CHAPTER ONE

Nondeductive Argumentation and the Art of Chinese Philosophy

One fusty criticism of Chinese thought is that it is not truly "philosophical" because it lacks viable protocols of argumentation.[1] Thus it qualifies at best as "wisdom": Confucius, for example, might provide valuable guidance, or thoughtful epigrams to savor, but nothing in the way of formal reasoning that would permit his audience to reconstruct and reconsider his arguments in any conceivable context.[2] As Hu Shih 胡適 (1891–1962) put it, "China has greatly suffered for lack of an adequate logical method."[3]

Such hand-wringing bespeaks the prejudgment that satisfactory argumentation must be deductive. I have no special definition of "deduction" in mind; it suffices to use that of Aristotle: "a discourse in which, certain things being stated, something other than what is stated follows of necessity from their being so" (*Prior Analytics* 24b18–20).[4] This is often called "syllogism" in older translations, because Aristotle thought that all deductive inference must be syllogistic (*Prior Analytics* 41b1–3)[5]—a notion rejected by modern logicians.[6] Aristotle went on to give some examples of syllogisms, which the medieval tradition organized into types according to their "mood," that is, the nature of their premises and conclusion.[7] The mood *AAA* (sometimes called "Barbara syllogism"), for instance, holds that if all A are B, and all B are C, then all A must be C (*Prior Analytics* 26a1).

All elephants are mammals.
All mammals are animals.
∴ All elephants are animals.

Such reasoning allows inferences that must be valid for every conceivable elephant, regardless of how many discrete elephants one happens to

have seen in one's lifetime. Aristotle seems to have believed that such powers of inference were unique to human beings.[8]

China took a different tack.[9] Many of the most famous Chinese philosophical statements are patently nonsyllogistic. For example:

季文子三思而後行。子聞之，曰：「再，斯可矣。」(*Analects* 5.19)[10]

Ji Wenzi acted only after thinking three times. The Master heard of it and said: "Twice would have been acceptable."

This could be construed as useful practical advice. The dangers of acting too rashly and too slowly are the subjects of contradictory aphorisms (for example, in our culture, "Look before you leap" and "He who hesitates is lost"). Here, Confucius recommends a prudent middle course. Think twice before acting: not once, but not three times, either. Clearly this is not a matter of deductive inference—nor is the statement applicable in every conceivable situation. One should not think twice about whether to avoid an oncoming car. It is left to us to explore the range of plausible applications, but presumably Confucius is talking about weighty moral decisions: these deserve careful consideration and reconsideration,[11] but as soon as one has made up one's mind, further deliberation only leads to inaction.

Another example from the *Analects*:

子曰：「歲寒，然後知松柏之後彫也。」(*Analects* 9.27)[12]

The Master said: "Only after the year has grown cold does one know that the pine and cypress are the last to wither."

This is a memorable meiosis, for pines and cypresses are not merely the last to wither; they almost *never* wither. As anyone in Confucius's society would have known from daily exposure to the living world, pines and cypresses not only remain green throughout the year but also are among the longest-lived organisms on earth. Usually *Analects* 9.27 is understood as a comment on friendship: fair-weather friends may, like beautiful plum or cherry blossoms, seem attractive in times of abundance, but true friends resemble evergreens, maintaining their color in all seasons of the year. But it is also, on a deeper level, a statement about the usefulness of looking to patterns in nature as a guide through the

perplexities of life, as well as a reminder that the value of things cannot be gauged by their momentary appeal. At the same time, it is an assertion of the need for experience, and not just reason, in judgment: for if the character of pines and cypresses cannot be appreciated before the year has grown cold, then someone who has never experienced winter cannot possibly comprehend how they surpass the gaudy blooms of springtime. Thus it is not surprising that names bearing the word *song* 松, "pine," were favored by literati in traditional China, and the hardy pine—often shown gnarled and twisted in snowy landscapes—was a mainstay of Chinese nature painting.[13]

One observation is crucial: the statement begs to be taken metaphorically,[14] because no one would have bothered to record and preserve this line if it were really just a remark about pines and cypresses. (The *Analects* is not a manual of forestry.) And metaphors have no place in deductive reasoning. When we say that all elephants are mammals, we are not speaking metaphorically; we *cannot* be speaking metaphorically, or else the very inference would be called into question.[15] (Speakers of English sometimes refer to an obvious problem that no one wishes to address as "the elephant in the room," but that kind of elephant is not a mammal.) Thus Confucius's utterance, however we choose to interpret it, cannot be deductive.

Three general types of nondeductive argumentation in classical Chinese philosophy merit extended discussion: paradox, analogy, and appeal to example.[16]

PARADOX

Many of the paradoxes[17] of the so-called disputers (*bianzhe* 辯者)[18] can be made to seem veridical,[19] or at least veridical in spirit, if interpreted sympathetically. For example, among the ten paradoxes ascribed to Hui Shi 惠施 (fourth century BC), one finds: "The South has no limit but has a limit" 南方無窮而有窮.[20] We do not know how Hui Shi himself defended this paradox, but there are interpretations that would render it veridical: the quadrant called "South" contains an infinite number of points, but it does not include the entire world; it is distinct, naturally, from the quadrants called "North," "East," and "West." Thus it is both

limitless and limited at the same time.[21] Another (possible) example of veridical paradox is "Eggs have hair" 卵有毛:[22] if this is taken to mean "Inside an egg, there is hair"—that is, the hair of the unborn chick inside—then it is an unexpectedly true statement. (The Chinese word *mao* 毛 denotes body hair, such as the pelt of an animal, and could have been stretched to refer to the down of a chick.) One paradox that should have attracted more attention from modern linguists is "Dogs can be sheep" 犬可以為羊,[23] which is veridical if it means "Dogs may be called 'sheep' ": the word "dog" is arbitrary and has nothing to do with the nature of the dog itself.[24]

Many of the disputers' paradoxes rely on the technique of exploiting a vulnerable keyword, either by using it in a sense different from what the audience expects, or by using it in one sense in one part of the paradox, and in a different sense in another.[25] (This is similar to the fallacy of equivocation in Western philosophy.)[26] Thus "Tortoises are longer than snakes" 龜長於蛇 if one takes "long" in the sense of "long-lived."[27] Unexpected, but not untrue. The most famous paradox of all, "A white horse is not a horse" 白馬非馬,[28] can be identified as another example of this technique if "white horse" and "horse" are taken to refer not to horses, but to sets of horses: the set of objects fulfilling the requirements "white and horse" and the set of objects fulfilling the requirement "horse" are not identical.[29]

Later Mohist exercises in semiotics attest to an interest in analyzing how such paradoxes could be constructed. A typical example: "The fruit of the peach is the peach, but the fruit of the *ji*-tree is not the *ji*" 桃之實, 桃也; 棘之實, 非棘也,[30] which seems to be predicated on the oddity that the word *tao* 桃 (peach) refers to both the tree and the fruit that it bears (as in English), whereas the word *ji* 棘 refers only to the tree, because its fruit is called *zao* 棗 ("jujube" or "Chinese date" in English).[31] From here it would not be far to a hypothetical paradox like "Peaches are not fruit" (because they are trees).

Not everyone was convinced of the value of such adventures in language—Xunzi rejected them as useless for the enterprise of moral self-cultivation (see pp. 193–94)—but some of the most important statements in the *Laozi* rely on the same technique of using a keyword in two different senses (and therefore probably stem from the same intellectual environment). "The highest virtue is not virtuous; therefore, it

has virtue" 上德不德, 是以有德 (*Laozi* 38) is usually not treated as sophistry like "Tortoises are longer than snakes," but it relies on the same rhetorical device. For "The highest virtue is not virtuous" to have any intelligible meaning, the keyword *de* 德 (virtue, inner power) must be taken in two different ways. The first *de*, called *shangde* 上德, or the highest virtue, refers to *de* that is real and potent because it derives from the *dao* 道 itself, whereas the second *de*, merely *de*, refers to the great sham that human society, in its self-induced ignorance, wrongly identifies as *de*. Thus the highest virtue has real virtue precisely because it is not the false virtue that everyone has been trained to venerate. Usually such paradoxes are explained as part of a sustained rhetoric in *Laozi* whose purpose is to shake complacent readers and make them question their unnatural assumptions about the world,[32] like the aesthetic technique of defamiliarization.[33]

ANALOGY

Reasoning by analogy was a crucial mode of deliberation in traditional China.[34] It was one of the hallmarks of Chinese jurisprudence[35] and also figures prominently in early Chinese poetics, where it was identified by the critical terms *bi* 比 (comparison or juxtaposition) and *xing* 興 (arousal). (The precise meanings of *bi* and *xing* are notoriously difficult to unravel and indeed vary from one authority to another.)[36] In philosophy, one of the best-known examples appears in *Mencius*:

> 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。」(*Mencius* 6A.10)[37]

> Mencius said: "I like fish; I also like bear's paw. If I cannot have both, I shall forgo fish and choose bear's paw. I like life; I also like righteousness. If I cannot have both, I shall forgo life and choose righteousness. Although I like life, there are things that I like more than life, and thus I should not keep [my life] indecorously. Although I dislike death, there are things that I dislike more than death, and thus there are some perils that I should not avoid."

As moral philosophy, this passage conveys a certain mindset rather than formulating a definite argument (and as an argument it is obviously not deductive). Just as a gourmet is prepared to sacrifice fish for the sake of a delicacy like bear's paw, a moral connoisseur[38] is prepared to sacrifice his or her life for the sake of righteousness. Naturally, the analogy does not *prove* that righteousness is worth dying for; it merely illustrates Mencius's zeal.

Many such analogies refer to natural phenomena with the unstated supposition that patterns observable in nature cannot be wrong.[39] This conviction underlies arguments that are not always well received today. For example, early in the famed debate between Mencius and Gaozi 告子, the latter presents the view that human nature (*xing* 性) lacks any inherent moral orientation; like a torrent of water, it will rush in whichever direction is laid open for it. Mencius responds by assailing the analogy: water does have an inherent orientation after all, because it always flows downward. Thus human nature is inherently good in the same way that water naturally flows downward (*Mencius* 6A.2). This argument has been harshly criticized in modern times;[40] its power must have been greater in a culture like that of ancient China, where reasoning by analogy was deeply respected.[41]

It must also be acknowledged that appeals to natural phenomena were often used to keep women in their place. In "The Oath at Mu" ("Mushi" 牧誓), King Wu of Zhou 周武王 (r. 1046–1043 BC) justifies his decision to attack the King of Shang on the grounds that the latter listens to his wife:

> 王曰：「古人有言曰：『牝雞無晨；牝雞之晨，惟家之索。』今商王受惟婦言是用。」[42]
>
> The King said: "The ancients had a saying: 'The hen shall not announce the morning; when the hen announces the morning, it means that the family will wane.' Now King Shou of Shang implements only the words of his wife."

Hens should just keep quiet in the morning, because they threaten the survival of the family when they try to do the rooster's job.[43]

Not infrequently, Chinese authors saw meaningful patterns in nature that we would not recognize today; for example, *Comprehensive Discus-*

sions from the White Tiger Hall (*Baihu tong* 白虎通) explains that women should follow their husbands because *yang* sings the lead and *yin* harmonizes (*yang chang yin he* 陽倡陰和).[44] This is the problem with analogizing from nature: all observation of the natural world necessarily passes through one's personal interpretive filter, and therefore different people do not always apperceive the same pattern when they perceive the same set of objects.[45]

APPEAL TO EXAMPLE

Appeals to example are nearly ubiquitous in ancient Chinese philosophy (the most prominent text not to resort to them is *Laozi*), and it seems fruitful to divide the technique into a number of subtypes. Appeal to history has been regarded as so typical of Chinese philosophy that Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) derided it as the "Chinese argument."[46] Rarely did Chinese persuaders fail to refer to examples from the past that supposedly bolstered their case—nor did they always feel obliged to recount details accurately.[47]

A more specific category is appeal to the sages of yore and the canonical texts attributed to them, which prompted a backlash in texts such as *Han Feizi*.[48] Teaching people how to build nests in trees or drill flint in order to make fire were crucial advances in prehistoric times, but in later eras they would have been laughable:

> 今有搆木鑽燧於夏后氏之世者，必為鯀、禹笑矣。有決瀆於殷、周之世者，必為湯、武笑矣。然則今有美堯、舜、湯、武、禹之道於當今之世者，必為新聖笑矣。(*Han Feizi* 49)[49]

> If there were someone who built nests or drilled flint in the Xia dynasty, he would surely be ridiculed by Gun and Yu. If there were someone who cleared water channels in the age of Yin and Zhou dynasties, he would surely by ridiculed by Tang and Wu. Yet today there are those who praise the ways of Yao, Tang, Wu, and Yu as though they were appropriate for today's age; surely they are to be ridiculed by new sages.

What may have been laudable actions by sages of the past are not necessarily appropriate to the very different society of today.

Another productive subtype is appeal to proverbs, such as the one about hens announcing the morning, mentioned above. In a later example, Jia Yi 賈誼 (201–169 BC) wrote: "A rustic proverb says: 'Those who do not forget affairs of the past are teachers of the future'" 野諺曰:「前事之不忘, 後之師也」.[50] This is both an appeal to a proverb and an appeal to history at the same time (though Jia Yi goes on to emphasize that methods of the past might have to be adjusted to suit present circumstances). He probably did not make up this proverb, because it appears verbatim in an unrelated item in *Stratagems of the Warring States* (*Zhanguo ce* 戰國策),[51] a text that has preserved many other maxims as well (such as "Three people make a tiger" 三人成虎: everyone will believe that there is a tiger if three people independently claim to have seen it).[52]

Modern readers are seldom impressed by these subtypes of appeal to example. Appeals to history are sometimes deemed persuasive, but not if the circumstances are incommensurate (and certainly not if the examples are distorted), while appeals to canonical texts and proverbs fare even worse, usually being dismissed as *argumentum ad verecundiam*. But one subtype of appeal to example is not necessarily fallacious: appeal to exemplary conduct, both good and bad. This discourse is characteristic of the *Analects*:

> 子曰:「三人行, 必有我師焉: 擇其善者而從之, 其不善者而改之。」 (*Analects* 7.22)[53]
>
> The Master said: "When I am walking [with others] in a threesome, there must be a teacher to me among them. I select what is good in them and follow it; what is not good in them, I correct."

Like Mencius's comment about fish and bear's paw, this is more of a declaration of a certain attitude than a formal argument; it merely asserts the principle that there is always something to learn, whether positive or negative, from the example of others. The idea that we can learn by emulating other people's strengths and reforming their weaknesses has been central to Chinese philosophy for centuries[54] and has fostered the associated conviction that we must judge people's actions fairly—including our own.[55]

The appeal to an anecdote is a productive subtype of appeal to example: the anecdote is intended to furnish an instructive example high-

lighting the particular philosophical issue under debate. The inferences gleaned from it are never deductive. Take the example in *Han Feizi* of a lucky farmer who caught a rabbit that happened to kill itself by careering into a stump:

> 宋人有耕田者，田中有株，兔走，觸株折頸而死，因釋其耒而守株，冀復得兔，兔不可復得，而身為宋國笑。今欲以先王之政，治當世之民，皆守株之類也。(*Han Feizi* 49)[56]

> Among the men of Song there was one who tilled his fields; in his fields there was a stump. A rabbit ran by, crashed headfirst against the stump, broke its neck, and died. Thereupon [the man] set aside his plow and kept watch by the stump, hoping to get another rabbit, but no other rabbit was to be gotten, and he became the laughingstock of Song. Now those who wish to use the governance of the Former Kings to bring order to the people of our time are all of the same type as the stump watcher.

Using "the governance of the Former Kings to bring order to the people of our time" is as foolish as waiting for a *second* rabbit (because it is equally unlikely that virtuous individuals will present themselves in government pro bono).

Such anecdotes are fungible in the sense that they can be adapted to serve different arguments, and thus their ability to convey a priori truths is limited, if not nil. The example of the stump watcher is effectively applied in *Han Feizi* to political philosophy, but it could also be used, say, to argue against wagering one's life savings at the roulette table after winning one spin. (Essentially, its purpose is to emphasize the folly of basing one's plans for the future on the hope that a welcome but extremely rare event might happen again.) In *Han Feizi*, anecdotes are so fungible that one can occasionally find the same one marshaled in support of diametrically opposed positions. In "Ten Missteps" ("Shiguo" 十過), Lord Huan of Qi 齊桓公 (r. 685–643 BC) is criticized for ignoring Guan Zhong's 管仲 (d. 645 BC) deathbed advice to purge three self-interested ministers,[57] while in "Critiques, No. 1" ("Nan yi" 難一), Guan Zhong's deathbed advice is itself criticized, because a lord needs to know how to extract service from self-interested ministers.[58] For if *Han Feizi* teaches us anything, it is that ministers are self-interested yet indispensable (see pp. 204–5).[59]

Han Feizi does not worry about whether Guan Zhong *really* said what was attributed to him (what stenographer would have been present at his bedside, after all?); the point is that arguments about how to deal with self-interested ministers could be persuasively praised or criticized, depending on one's perspective. This is why so many appeals to historical events, as noted above, contain unconcealed factual errors. Their veracity was less of a concern than their illustrative power.

It would be unproductive, therefore, to distinguish rigidly between "anecdotes" like that of Guan Zhong's deathbed advice in *Han Feizi* and the unmistakably fictitious stories of *Zhuangzi*, which are more commonly characterized as "parables."[60] (None of these English terms, it should be noted, can be mapped neatly onto Chinese vocabulary.)[61] Consider the famous parable that draws the "Inner Chapters" (*neipian* 內篇) of *Zhuangzi* to a close:

南海之帝為儵，北海之帝為忽，中央之帝為渾沌。儵與忽時相與遇於渾沌之地，渾沌待之甚善。儵與忽謀報渾沌之德，曰：「人皆有七竅，以視聽食息，此獨無有，嘗試鑿之。」日鑿一竅，七日而渾沌死。(*Zhuangzi* 7)[62]

The Emperor of the Southern Sea was named Zig; the Emperor of the Northern Sea was named Zag; the Emperor of the Center was named Blob. Zig and Zag often met each other in Blob's territory, and Blob received them very well. Zig and Zag planned to repay Blob for his kindness, saying: "All human beings have seven holes for seeing, hearing, eating, and breathing. [Blob] is the only one who does not have them. Let us try drilling them for him!" Each day they drilled another hole, and on the seventh day Blob died.

No rational reader would object to this anecdote/parable on the grounds that Zig, Zag, and Blob are not real people.[63] We are invited to ruminate on the story, knowing full well that it must be fictitious, for the philosophical insights that it obliquely conveys—an exercise that remains fruitful to this day, with our urgent new concern for maintaining the integrity of the environment.[64] Thus appeals to history, anecdotes, and parables lie on a continuum of historicity ranging from the generally unexceptionable historical examples offered by nearly every ancient persuader at court; to more questionable historical examples, such as Guan

Zhong's deathbed advice in *Han Feizi*; to parables with no pretense of factuality, such as the tale of Zig, Zag, and Blob in *Zhuangzi*. But fundamentally they are of the same species: devices that aim to clarify a philosophical problem by focusing on a cogent example.

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The foregoing should not be misread as a denial that Chinese philosophers ever engaged in deductive reasoning. There are several important classical Chinese arguments that can be restated in terms of propositional logic[65]—for instance, the Mohist defense of impartial love (*jian'ai* 兼愛):

> 姑嘗本原若眾害之所自生，此胡自生？此自愛人利人生與？即必曰非然也；必曰從惡人賊人生。分名乎天下，惡人而賊人者，兼與？別與？即必曰別也。然即之交別者，果生天下之大害者與？是故別非也。(*Mozi* 16)[66]

> If one were to investigate whence these various harms arise, whence do these things arise?[67] Do these things arise from caring for others and benefiting others? One would have to say that this is not the case; one would have to say that they arise from hating others and despoiling others. If one were to categorize things in the world by means of names, would those who hate others and despoil others [be called] impartial or partial? One would have to say partial. Thus is it not the case that engaging [others] with partiality gives rise to the great harms in the world? For this reason, partiality is wrong.

I take this as an early attempt at a deductive argument (essentially a composite Barbara syllogism):

$p \rightarrow q$
(If one is partial, one hates and despoils others.)

$q \rightarrow r$
(If one hates and despoils others, one causes harm.)

$r \rightarrow s$
(If one causes harm, one is wrong.)

$\therefore p \rightarrow s$
(If one is partial, one is wrong.)

More complex deductive arguments can be found in later texts. Xunzi's elaborate argument against abdication, which he tries to rule out as a method of transferring sovereignty in all possible situations,[68] contains an example of disjunctive elimination.

曰：「死而擅之。」是又不然。. . . . . 聖王已沒，天下無聖，則固莫足以擅天下矣。天下有聖而在後[子][69]者，則天下不離，朝不易位，國不更制，天下厭然與鄉無以異也，以堯繼堯，夫又何變之有矣？聖不在後子而在三公，則天下如歸，猶復而振之矣，天下厭然與鄉無以異也，以堯繼堯，夫又何變之有矣？唯其徙朝改制為難。故天子生則天下一隆，致順而治，論德而定次；死則能任天下者必有之矣。夫禮義之分盡矣，擅讓惡用矣哉？(*Xunzi* 18.5c)[70]

It is said: "When [the King] is dying, he should cede to someone else." This is also not so. . . . If the sage kings have already fallen, and there is no sage in the world, then there is certainly no one adequate to cede the world to. If there is a sage king in the world, and he is among [the current King's] sons or descendants, the dynasty does not change; the state does not alter its regulations. The world will be satisfied with this; there will be no respect in which this differs from [the situation] prior. If a Yao succeeds a Yao, what change would there be? If the sage is not among his sons or descendants, but among the Three Chief Ministers, then the world will come home to him as though he were restoring and sustaining it. The world will be satisfied with this; there will be no respect in which this differs from [the situation] prior. If a Yao succeeds a Yao, again, what change would there be?

This too is deductive in structure:

$\sim p \vee (q \vee r)$
(Either there is no sage or there is a sage among the King's descendants or the Three Chief Ministers.)

$\sim p \rightarrow \sim s$
(If there is no sage, there is no reason for abdication.)

$q \rightarrow \sim s$
(If there is a sage among the King's descendants, there is no reason for abdication.)

r → ~s
(If there is a sage among the Three Chief Ministers, there is no reason for abdication.)

∴ ~s
(There is no reason for abdication.)

The opening premise is questionable, however: Xunzi does not seem to have envisioned a situation in which there is a sage in the world who is *neither* one of the King's descendants *nor* one of the Three Chief Ministers; nor is it entirely clear why succession by one of the Three Chief Ministers did not, in his mind, constitute the establishment of a new dynasty. (Consider the example of Yu, the sage who succeeded Shun, thereby initiating the dynasty known as Xia 夏.) But otherwise, the reasoning is sound.

Ancient Chinese audiences were so familiar with disjunctive elimination that even jokers could use it in texts intended more for entertainment than edification:

秦宣太后愛魏醜夫。太后病將死，出令曰：「為我葬，必以魏子為殉。」
魏子患之。庸芮為魏子說太后曰：「以死者為有知乎？」
太后曰：「無知也。」
曰：「若太后之神靈，明知死者之無知矣，何為空以生所愛，葬於無知之死人哉！若死者有知，先王積怒之日久矣，太后救過不贍，何暇乃私魏醜夫乎？」
太后曰：「善。」乃止。[71]

Queen Dowager Xuan of Qin [d. 265 BC] loved Wei Choufu.[72] When the Queen Dowager fell ill and was about to die, she issued an order, saying: "When I am buried, Master Wei must accompany me in death."

Master Wei was horrified by this. Yong Rui persuaded the Queen Dowager in Master Wei's behalf, saying: "Do you consider the dead to have consciousness?"

The Queen Dowager said: "They have no consciousness."

[Yong Rui] said: "If your Majesty's godlike numen is clearly aware that the dead have no consciousness, why would you vainly take the person you loved in life, and bury him with the dead, who lack consciousness? And if the dead do have consciousness, the former king has been accu-

mulating his wrath for many days. Your Majesty, you will scarcely have the means to make amends for your transgressions—how would you have leisure for assignations with Wei Choufu?"

Restated in propositional form, this yields:

$p \vee \sim p$
(Either the dead have consciousness or the dead do not have consciousness.)

$p \rightarrow r$
(If the dead have consciousness, having your lover buried with you is a waste.)

$\sim p \rightarrow r$
(If the dead do not have consciousness, having your lover buried with you is a waste.)

$\therefore r$
(Having your lover buried with you is a waste.)

And that is a valid inference.

These few but memorable examples leave no doubt that audiences were aware of principles of deduction and thus suggest that Chinese philosophers crafted nondeductive arguments as a deliberate choice. Arguments that rely wholly on deductive inference, like Xunzi's case against abdication, are not easy to find; one can only surmise that they were not preferred. Why? Two answers come to mind. First, there is a deep conviction in Chinese culture that persuasive speech must be artfully patterned, as in the famous saying attributed to Confucius: "If you do not speak, who will know your will? But if you speak it without *wen*, it will not go far" 不言誰知其志？言之無文，行而不遠.[73] The basic meaning of *wen* is "pattern," but—not surprisingly in view of such uses—it has attained many other connotations, including "literature" and "civilization."[74] Philosophers who subscribed to this idea would have been motivated to compose as elegantly as possible; sometimes, classical Chinese philosophy is expressed so beautifully that it verges on poetry. But many of the most prized literary devices in the Chinese tradition, such as meiosis and metaphor, are not readily compatible with the fulsome exposition characteristic of deductive argumentation.

Second, the listener bore an onus of interpretation as well. If you read a book by a contemporary philosopher and find little of value in it, you are likely to blame the author and not yourself. Today, the burden of persuasion is thought to lie with *the author*. But in a culture where the supposed authors of philosophical texts were venerated as sages, expectations would have been reversed: if you read a text like the *Analects* and find little of value in it, this reflects only your own failure, because the burden of understanding lies with *you*. These pressures placed a premium on skillful interpretation.[75]

Thus Chinese philosophy demands a high level of interpretive participation. Perhaps this is what Confucius meant when he said, "I begin with one corner; if [a student] cannot return with the other three corners, I do not repeat myself" 舉一隅不以三隅反, 則不復也 (*Analects* 7.8).[76] If the strength of deductive argumentation is supposed to be that it yields correct inferences regardless of circumstance—*modus tollens* is as valid in Dallas as in Krasnoyarsk—then it follows that deductive argumentation yields the same results regardless of the audience's mood, receptiveness, perspective, and so on. By contrast, an audience presented with a statement like "Only after the year has grown cold does one know that the pine and cypress are the last to wither" must ponder it sympathetically—or else derive little, if any, benefit from it. Nor is the meaning that one discovers necessarily identical at every juncture of one's life. In one's youth, the statement about the pine and cypress could mean one thing; as one matures, gains experience, and compares it to other opinions one has encountered, it could take on previously unimagined dimensions. Chinese philosophy, like literature, painting, or music, requires connoisseurship.[77] If we lack the taste—even more so if we exempt ourselves from the task of developing it—we will miss most of what Chinese philosophy has to offer.

CHAPTER ONE. NONDEDUCTIVE ARGUMENTATION AND THE ART OF CHINESE PHILOSOPHY

1. The academic debate over the legitimacy of Chinese philosophy has occasioned numerous recent publications. For representative overviews, see Perkins, *Heaven and Earth Are Not Humane*, 4–5; Denecke, *Dynamics of Masters Literature*, esp. 11–18; Defoort, "Is There Such a Thing as Chinese Philosophy?"; Defoort, "Is 'Chinese Philosophy' a Proper Name?"; and Lin Tongqi et al., "Chinese Philosophy," esp. 746ff.

2. For an example of this sort of complaint, see Munro, *Concept of Man in Early China*, ix; see also the response in Van Norden, "What Should Western Philosophy Learn from Chinese Philosophy?," 230. Also Hartwell, "Historical Analogism, Public Policy, and Social Science in Eleventh- and Twelfth-Century China," 722ff. In earlier generations, the typical complaint was that "the Chinese mind" was incapable of higher logic; e.g., Forke, "Chinese Sophists," 5. One can only suppose that such opinions were influenced by the ignorant and chauvinistic representation of China by G.W.F. Hegel (1770–1831), for which see, e.g., Griffioen, "Hegel on Chinese Religion."

3. Hu Shih, *Development of the Logical Method in Ancient China*, 6. For a survey of modern Chinese ideas about the presence or absence of logic in classical sources, see Kurtz, *Discovery of Chinese Logic*, esp. 277–337.

4. Trans. A. J. Jenkinson in Barnes, *Complete Works of Aristotle*, 1:40. Nisbett's declaration that "Aristotle had testable propositions about the world while the Chinese did not" (*Geography of Thought*, 134) is a flagrant overstatement. Consider that scientists have criticized Aristotle precisely for advancing hypotheses that are not testable (e.g., Moore, *Science as a Way of Knowing*, 41).

5. More precisely: "Although Aristotle was aware that there are several kinds of valid argument which cannot be reduced to syllogistic form, he did not, so far as we know, succeed in giving a formal analysis of any of them" (Kneale and Kneale, *Development of Logic*, 99).

6. Cf. Barnes, "Aristotle," 120–21.

7. See, e.g., Quine, *Methods of Logic*, 102–8.

8. E.g., Modrak, *Aristotle*, 128–28.

9. Cf. Nylan, "Lots of Pleasure but Little Happiness," 212; Coutinho, *Zhuangzi and Early Chinese Philosophy*, 19; more generally, Zhang Wenxiu, "Zhongguo zhexue zhong de zhengming wenti."

10. *Lunyu jishi* 10.337.

11. Compare the many Latin variations on the theme of "second thoughts are wiser," e.g., *Posteriores enim cogitationes, ut aiunt, sapientiores solent esse* (Shackleton Bailey, *Philippics 7–14*, 190), in the formulation of Cicero (106–43 BC).

12. *Lunyu jishi* 18.623.

13. Other traditions alluded to the same properties of evergreens; one of the legendary sages of the Daoist tradition, for example, is Master Red Pine (Chisongzi 赤松子, see p. 75).

14. For further reflections on metaphor in Chinese philosophy, see Slingerland, "Metaphor and Meaning in Early China."

15. Cf. Lightbody and Berman, "Metaphoric Fallacy to a Deductive Inference."

16. This is by no means an exhaustive list; for example, for my thoughts on paronomasia, see Goldin, *After Confucius*, 14ff. Bodde observed some of these types of reasoning in his *China's First Unifier*, 223–32.

17. Because such paradoxes and their various proposed "solutions" seem straightforwardly reducible to logic problems familiar from Western philosophy, they have received inordinate attention over the last few decades, as Pines bemoans (*Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 225n18). Even a representative bibliography would be impossible in the space of one note. Incidentally, I do not mean the same thing as riddles, which are explored as a technique of remonstrance in Wai-yee Li, "Riddles, Concealment, and Rhetoric in Early China." See also Patt-Shamir, "To Live a Riddle."

18. In previous work (e.g., *Rituals of the Way*, 83ff.), I translated *bianzhe* as "dialecticians," but I now think this is misleading.

19. I borrow this terminology from Quine, *Ways of Paradox and Other Essays*, 1–18.

20. *Zhuangzi jishi* 10B.33.1103 ("Tianxia" 天下).

21. Cf. Solomon, *On the School of Names in Ancient China*, 36–37. For other interpretations, see Harbsmeier, *Language and Logic in Traditional China*, 296–97; Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 79–80; and Reding, *Les fondements philosophiques de la rhétorique*, 369–72.

22. *Xunzi jijie* 2.3.38 ("Bugou" 不苟); also *Zhuangzi jishi* 10B.33.1105 ("Tianxia").

23. *Zhuangzi jishi* 10B.33.1106 ("Tianxia").

24. The explanation in Reding, *Les fondements philosophiques de la rhétorique*, 439, is that "Sheep" might be the dog's proper name.

25. Cf. Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 91. I believe the point was first made by Mou Zongsan, *Mingjia yu Xunzi*, 3ff.

26. E.g., Lawrence H. Powers, "Equivocation."

27. *Zhuangzi jishi* 10B.33.1106 ("Tianxia"); see Reding, *Les fondements philosophiques de la rhétorique*, 440–41.

28. *Gongsun Longzi xingming fawei* 2.24 ("Baima lun" 白馬論). The likeliest interpretation of this paradox, from a historical point of view, is Harbsmeier, "Mass Noun Hypothesis and the Part-Whole Analysis of the White Horse Dialogue." Note that *Han Feizi xin jiaozhu* 11.32.674 ("Wai chushuo zuo shang" 外儲說左上) attributes it to an obscure figure named Ni Shui 兒說 (the Boy Persuader). For a discussion of the implications, see Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*, 138n3.

29. The scholarship on this one line is too massive to cite in a single note, but the most plausible treatment, to my mind, is Harbsmeier, *Language and Logic in Traditional China*, 298–321.

30. *Mozi jiaozhu* 11.45.630 ("Xiaoqu" 小取); also Graham, *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science*, 492 (NO 18), though his translation of *ji* as "bramble" reflects a different understanding of the statement.

31. Thus Sun Yirang 孫詒讓 (1848–1908) in *Mozi jiaozhu* 11.45.639n64. Fung, "Logical Perspective on the Parallelism in Later Moism," 348, dismisses it simply as an "invalid argument."

32. Cf. De Reu, "Right Words Seem Wrong," esp. 286–89; and Van Norden, "Method in the Madness of the *Laozi*," 197; more generally, Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 231–34.

33. "Defamiliarization" is one of several proposed translations of the Russian word *ostranenie*, which was coined by Shklovsky in *Theory of Prose*, esp. 6ff. In his "Translator's Introduction" (*Theory of Prose*, xviii–xix), Benjamin Sher argues for "enstrangement" (*sic*), a jarring neologism like *ostranenie* itself. In brief, defamiliarization refers to any artistic device that serves to problematize concepts, patterns, or prejudices obscured by mainstream discourse.

34. For recent surveys, see Lloyd, *Analogical Investigations*, esp. 43–57; Reding,

Comparative Essays in Early Greek and Chinese Rational Thinking, 31–48; and Volkov, "Analogical Reasoning in Ancient China."

35. Cf. MacCormack, *Spirit of Traditional Chinese Law*, 166–74; and Bodde and Morris, *Law in Imperial China*, 517–30.

36. See, e.g., Pauline Yu, *Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition*, 57–67; also Kao, "Comparative Literature and the Ideology of Metaphor, East and West," 102ff.; Ming Dong Gu, "*Fu-bi-xing*"; and François Cheng, "*Bi* 比 et *xing* 興."

37. *Mengzi zhengyi* 23.783.

38. On this concept, see Ivanhoe, "McDowell, Wang Yangming, and Mengzi's Contributions to Understanding Moral Perception," 285ff.; and Hutton, "Moral Connoisseurship in Mengzi."

39. "The Many People" ("Zhengmin" 烝民, Mao 260), a poem in the *Odes*, states this principle as clearly as any philosophical text: "Heaven engendered the many people; there are creatures; there are patterns" 天生烝民，有物有則. Natural patterns are normative because they derive from Heaven. Cf. Pauline Yu, *Reading of Imagery in the Chinese Poetic Tradition*, 37–43: Chinese poetry tends to rely on the notion that natural correspondences are real and discovered, rather than metaphorical and invented.

40. Perhaps the sternest voice has been that of Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, 194.

41. Cf. David B. Wong, "Reasons and Analogical Reasoning in Mengzi"; and Lau, *Mencius*, 362–90.

42. *Shangshu jiaoshi yilun*, 3:1098.

43. See, more generally, Goldin, *Culture of Sex in Ancient China*, 48ff.

44. *Baihu tong shuzheng* 10.452 ("Jiaqu" 嫁娶).

45. For some other thoughts on the weaknesses of analogical reasoning in Chinese thought, see Lo, "From Analogy to Proof."

46. Bentham, *Bentham's Handbook of Political Fallacies*, 43–53.

47. See Goldin, "Appeals to History in Early Chinese Philosophy and Rhetoric."

48. The best discussion is now Pines, "From Historical Evolution to the End of History"; see also Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 270–73.

49. *Han Feizi xin jiaozhu* 19.49.1085 ("Wudu" 五蠹).

50. *Xinshu jiaozhu* 1.17 ("Guo Qin xia" 過秦下).

51. *Zhanguo ce zhushi* 18.613 ("Zhang Mengtan ji gu Zhao zong" 張孟談既固趙宗).

52. For this and other appeals to history, literature, and apophthegms in *Zhanguo ce*, see Goldin, *After Confucius*, 82–83.

53. *Lunyu jishi* 14.482.

54. On the *Analects*, see Olberding, *Moral Exemplars in the* Analects. The phrase "being cautious when alone" (*shen qi du* 慎其獨 or sometimes just *shen du*) is found in many texts, the oldest of which is probably *Wuxing* 五行 (Cook, *Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 1:496). When one is alone, one is bereft of helpful models.

55. In two recent publications, Matthias L. Richter has argued that such moral judgments derive from the bureaucratic practice of succinctly noting an official's strengths and weaknesses. See his "Roots of Ru 儒 Ethics in *shi* 士 Status Anxiety"; and his *Guan ren*.

56. *Han Feizi xin jiaozhu* 19.49.1085 ("Wudu").

57. *Han Feizi xin jiaozhu* 3.10.228–29. The three ministers are Shudiao 豎刁, Ducal Son Kaifang of Wei 衛公子開方, and Yiya 易牙, who go on, in this account, to imprison

Lord Qi until he starves to death. Cf. *Guanzi jiaozhu* 11.32.608–9 ("Xiaocheng" 小稱); and *Lüshi chunqiu xin jiaoshi* 16.978–80 ("Zhijie" 知接).

58. *Han Feizi xin jiaozhu* 15.36.849–52. Ducal Son Kaifang of Wei does not appear in this passage.

59. Cf. Goldin, "Introduction," in *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Han Fei*, 2ff.

60. E.g., the subtitle of Victor H. Mair's translation, *Wandering on the Way: Early Taoist Tales and Parables of Chuang Tzu*.

61. "Anecdote" comes close to *zhanggu* 掌故, the locus classicus of which is *Shiji*, e.g., 128.3224. The standard Chinese translation of "parable" is now *yuyan* 寓言, which is borrowed from a chapter in *Zhuangzi* (*Zhuangzi jishi* 9A.27.947–64), where it has a much broader meaning. The term *diangu* 典故 denotes any kind of literary allusion and overlaps with "anecdote" too. But none of these terms was used consistently in any kind of premodern Chinese genre theory. See further Jack W. Chen, "Introduction," in Chen and Schaberg, *Idle Talk*, 4; and Schaberg, "Chinese History and Philosophy," 394ff.

62. *Zhuangzi jishi* 3C.7.309 ("Ying diwang" 應帝王).

63. On these names, see, e.g., Ye Shuxian, *Zhuangzi de wenhua jiexi*, 128–32. Blob (*hundun* 渾沌) must be related to "dumpling" (*huntun* 餛飩, better known in English by the Cantonese pronunciation "wonton"), so called because of its shapelessness. Chin, *Savage Exchange*, 40–48, discusses the similar use of fictitious personages in early Chinese economic treatises; see also Goldin, *After Confucius*, 6–13.

64. Cf. Goldin, "Why Daoism Is Not Environmentalism," 80. For other interpretations, see, e.g., Chen Zhibin, "Lun Zhuangzi zhexue de benyu"; Girardot, *Myth and Meaning in Early Taoism*, 81–98; Kaltenmark, *Lao Tzu and Taoism*, 101; Needham, *Science and Civilisation in China*, 2:112ff.; Waley, *Three Ways of Thought in Ancient China*, 66ff.; Granet, *La pensée chinoise*, 320–21; and Granet, *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne*, 544.

65. The most extensive discussion known to me is Harbsmeier, *Language and Logic in Traditional China*, 278–86. Cikoski, "On Standards of Analogic Reasoning in the Late Chou," 325, proposes a passage from *Lüshi chunqiu* as an example of "the syllogism form," but I fail to see how it qualifies as a syllogism; cf. Chmielewski, "Concerning the Problem of Analogic Reasoning in Ancient China," 67n4. Some syllogisms from the Mohist Canons are discussed in Zhan Jianfeng, *Mojia de xingshi luoji*, 110–18.

66. *Mozi jiaozhu* 4.16.172 (Jian'ai xia" 兼愛下).

67. This sentence is no less repetitive in the original Chinese.

68. Cf. Goldin, "Appeals to History in Chinese Philosophy and Rhetoric," 88–89. My understanding of this passage differs slightly from that of Pines, "Disputers of Abdication," 289ff. Cf. also Luo Genze, *Zhuzi kaosuo*, 72ff.

69. Following the commentary of Yu Yue 俞樾 (1821–1907).

70. *Xunzi jijie* 12.18.331–32 ("Zhenglun" 正論). Since there is no universally recognized citation system for passages in *Xunzi*, I shall use the section numbers in Knoblock, *Xunzi*. My translations, however, will often diverge from those of Knoblock substantially.

71. *Zhanguo ce zhushi* 4.148 ("Qin Xuan taihou ai Wei Choufu" 秦宣太后愛魏醜夫).

72. This name appears to mean "the Grotesque Man from Wei."

73. *Chunqiu Zuozhuan zhu*, 3:1106 (Xiang 襄 25 = 548 BC).

74. Cf. Saussy, *Great Walls of Discourse and Other Adventures in Cultural China*, 35–74.

75. For similar attitudes toward the canonical *Odes*, see Goldin, *After Confucius*, 26–35.

76. *Lunyu jishi* 13.448. Compare *Analects* 1.15, where Confucius applauds his disciple Zigong: "I told you about what comes first, and you knew what comes after" 告諸往而知來者 (*Lunyu jishi* 2.56).

77. Cf. Mattice, *Metaphor and Metaphilosophy*, 91–100.