu wo yi* 萬物皆備於我矣),[122] thus confirming that "the process of dissolving the barrier between self and environment involves disciplining the ego-self and becoming a person-in-context. This process can alternatively be described as the objectification of the self in that it recognizes the correlative and coextensive relationship between person making and community making, and ultimately, world making" and "the personal self (*wo* 我) that discloses *yi* is exalted in that it is a self-realizing person-in-context".[123]

Being a first-person singular and plural pronoun, *wo* carries two functions, an "exclusive" and an "inclusive". Its "exclusivity" can be highlighted in the most commonly understood meaning of *wo*, i.e. "I", although *wo* was primarily a plural pronoun "we, us".

In connection with the emphasis attributed to *wo* in Yang Zhu's philosophy, John Emerson observed that:

> Yang's principle, "each for himself" (*wei wo*, literally 'for me'), is more problematic. However, it can just as well be translated 'for us' or 'for me and mine'; the word *wo* can be either singular or plural, and, as indicated by Xu, can be used when speaking for one's family or clan. [...] It is not at all certain that Yang Zhu or his followers rejected the burdensome obligations of the family. [...] The various Chinese words used to express the Yangist positions all tend to bear out the theory that Yang Zhu's teaching was familial.[124]

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121 Herbert Fingarette argues that "*ji* 己 is used as a term for self-reference, often emphatic [...] the more ordinary personal pronoun, such as *wu* 吾 or *wo* 我, distinguishes me as subject, or agent, or possessor, or object; but it does so in an unemphatic way, an unself-conscious, unreflexive way". See Fingarette 1979: 131; 138, note 20. Some scholars noticed that the syntactic function of *wo* has gradually turned from a first-person singular and plural pronoun with a subject function (11th–7th century B.C.) into a pronoun with a determinative function (7th–3th century B.C.). See Dobson 1974: 786–788; see also Hall and Ames 1984: 6–7. See also Boodberg 1953: 330–332.

122 *Mengzi* 7A/4. See also Wang Huaiyu 2009.

123 See Hall and Ames 1987: 93–94.

124 Emerson 1996: 549–550.

Persuaded that "Yang Zhu's doctrine was solidly founded on Chinese traditions of family piety older than Confucius",[125] Emerson considered the main Yangist assumptions (amongst them the *wei wo* principle) as an elaboration of traditional values, some of them dating back to a pre-Ru era. We cannot exclude the possibility that Yang Zhu was a devoted upholder of the centrality of the role of the family and that he fulfilled his duties towards his relatives, yet we should carefully evaluate Emerson's assumption and examine it in the light of the available textual sources. That the *wei wo* really represents the essential character of the Yangist message stands in need of demonstration. As has already been observed, the *Mengzi* is the only text supporting this interpretation and, considering Mencius's open hostility towards his antagonists, the possibility that *wei wo* is just a defamatory slogan cannot be excluded. Even if we acknowledge that Yang Zhu actually supported the *wei wo* principle, there would still be one more problem: Mencius's critique suggests that in the *wei wo* expression the character *wo* only refers to one's own ego, to oneself, rather than to the family. A.C. Graham pointed out that

> [...] one may indeed raise the question whether Chinese thought ever poses the problem of philosophical egoism as it is understood in the West. Some translators, including myself in the past, have translated the phrase *wei wo* applied by Mencius to Yang Zhu by 'egoism' instead of 'selfishness'. But one has the impression that Chinese thinkers perceive persons as inherently social beings who are more or less selfish rather than as isolated individuals who will be pure egoists unless taught morality.[126]

Returning to the relationship between *yi* and *wo*, it should be stressed how *yi* in Ru texts is the distinctive characteristic defining one's personal identity. Confucius actually defined *yi* as the "raw material" (*zhi* 質) by which exemplary persons forge themselves.[127] There are valid reasons to believe that originally *yi* referred to a sort of "care for oneself" and hinted at something somehow connected with a sense of honor. In this regard, precise information can be found in the combined use, present in some text, of *yi* and *ru* 辱 "dishonor, shame".[128] Commenting on the words by Zi Huazi 子華子, the author of the "Gui sheng" 貴生 (Giving value to life) chapter of the *Lüshi chunqiu* points out that there is nothing more dishonorable than a morally inappropriate behavior (*ru mo da yu bu yi* 辱莫

125 Emerson 1996: 548.

126 Graham 1989: 61.

127 See *Lunyu* 15/18.

128 About *ru* 辱, see the principle attributed to Song Xing 宋鈃 (ca. 360–290 B.C.), who's main doctrine was "not feeling disgraced when insulted" (*jian wu bu ru* 見侮不辱). See *Zhuangzi* 92/33/36; *Xunzi* 92/18/93–114; *Han Feizi* 50.2.27.

大於不義):[129] probably in line with Yang Zhu's doctrine, a morally inappropriate (*bu yi* 不義) life is a repressed life (*po sheng* 迫生).

The interpretation of *ru* as a fault of *yi* can also be found in another passage from the *Lüshi chunqiu*[130] and in one from the *Mozi*.[131] *Yi* was perhaps associated, at least in Ru sources, with a lack of *ru* 辱, and, according to Shun Kwong-loi, it was also connected with *li* 禮, since a lack of *yi* might be compared to the dishonor (*ru* 辱) deriving from falling into disgrace or from being publicly, and thus, socially, in open contrast with what is prescribed by *li*.[132]

Now moving back to *yi*'s subjective dimension, it is relevant here to refer to Mo Di's statement that in ancient times, there were as many criteria of *yi* as humans, "and each of them approved their own criterion and disagreed with the others."[133] This passage evokes the dramatic *scenario* of the state of nature at the beginning of civilization, when disorder and injustices prevailed. This explains the need for the Mohists to keep different moral principles in balance in the interest (*li* 利) of the entire community, until a time when the ultimate principle could be identified that would allow for the maximization of general interest (*tianxia zhi li* 天下之利). Although this view was not reflective of the Ru attitude, like Mozi's followers, the Ru considered that *yi* is located in the individual. This is demonstrated by the fact that both the *Lunyu* and other Ru works attribute a margin of discretion when it comes to the identification of what constitutes appropriate action.[134]

Mohists, nonetheless, also conceived a theory in which *yi* corresponded to conformity with the expectations of Heaven:

> 然則天亦何欲何惡？天欲義而惡不義。然則率天下之百姓以從事於義，則我乃為天之所欲也。我為天之所欲，天亦為我所欲。然則我何欲何惡？我欲福祿而惡禍祟。若我不為天之所欲，而為天之所不欲，然則我率天下之百姓，以從事於禍祟中也。然則何以知天之欲義而惡不義？曰天下有義則生，無義則死；有義則富，無義則貧；有義則治，無義則亂。然則天欲其生而惡其死，欲其富而惡其貧，欲其治而惡其亂，此我所以知天欲義而惡不義也。
>
> Now, what does Heaven desire and what does it abhor? Heaven desires rightness and abhors unrightness. Therefore, in leading the people in the world to perform their affairs according to rightness, I will be doing what Heaven desires, and when I do what Heaven desires, Heaven will also do what I desire. Now, what do I desire and what do I abhor? I desire blessings and emoluments, and abhor calamities and misfortunes. When I do not do what

129 See *Lüshi chunqiu* 2.2/8/13.
130 See *Lüshi chunqiu* 2.4/9/28.
131 See *Mozi* 3/3/6.
132 See Shun Kwong-loi 1997b: 58–62.
133 是以人是其義，以非人之義. *Mozi* 14/11/1.
134 See *Lunyu* 4/10; 18/8.

> Heaven desires, neither will Heaven do what I desire: then, I should be leading the people into calamities and misfortunes. But how do we know Heaven desires rightness and abhors unrightness? For, with rightness the world lives and without it the world dies; with it the world becomes rich and without it the world becomes poor; with it the world becomes orderly and without it the world becomes chaotic. And if Heaven likes to have the world live and abhors its death, likes to have it rich and abhors to have it poor, and likes to have it in good order and abhors to have it in disorder. Therefore we know Heaven desires rightness and abominates unrightness.[135]

According to Hall and Ames, *yi* defines the appropriateness of an act towards oneself, rather than an evaluation of the act within its context.[136] However, Shun Kwong-loi pointed out that, especially in the *Lunyu*, *yi* is used as an attribute of both actions and individuals.[137] In the *Mengzi* appropriateness is expressed through one's degree of moral outrage (*wu* 惡) when realizing that duties have not been fulfilled[138] and one's awareness of what one would deem shameful (*xiu* 羞), unworthy or reprehensible for oneself has emerged. Therefore repugnance (*wu*) and shame (*xiu*) are the telltale signs of *yi* and *yi* is identified with what is personally, and by extension, socially recognized as "appropriate". *Yi* outlines the strategy to adopt in the process of moral self-cultivation for the purpose of achieving a perfect social order.[139]

In the *Chunqiu Fanlu* 春秋繁露 (Luxuriant Dew of the *Annals*), Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (ca. 179–104 B.C.) confirmed that *yi* refers to oneself:

> 以仁安人，以義正我，故仁之为言人也，義之为言我也。 [...] 仁之法在爱人，不在爱我。義之法在正我，不在正人。我不自正，雖能正人，弗予為義。[...] 何可謂義？義者，謂宜在我者。宜在我者，而后可以称義。故言義者，合我與宜，以為一言。
> *Ren* is essential to pacify others, *yi* to rectify oneself. Therefore *ren* refers to others, *yi* to oneself. [...] The model that defines *ren* is based on love for others, not on love for oneself; the model of *yi* is based on rectifying oneself, not other people. Even if I could correct others, I should first correct myself otherwise it cannot be said that I complied with what is intended as *yi*. [...] What is the meaning of *yi*? *Yi* means appropriateness towards oneself. Only an appropriate behavior towards oneself can be defined as "*yi*". Therefore *yi* gathers within a single term "self" and "appropriateness".[140]

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135 *Mozi* 7/1/2.

136 Hall and Ames 1986: 96.

137 Shun Kwong-loi 1997b: 25–26, 62–63.

138 *Mengzi* 2A/6; 43/6A/6.

139 See Hall and Ames 1984: 7; see also 1987: 93: "Where *li* 利 is to pursue the good on behalf of the interests of the ego-self (*ji* 己) and is associated with the conduct of the less developed individual (*xiao ren* 小人), *yi* can be readily identified with the exalted-self (*wo* 我) and the conduct of the exemplary person (*junzi*) who pursue the broader good".

140 *Chunqiu Fanlu* 8.8a.

Taking into account a widely shared position among the Ru, one may believe that Mencius denigrated Yang Zhu by accusing him of upholding the principle of *wei wo* because he realized that it was based on a dangerous and partial assumption of what personal achievement should be. In Mencius's interpretation of *wei wo*, the status of the subject (*wo*) is not exalted. On the contrary, it is significantly reduced because it must permanently be balanced against the demands of the whole context in which the subject is instantiated: if *wo* is construed in an exclusive sense, totally withdrawn into itself and deprived of its interpersonal dimension, then it will never express *yi* in full. It is no coincidence that one of the most significant teachings by Confucius is precisely the "refusal to have egoistic attitudes" (*wu wo* 毋我).[141]

Besides outlining the duties which one must fulfill, *yi* implies the principle that the legitimacy of these duties is not a matter of arbitrary imposition. For the Ru, the requirement to fulfill certain duties is strongly emphasized because they are duties towards oneself *and* others; failure to fulfill them would result in a degradation of the self.

An extremely clear example of the value of *yi* can be found in the passage below, taken from the *Lunyu*. Zilu 子路, after telling Confucius about his encounter with a recluse (*yinzhe* 隱者), makes the following remark:

> 不仕無義。長幼之節，不可废也；君臣之義，如之何其废之？欲潔其身，而亂大倫。君子之仕也，行其義也。
> Not to take office is not morally appropriate. If the relations between old and young may not be neglected, how is it that he sets aside the duties that should be observed between sovereign and minister? Wishing to maintain his personal purity, he allows great relations to come to confusion. The exemplary person takes office, and performs the righteous duties belonging to it. As to the failure of right principles to make progress, he is aware of that.[142]

The previous passage deserves careful examination, since it will help to better understand the contrast between Mencius and Yang Zhu. First, the text states that fulfilling one's duties as a subject by accepting a government office represents a duty which is in line with *yi*. We should not forget that Yang Zhu, to whom with the doctrine of the renunciation of duties towards the sovereign was attributed, is defined as *wu jun* "disrespectful of [the allegiance due to] the sovereign" because he was advocating the *wei wo* principle.

It can be assumed that Mencius interpreted Yang Zhu's claims in the same way as those of the recluse met by Zilu, i.e. as an attempt at self-defense through

141 See *Lunyu* 9/4.
142 *Lunyu* 18/7.

the rejection of any external interference which might threaten one's personal safety. Nonetheless, what really matters is that evading one's duties as subject – always giving priority to one's own wellbeing – means acting against *yi*, therefore there is a clear connection between being egoist (*wei wo*), withdrawing from one's duties towards the sovereign (*wu jun*) and *yi*.

The *Mengzi* suggests that the correct observance of the relationships between subject and sovereign falls within *yi*.[143] In the passage below, Mencius suggests that, in spite of what was stated by Mozi, it is through the practice of *ren* and not of *jian ai* that one achieves proper respect for paternal authority and that, unlike for Yang Zhu, the egoistic refusal of government office is not compatible with moral appropriateness (*yi*):

> 孟子曰：「口之於味也，目之於色也，耳之於聲也，鼻之於臭也，四肢之於安佚也，性也，有命焉，君子不謂性也。仁之於父子也，義之於君臣也，禮之於賓主也，智之於賢者也，聖人之於天道也，命也，有性焉，君子不謂命也。」
> Mencius said: "For the mouth to desire sweet tastes, the eye to desire beautiful colours, the ear to desire pleasant sounds, the nose to desire fragrant odours, and the four limbs to desire ease and – these things are natural. But there is something which is appointment by Heaven in connexion with them, and the superior man does not say of his pursuit of them, 'It is my nature'. The exercise *ren* between father and son, the observance of *yi* between sovereign and minister, the rules of ceremony between guest and host, the display of knowledge in recognising the talented, and the fulfilling the heavenly course by the – these are the appointments of Heaven. But there is an adaptation of our nature for them. The superior man does not say, in reference to them, 'It is the appointment of Heaven'."[144]

There is another possible, complementary interpretation of Mencius's argument against Yang Zhu and Mo Di. Xie Lizhong 謝力中[145] noticed how the *wei wo* and *jian ai* principles are actually in sharp conflict with the Ru values of *xiao* 孝 "filial piety" and *zhong* 忠. Moreover, Xie Lizhong underlined the fact that, without obeying one's superiors in the socio-political context and without respecting paternal authority in the familiar context, it is impossible to establish a system of values allowing interpersonal relation.

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143 See *Mengzi* 3A/4 and *Xunzi* 64/17/38. See also some "Ru-oriented" bambooo texts from Guodian tomb in *Jingmen shi bowuguan* (ed.) 1998: 168, 188.

144 *Mengzi* 7B/24, transl. Legge 1895: 489–490, transl. mod. auct. The passage should be interpreted in the light of Mencius's hostility towards Yang and Mo, in order to justify why Yang Zhu was associated with the *wu jun* principle while Mozi was identified as *wu fu*, involving the principles of *ren* and *yi*. It is also my opinion that in this passage Mencius replies to Gaozi 告子 (ca. 420–350 B.C.), demonstrating that it is unacceptable to define the inclinations of human nature in terms of a mere satisfaction of desires and senses.

145 See Xie Lizhong 1957: 14.

Zhong 忠, usually translated as "loyalty", is more than just blind obedience towards one's superiors, as recently observed by Paul R. Goldin, who suggested "being honest with oneself in dealing with others" as a possible translation.[146] Far from being just a moral parameter demanding passive respect for authority, *zhong*, as underlined by Maurizio Scarpari, also entails the precise duty of making other people respect *li* (ritual conduct).[147] This is confirmed in the following passage of the *Lunyu*: "When Zigong asked about friendship, The Master replied: 'Reprove your friend when dutifulness requires (*zhong gao er shan dao zhi* 忠告而善道之), but do so gently. If your words are not accepted then desist, lest you incur insult'."[148] In Hall and Ames' view, *zhong* means "doing one's best as one's authentic self",[149] a concept which comes very close to the idea of "behaving according to conscientiousness".[150] For example, Confucius pointed out that "the lord employs the ministers following the traditional rules of conduct (*li* 禮), while the ministers serve the lord with utmost devotion (*zhong*)."[151]

After this brief remark, Xie Lizhong's interpretation seems more credible, since it is likely that Mencius might have severely criticized Yang Zhu because the latter did not observe *zhong*. As for Yang Zhu, he was not interested in standing out for his disloyalty and, as probably confirmed by a passage in the chapter "Yang Zhu" from the *Liezi*, he clearly had doubts about the value attributed to *zhong* by the Ru:

> 忠不足以安君，適足以危身；義不足以利物，適足以害生。安上不由于忠，而忠名滅焉；利物不由于義，而義名絕焉。君臣皆安，物我兼利，古之道也。
> Being '*zhong* 忠 (dutiful)' is not enough to make the ruler safe; all it can do is endanger oneself. Being dutiful is not enough to benefit others; all it can do is interfere with one's life. When it is seen that dutifulness is not the way to make the ruler safe, the good reputation of the loyal will disappear; when it is seen that duty is not the way to benefit others, the good reputation of the dutiful will come to an end. It was the Way of ancient times that both ruler and subject should be safe, both others and oneself should be benefited.[152]

It has already been remarked that one of the core values defining the appropriate behavior of the subject towards the political authority is *yi*. The semantic fields of

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146 Goldin 2008: 169. Goldin also examines the relationship between *zhong* 忠 and *zhong* 中 (p. 171). On *zhong* and *shu* 恕, see also Fingarette 1979, Van Norden 2002: 216–236 and Ivanhoe 1990. See also Chan Sin Yee 1999 and Nivison 1996: 59–76.

147 See Scarpari 1991: 42.

148 *Lunyu* 12/23 (the translation is indebted to Slingerland 2003: 136). See also *Liji* 10.2/64/20.

149 Hall and Ames 1987: 50; 285–287.

150 See Shun Kwong-loi 1997b: 23, 120.

151 *Lunyu* 3/19; see also *Lunyu* 2/20, 5/19, 12/14.

152 *Liezi* 7/44/5.

zhong and *yi* are clearly different, but there apparently is some complementarity as far as the relationship between the subject and the sovereign is concerned, as documented by the passage above. The *Liji* 禮記 (Record of Ritual), when defining the morally appropriate behavior (*ren yi* 仁義) for each of the fundamental roles, specifies that "for the sovereign this means being *ren* (*jun ren* 君仁), for the subject this means being conscientious (*chen zhong* 臣忠)",[153] in line with passage 3/19 of the *Lunyu* and the above mentioned episode taken from the "Yang Zhu" chapter of the *Liezi*.

Another line from the *Liji* confirms that "the conscientious minister that serves the sovereign and the respectful son that serves his parents draw inspiration from the same fundamental principle" (*zhong chen yi hi qi jun xiao zi yi shi qi qin qi ben yi ye* 忠臣以事其君孝子以事其親其本一也).[154]

Although *zhong* is often used as an attribute of *chen* 臣 "minister, subject" and the duties of *chen*, as we have already seen, are linked to *yi*, neither the *Lunyu* nor the *Mengzi* draws an explicit connection between *zhong* and *yi*, to the point that that Shun Kwong-loi considers *zhong* as an expression of *ren*.[155] In spite of this, it is proper to assimilate *zhong* to *yi*, also because, as pointed out by Li Chenyang,[156] it is *shu* 恕 "empathetic understanding in dealings with others",[157] rather than *zhong*, which is closely connected with filial piety and, ultimately, with *ren*.

In sum, there seem to be enough elements to support the hypothesis that by identifying Yang Zhu with a *wei wo-wu jun* attitude, Mencius saw a distorted application of *yi* 義, while the Mohist *jian ai-wu fu* principles did not honor *ren* 仁:[158] by totally devoting oneself to the community and to the state, one cannot but violate the code of familiar relations and obligations (like Mozi did); on the

153 *Liji* 9/23. See also the Guodian bamboo manuscript identified as *Liu de* 六德 (The Six Virtues), where the virtuosity of the sovereign is defined as *yi*. See Jingmen shi bowuguan (ed.): 1998: 167.

154 *Liji* 25/2. See also *Liji* 31/1; 33/14.

155 See Shun Kwong-loi 1997b: 120.

156 See Li Chenyang 1997: 227.

157 See Slingerland 2003: 32, 160, 238, 242.

158 This interpretation was originally supported by some of the leading Ru scholars in the Song Dynasty (960–1279), who highlighted differences and similarities between the principles advocated by Yang-Mo and *ren* and *yi*. For example, according to passage 55:15a in the *Mengzi zhu* 孟子注 (Commentary on the Book of Mencius) by Zhu Xi, Yang's and Mo's doctrines were more dangerous than Han Fei's and Shen Buhai's 申不害 (ca. 400–337 B.C.) since "Yang's egoism may be assimilated to *yi*, while Mo's unreserved concern for others may be assimilated to *ren*" (*gai Yang shi wei wo yi yu yi Mo shi jian ai yi yu ren* 蓋楊氏為我疑於義，墨氏兼愛疑於仁). See Zhu Xi in *Sishu zhangju jizhu* 四書章句集注 1983: 272–273. The *Jinsilu* 近思錄 (Reflections on Things at Hand), an anthology edited by Zhu Xi and Lü Zuqian 呂祖謙 (1137–1181), records a statement by Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085) stressing the affinity between Yang Zhu's egoism and *yi*, on the one hand, and between Mozi's doctrine and *ren*, on the other. Nonetheless, it should be noticed that

other hand, by refusing to be concerned with the community and to serve the sovereign, one fails to accomplish one's civic duties (like Yang Zhu did). Yang and Mo were therefore portrayed as figures who represented two opposite points of view, denying respectively the authority of the sovereign by promoting a radical ethical egoism, and the claims of familiar devotion towards one's father in favor of an unbalanced concern for others. In this sense, the Yang-Mo symbol opposed both extremism and immorality.

As already pointed out, Mencius' mastery of argumentative devices like *inventio*, *imitatio*, *exaggeratio* reinforced his opposition to the heresies with a powerful dual rhetorical representation of moral deviances. One possible reason for enduring influence of the Yang-Mo symbol is the fact that it expressed the basic tension present within ancient Chinese society between dutiful love and respect toward one's parents and ancestors (*xiao* 孝) and state loyalty and self-abnegation (*zhong* 忠). At the same time, the Yang-Mo symbol also provided the Ru – at least the lineage closer to Mencius – with a response to that tension: to hold the "mean" between two pernicious and radical extremes by making use of a perceptive and proper evaluation (*quan* 權) based on the capacity of one's heart/mind to discern.

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some editions of *Jinsilu* present an inversion between *yi* and *ren*. See Chan Wing-tsit 1967: 279–281 and 1989: 361–362. The idea that the Yangist doctrine opposes *yi*, while Mo's doctrine clashes with *ren* is confirmed also in the works by Wang Anshi and Wang Yangming 王陽明 (1472–1529). See *Wang Anshi quanji* 1974, 1: 141–142; Henke 1964: 321; Chan Wing-tsit 1963: 113. See also Zhang Lüxiang 張履祥 (1611–1674) in *Yangyuan xiansheng quanji* 楊園先生全集 2002: 5:2a-3a and Kano Naoki 1987: 34, 37; Liang Weixian 梁韋弦 and Li Chunsheng 李春生 1994. Conversely, the relationship between Yang Zhu and *ren* and between Mozi and *yi* is underlined by Yang Shi 楊時 (1053–1135). See also Zhang Zai 張載 (1020–1077) in *Zhangzi quanshu* 張子全書 1936: 10. This position is reinforced by Cai Renhou 蔡仁厚 1992: 1.

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