Continuations and variations of the Confucian system

Mo Zi

Reading

- Yulan Fung (Youlan Feng), *A history …*, pp. 76-105
- Xinzhong Yao, *An introduction …*, pp. 71-80
- Burton Watson, *Basic writings of Mo Tzu, Hsün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu* (New York, London, 1967), pp. 39-49, 52-61, 65-77, 78-83, 110-116, 124-136.

Peculiar style, similar to Pali suttas

example

Mo Zi and his followers – passages from *Mo Zi Jian Gu*

1. Shang Xian [Upholding the talent]

> *[It is good for the state to have plenty of skilled archers and charioteers. By offering them good benefits, the state can secure many of them. Likewise, it is good to have plenty of] talented and good administrative staff who are ardent in the practice of virtuous conducts, clear in discourse, broadly learned in the Way and methods. They are the treasures of a state, keepers of the altars of soil and grain. They too must be enriched, honoured, respected and praised. Then, they may be obtained in plenty.*
>
> *[The ancient sage kings said,] no rightness, no rich; no rightness, no honour; no rightness, no favour; no rightness, no closeness … Having heard this, everybody strove for rightness.*

Ancient sage kings venerated and honoured the talent. Their appointment was based on ability. No partisan-ship for the kin, no preference for the noble or the rich, no favouritism for the good-looking. Talented persons were employed and promoted. Wealth and honour were bestowed on them. Leading posts were given to them. Incapable ones were suppressed, impoverished, dishonoured and pressganged to labour. Then the people – encouraged by the recompense and fearing the punishment – all strove to become talented. The talented persons became numerous; the incapable ones became few. This is called `advancing the talent'.

Upholding the talent is the foundation of good governance.

cf. Lun Yu (□□ v □□)

1.7 □□□
4.16 □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□

2. 'Radical' understanding of *Lun Yu*, 3.4
(Lin Fang asked about the root of Li. The Master said, 'Great question! Regarding Li, you should rather be frugal than splashing out. Regarding funeral, you should rather have a genuine sentiment of poignancy than nicely decorating the graves. □□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□)

- Jie Yong [Moderation of comfort]
  Then, what should be the method of building a house? Mo Zi said, walls should be able to shield from winds and coldness; the roof should be able to shield from snow, frost, rain and dews; the inside should be clean enough to offer ancestral sacrifices; partitions and outside walls should be able to maintain the distinction between men and women. This should be enough and no more. All additional expenses which do not add to the benefit of the people were avoided by the sage kings.

- Jie Zang [Moderation in funerals] (□□□, 6)

  [As a result of elaborate funeral and lengthy grief period], the rulers will not be able to discharge their official duties, the people will not be able to pursue their activities. If the rulers do not discharge their official duties, the punishment and government will be disrupted. If the people do not pursue their activities, the basic materials for subsistence will be lacking. In the event of the shortage, a younger brother asking for help from his elder brother would not be able to get it. The younger brother who is not affectionately looked after is bound to blame his elder brother. A son asking for help from his father would not be able to get it. Then the son will not be respectful and is bound to blame his father. A subordinate asking for help from the boss will not be able to get it. Then the subordinate will not be loyal and is bound to usurp his superiors. [Then it will be impossible to govern.]

  Food and clothes are the benefits of the living. A measured approach is necessary. Funerals and burials are the benefits of the dead. Then why shouldn't there be a measured approach for this?

  This is Mo Zi's method of not losing the benefits of the living and the dead.

- Fei Yue [No music] – cf. *Lun Yu*, 3.23 ("I know something about music. You begin, then you move on to unison, you then phase into polyphony. The sound should be clear and distinct. Yet it should be unbroken and continuous. That's how you play."), 17.11 ("Music, music! Do you think I am talking about bells and drums?")

  The body does know what is comfortable, the mouth knows what is sweet, the eyes know what is beautiful, the ears know what is delightful. Seeing, however, that

music was not among the sage kings' business; understanding that it is not in the interest of people, Mo Zi says, `No music!'

[With a complete array of able-bodied musicians, music is played.] Magnates alone listen to it. What pleasure? This argument certainly applies to the people as well as to the ruler. While listening to the music, the ruler cannot listen to the people. While listening to the music, the people cannot pursue their [productive] activities … Mo Zi therefore says, 'No music!'

3. Jian Ai [Reciprocation of love]

In a poem of Zhou [Shu Jing, Hong Fan], it is said, 'The kingly Way is immense. No sides, no parties. The kingly Way is even. No parties, no sides.' It was straight as an arrow, straightforward as a grinding stone. I am not making this up. In olden days, the king Wen and the king Wu rightly divided up equally. In rewarding the talented and in punishing the violent, no favouritism was shown to a father, an uncle, a brother younger or elder.

In the Odes, the poem Ya has it, 'No word fails to get a reply; no virtue fails to get a recompense. Toss me a peach, I will pay you back with a pear.' This means that he who loves others is bound to exude love; he who hates others is bound to exude hatred.

If we all reciprocate benefits to each other, we will all have the benefit. It will be so easy … I believe that no ruler has yet explained this. If a ruler explains this, encourages the people with prizes and honours and threatens them with punishments, I believe that people will proceed to mutual love and reciprocation of benefits just as a flame proceeds upward and water proceeds downward.

cf. *Lun Yu*,
1.6 (□□□□□□□□),
6.30 (Zi Gong said, ‘How about broadly looking after people and thus bringing all living beings to their fulfilment? Can it be called ethical integrity?’ The Master said, ‘How can it merely be ethical integrity? It must be Sainthood!),
15.24 (□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□What you yourself do not want, do not do it to others.),

4. Fei Gong [No war of aggression]

> *[Wars of aggression cause loss of man-power and material resources which could otherwise be used to venerate the Heaven, appease the ghosts and bring comfort to people.] Is the aggression, then, in the interest of the Heaven? Is it, then, in the interest of ghosts? Is it, then, in the interest of man?*
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> *When you kill one person, people will say it is wrong. You committed the crime of killing one person. Proceeding along this line of argument, we may say that killing ten persons are ten times as wrong. It must be the ten-fold crime of killing. Killing one hundred persons is hundred times as wrong. It must be the hundred-fold crime of killing. About this, all noble men know and condemn and say that it is wrong. But when it comes to committing the great wrong of attacking a country, they do not condemn. They go along and extol it. They say it is right … We can tell that all noble men of this world are seriously mixed up in their ability to tell the right from the wrong.*
>
> *[War of aggression v War of retribution]*

5. Shang Dong [Upholding uniformity]

> *In the beginning, when people started to appear, punishment and governance were not yet in place. Everybody had his own standard of what is right and what is wrong … The whole world*

was in a chaos just like the animal world.

[In such condition, there is no place for Industry; because the fruit thereof is uncertain: and consequently no Culture of the Earth; no Navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by Sea; no commodious Building; no Instruments of moving, and removing such things as require much force; no Knowledge of the face of the Earth; no account of Time; no Arts; no Letters; no Society; and which is worst of all, continuall feare, and danger of violent death; And the life of man, solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short. — Hobbes, Leviathan, ch. 13.]

[The Heaven, therefore, installed the Son of Heaven, who then installed three grand dukes, who then installed the feudal rulers (kings), who then installed regional governors, who then installed village chiefs.]

The Son of Heaven then proclaims to the people of the world, … 'Report to your superior.' The village chiefs then proclaim to the villagers, `If you hear something good or something bad, you shall report to the regional governor.' [In this manner, intelligence can be gathered and] the regional governor can obtain uniformity of what is right and what is wrong. The region is then governed. The regional governor proclaims to the people of the region, 'When you see or hear something good or something bad, you shall report to the feudal king.' [In this manner,] the king can obtain uniformity of what is right and what is wrong. The kingdom is then governed. The king proclaims to the people of the kingdom, 'When you see what is good for the kingdom or what is bad for the kingdom, you shall report to the Son of Heaven.' The Son of Heaven can then obtain uniformity of what is right and what is wrong. The whole world is then governed.

When a ruler upholds the uniformity of the opinion, the ruled dare not criticise. What the ruler affirms to be right is bound to be right. What the ruler confirms to be wrong is

bound to be wrong. If you wish to purge bad discourse, study the good discourse of your ruler. If you wish to purge bad deeds, study the good deeds of your ruler. The ruler of an area must be the talented man of the area. When the people of the area emulate him as the model, the area is well governed.

The ruler obtaining intelligence about the ruled, this is what governing is about. Only when the uniformity of right and wrong is thus upheld, can the governing be properly done. If there persists discord as to what is right and what is wrong, parties and cliques will appear.

However, when the uniformity is achieved all the way up to the Son of Heaven, but not up to the Heaven itself, a disaster will strike.

[cf. *Lun Yu*, 3.16, 13.23 ('A noble man seeks harmony but not uniformity. The petty and the lowly seek uniformity but not harmony.')]
[cf. *Lun Yu*, 3.9 子曰:「夏禮，吾能言之，杞不足徵也；殷禮，吾能言之，宋不足徵也。文獻不足故也，足則吾能徵之矣。」]

6. Tian Zhi [The will of Heaven]

[天志上, 1] If a person residing in a household commits a crime against the head of the household, the culprit can escape to a neighbouring household. … If a person residing in a state commits a crime against the head of the state, the culprit can escape to a neighbouring state. … Now, everybody resides in this world under the Heaven. A person who commits a crime against the Heaven has nowhere to escape to. Heaven sees everything clearly. [cf. Lun Yu, 3.13 獲罪於天，無所禱也]

[天志上, 2] Then, what does Heaven desire? What does Heaven abhor? Heaven desires rightness; Heaven abhors crookedness. … How do I know? If there is rightness in this world, all live. If there is no rightness, all die. If there is rightness, wealth ensues. If there is no rightness, poverty ensues. If

there is rightness, there is order. If there is no rightness, there is chaos. Heaven, however, desires life and abhors death; desires wealth and abhors poverty; desires order and abhors chaos. As this is [obviously?] right, I know that the Heaven desires rightness and abhors crookedness.

Only rightness can put things right. [cf. Lun Yu, 2.19 □□□□□□ □□□] You may not follow the inferior to put the superior right. You must follow the superior to put the inferior right. The stupid and base people cannot correct the noble and intelligent people. The latter can correct the former. This is how I know that rightness does not come from the stupid and base. It comes from the noble and intelligent. Then, who is noble and intelligent? Heaven is noble; Heaven is intelligent. This is how I know that rightness comes from the Heaven.

[□□□ 6] Now, Heaven reciprocates its love to the whole world. … I know Heaven's love for the people is great. This is because he laid out the sun, the moon and the stars and guides them brilliantly; he created the four seasons and leads them in order; he makes the snow, frost, rain and dews fall so that five grains and hemp can grow; he lets the people harvest them so that these materials can benefit them; he made the mountains, rivers and valleys; and he disposes and propagates all things therein. He superintends the people's conducts good and bad. He installs the kings, dukes, counts, viscounts to rule the people. He rewards the talented; punishes the violent. He provides the metal, wood, birds and animals in abundance. He tends five grains and hemp so that people can have them as food and clothes. Of old until now, things have always been like this. Now, imagine the same in human relationship. A father graces the son with love. He expends all his might and single-handedly endeavours to benefit the son. The son grows and does not render unto the father the things that are father's. [Matt. 22.21] All noble men of the world will say that it is immoral and

blasphemous.

[□□□, 7] Mo Zi said, 'I have the Will of Heaven just as a wheelwright has the gauge; just as a carpenter has the square. Wheelwrights and carpenters take the gauge and the square; they measure wheels and angles of the world and say, "This is correct." "This is not correct." These days, scholars and rulers have produced so many books. Their arguments are inexhaustible. Grand dukes have their theories, small scholars have their theories. As far as ethical integrity and rightness are concerned, however, they are all way off the mark. How do I know? I know because I have obtained the brightest measure of this world and measure them.'

[□□□, 8] □□□□□□□□□□

[cf. *Shi Jing* [Odes], Huang Yi]
The Lord spoke to the king Wen,
'I have bright virtue in me
But my voice is not loud, my appearance is not striking
My whip is not long, my lash is not thick
You won't see me, you won't know me
Follow my rule.'

7. Ming Gui [Proving the existence of ghosts]

[Why is the whole world now in a chaos?] This is because everybody is in doubt as to the existence or non-existence of ghosts and spirits. Nobody is clear about the ability of the ghosts and spirits to recompense the talent and punish the violent.

The way to investigate the existence or non-existence of a phenomenon is to see whether many people have actually witnessed or heard it. A mere account that a certain this saw it or a certain that heard it will not be enough.

Those who insist on non-existence of ghosts say, 'So many people claim to have seen or heard the ghosts and spirits. But who exactly have done so?' Mo Zi says, 'In fact, many people saw it together, heard it together. Du Bo is the case in point …'

Those who insist on non-existence of ghosts say, 'This is no more than many people's account of what they saw or heard. Is it enough to settle the doubt? How can a man who aspires to be a noble man of this world can be so gullible as to believe many people's account of what they saw or heard?' Mo Zi says, 'If many people's account of what they heard or saw is not enough to believe, not enough to settle the doubt, we won't know what the ancient sage kings Yao, Xun, Yu, Tang, Wen, Wu were like. Then, how can you say that they are to be emulated? Those who are above average all agree that the sage kings of the previous three dynasties are good enough to be emulated. [In numerous books which record their deeds, however, we may see that] they all believed in the existence of ghosts and spirits. They all served them well. Those who insist on the non-existence of ghosts go against the practice of the sage kings. Going against the practice of the sage kings is not the way of a noble man.'

Those who insist on non-existence of ghosts say, 'If the intention is not genuine, [offering sacrifice to the ghosts] is merely harming the interest of family members. Would such a practice make a respectful son?' Mo Zi says, `[In most cases, the sacrifice will be for the ghosts of one's deceased parents or relatives.] If these ghosts should be there, it is to offer food and drinks to one's parents and relatives. Is it not a great benefit? Even if these ghosts should not be there, the expenses of offering sacrifices are not wasted because family members and village people can all eat and drink. Through these occasions, people can get together and rejoice resulting in good bonding of the village people.'

Those who insist on non-existence of ghosts say, `Ghosts and

spirits simply do not exist. That is why you should not offer food, drinks and sacrificial animals. It is not that I cherish the food, drinks and sacrificial animals. I simply do not see what can be gained.' This is against the books of the sage kings, against the deeds of respectful sons.

[cf. *Lun Yu*,
11.12 Ji Lu asked about serving spirits and ghosts. The Master said, 'While we haven't manged to serve human beings, how could we serve ghosts?' 'May I then ask about human being's death?' The Master said, 'We don't even know about life; how can we know about death?'
7.21 □□□□□□□□□□□
2.24 The Master said, 'If you are not awe-inspired by ghosts, offering sacrifice to them is a flattery.' □□□□□□□□□□□□□
7.35 The Master was ill. Zi Lu wanted to pray. The Master said, 'Do you have the phrase?' 'Yes,' said Zi Lu, 'in an obituary, it is said, "I pray for thee, to the spirits of the above and of the below, with reverence …
"' The Master said, 'I have been praying like that for a long while already.'

8. Fei Ming [No Fate]

[Some say that there is the fate; some say that there is no fate.] If many people saw or heard it, we may know that there is the fate. If not, we may know that there is no fate. As none of the people have ever seen or heard the fate, we may conclude that there is no fate. If the base people are not to be trusted, why not observe the feudal lords' account or sayings? Again, none of the feudal lords have ever heard the sound of the fate, seen the shape of the fate. Let us then observe the affairs of the sage kings.

[Whether there was a good government or a bad government depended on the ability of the ruler. So there was no fate. Only the tyrants had claimed the fate. But the sage kings

have all vanquished them. In their good reign, all said that it was due to their effort.]

[Why do people work hard? If they don't, they will lose the benefit of good government, peace, wealth, honour, prosperity, warmth, and a full belly. If they should believe in the fate, who would work hard?]

Noble men of the world who wish to promote the interest of the world and remove the harm of the world should condemn the theory of fate.

[cf. *Lun Yu*, 9.5 The Master was menaced in Quang. He said, 'King Wen being long dead, do I not embody civilisation (wen) now? If Heaven is going to forsake that civilisation, my death will result in a world without the civilisation. If Heaven is not going to forsake the civilisation, what can the people of Quang do to me?' 子畏於匡。曰:「文王既沒，文不在茲乎？天之將喪斯文也，後死者不得與於斯文也；天之未喪斯文也，匡人其如予何？」]

[cf. *Sivaka-sutta*: One day … Moliya-Sivaka asked Buddha, `Oh! Venerable Gautama, there are the religious and the bramans who hold this view, "All feelings joyful, sorrowful and neutral of an individual are the result of the actions which the person committed in the past." What say you, Venerable Gautama?' Buddha said, `Oh! Sivaka, there are also feelings which arise because of the physical condition (three kinds of humour – *pitta semha, vata* – and their combination). The existence of these feelings is generally recognised by people as truthful. The religious and the bramans who say "All feelings joyful, sorrowful and neutral of an individual are the result of the actions which the person committed in the past" go too far from the facts recognisable by personal experience and from the facts generally admitted by people. There are also feelings which arise because of the seasonal changes. … There are also feelings which arise because of irregular events. … There are also feelings which arise because of sudden

accidents. … There are also feelings which arise because of maturation of actions.’]

9. Fei Ru [Against Confucians]

Throughout summer, they beg barley and rice. When five grains have all been harvested, they go after big funerals. They bring along their children and relatives to the funeral and bloat out. A few funerals will be enough to get them going. At the expense of other’s family, they fatten themselves. Relying on other’s field, they promote themselves. If a rich man has a funeral, they go crazy with joy and say, `This is the beginning of good food and good clothes!’

Jing Gong of Qi asked An Ying, `What is Confucius like?’ [After much hesitation,] An Ying replied, `Kong Qiu contemplates deeply, schemes thoroughly and supports the rebels. He thinks elaborately, knows exhaustively and does evil things. He encourages the subordinates to usurp the superior, teaches the ministers to kill their boss. This is not a wise man’s deeds. He enters a country and sides with the rebels. He is not among the right sort of people. He knows when people are disloyal and quickens the rebellion. This is not ethical integrity nor rightness. After he flees, he plots. After he escapes, he criticises. His practice of rightness is not clear to the people. His plots and contemplations are not in common with the rulers and their ministers.

An Ying said, `Confucians are haughty and self-righteous. You cannot take them [as the example] to teach the people. They like music and decadent. You cannot let them rule the people. They believe in fate and lazy in doing the job. You cannot let them keep their post. They take funerals seriously and grief endlessly. You cannot have them pity the people. They wear their clothes in all pomp and pretend that they are humble. You cannot let them guide the people.’

[An Ying continues,] `Kong Qiu was in trouble caught between Ca and Chen. For ten days on end, he was surviving on vegetable porridge without even a broken grain of rice in it. Zi Lu finally managed to serve pork. Kong Qiu did not even ask where the meat came from and ate it. Having stripped someone's clothes, Zi Lu managed to serve wine. Kong Qiu did not even ask where the wine came from and drank it. [Later] Ai Gong received Kong Qiu. He did not sit down complaining that the cushion was not properly laid out. He did not eat complaining that the meat was not properly cut. When they came out, Zi Lu asked, `How come you are so different from when we were caught between Chen and Ca?' Kong Qiu said, "Come closer. I will tell you. You and I now need to practice rightness. When you are starving and hard up, you should not hesitate to grab anything and everything. When you can relax and your belly is full, you put up some appearances." Now, who can surpass him in the art of self-embellishment using dirty tricks and crooked hypocrisies?'

[cf. *Lun Yu*,
3.18,The Master said, "If you serve your boss in full compliance with Li, people will say that you are a flatterer.
□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□
1.1: `People don't understand you and you don't mind; you sure are a noble man!']

10. Gui Yi [Endearing rightness] – *yi* (rightness) or *li* (benefit)?

Suppose a man offers you a hat and shoes. In return he proposes to chop your hands off. Would you agree? You wouldn't. Because a hat and shoes are not as dear as your own limbs. Suppose a man offers you the whole world. In return, he proposes to take your life. Would you agree? You wouldn't because the whole world is not as dear as your life. Over one word, however, people kill each other. This shows that rightness is dearer than one's own life. Nothing, therefore,

is dearer than rightness.

Noble men of the world treat rightful scholars with even less esteem than they treat a coolie carrying cereal. Imagine this. A coolie has rested on the roadside. Now he wants to stand up again with his load of cereal. But he is having difficulty. A noble man sees this. Without any regard to the age, low or high status of the person, he will help him to stand up. Why? `Because it is right', he says. These days, noble men who [supposedly] practice rightness transmit the Way of ancient kings only to preach; they do not do what they expound. Rather, they deny and defile it. This is why I say noble men of the world treat rightful scholars with even less esteem than they treat a coolie carrying cereal.

Mo Zi said, `Merchants go to all corners. To sell their wares in markets, they move about with passport. In spite of the difficulties of crossing the check-points and toll-gates, in spite of the danger of thieves and robbers, they do it. Scholars, however, can remain seated and discuss rightness. There is no difficulty of crossing the check-points and toll-gates, no danger of thieves and robbers. [The comfort] is incomparable to the discomfort of having to move about with passport. Still, they don't do it. That is, scholars cannot calculate the benefit while merchants even investigate it.

When I say a blind man does not know black and white, I do not mean that he does not know the name. I mean he does not know what the name refers to. … I say noble men of the world do not know ethical integrity. They do know the name but they do not know what it refers to.

Refuting my argument with your argument is just like hitting a boulder with an egg. Use all the eggs in the world. The boulder will still be right [there]. You cannot even make a dent.

[cf. *Lun Yu*, 4.16: `Noble men always go by rightness; the

petty and the lowly always go by benefit.’]

Fundamentalist fanatics?