

# *To become a god*

Cosmology, Sacrifice, and Self-  
Divinization in Early China

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Published by the Harvard University Asia Center for the  
Harvard-Yenching Institute  
Distributed by Harvard University Press  
Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, England, 2002

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Printed in the United States of America

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Puett, Michael J., 1964-

To become a god : cosmology, sacrifice, and self-divinization in early China / Michael

J. Puett.

p. cm. -- (Harvard-Yenching Institute monograph series ; 57)

Includes bibliographic references and index.

ISBN 0-674-00959-2 (alk. paper)

1. God--Proof, Cosmological. 2. Divinization--China. 3. I. Title: Cosmology, sacrifice, and self-divinization in early China. II. Title. III. Series.

BT100.P9 2002

299'.51--dc 21

East Asia  
BT  
100  
.P9  
2002

2002017257

Index by Mary Mortensen

⊗ Printed on acid-free paper

Last number below indicates year of this printing

12 11 10 09 08 07 06 05 04 03 02

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods.

—*The Bible*, Genesis 3, King James version

Emperors and kings,  
are but obeyed in their several provinces,  
Nor can they raise the wind or rend the clouds;  
But in his dominion that exceeds in this  
Stretcheth as far as doth the mind of man.  
A sound magician is a mighty god:  
Here, Faustus, try thy brains to gain a deity.

—Christopher Marlowe, *The Tragedy of Doctor Faustus*, lines 60–66

Who was it who first  
Wrecked the bonds of love  
And transformed them into chains?  
Which led rebels to make  
A mock of their rights  
And the heavenly fire and,  
Disdaining mortal ways,  
Elect presumption,  
Striving to become the equals of gods.

—Friedrich Hölderlin, "The Rhine" (Translation by Richard Sieburth, *Hymns and Fragments*, pp. 73–75)

Mencius, like many thinkers of the fourth century BC, made strong claims that divine powers resided in humans, and for Mencius this meant that humans have the potential to bring order to the world. Heaven, in contrast, while being the source of those divine powers in humans, can potentially prevent the order that it has given humans the power to create. The central tension for Mencius, then, is that although Heaven is the ultimate source of moral patterns, it can and does arbitrarily act in opposition to those patterns. And yet we must accept what Heaven commands.

Zhuangzi also felt this tension, but he resolved it in a very different way: Zhuangzi denied that Heaven is the source of moral norms and thus denied that Heaven had to follow such norms. For Zhuangzi, moral norms are human inventions, with no basis whatsoever in Heaven. If Mencius saw such moral judgments as deriving from Heaven, Zhuangzi saw them as entirely due to man. Accordingly, for Mencius, the agon of Heaven and man arises because man makes moral judgments on the world. For Zhuangzi, man should accept whatever Heaven decrees; once men stop using moral norms to criticize Heaven, there will be no agon.

Although both Mencius and Zhuangzi could be characterized as “naturalistic,” insofar as they both root values in Heaven, such a characterization misses several crucial points. Both Mencius and Zhuangzi were interested primarily in the divine potentials of humans, and part of what is so interesting about their differences lies in the ways they attempted to link such potentially divine powers of humans with a support for Heaven. In neither was there an assumption of continuity. On the contrary, both asserted at least partial continuity between the human and the divine realms, and for both this creates a potential problem with Heaven. Although both responded to this problem by supporting Heaven, the effort the argument required was tremendous.

## 4 Descendants of the one

### Correlative Cosmology in the Late Warring States

Let us return to the origin of the cosmos:

Heaven and Earth had a beginning. Heaven was subtle so as to complete, and Earth blocked so as to give form. Heaven and Earth combining and harmonizing is the great alignment (*jing*) of generation (*sheng*).<sup>1</sup>

In the cosmogony sketched in the “Jingshen” chapter of the *Huainanzi*—the passage with which I opened this book—spirits aligned (*jing*) the cosmos.<sup>2</sup> This passage from the “Youshi” chapter of the *Lüshi chunqiu*, a text that dates to around 240 BC, posits neither spirits nor Heaven as active agents in the formation of the cosmos. Instead, Heaven and Earth simply emerge spontaneously, and their mating, which gives birth to the myriad things, is the alignment of generation itself.

Cosmological arguments like these began appearing at about the same time as the self-divinization movements described in Chapter 2. They ranged from five-phase speculation to monthly ordinances to attempts to place culture within cosmogonic schemata. Like the self-divinization claims, such cosmological frameworks were used to argue that a sage can, through variously defined processes of self-cultivation, achieve the power to understand the workings of the cosmos and thereby act correctly and gain control over them.

1. *Lüshi chunqiu*, “Youshi,” 13.11.

2. See Chapter 7, pp. 270–84, for a detailed discussion of this text.

The nature of early Chinese correlative thought has been a topic of lengthy discussion in both anthropological and sinological studies. Marcel Mauss and Emile Durkheim first proposed the famous thesis that early Chinese correlative thinking was based on "primitive classification" systems.<sup>3</sup> According to them, such systems in China were "a highly typical case in which collective thought has worked in a reflective and learned way on themes that are clearly primitive."<sup>4</sup> This thesis clearly fits the recurrent arguments of sinologists that China's significance lies in the degree to which it maintained (for better or worse, depending on the criteria of the scholar in question) links to a primitive, primordial period of human history.

Although Marcel Granet did not develop Mauss's and Durkheim's comparative claims, their sociological approach exercised an important influence on Granet's analysis in *La pensée chinoise*,<sup>5</sup> itself the single most influential work ever published on early Chinese cosmology. Largely because of Granet's work, Chinese correlative thought has come to play an important role in the anthropological study of cosmology. Claude Lévi-Strauss's *The Savage Mind*, a landmark study of primitive classification systems that superseded Mauss's and Durkheim's earlier work on the subject, for example, relies heavily on Granet.

In this chapter, I attempt to re-examine the origins and nature of correlative thinking in early China. I begin by surveying the secondary literature on the topic, in particular anthropological studies of sacrifice and cosmology and the ways that sinologists have both contributed to and worked from this literature. I then trace the rise of correlative thought in the late Warring States period and argue for a somewhat different approach to using the insights of anthropological studies of correlative systems.

### The One and the Many: Secondary Scholarship on Early Chinese Cosmology

The discussion of early Chinese cosmology has both influenced and been influenced by anthropological analyses. Indeed, much of the scholarship on this issue has developed as scholars positioned themselves in different ways in relation to the work of Granet or Lévi-Strauss. I, too, will argue that an

3. Durkheim and Mauss, *Primitive Classification*, pp. 67-80.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 73.

5. Granet acknowledges the debt in *La pensée chinoise*, pp. 484-85n22.

alternative reading of Granet and Lévi-Strauss might lead to a more successful approach to the problem of Chinese correlative thought.

As discussed in the Introduction, A. C. Graham criticizes Granet for reading Warring States and Han correlative models as characteristic of Chinese thought in general and argues instead that correlative thought is universal and exists in all forms of thinking save one: "What Granet saw as the difference between Chinese and Western thought may nowadays be seen as a transcultural difference between proto-science and modern science."<sup>6</sup> In making this argument, Graham presents himself as rejecting Granet and favoring Lévi-Strauss: "In exploring proto-scientific thinking it has been usual to start from what we find peculiar in pre-modern views of nature; here we have followed the example of Lévi-Strauss (although not the detail of his methods) in starting from the opposite direction, from structures common to pre-modern and modern thinking."<sup>7</sup> For Graham, late Warring States and Han cosmological systems should be understood as a particular, highly formalistic, example of an essentially human way of thinking.

David Hall and Roger Ames position themselves on the opposite side of each of these claims. They strongly defend Granet's argument that correlative thinking was a defining feature of Chinese thought in general, and they reject Graham's claim that Granet's arguments apply only to texts from the late Warring States and after. Hall and Ames trace Graham's "error" to Lévi-Strauss: Lévi-Strauss, they claim, misread Marcel Granet's arguments about correlative thinking, and Graham unfortunately based his reading on Lévi-Strauss.

[Graham] appeals explicitly to the theory of correlativity developed by Claude Lévi-Strauss. Lévi-Strauss had formalized the sense of correlativity contained in Marcel Granet's *La pensée chinoise* by recourse to the work of Roman Jakobson. . . . Lévi-Strauss applies Jakobson's notions of similarity and contiguity relations to Marcel Granet's speculations concerning the "Chinese mind," surmising that what Granet had called correlative thinking could be formalized by recourse to the metaphor/metonym distinction. . . . With this insight, so Lévi-Strauss believed, the notion of correlativity gained clarity and rigor. Applying this insight to the Chinese employment of analogical thinking, it would be possible, for example, to understand

6. Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, p. 320.

7. Graham, *Yin-Yang and the Nature of Correlative Thinking*, p. 39.



the vast systems of classification associated with *yin-yang* cosmologies or the *Book of Changes* by appeal to these tropic devices.<sup>8</sup>

But Lévi-Strauss's attempt to analyze correlative thought more rigorously made it less applicable to China:

We are inclined to believe that the attempt to formalize the analogical mode of thinking by appeal to Jakobson's speculations has in fact overly rationalized analogical, first problematic thinking and made it, while more precise and rigorous as a method, less applicable to the Chinese context. The burden of the following discussion will be to reinstitute the former, more naive understanding of analogical thought.<sup>9</sup>

Indeed, the very distinction of metaphoric and metonymic relations is for Hall and Ames an example of the "rational intellect" and is based on "rational, causal assumptions."<sup>10</sup>

The problem with Graham, Hall and Ames argue, is that, by following the more formalistic reading of Lévi-Strauss, he was led to believe that correlative thought arose late in Chinese history. A return to Granet will correct this error.

Graham's judgment that correlative thought is to be consigned to periods beyond the classical is based upon his acceptance of the metaphoric/metonymic distinction as an essential formalizing element in all correlative operations. We believe that this acceptance of Lévi-Strauss's Jakobsonian interpretation of Granet's initial insight leads him astray, finally causing him to fail to appreciate the extent to which first problematic assumptions shape the entire sweep of the Chinese cultural sensibility.<sup>11</sup>

For Hall and Ames, correlative thought defines all of early China:

We only insist that the more formal, rationalized interpretation not be treated as exhausting the meaning of this activity. . . . Our argument will be that we shall be able to employ the term "correlative thinking" as a synonym for the analogical procedures associated with first problematic thought without losing any of the relevant meanings that have come to be associated with the term when applied to the interpretation of Chinese culture.<sup>12</sup>

8. Hall and Ames, *Anticipating China*, pp. 126–27.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 127–28.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 296n44.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 133.

12. *Ibid.*

Lévi-Strauss's attempt to generalize correlative thinking ended up limiting the meaning of the concept—and led Graham to restrict its applicability to only late Warring States and Han texts.

As should be clear from my discussion in Chapters 1 and 2, I side with Graham on this particular point: correlative cosmology is a late development in Chinese history. The problem is then to explain how and why it emerged. One recent attempt to do so is that of John Henderson. Henderson's *Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology* is a brilliant narrative of the history of correlative thought in China. Although the question of the emergence of such thinking occupies only a small portion of this narrative, Henderson's comments are nonetheless provocative: "My own view on this question is that correlative systems in China were devised in a fully historical epoch, particularly the third and second centuries B.C., for largely historical reasons." Among the possible scenarios adduced by Henderson for the rise of correlative cosmologies is that particular philosophers created an "epistemological space (as Michel Foucault might say) in which correlative thought could develop." An example would be Laozi's calling on man to "pattern himself after heaven and earth." As a consequence, "later and lesser minds could interpret the classical Taoist calls for the harmonization of man and nature in a literalist fashion, devising anatomical, numerological, and psychological correspondences."<sup>13</sup> In this view, correlative cosmology is a literal reading by lesser minds of a metaphor. The problem with this explanation is that it unnecessarily denigrates correlativity and fails to explain why greater minds of a later period found correlativity convincing.

Another explanation offered by Henderson is institutional. In the Qin and early Han, "imperial ideologists" invoked correlative thought as a means of justifying imperial governance:

Through the invocation of the "mutual conquest" sequence of the five phases, by which earth (Han) conquers water (Qin), the Han was able to justify its overthrow of Qin rule and its assumption of power. Once the dynasty was established, imperial ideologists also found it useful to invoke the hierarchical relation of yang to yin and heaven to earth as a way of legitimating various authoritarian political and social relations.<sup>14</sup>

13. Henderson, *The Development and Decline of Chinese Cosmology*, pp. 30, 35.

14. *Ibid.*, p. 36.

Critics of imperial rule then appropriated correlative thought "as checks on Han imperial despotism."<sup>15</sup> But this explanation also has problems. If correlativity arose as a means of imperial legitimation, why did the intended audience find it convincing? As with any argument in terms of legitimation, one needs to explain why the ideology was effective.

Yet another reason given by Henderson was that correlative thinking was utilized by Han thinkers to "weav[e] diverse strands of the classical literary legacy into a consistent whole."<sup>16</sup> But correlativity emerged before the Han and not in texts that could plausibly be seen as attempts to unify the literary tradition. Although I have questioned Henderson's explanations (and I emphasize again that these suggestions occupy only a small portion of an exceptionally cogent narrative), his search for historical explanations of why cosmology arose is a model for my own work.

Benjamin Schwartz approaches correlativity in a different way. He sees it as linked to the "absence [in early China] of clearly drawn boundaries between the divine and human," and he tries to connect this with ancestor worship:

I am tempted to speculate that this absence of boundary affects not only the realm of religion narrowly defined, but the entire realm of ontological thinking. Does the fact that in later Chinese high-cultural accounts of the origins of mankind or of the cosmos, the dominant metaphor is that of procreation or "giving birth," rather than that of fashioning or creating, have anything to do with the centrality of ancestor worship with its dominance of the biological metaphor? Does this in turn have something to do with the predominance of what some have called "monistic" and "organismic" orientations of later high-cultural thought?<sup>17</sup>

As we will see, some correlative systems in the Warring States and Han are indeed based on generative models, and many do quite explicitly play on ancestor sacrifices in their discussions. Schwartz sees this as a continuation of a mind-set datable to the Shang. But this explanation in fact explains little. The fact that the Shang worshipped ancestors does not *explain* why later authors built generative correlative systems. The question remains: Why did the authors in question choose to appropriate sacrificial language in developing their cosmological systems?

15. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 41.

17. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, p. 26.

Schwartz's response is to say that the family metaphor was highly important in China.<sup>18</sup> I have already questioned Schwartz's attempt to read familial holism and a continuity between the human and divine as guiding orientations in early China, and I will continue that questioning in this chapter. But the complexities of Schwartz's arguments warrant careful attention. Schwartz argues that earlier sacrificial practice in China should not be read in correlative terms. Sacrifice and cosmology may have shared the same general vision of continuity, but they should not be equated. As discussed in the Introduction, Schwartz is firmly committed to a general "religion to philosophy" model of rationalization. Thus, although he claims that certain metaphors of the family and bureaucracy dominated early China, he wants to see correlative thought as a late, philosophical development—a movement away from religion and toward a rationalized worldview. Like Graham, then, Schwartz reads correlativity as a late development in early China, but unlike Graham, he bases this claim not on the notion that correlativity is a universal mode of thought but rather on the Weberian model of rationalization.

In making this argument, Schwartz also appeals to Lévi-Strauss. But he cites Lévi-Strauss not in order to emphasize the universality of correlative thinking but to distinguish late Warring States correlative cosmology from the sacrificial model that predominated in the Shang:

The fact is that neither the oracle bones, the bronze vessels, nor any of the earliest texts we have seem to provide strong evidence of correlative cosmology, even though some discern evidence of totemism in the iconography of the Shang ritual bronze vessels. Much of the information furnished in these inscriptions sheds light not on correlative cosmology, but on what Lévi-Strauss would himself define as the realm of religion. Correlative cosmology in his view is a "science of the concrete" because it relates concrete phenomena actually perceived in our ordinary experience to each other "horizontally." Its materials are all drawn from the "real" world. Animals, plants, the four cardinal directions, kinship organizations, human traits, and celestial bodies are all "real." A religious ritual—specifically the ritual of sacrifice—which relates humans "vertically" to gods and spirits represents in this view an effort to establish "a desired connection between two initially separate domains," of which one—the divine—is non-existent.<sup>19</sup>

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 416–17.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 351–52.

Schwartz thus rejects Granet's argument that correlative thinking should be read as pervading early Chinese thought. Even if we adopt Lévi-Strauss's own terminology—the very terminology developed to argue the pervasiveness of correlative thinking—we are forced, Schwartz argues, to see that Chinese correlative thinking is a late development.

Ironically, this reading of Lévi-Strauss is comparable to that of Hall and Ames. Hall and Ames hope to demonstrate that correlative thinking defines all of Chinese thought, and Schwartz is arguing for a general movement from religion to philosophy, but all three believe that Lévi-Strauss's position, despite its overt claims for the universality of correlative thinking, leads to a rejection of Granet and to the position that correlative systems are late developments in China. Hall and Ames therefore reject Lévi-Strauss's position, whereas Schwartz agrees with it.

Although, like Schwartz, I argue that correlative cosmology is a late development in China, I nonetheless disagree with his (and Hall and Ames's) reading of Lévi-Strauss. Schwartz is misreading Lévi-Strauss, and his misreading is worth following in detail, for a closer reading of Lévi-Strauss, as well as of Granet, will lead to a somewhat different, and perhaps more promising, approach to the problem.

### Totemism and Sacrifice: From Granet to Lévi-Strauss and Back Again

In the passage quoted by Schwartz, Lévi-Strauss refers to the distinction between "so-called" totemism and sacrifice.<sup>20</sup> In so-called totemism, two discontinuous series (human clans and natural species) are presented as analogies. In contrast, sacrifice "seeks to establish a desired connection between two initially separate domains." "Sacrifice therefore belongs to the realms of continuity."<sup>21</sup> According to Schwartz, this distinction, when applied to

20. The reason Lévi-Strauss uses "so-called" in referring to totemism is that he argues strongly against the category of "totemism" to describe the phenomenon of social groups connecting themselves with animals. Lévi-Strauss's basic move here is to subsume the category under a larger theory of structural classification: "So-called totemism is in fact only a particular case of the general problem of classification and one of many examples of the part which specific terms often play in the working out of a social classification" (*The Savage Mind*, p. 62). For his full critique of the term, see Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*. Some of Lévi-Strauss's motivations for providing this argument are discussed below.

21. Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind*, pp. 224–25; hereinafter cited in the text.

China, reveals a shift from sacrifice to totemism, from the Shang ancestral cult to correlative cosmology. But, in fact, Lévi-Strauss would argue something quite different.

The distinction Lévi-Strauss makes between totemism and sacrifice is based on the different ways that each conceptualizes continuity and discontinuity. Totemism, Lévi-Strauss argues, is a polygenetic system, in which discontinuity is assumed:

The homology they [the so-called totemists] evoke is not between social groups and natural species but between the differences which manifest themselves on the level of groups on the one hand and on that of species on the other. They are thus based on the postulate of a homology between two systems of differences, one of which occurs in nature and the other in culture. (p. 115)

Lévi-Strauss contrasts this with monogenetic systems, using Polynesia as an example:

Instead of a once-for-all homology between two series each finite and discontinuous in its own right, a continuous evolution is postulated within a single series that accepts an unlimited number of terms. Some Polynesian mythologies are at the critical point where diachrony irrevocably prevails over synchrony, making it impossible to interpret the human order as a fixed projection of the natural order by which it is engendered; it is a prolongation, rather than a reflection, of the natural order. (p. 233)

In short, polygenetic systems assume discontinuity, and monogenetic systems assume continuity.

To return to China, all the texts discussed in this chapter posit a cosmos generated naturally by a single ancestor—often referred to as the Great One (*Taiyi*). In Lévi-Strauss's terminology, these texts reflect monogenetic cosmologies, not the totemic systems of polygenesis. Moreover, Lévi-Strauss would certainly not cite the Shang ancestral cult as an example of totemism. Thus, Schwartz's attempt to use Lévi-Strauss's terminology to characterize the shift from Shang ancestral sacrifice to correlative systems as a shift from sacrifice to totemism is incorrect. For Lévi-Strauss, both the Shang ancestral sacrifices and the late Warring States correlative systems would be prototypically monogenetic. None of the systems we have looked at would be classified by Lévi-Strauss as a totemic system.

Indeed, Lévi-Strauss argues that no Eurasian civilization is totemic, nor are Eurasian civilizations based on totemic foundations. For Lévi-Strauss,



totemism and sacrifice are two distinct systems: one does not lead to the other. He emphatically rejects the tendency in earlier anthropology to present totemism and sacrifice along evolutionary lines: "That it should have been possible to regard totemism as the origin of sacrifice in the history of religion remains, after so long, a matter of astonishment" (p. 223). Lévi-Strauss's move here is to defend the complexity of classificatory schemes in primitive cultures by denying that totemism represents an earlier, superseded period in the development of civilizations. Instead, he argues, the classificatory systems of the great civilizations are not based on totemism (see, e.g., p. 42). On the contrary. The great civilizations of Eurasia are monogenetic: "This perhaps explains what one is tempted to call the 'totemic void,' for in the bounds of the great civilizations of Europe and Asia there is a remarkable absence of anything which might have reference to totemism, even in the form of remains" (p. 232). And not only is totemism not a superseded level of culture, but it is in fact scientifically superior to sacrifice:

Totemic classifications have a doubly objective basis. There really are natural species, and they do indeed form a discontinuous series; and social segments for their part also exist. . . . The system of sacrifice, on the other hand, makes a pre-existent term, divinity, intervene; and it adopts a conception of the natural series which is false from the objective point of view, for, as we have seen, it represents it as continuous. . . . The system of sacrifice . . . represents a private discourse wanting in good sense for all that it may frequently be pronounced. (pp. 227-28)

Totemic systems are objectively valid, since they recognize discontinuity from the beginning. In contrast, sacrifice is "wanting in good sense," since sacrificial systems believe in continuity—and this is, from an "objective point of view," wrong.

Lévi-Strauss's polemic is not a passing rhetorical flourish. One of the recurrent arguments in *The Savage Mind* is that totemism is just as logical as modern science. It is simply a different form of logic (p. 269), a form that he calls "a science of the concrete" (pp. 1-35). And the crucial point about this science of the concrete is that it builds classifications based on an objectively accurate understanding of natural structures (pp. 1-35, 135-61). Note, for example, how Lévi-Strauss describes the idea of species in totemism: "We should understand how this idea can furnish a mode of sensory apprehension of a combination objectively given in nature, and that the activity of the mind, and social life itself, do no more than borrow it to apply it to the creation of new taxonomies" (p. 137).

In other words, for Lévi-Strauss there are two legitimate forms of science: the science of the concrete (found in totemism) and modern science:

Certainly the properties to which the savage mind has access are not the same as those which have commanded the attention of scientists. The physical world is approached from opposite ends in the two cases: one is supremely concrete, the other supremely abstract; one proceeds from the angle of sensible qualities and the other from that of formal properties. But the idea that, theoretically at least and on condition no abrupt changes in perspective occurred, these two courses were destined to meet, explains why both, independently of each other in time and space, should have led to two distinct though equally positive sciences. (p. 269)

So where does modern science come from? If it is not based on totemism, is it based upon sacrifice? Lévi-Strauss does not make an explicit statement on this point, but I suspect that he would say that modern science arose with the *transcending* of the sacrificial model. Totemism is a science (a science of the concrete), but the model of sacrifice is objectively wrong, and it needed to be overcome before a different, abstract science could arise. Lévi-Strauss is cagey on why this happened, but it is clear that he sees the crucial step as the introduction of abstraction in early Greece: "A dramatic change took place along the frontiers of Greek thought, when mythology gave way to philosophy and the latter emerged as the necessary pre-condition of scientific thought."<sup>22</sup> In other words, he is working with a version of the "religion to philosophy" argument. Moreover, he appears to view modern science as a unique creation of the West, the one Eurasian civilization that transcended the sacrificial model.

Given this framework, what would Lévi-Strauss say about China? Lévi-Strauss says almost nothing about China in his voluminous writings, but I think it is safe to say that Lévi-Strauss would not be sympathetic to Chinese correlative thought. And for *precisely* the same reasons that figures from Weber to Roetz have disparaged Chinese correlative thought: Chinese correlative thought fails to recognize the objective existence of discontinuities—the discontinuities that, the implicit argument goes, proved crucial for the emergence of modern science. The only difference is that Lévi-Strauss would not see Chinese correlative thought as primitive: unlike so many scholars—from Mauss and Durkheim to K. C. Chang—who see

22. Lévi-Strauss, *From Honey to Ashes*, p. 473.



the uniqueness of China as lying in its intimate connection to a primitive past, Lévi-Strauss would *not* see primitive thought in China at all. Similarly, Lévi-Strauss would not agree with Graham's presentation of Chinese correlative systems as simply another example (along with "primitive thought") of "proto-science." One suspects that for Lévi-Strauss, Chinese correlativity would have involved an objectively incorrect claim of continuity. Primitive thought, in contrast, is to be found in totemism—a system that, like modern science, but in a different way, accurately recognizes the truth of discontinuity.

But where does this leave the study of early China? As the vast majority of scholars who have studied early Chinese correlative thought have noted, Lévi-Strauss's analyses are invaluable for the exploration of classification systems. But if we choose not to follow Lévi-Strauss's polemic, can we at least use his terminology more effectively? First, is China monogenetic? I will argue no. Even if Schwartz is slightly misrepresenting Lévi-Strauss's argument, Schwartz's intuition that China cannot be successfully defined according to one pole of Lévi-Strauss's terminology is nonetheless correct. I will go even further and question Lévi-Strauss's attempt to distinguish polygenesis and monogenesis in the form that he does: categorizing entire cultures on the basis of such a dualistic framework is precisely what we should avoid in comparative studies.

Marshall Sahlins has suggested a way of utilizing Lévi-Strauss's distinctions in a more nuanced way. As noted above, Lévi-Strauss cites Polynesia as an example of a monogenetic system—a system that defined everything as based on a single continuous line of descent. Sahlins, an expert on Polynesia, has modified this by pointing out that this description, while accurate, refers only to one set of claims; other groups, in the same culture, emphasize polygenesis:

It appears in Fiji as the interchangeable contrast between unitary lineage organization of the social totality, an encompassment of the whole in the ancestry of a divine king (*yavusa* system), and the scheme of society as a synthesis of indigenous and immigrant peoples, joined by the marriage of a daughter of the land with a stranger-king from the sea, and then ordered as a diarchic kingdom under a ritual paramount from the foreigners and a warrior-king from the originals (land-sea or *vasu* system).<sup>23</sup>

23. Sahlins, "Foreword," p. x.

Certain groups define society and the cosmos monogenetically; others define it polygenetically. Historical analysis involves, among other things, the study of the interplay between these competing visions.<sup>24</sup>

Gregory Schrempp, one of Sahlins's students, has developed these arguments for the Maori through his notion of a "dual formulation," which he defines as "the co-existence of two different conceptions of the essential character and identity of a given concrete social unit."<sup>25</sup> These two conceptions correspond closely to Lévi-Strauss's distinction between monogenesis and polygenesis. Schrempp argues that Maori cosmogonic narratives can be grouped into two distinctive positions—positions that, Schrempp points out, can be mapped successfully with Kant's antinomies.<sup>26</sup> Kant's argument is that, in the history of Western metaphysics, one can find two distinctive, and mutually contradictory, positions. Take, for example, Kant's second antinomy in the *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*:

Thesis: Everything in the world consists of [elements that are] simple.  
Antithesis: There is nothing simple, but everything is composite.<sup>27</sup>

According to Schrempp, Maori thought, just like Western metaphysics, can be categorized into one of these two positions.<sup>28</sup> And, what is more significant, the two constantly play off each other. To revert to Lévi-Strauss's terminology, neither monogenesis nor polygenesis is a founding assumption; rather, the two co-exist, and their antithesis endlessly gives rise to further developments in cosmological thought.

This way of using Lévi-Strauss's terminology points toward a means of explicating the complexities of competing cosmological formulations in a given culture. How do various cosmologies posit continuity and discontinuity, and what are the implications of this positing? And how do these competing cosmologies play off against one another? As we will see, in the case of early China, this is a crucial question for working through the correlative cosmologies posited in the late Warring States and early Han.

24. For related arguments by Sahlins's students for other areas of Polynesia, see Valeri, "Constitutive History"; Schrempp, *Magical Arrows*; and Michael Scott, "Auhenua."

25. Schrempp, *Magical Arrows*, p. 68.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 137–68.

27. Kant, *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, p. 87. A fuller discussion can be found in Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 402–9.

28. For Schrempp's discussion of parallels between the second antinomy and aspects of Maori thought, see *Magical Arrows*, pp. 149–55.

Thus, although I have questioned Schwartz's presentation of Lévi-Strauss, I follow Schwartz in arguing that Lévi-Strauss's terminology may be extremely helpful in sorting out Chinese correlative thought but that it should be utilized in a new way. It will also be helpful to return to Granet, but in a way very different from that of Hall and Ames. I agree with Hall and Ames that we should attach much significance to the way Lévi-Strauss built his ideas on the foundation of Granet, but I will argue that the implications point in the opposite direction.

Although Lévi-Strauss is repeatedly read in the sinological literature as having claimed that all "primitive" thinking is based on the principles Granet discovered, the actual development of this thinking was far more complex. Although Lévi-Strauss built much of his structural analyses on Granet, he consistently charged Granet with failing to develop his ideas rigorously. For example, Lévi-Strauss faults the analysis of Chinese kinship structures in Granet's *Catégories matrimoniales et relations de proximité dans la Chine ancienne*:

In this work, a sinologist provides a decisive contribution to the general theory of kinship systems, but he presents his discoveries in the guise of Chinese material, and as interpretations of this material. However, when considered from this particular angle, these interpretations seem confused and contradictory, and sinologists have received them suspiciously, even when their own analyses were not contrary to them. Here, then, is a specialist who perhaps exceeds his proper role, but he succeeds in arriving at theoretical truths of a greater and more general significance.<sup>29</sup>

And I suspect that Lévi-Strauss would reach a similar conclusion about Granet's analysis of correlative thinking: invaluable for theory but confused for China. More specifically, I suspect that Lévi-Strauss thought that Granet treated China too much like a totemic system, when it in fact was, by Lévi-Strauss's reckoning, a monogenetic system.

More important, though, Lévi-Strauss would have rejected Granet's overall analytical framework. As mentioned above, Lévi-Strauss strongly opposed an evolutionary reading of totemism and sacrifice. Such a framework has a long pedigree and was most famously argued by William Robertson Smith. But it is a pedigree that includes Granet. Indeed, the shift from totemism to sacrifice is one of the underlying themes of Granet's evolutionary reading of early China.<sup>30</sup> Granet argues that early Chinese society was to-

29. Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, p. 311.

30. See Granet, *Danses et légendes de la Chine ancienne*.

temic and that kingship arose when particular figures—the ancient sages—sacrificed the totemic animals and captured their power. For example, according to Granet, the owl was the totemic "emblem" of Huangdi, but Huangdi captured and devoured an owl. Similarly, Yao had to conquer the sun before he could become a king: "Yao, the sovereign, . . . had to aim arrows at the sun before he could become a Son of Heaven. Thus he succeeded in overcoming his celestial double. As soon as he had conquered the emblem of the sun, he was worthy to reign."<sup>31</sup>

Granet's reconstruction is not convincing in terms of the sinological materials; nor, I would agree with Lévi-Strauss, is it convincing theoretically. Lévi-Strauss would certainly be correct in saying that Granet's decision to analyze early China in terms of a shift from totemism to sacrifice was unfortunate. But if we accept Lévi-Strauss's critique of Granet's evolutionism, we should also accept Sahlin's critique of Lévi-Strauss's form of cultural classification. All of this leaves us in a very interesting place when reading Granet. Most of Granet's sources were late Warring States or Han texts, and the issues Granet was discussing as an evolution from totemism to sacrifice could, à la Lévi-Strauss and Sahlin, be worked out in terms of the ways that various texts posit continuity and discontinuity.

With this in mind, let us return to Granet. Granet's point in emphasizing that the early cultural heroes conquered emblems was that the origins of Chinese correlative thought do not lie in an attempt to make the social world correspond to the natural world. Rather,

the first necessity of the ruler is to furnish humans with the emblems that allow them to domesticate nature. The emblems signal, for each being, its nature as well as its place and position in the world. In the first days of Chinese civilization, Huangdi acquired the glory of a heroic founder, for he saw the need to give all things a correct name. . . . "To render the names correct" is, in effect, the first of governmental obligations.<sup>32</sup>

This is why Granet emphasized that emblems were initially totems conquered by man: man did not so much recognize correlations between the social and the natural worlds as create correlations by appropriating, domesticating, and placing natural objects within a framework that allows for human consumption and control.

31. Granet, *Chinese Civilization*, pp. 197–98.

32. Granet, *La pensée chinoise*, p. 47.

Removed from its evolutionary framework of a shift from totemism to sacrifice, Granet's argument yields something close to what Sahlins was pointing toward: a correlative claim of continuity between humanity and nature was designed, and continues to function, only in opposition to an opposing claim of discontinuity. Or, in Lévi-Strauss's terminology, there is both polygenesis and monogenesis here, and neither can be understood without the other.

### The Great Unity of the Cosmos: The *Taiyi sheng shui*

The *Taiyi sheng shui*, a text discovered in the Guodian tomb and probably dating to the late fourth century BC,<sup>33</sup> describes a cosmogony focused on Taiyi 太一, the Great One. In this text, Taiyi is the force that gives birth to the cosmos.<sup>34</sup>

The Great One gives birth to water. Water goes back and supplements [i.e., joins with] the Great One. They thereby complete Heaven. Heaven goes back and supplements the Great One. They thereby complete Earth. Heaven and Earth [return and supplement each other].<sup>35</sup>

In this opening portion of the cosmogony, the Great One is the primary power. It initially generates, on its own, water. Water and the Great One then join to give birth to Heaven. Then Heaven and the Great One combine to make the Earth. The Great One not only begins the process with a direct birth (without another partner), but it continues to be the force with which each successive substance copulates to complete the next substance. This process reaches its conclusion once both Heaven and Earth have been completed. Contrary to most early Chinese cosmologies, Heaven is not the highest power. Not only is Heaven subordinated to the Great

33. For a discussion of the Guodian find, see "Jingmen Guodian yi hao Chu mu." For analyses of the Guodian texts, see, in particular, Allan and Williams, *The Guodian Laozi*; and Guo Yi, *Guodian zhujian yu xian-Qin xueshu sixiang*.

34. Relatively little is known about Taiyi. He was evidently a god in at least the southern regions during the pre-Han period. He appears, for example, in the Baoshan divination texts from the state of Chu in the fourth century BC. For an excellent analysis of the paleographic references to Taiyi, see Li Ling, "An Archaeological Study of Taiyi (Grand One) Worship."

35. *Taiyi sheng shui*, strip 1; hereinafter strip numbers are given in the text; the entire text is reproduced in *Guodian chumu zhujian*, p. 125.

One, but it is placed within a generative process that it does not control. Heaven is not a potentially capricious power here; it is a part of a larger processual movement.

Following the completion of Heaven and Earth, the substances begin copulating among themselves, without the Great One: Heaven and Earth join together and complete two more substances, which in turn copulate and complete two more:

They thereby complete the spirits and the illuminated (*shen ming*). The spirits and the illuminated return and supplement each other. They thereby complete the yin and yang. Yin and yang return and supplement each other. They thereby complete the four seasons. The four seasons return and supplement each other. They thereby complete the cold and hot. Cold and hot return and supplement each other. They thereby complete the wet and dry. The wet and dry return and supplement each other. They thereby complete the year and then stop. (Strips 2-4)

Of interest here is that all these figures, from the Great One through Heaven, Earth, the spirits, and the illuminated (*shen ming*), were gods and spirits who received cult at the time. The authors of this text are thus building their cosmology from actual gods and reading them simply as substances in a balanced cosmos.

The next substances mentioned in the cosmology are the cold and hot and the wet and dry. The combination of the second pair results in the formation of the year, and this brings the process to its end. The cosmos is thus formed when the wet and the dry result in the natural generation of the year.

The text then recapitulates the process and underlines that it all began with the Great One:

Therefore, the year was generated by wet and dry. Wet and dry were generated by cold and hot. Cold and hot were generated by the four seasons. The four seasons were generated by yin and yang. Yin and yang were generated by the spirits and the illuminated. The spirits and the illuminated were generated by Heaven and Earth. Heaven and Earth were generated by the Great One. (Strips 4-6)

However, the text draws a further conclusion as well: the Great One pervades all that was generated from it and is in fact active in the seasons themselves:

Therefore the Great One is stored in water and moves in the seasons. Circulating and again [four graphs missing, probably: starting, it takes itself as] the mother of



the myriad things. At times diminishing, at times flourishing, it takes itself as the alignment (*jing*) of the myriad things. (Strips 6–7)

The Great One pervades everything and is both the mother and the aligner of the myriad things. Spirits do not control natural phenomena, nor, as we will see later in the *Huainanzi*, do they align the cosmos. Instead, the One gives birth to the myriad things and aligns them.

It is therefore the one thing that cannot be controlled by Heaven, Earth, yin, and yang: "This is what Heaven is unable to kill, what Earth is unable to regulate, and what yin and yang are unable to complete. The gentleman who understands this is called . . . [characters missing]" (strips 7–8). He who understands that the Great One pervades and aligns everything understands the movement of the universe.

The authors then explain the alignment of the universe: "The way of Heaven is to value weakness. It reduces its completion so as to add to life. By cutting back on strength, making clear . . ." (strip 9). Part of the text is unfortunately lost, and it is impossible to reconstruct the full argument. But it is clearly intended to explicate the alignment that can be understood by the person who knows the Great One. The text continues: "Below is the ground; it is called Earth. Above is *qi*; it is called Heaven" (strip 10). The interaction of Heaven and Earth takes place through the Great One, also known as the Way: "The Way is also its style-name (*zi*). I beg to know its name (*ming*)" (strip 10). It can be given the style-name of "the Way," but the real name is unknowable. This is presumably a reference to contemporary religious practice. As we saw in Chapter 2, Yu's placing the images of spirits on cauldrons allowed for a degree of control over those spirits: naming domesticates deities by putting them within a system controlled by humans. Here, however, the name is unknowable: one cannot place the ancestor into a humanly defined system, and one cannot gain control over it. One must simply entrust oneself to its name:

He who follows affairs by means of the Way must entrust himself to its name. Thus, tasks are completed, and the body grows. As for the sage's following of tasks, he also entrusts himself to its name. Therefore, his achievements are completed, and his body suffers no harm. (Strips 10–12)

The sage accomplishes his tasks and suffers no harm. The reason for this is not that he can transform the spirits who control natural phenomena but rather that, by knowing the ultimate ancestor, the sage understands the ways that natural forces operate:

Heaven and Earth, the style-name and name, were established together. Therefore, if one transgresses the other's boundaries, each fits<sup>36</sup> with the other without thinking. [When Heaven was insufficient in]<sup>37</sup> the northwest, that which was below raised itself through strength. When the Earth was insufficient in the southeast, that which was above [seven graphs missing; the last four are probably: If there is insufficiency above], there is excess below; if there is insufficiency below, there is excess above. (Strips 12–14)

The sage understands the degree to which forces of the natural world spontaneously respond to one another. As such, he is able to live and act effectively in the world. In this cosmology, neither humans nor spirits affect the environment: the cosmos is simply a set of natural forces that respond to one another. Sages are simply those who understand these processes properly by understanding the Great One—whose style-name is "the Way."

In this cosmology, natural phenomena are not controlled by individuated spirits. Rather, the authors of this text appropriated divinities and spirits and made them into cosmological forces. Like the texts discussed in Chapter 2, this text presents a gnosis different from that offered by the ritual specialists of the day: any attempt to manipulate the spirits of the world through divination and sacrifices would be useless within such a cosmology. However, the argument here departs significantly from the claims seen in Chapter 2. Instead of trying to establish forms of power within the adept, the authors of this text based power on the spontaneous nature of the cosmos—which operates independently of the actor. There is an inherent alignment in the cosmos, generated and maintained by the Great One, that provides the basis for human action. Power and knowledge are thus to be gained not by appropriating the powers of spirits but by understanding and subordinating oneself to the patterns of the cosmos. The cosmos is thus seen as following a normative pattern discernible by those who know how to understand it.

The consequence of this is that the tensions between humanity and Heaven found in Mencius are here completely erased. Heaven is here an offspring of a yet earlier ancestor—the Great One. And Heaven becomes simply a partner with another offspring, Earth, with whom it mates to generate the remainder of the cosmos. Heaven, Earth, and the remainder of the cos-

36. Following Qiu Xigui in reading the missing graph as *dang* 當; see *Guodian chumu zhujian*, p. 126n17.

37. Following Qiu Xigui in reading the three remaining missing graphs as 天不足; see *ibid.*



mos are generated and aligned by the One, and any movement by one force spontaneously brings about a movement by its pair. Neither Heaven nor any of the deities can be capricious in this schema.

This point allows us to reflect further on some claims made concerning Chinese cosmology. In particular, Joseph Needham's descriptions of early Chinese cosmology, discussed in the Introduction, deserve a closer look. Schwartz criticizes Needham's biological metaphors (particularly the description of the cosmology as "organismic"), arguing, among other things, that Needham's terminology is somewhat contradictory. As Schwartz correctly points out, Needham's notion of a harmony of wills implies distinctive wills that are then harmonized—exactly the opposite of what Needham is trying to imply: "There is much talk [in Needham] of 'cooperation' of parts or 'harmony of wills,' while avoiding the fact that the image of 'cooperation' inevitably suggests the notion of initially separate entities which come together to 'cooperate.'"<sup>38</sup> Although Schwartz's intent is to illustrate Needham's poor choice of words, I would argue that the poor choice is, unintentionally, quite felicitous: what is going on in Chinese correlative thought is precisely an attempt to pull together elements perceived to be distinct—an attempt to claim a form of continuity prevailing against disparate entities. Continuity is not assumed; it is created. In the case at hand, disparate deities are defined as descendants of the Great One, and that ancestor is presented as continuing to align and participate in the actions of the descendants. Accordingly, the actions of each of these powers are seen as a spontaneous response to the actions of the others. All, in other words, are imbued with the One.

This first instance of correlative thinking appears in a cosmological system in which the One is posited as the ancestor of the cosmos. As we shall see, the basing of correlative thinking in a claim of genealogical descent from a single ancestor will continue throughout much of the Warring States. The debate will turn then to issues such as What is the relationship of humans to this One? Do they simply conform to the patterns of the One, or can they achieve power by means of the One as well? And, if they can, under what circumstances is it acceptable to exercise such power? And does one use the traditional arts of sacrifice and divination to do this or some other means?

38. Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China*, p. 416.

### Becoming an Ancestor to the People: The *Laozi*

In the Guodian cache, the *Taiyi sheng shui* text is linked with, and may have been attached to, the third of the texts containing chapters of the *Laozi*.<sup>39</sup> The *Laozi* does, indeed, compare in many ways with *Taiyi sheng shui*.<sup>40</sup> To begin with, it posits a comparable cosmogony:

The Way gives birth to the One,  
the One gives birth to the two,  
the two give birth to the three,  
the three give birth to the myriad things.  
The myriad things carry the yin and embrace the yang,  
and blend the vapors so as to become harmonized. (Chap. 42)

Although worked out differently, the cosmogony of the *Laozi*, like that of the *Taiyi sheng shui*, is based on generation from an original ancestor, the Way.

Also like the *Taiyi sheng shui*, the *Laozi* discusses the Way in terms of its name (*ming*) and style-name (*zi*):

There is a thing chaotically completed,  
born before Heaven and earth.  
Still and quiet,  
standing alone yet unchanging,  
going around yet never becoming weary,  
and capable thereby of being the mother of all under Heaven.  
I do not know its name (*ming*),  
Its style-name (*zi*) is "the Way."  
If forced to give it a name, it would be called "Great" (*da*). (Chap. 25)

The ancestor of all that exists can be given a style-name of "the Way," but its real name is unknowable. Here again, one cannot domesticate or control the divine power by learning its name.

Unlike the *Taiyi sheng shui*, however, the *Laozi* calls on the adept to return to this ancestor:

39. On the nature of the Guodian *Laozi* chapters, see Roth, "Some Methodological Issues in the Study of the Guodian *Laozi* Parallels."

40. My understanding of the *Laozi* has been aided greatly by the essays in *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi*, edited by Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe.

All under Heaven had a beginning.  
 It can be taken as the mother of all under Heaven.  
 Once you have obtained the mother,  
 you can thereby know the sons.  
 Once you have known the sons,  
 you can return and hold fast to the mother. Until the end there will  
 be no harm. (Chap. 52)

The crucial point here is that the sage does *not* strive simply to understand, follow, and accord with the generative process of the Way. On the contrary, the sage reverses that generative process and returns to the source of power: the ancestor.

By doing so, the adept gains the same powers and generates the same harmony as the Way itself:

The Way is nameless.  
 Although the uncarved block is small,  
 no one is able to subordinate it.  
 If princes and kings were able to hold fast to it,  
 The myriad things will submit on their own,  
 and Heaven and Earth will harmonize with each other  
 and send down sweet dew.  
 The people will adjust themselves,  
 yet no one will order them. (Chap. 32)

By holding fast to the Way, the adept is able to make all things submit to him, to control the populace without resorting to overt commands, and even to bring Heaven and Earth into harmony. He becomes, in a sense, like the ancestor: he is able to generate order and cause everything to submit to him.

The ruler is thus able to accomplish everything, but it will seem to the people as though everything is simply occurring naturally, without any directing will:

When his achievements are completed and tasks finished,  
 The commoners say that "We are like this naturally (*zi ran*)."  
 (Chap. 17)

Since the people think the order brought about by the ruler is a spontaneous product of the Way, they readily accept it. In contrast to the sage of the *Taiyi sheng shui*, the sage of the *Laozi* is not according with a pre-existing natural order, nor is he simply following the order of the ancestor—the One.

Instead, the adept is according with the ancestor in order to gain its powers and create an order of his own choosing.

Although the *Laozi* is often characterized as an expression of a form of naturalism, I would argue that the epithet is even less appropriate for the *Laozi* than it is for Zhuangzi and Mencius. In the *Laozi* the sage does not model himself on nature: he models himself on the Way, which is the ancestor of the natural and human worlds. He thus gains power over both: the natural world, like the human world, submits to him, not the other way around. Moreover, the sage does not act naturally at all. To begin with, he reverses the natural generative process to return to the Way. He thereafter fools people into thinking the subsequent phenomena they witness are natural, when in fact they are simply his wishes.

In short, this is not a naturalism at all; it is yet another form of self-divinization—a claim that humans can, through self-cultivation, gain divine powers. But, in contrast to the "Neiye," the claim here is not made through a posited cosmology of *qi*, essence, and spirit, and the argument is not that humans have the ability to become like spirits. It is, rather, a genealogical claim in which the adept is able to appropriate and thus gain the powers of the ultimate ancestor of the cosmos.

Whether such a cosmology should be termed correlative depends on one's definition of the term. But I will argue that ideas such as those seen in the *Laozi* and *Taiyi sheng shui* were crucial for the development of late Warring States correlative cosmologies.

### Using the One to Explore Heaven: The *Shiliujing*

The "Chengfa" chapter of the *Shiliujing*, one of the texts discovered at Mawangdui, reveals a concern with the One similar to that seen in the *Taiyi sheng shui*.<sup>41</sup> The chapter consists of a dialogue between Huangdi and his minister Li Hei. Huangdi is concerned about the growth of dissension in his realm:

Huangdi asked Li Hei: "It is only I, the One Man, who has united and taken possession of all under Heaven. But cunning people are continuing to grow, and clever debaters are using craftiness. They cannot be opposed with laws. I fear that some will employ them and thereby bring chaos to all under Heaven. I wish to ask if all under Heaven has complete laws that can be used to rectify the people?"<sup>42</sup>

41. My translation has been aided by Yates, *Five Lost Classics*, pp. 135–37.

42. *Shiliujing*, in *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, 1: 72; hereinafter cited in the text.

Li Hei responds by first discussing the ancient period:

Li Hei responded: "Yes. In ancient times, when Heaven and Earth had been completed, rectified were the names and in harmony were the forms. [graph missing] thereby held fast to the one name. They connected it to Heaven above and extended it to the four seas. I have heard of the complete laws under Heaven. Therefore it is said: Instead of the many, speak of the One and then stop. Accord with the name and return to the One, and the people will not bring disorder to the regulations." (1: 72)

In the implicit cosmogony here, names emerged with Heaven and Earth. Moreover, the one name is portrayed as fully graspable by humans. By according with it, the ruler can return to the ultimate ancestor and regulate all the descendants.

Huangdi then inquires whether the One can still be possessed, and Li Hei assures him that it has been accessible throughout history:

Huangdi said: "I wish to ask if all under Heaven can still possess the One." Li Hei responded: "In ancient times, august Heaven made the phoenix descend to say one word and then stop. The five thearchs employed it, using it to clear Heaven and Earth, calculate the four seas, cherish the people below, and rectify the officers of the first generation. For this reason, all the slanderous people retreated, and the worthy men arose. The five evils were expunged, and the clever debaters stopped. They accorded with the name and returned to the One, and the people did not bring disorder to the regulations." (1: 72)

By according with the name, the thearchs were able to right Heaven and Earth and order the world.

Huangdi next asks about the One itself:

Huangdi asked, "As for the One: is it the One and that's all? Does it also grow?" Li Hei said: "The One is the root of the Way. How could it be so and yet not grow? [two graphs missing] is lost, it is because no one is holding fast to the One. The liberation (*jie*) of the One allows an exploration (*cha*) of Heaven and Earth. The pattern (*li* 理) of the One extends to the four seas." (1: 72)

The pattern of the One extends throughout the world. Consequently, by holding fast to the ancestor, the adept is liberated and thus able to exceed normal human limitations and to explore Heaven and Earth. Moreover, the pattern of the One extends throughout the world. The statement is almost precisely the same as the one discussed in Chapter 2 from the "Neiye":

The Way fills all under Heaven. It is everywhere that people reside, but people are unable to understand. With the liberation (*jie*) of the one word, one explores (*cha*) Heaven above, reaches to Earth below, and encircles and fills the nine regions. What does it mean to be liberated by it? It resides in the stability of the mind.<sup>43</sup>

As noted above, however, the "Neiye" presents this liberation as occurring entirely within the mind of the adept. Here, the One is presented as the ancestor and the unifying link of the cosmos, and the adept is called upon to link himself to it.

Li Hei continues:

How can one understand the endpoint of complying and the comprehension of far and near? Only the One is not lost. The One thereby impels transformations. The few can be used to know the many. Now, for gazing throughout the four seas, reaching the farthest points above and below, with the four directions embracing each other: each follows its own way. Now, a hundred words have a basis, a thousand words have essentials, and a myriad words have totality. As for the numerosness of the myriad things: all pass through one hole. (1: 72)

The One thus becomes the ground for control:

Now, if not a rectified person, who would be able to regulate this? He must be a rectified person, thereby able to manage rectification so as to rectify the strange, grasp the One so as to understand the many, expel what is harmful to the people, and support what is appropriate for the people. He manages all by holding fast to the One, and he shares the same endpoints as Heaven and Earth. He can thereby know the good fortune and misfortune of Heaven and Earth. (1: 72)

By holding fast to the One, one is able to understand and regulate all. Again, as in the "Neiye," one is able to understand good fortune and misfortune. But, if the adept in the "Neiye" is liberated through inner cultivation, the sage of the *Shiliujing* frees himself by holding fast to that which generated and continues to pervade everything.

All three of the texts discussed thus far—the *Taiyi sheng shui*, the *Laozi*, and the "Chengfa" chapter of the *Shiliujing*—have a similar monogenetic cosmology: everything that exists, we are told, was generated from a single ancestor—usually termed the One. Accordingly, great powers over the descendants of that ancestor—including Heaven and Earth themselves—can be obtained if one can return to that ancestor. The exact method for

43. *Guanzi*, "Neiye," 16.3b.



returning varies by text, as do the powers that can be obtained. But what is of interest here is how this cosmology reverses that seen in the sacrificial models. The sacrificial models assume a radical disjunction between the human realm and the world of spirits. The goal was thus to try, within the limits of what was possible, to anthropomorphize the spirit world, beginning with the local and most immediate spirits and working one's way up the pantheon to, one hoped, Heaven itself. In these cosmological models, however, the claim is not that there exists an inherent disjunction between the human, natural, and spirit realms but rather that all things—humans, nature, and the entire pantheon of gods (including Heaven)—are descendants of a single ancestor, and all things are thus directly related by descent. Thus, by understanding or (in other texts) holding fast to this ancestor, one can gain knowledge or even direct power over all things. These cosmological texts are, in short, an attempt to reject a sacrificial model of the cosmos by asserting absolute monogenesis and by claiming a consequent ability to return directly to the ultimate ancestor instead of having to work up (and transform) the pantheon with sacrifices beginning at the local level.

#### Becoming a Spirit: The "Xinshu" Chapters of the *Guanzi*

Read in this way, the cosmological texts under consideration in this chapter are similar to those discussed in Chapter 2. And, indeed, the authors of the "Xinshu, shang" and "Xinshu, xia," chapters 36 and 37 respectively of the *Guanzi*,<sup>44</sup> modeled their arguments directly on the "Neiye." Not only is the overall cosmology quite similar to that seen in the "Neiye," but significant portions of these chapters are based on passages from the "Neiye." However, the arguments concerning self-divinization go much farther than those found in the "Neiye."

The authors of the "Xinshu, xia" begin by focusing on the rectification of the form and the resting of the essence within: "If the form is not rectified, the power (*de*) will not arrive. If the essence is not within, the mind will not be regulated. Rectify the form and illuminate the power, and all the myriad things will arrive on their own."<sup>45</sup> The passage is almost identical to one

44. For an excellent discussion of the relationship between the "Neiye" and the "Xinshu" chapters, see Roth, "Redaction Criticism and the Early History of Taoism"; and idem, *Original Tao*, pp. 23–30. See also Rickett, *Guanzi*, pp. 56–58, 65–70.

45. *Guanzi*, "Xinshu, xia," 13.5b–6a; hereinafter cited in the text.

from the "Neiye": "If the form is not rectified, the power (*de*) will not arrive. If you are not still within, the mind will not be regulated. Rectify the form and assist the power."<sup>46</sup> Building on the arguments of the "Neiye," the authors of the "Xinshu, xia" posit a cosmology based on form and essence. Maintaining these properly allows one to obtain power, regulate the mind, and thereby bring the myriad things to oneself.

As in the "Neiye," the cosmos is monistic. He who grasps the One is thus able to explore everything: "Therefore, as for the sage, the one word liberates him. He explores Heaven above and explores Earth below" (13.8a). Although the sage never leaves his form, he is able to explore the cosmos simply by grasping the one word. And, again as in the "Neiye," this allows him to rule all the myriad things:

He who grasps the One and does not lose it is able to become the ruler of the myriad things. He shares the same brightness of the sun and moon and shares the same pattern as Heaven and Earth. The sage regulates things; things do not control him. (13.6b)

The claim here exceeds anything seen in the "Neiye." Grasping the One not only gives the sage access to the cosmos, it in fact allows him to gain the same pattern as Heaven and Earth and achieve the same brightness as the sun and moon. He has the same powers of control as Heaven itself.

This emphasis on the divine powers of humans is particularly clear in the way the authors play off the discussion in the "Neiye" concerning *shen*. The text defines spirit as that which is so refined as to be immeasurable by ordinary human experience and yet understands everything: "As for the spirit, no one knows its ultimate point. It brilliantly knows all under Heaven and penetrates the four ultimate points" (13.5b–6a). The text then quotes the "Neiye" passage on divination. Intriguingly, however, it omits the admonition to concentrate "as if a spirit" (*ru shen*; see p. 115):

Can you concentrate? Can you unify? Can you not engage in crackmaking or milfoil divination and yet understand auspiciousness and inauspiciousness? Can you stop? Can you reach an end? Can you not ask others and obtain it in yourself? Therefore it is said: "If you think about it and think about it but do not obtain it, the ghosts and spirits will teach it: This is not due to the power of ghosts and spirits; it is due to the ultimate point of the essential *qi*." (13.6a–b)

46. *Guanzi*, "Neiye," 16.3a.



The passage concludes by defining the sage in precisely the same terms used to describe the spirit: "He brilliantly knows all under Heaven and penetrates the four ultimate points" (13.7b). The claims are essentially those of the "Neiye," but the authors take the additional step of implying that one can in fact become a spirit and gain full knowledge of all under Heaven.

Another chapter of the *Guanzi*, the "Xinshu, shang," makes the point explicit. The text at one point makes a claim clearly reminiscent of the "Neiye": "If one empties one's desires, the spirit will enter and dwell. If in clearing one does not cleanse fully, the spirit will leave." It then provides a commentary to this statement:

That which regulates man is essence. If you discard desires, then you will be all-embracing. If you are all-embracing, then you will be still. If you are still, you will be of essence. If you are of essence, you will establish yourself alone. If you are alone, you will be illuminated. If you are illuminated, you will be a spirit. The spirit is the most valued. Thus, if a hallway is not opened and cleared, then a valued person would not reside in it. Therefore it is said: "If you do not cleanse, the spirit will not remain."<sup>47</sup>

Utilizing the same cosmology and same terminology as the "Neiye," the authors of the "Xinshu, shang" make the full claim that humans can in fact become spirits.

Like the "Chengfa" chapter of the *Shiliujing*, the authors of these two chapters posit a monistic cosmology in which the adept should attempt to grasp the One. But, whereas the "Chengfa" is built on an argument for the necessity of understanding and controlling the many by means of the One, the authors of these chapters are arguing that the sage can in fact become a spirit—ruling over the myriad things, possessing the same pattern as Heaven and Earth, and penetrating to the four points of the cosmos. Despite their differences, however, both follow a similar move: both present a monogenetic cosmos, and both claim that the ruler can gain great powers by returning directly to the One.

### Becoming Like Heaven: The *Lüshi chungiu*

Many of these cosmological arguments were further elaborated in the *Lüshi chungiu*, a text put together by Lü Buwei at the court of Qin around 239 BC. The text is, among other things, an argument for universal rulership. Com-

47. *Guanzi*, "Xinshu, shang," 13.1b, 3a–b.

posed at a time when the Qin unification of the states became a real possibility, the text appears to be part of a court debate over what the ideology of the state of Qin should be.

The received tradition holds that Lü Buwei commissioned a number of scholars to write chapters for a work that would encompass all knowledge of the time. Why such a tradition would develop is clear: the overall claim made by the text is one of inclusivity. Although the specific arguments vary from chapter to chapter, each chapter attempts to pull together distinct positions into larger, totalizing systems. Moreover, and more important for the concerns of this chapter, the attempt is usually made within cosmological frameworks. The text thus reveals an array of cosmological positions taking shape in the mid-third century BC: since the place of humans varies from chapter to chapter, the text serves as an excellent series of examples of some of the disparate late Warring States attempts to envision rulership within a cosmological framework.

The text also provides a snapshot of a debate at the Qin court on the eve of the imperial unification. In the short run, as we shall see, the positions associated with the *Lüshi chungiu* failed to win out at court: soon after the work was completed, Lü Buwei fell from power, and the Qin court thereafter provided little support for such ideas—nor did it do so after the formation of the Qin empire. We thus gain a glimpse as well of the precarious position of correlative cosmology at the courts of the day.

The text continues the critique of ritual specialists, as well as the critique of rulers of the day for employing them. For example, the "Jie shu" chapter sees attempts to manipulate the world of spirits as causing the problems they are supposed to prevent: "In the current generation, the rulers use crackmaking and milfoil divination, praying, and sacrificing. Therefore, sickness and disease come all the more."<sup>48</sup> The same chapter has similar critiques of the "spirit specialists and physicians"—figures whom the "the ancients held in contempt."<sup>49</sup> Such criticisms show the degree to which, even as late as 240 BC, cosmologists still perceived themselves to be a minority voice at the court and thought it necessary to argue that the rulers of their day should not resort to such ritual arts as divination and sacrifice. The point is worth emphasizing, since many twentieth-century analyses take the cosmological

48. *Lüshi chungiu*, "Jieshu," 3.5a.

49. *Ibid.*

claims in texts like the *Lüshi chunqiu* as evidence of fundamental structures of Chinese thought and overlook the origins of these texts as polemics against the dominant practices at the courts of the day. And they were arguments that would continue to be, for much of the next two centuries, quite unsuccessful.

### "Dayue"

The "Dayue" chapter, an essay on music, opens with a cosmogony designed to place both the origins of music and the sages' utilization of music within a broad generative framework—a framework reminiscent of the *Taiyi sheng shui*:

The origins of tones and music are distant. They were generated of measures and rooted in the Great One (Taiyi). The Great One produced the two forms, the two forms produced the yin and the yang, the yin and the yang changed and transformed, one above and one below, joining and completing, confused and chaotic, separating and then again joining, joining and then again separating. This is called the constancy of Heaven. Heaven and Earth were the wheel of a chariot, ending and then again beginning, reaching the extreme and then again returning.<sup>50</sup>

As in the *Taiyi sheng shui*, the cosmogony here centers around the Great One. But unlike that earlier text, the role of the Great One was to give birth to two forms, which then gave birth to the yin and yang.

The interaction of these two created the seasons, and out of this the myriad things were born:

The four seasons repeatedly arose, now hot, now cold; now short, now long; now soft, now hard. The myriad things were what emerged, initiated (*zao*) by the Great One, transformed by the yin and yang, germinating, sprouting, developing, growing, growing cold, and freezing—all so as to be formed. (5.3b)

The proper and harmonious functioning of the cosmos allows for the continued growth of things. The sounds produced from the ensuing harmony became the basis for the sages' formation of music: "The form and substance have a place; everything has a sound. Sound is produced from harmony, harmony is produced from being fitting. When it was harmonious and fitting, the former kings determined (*ding*) the music. (Music) was generated from

50. *Lüshi chunqiu*, "Dayue," 5.3a; hereinafter cited in the text.

this" (5.3b). Harmonious sound is thus a product of the growth of the cosmos itself, and the sages created music by determining those natural harmonies. Music thus exemplifies this natural harmony: "All music is the harmonizing of Heaven and Earth and the blending of yin and yang" (5.4a). Hence, the sages use music to maintain Heaven and Earth in proper harmony.

The Great One is the source of this harmony. As the authors argue in a passage almost identical to statements in both the *Taiyi sheng shui* and the *Laozi*: "The Way is the utmost essence. It cannot be formed; it cannot be named. If you are forced to do so, call it the Great One. Therefore, the One regulates and commands, and the two follow and obey" (5.4a–b). Consequently, humans who can use the One are able to bring harmony to nature:

He who can use the One to bring order to his body will escape from disaster, live a long life to the end, and keep intact his Heaven (Tian). He who is able to use the One to govern his state will cast out depravity and licentiousness, attract the worthy, and complete the great transformation. He who is able to use the One to regulate all under Heaven will cause cold and heat to be moderated and the wind and rain to be timely, and will become a sage. (5.4b)

By utilizing the One, an adept can bring the natural world to its proper fruition: the individual will live out his allotted lifespan, the ruler of a state will bring order to his realm, and the supreme ruler of all under Heaven will properly modulate the forces of nature.

Humans thus play a crucial role in moderating not only human nature but the entire natural world. Music occupies a middle position here—it is based on the generative processes of nature, and yet it is one means humans use to regulate nature. Humanity is thus, even in the formation of music, the fulfiller of natural processes. The way to control the wind and rain, therefore, is not by trying to manipulate the spirits who control such forces but by connecting oneself to the Great One and thereby helping to maintain the harmony of the cosmic forces. As in the "Chengfa," the argument here is that the adept should conform to an external One.

### "Bensheng"

In contrast to the "Dayue" chapter and the "Chengfa," the authors of several other chapters in the *Lüshi chunqiu* built their cosmological arguments on claims concerning *shen*. The "Bensheng" chapter, one of the most interesting of these essays, makes cosmological claims for the potentially divine powers

of humans through a complex argument concerning ancestors and humans.<sup>51</sup> The opening statement plays on the title of the ruler, the "son of Heaven" (*tianzi*): "That which first gives birth (*sheng*) is Heaven; the one that nourishes and completes is man. The one who is able to nourish what Heaven generates without perverting it is called the Son of Heaven."<sup>52</sup> Heaven is a generative power, and humans nurture what Heaven has generated. However, such activities risk a perversion of the inheritance, a perversion that can be avoided only by the Son of Heaven—that is, he who is a proper son, properly following what the parent, Heaven, has generated.

The text continues:

The actions of the Son of Heaven take the completing of Heaven as their cause. It is for this reason that officials are established. The establishment of officials is done in order to complete life. The deluded rulers of the present age set up many officials but contrarily use them to harm life. They thus lose the purpose for establishing them. (1.4a)

The sole goal of the state should be to complete Heaven. And the same point holds at the level of human nature. Again, the emphasis is on the necessity of nurturing human nature and on the dangers of perverting it:

It is the nature of man to be long-lived. But things (*wu*) disorder it; therefore, it does not obtain long life. Things are used to nurture the nature; they are not what uses the nature to be nurtured. (1.4a)

The concern, therefore, is not to use oneself to help things but the exact opposite:

Of those who are deluded in the present age, many use the nature to nurture things. They do not understand [the distinctions of] lightness and heaviness. He who does not know lightness and heaviness takes heavy as light and light as heavy. As such, every action fails. (1.4a-b)

The ability to nurture correctly thus resides in a correct understanding of distinctions. Accordingly, the sage consumes only those things that are beneficial:

51. My understanding of this chapter has been helped by the insightful comments in Graham, "The Background of the Mencian Theory of Human Nature," pp. 13–15. I, however, question Graham's attempt to read the chapter as "Yangist."

52. *Lüshi chunqiu*, "Bensheng," 1.3b–4a; hereinafter cited in the text.

Therefore, as regards a sage's relation to sounds, colors, flavors, and tastes: if they are beneficial to his nature, he takes them. If they are harmful to his nature, he rejects them. This is the way of completing his nature. (1.4b).

And completing his nature is tantamount to completing his Heaven:

Therefore, the sage regulates the myriad things so as to complete his Heaven. If his Heaven is complete, then his spirit will be harmonized, his eyes will be clear-seeing, his ears keen of hearing, his nose good at smelling, his mouth quick, the 360 joints all connected and sharp. (1.51)

By thus regulating the myriad things, the sage is able to perfect his heavenly endowment. His powers and faculties then connect properly with the rest of the cosmos: as his spirit becomes harmonized with the cosmos, his senses are able to perceive without error. As a consequence, the sage himself becomes like Heaven and Earth:

His essence will penetrate Heaven and Earth, and his spirit will cover the universe. As regards things: there are none he does not receive and none he does not internalize. He is like Heaven and Earth. (1.52).

The cycle is complete. Heaven gives birth to man, and man thus has a part of Heaven within him. The goal of man is to utilize the things of the world to complete that which Heaven has given. The true sage—the person who is able to complete this process—ultimately internalizes all things within himself, and his essence and spirit penetrate the universe. The Son becomes comparable to that which gave birth to him: he becomes like Heaven and Earth themselves.

The sage's achievement of a spirit that encompasses the cosmos is thus the teleological completion of what Heaven initially generated. In such a cosmology, man does not exist in a potential agon with Heaven, nor does man follow Heaven; instead man—if he fully achieves his potential—completes Heaven's generative process and thereby regulates the myriad things of the universe. Things are therefore to be used to aid in man's completion of this generative process. In short, Heaven established the cosmos for man: if the Son of Heaven accepts what benefits his own nature and rejects all that does not, he will rule over the world properly.

The argument is in some ways a radicalization of the claims of Mencius. Mencius believed that sages, by cultivating that which Heaven gave them, could encompass the myriad things and harmonize Heaven and Earth. But he also felt that Heaven, for reasons that were mysterious, at times blocked



the sage's proper ordering of the world. In this chapter of the *Lüshi chungiu*, however, the sage's ordering of the cosmos is defined as the normative movement of the generative process begun by Heaven. The potential agon found from the Western Zhou through Mencius, which figures like Zhuangzi rejected by defining the spirit as spontaneously following Heaven, is here denied entirely: in achieving the ability to encompass the universe and regulate the myriad things, the sage brings to completion what Heaven has generated.

A closer look, however, reveals that the argument of the "Bensheng" parallels the ritual behavior toward the ancestors discussed in Chapter 1: it is the living who must both fulfill the processes begun by the ancestors and place those ancestors in the proper location. Only here the process moves in the opposite direction: instead of trying to order his ancestors and ultimately influence Heaven, the ruler becomes like Heaven and personally brings order to the entire cosmos. The method advocated is therefore self-cultivation, not sacrifice and divination. As in the "Neiye" and "Xinshu" chapters, powers usually conceived to be obtainable only by ritual specialists in their dealings with spirits are here presented as obtainable by certain humans through self-cultivation. The conflict between humans and spirits is denied by representing the sage as capable of divinizing himself and thereby internalizing all of the cosmos within himself.

#### "Lunren"

The "Lunren" chapter plays with these notions in a slightly different way. The chapter opens by explaining that the most important thing for a ruler to do is to revert to his true nature:

What is meant by turning back to oneself? Making one's ears and eyes appropriate, modulating one's lusts and desires, forsaking cleverness and plotting, expelling craftiness and precedent, letting one's intentions roam (*you*) in the inexhaustible realm, and exercising one's mind on the path of spontaneity.<sup>53</sup>

Neither precedent—following the past—nor craftiness—shifting with the times—is of use. The goals are to return to one's true self, wander throughout the cosmos, and embrace spontaneity. On the face of it, this sounds very much like Zhuangzi.

53. *Lüshi chungiu*, "Lunren," 3.7b; hereinafter cited in the text.

As in the "Bensheng" chapter, by following this program, the ruler protects the Heaven within him:

As such, there will be nothing that will harm his Heaven. If there is nothing that will harm his Heaven, then he will know his essence. If he knows his essence, then he will know his spirit. Knowing his spirit is known as obtaining the One. Now, the myriad forms are completed after obtaining the One. Therefore, he who knows the One can respond to the alterations and transformations of things. (3.7b)

Here too, the possibility of conflict with Heaven is denied; on the contrary, one's highest goal as a human is to protect that piece of Heaven within oneself. But the "Lunren" adds to this argument a cosmology based on essence, spirit, and the One. These are arrayed in a hierarchy: not harming his Heaven allows the adept to know his essence, which in turn allows him to know first his spirit and then the One. Since all things, it is implied, are subordinate to the One, his knowledge of the One allows the adept to respond to things flawlessly.

As in the "Bensheng" chapter, this ultimately allows one to be like Heaven and Earth:

Therefore, if his knowledge consists in knowing the One, then he will be like Heaven and Earth. As such, then what affair cannot be overcome? What thing (*wu*) will he not respond to? (3.8a)

The ruler thus, in a sense, transcends being a thing (*wu*). He instead knows the One and is like Heaven and Earth: he witnesses the alterations and transformation of things and responds properly. In some ways, this argument is reminiscent of that in the "Neiye": by cultivating himself, the adept is able to obtain the One and rule effectively. But here the implication is not that one, as in the "Neiye," controls things; the sense is, rather, that one is able to respond effectively to things. This is, in a way, a political reading of the cosmology of texts like the *Zhuangzi*. But instead of simply accepting the order of Heaven and thereby spontaneously according with the proper way, the ruler here becomes like Heaven and Earth and thus maintains the same spontaneous direction over things that Heaven and Earth themselves exercise. The *Zhuangzi* repeatedly advises us to stop trying to overcome Heaven; the concern here is precisely to allow the adept to overcome things. The path to political power, therefore, lies not in becoming like a spirit but in attaining the same spontaneous guidance of the cosmos exercised by Heaven.



## "Wugong"

Yet another variant of the cosmological argument is to be found in the "Wugong" chapter. As in the "Lunren," the argument of the "Wugong" chapter is based on a linkage of spirit and the Great One. The sage-king, the authors argue,

nourishes his spirit, cultivates his power (*de*) and transforms. . . . Bright, like the illumination of the sun, he alters and transforms the myriad things, and nothing is not put in motion. His spirit is harmonized with the Great One.<sup>54</sup>

By nourishing his spirit, the sage-king harmonizes his spirit with the Great One and gains power over things:

His essence penetrates to the ghosts and spirits. Deep, minute, dark, mysterious; no one sees his form. If today he faced south, the hundred heterodoxies would correct themselves and all under Heaven would return to their dispositions. The people would fully take pleasure in their intentions and peacefully cultivate their natures, and none would act without completing. (17.9b)

These powers would ultimately allow him to become like the ghosts and spirits, and he would rectify the world.

The claim here is in some ways comparable to a statement from the *Lunyu* (15/5):

The master said: "Not doing anything and yet putting things in order, this was Shun. What did he do? He made himself reverent, was rectified, and faced south; that is all."

Shun was able to put all in order by assuming the proper ritual position. The passage from the "Wugong" chapter makes a similar point but at a cosmological level: by making his spirit harmonize with the Great One, the sage-king penetrates to the ghosts and spirits and brings order to the world.

Several interrelated claims are being made here. The most important is that humans can, through self-cultivation, gain the same powers as ghosts and spirits. Precisely what powers ghosts and spirits have is not clear: they certainly do not seem to be the ghosts and spirits of contemporary religious practice—beings who act willfully and (from the point of view of humans) sometimes arbitrarily, and who therefore need to be manipulated by means

54. *Lüshi chunqiu*, "Wugong," 17.9a–b; hereinafter cited in the text.

of arts such as divination or sacrifice. The implication is that the spirits are without form yet can nonetheless order things—powers that a human can attain as well.

However, nothing in the text implies that ghosts and spirits face south and thereby make all under Heaven follow their wishes. Humans can penetrate to the ghosts and spirits, but humans are also granted a particular and crucial role in ordering the cosmos. As with Confucius, that role is based on ritual positioning, but here it is discussed in terms of a cosmological potency. As a consequence, the sage-king is able to bring all within his realm into the form that he desires:

In general, the ruler resides in evenness and stillness and employs virtue and transformation so as to follow his needs. In this way, he gives form to nature (*xing*). (17.10b)

The sage-king does precisely what the Great One does: he gives form to things by guiding their nature—their innate potentiality.

The sage's realm is thus a microcosm of the larger cosmos. By nourishing his spirit, the ruler can attain the power to transform things and give them form. This is yet another variant of the attempt to claim continuity in the cosmos and to position the human ruler, by linking with the ultimate ancestor, as the ordering force of the cosmos.

Each of these chapters from the *Lüshi chunqiu* involves attempts to develop a cosmological argument based on a claim of genealogical descent. If everything is descended from a common ancestor, then how does man gain power vis-à-vis this ancestor? As I have noted, the answers to this question are complex cosmological reworkings of the issues discussed in Chapter 1 concerning ancestral sacrifices. Correlative cosmology in China may be an attempt to supersede sacrificial models, but the authors of cosmological systems often appeal to the model of ancestral sacrifice in making their arguments. As Granet (according to my reading of him) has argued, cosmology in early China often recapitulates sacrificial claims.

The Pattern of Heaven and Earth: The *Xunzi*

All the texts discussed thus far in this chapter advocate a cosmology based on a common descent of everything (including man) from a single ancestor, and all reject practices such as divination and sacrifice. I turn now to *Xunzi*,

one of the pre-eminent thinkers of the third century BC.<sup>55</sup> Many scholars would argue that although Xunzi rejects divination and sacrifice, he does not accept the cosmological arguments developing around him. Indeed, Heiner Roetz portrays Xunzi as a full rationalist<sup>56</sup> and argues that although Xunzi at times appears to make cosmological arguments, he does not intend them as such. In Xunzi, "the cosmological diction is rhetoric."<sup>57</sup>

I will dispute each of these points: Xunzi was indeed extremely interested in cosmological notions, and unlike so many of his contemporaries, he *supported* sacrifice and divination. Although he agreed that sacrifice and divination could not coerce spirits, he argued that they were nonetheless traditional practices and should be accepted as such. Thus, in contrast to those calling for a rejection of sacrifice and divination on the grounds that the sage can achieve the same ends through *shen*-like intuition, Xunzi argues that such practices are culture (*wen* 文). As he states in the "Tianlun" chapter:<sup>58</sup>

If we sacrifice and it rains, what does this mean? I say: it does not mean anything. It is the same as not sacrificing and having it rain. When the sun is eaten by the moon [i.e., when there is an eclipse], we save it; when Heaven has a drought, we sacrifice; we engage in crackmaking and milfoil divination and only then decide a great event. But we do not thereby obtain what we seek; we are placing culture (*wen*) upon it. Therefore, a gentleman takes this as culture, but the hundred families take it as divine (*shen*). To take it as culture is auspicious; to take it as divine (*shen*) is inauspicious.<sup>59</sup>

But what precisely does Xunzi mean in distinguishing *wen* and *shen*? Tellingly, Xunzi defines *wen* in relation to sacrificial action. His full argument is worth following in depth.

At the *xiang* sacrifice, we are told, water, raw fish, and unflavored soup are offered: "At the great *xiang* sacrifice, one offers a goblet of water, places

55. My overall understanding of Xunzi has been helped greatly by the analyses in Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*; and the essays in Kline and Ivanhoe, *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*. Of particular help for the specific issues of interest in this section has been Company, "Xunzi and Durkheim as Theorists of Ritual Practice."

56. See, e.g., Roetz, *Confucian Ethics of the Axial Age*, pp. 213–26.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 230.

58. My understanding of the "Tianlun" chapter has been aided tremendously by Ivanhoe, "A Happy Symmetry"; Machle, *Nature and Heaven in the Xunzi*; and Eno, *The Confucian Creation of Heaven*, pp. 154–67.

59. Xunzi (hereinafter cited in the text), "Tianlun," 11.13a.

raw fish on the offering table, and serves first the unflavored soup. This is to honor the foundations (*ben* 本) of food and drink" ("Lilun," 13.3b). But one then goes on to offer prepared foods:

At the *xiang* sacrifice, one offers the goblet of water but then utilizes wine and sweet wine; one first has glutinous and panicked millet but then eats rice and spiked millet; at the sacrifices, one takes the unflavored soup but then gets filled with various delicacies. One is thus honoring the foundations yet embracing how they are used (*yong* 用). ("Lilun," 13.3b)

The sacrifices allow us to honor both the raw and the cooked.

Xunzi then associates these two poles with *wen* and *li* 理, respectively: "Honoring the foundations is what we call cultural forms (*wen*). Embracing how they are used is what we call pattern (*li*)" ("Lilun," 13.3b). Offering a goblet of water, placing raw fish on the offering table, and serving unflavored soup is an example of cultural form—of actions that direct the participants' attention to the foundations observable in nature. And the second part of the sacrifices allows us to embrace human preparation of food and drink for consumption. "When these two are combined with completed cultural forms, they thereby return to the Great One. All of this is what we call the Great Flourishing" ("Lilun," 13.3b). The "completed cultural forms" thus return us to the Great One—the original foundation—just as lesser cultural forms return us to such basics as raw food.

Xunzi has thus posited an extremely complex set of interlocking definitions. We have foundations, cultural forms that help us honor those foundations, patterns that allow us to embrace how humans put those foundations to use, and completed cultural forms that, combining cultural forms and patterns, return us to the Great One—the primary foundation. Sacrifices for Xunzi thus involve a focus on the nature of human action in relation to the world. Indeed, they encapsulate the entire process of humans' taking elements of nature, preparing them, and then consuming them.

At one level, this may seem like a very "rational" understanding of sacrifice. Indeed, it closely corresponds with some of Lévi-Strauss's analyses of ritual. But Xunzi's final claim that humans are thus honoring the Great One reveals a greater cosmological interest than Roetz is willing to admit. To make sense of this, let us take a closer look at Xunzi's conception of "foundations," cultural forms, and patterns. For Xunzi, cultural forms and patterns are human artifice, whereas the foundations are part of nature.

Therefore I say that the nature (*xing*) is the foundation, the beginning, the material, and the substance; artifice is the cultural form (*wen*), pattern (*li*), abundance, and flourishing. If there were no nature, there would be nothing for artifice to add to. If there were no artifice, the nature would be unable to beautify itself. Only when the nature and artifice combine are the names of the sages unified and the accomplishments of all under Heaven completed. ("Lilun," 13.10a)

And artifice *must* be combined with nature in order for the myriad things to be brought to order:

Therefore, I say that when Heaven and the Earth combine, the myriad things are born; when yin and yang join, changes and transformations arise; when the nature and artifice combine, all under Heaven is put in order. Heaven can give birth to things but cannot distinguish things; the Earth can bear man but cannot put men in order. Within the universe, the myriad things generate those who belong to the human race; they await the sage and only then are they differentiated. ("Lilun," 13.10a)

It is the combining of cultural forms and patterns with the foundations that brings order to the world. As I have argued elsewhere, there is an implicit teleology in Xunzi: humans fulfill their proper duty through artifice and thereby bring order to that which Heaven generated.<sup>60</sup>

Elsewhere, Xunzi speaks of patterns (*li*) as something the sages properly brought to the world of nature:

Therefore, Heaven and Earth gave birth to the gentleman. The gentleman gives patterns to Heaven and Earth. The gentleman forms a triad with Heaven and Earth, is the summation of the myriad things, and is the father and mother of the people. Without the gentleman, Heaven and Earth have no pattern, ritual and righteousness have no unity; above there is no ruler or leader, below there is no father or son. This is called the utmost chaos. Ruler and minister, father and son, older and younger brother, husband and wife, begin and then end, end and then begin. They share with Heaven and Earth the same pattern and last for ten thousand generations. This is called the Great Foundation (*ben*). ("Wangzhi," 5.7a-b)

The gentleman forms a triad with Heaven and Earth, and he in turn becomes the father and mother of the people. And this entire hierarchy is defined as the Great Foundation.

The order of sages is thus the teleological completion of the generation of Heaven. As in the "Bensheng" chapter of the *Lüshi chunqiu*, the sage is the son of Heaven in a literal sense of carrying out the inheritance of Heaven.

60. See chap. 2 of my *The Ambivalence of Creation*.

But the sage does not, through cultivation, become like Heaven. On the contrary, Heaven and man have distinct duties in the proper ordering of the cosmos. They are genetically related, but in this cosmology the son does not become like the ancestor.

So what about *shen*? If in this cosmology the sage completes the work of Heaven, then does the sage become a spirit?

The arrayed stars follow in circles, the sun and moon shine in alternation, the four seasons take charge in succession, yin and yang greatly transform, the wind and the rain disseminate broadly. As for the myriad things, each obtains what harmonizes with it in order to be born, and each obtains its nurturance in order to become complete. We cannot see the activity, but we can see the accomplishments. This is what we call "divine" (*shen*). All understand that by which it has been completed but no one understands its formlessness. This is what we call "Heaven." Only the sage acts without seeking to understand Heaven. ("Tianlun," 11.9b-10a)

The cosmos operates according to specified patterns in order to allow things (*wu*) to live and receive nourishment. The fact that the cosmos so operates is *shen*. Xunzi uses the term not to describe spirits with control over natural phenomena: the word does not imply particular spirits as the causal agents of each event. He is, rather, using it to describe the divine qualities of the patterned cosmos, the fact that it so operates to allow things to flourish. And "Heaven" refers to the origin of this cosmos. But, we are told, the sage seeks not to understand any of this.

Xunzi then turns to man. Like the rest of the cosmos, man is born from Heaven: "When the work of Heaven has been established and the accomplishments of Heaven have been completed, the form is prepared and the spirit (*shen*) is born" ("Tianlun," 11.10a). As in texts like the "Neiye" and "Xinshu," humans have spirit within themselves. Man's inheritance is then described as coming from Heaven:

Likes, dislikes, happiness, anger, sorrow, and joy are stored within him: these are called the Heavenly disposition. The ears, eyes, nose, mouth, and body—each has that with which it connects, but they cannot substitute for one another: these are called the Heavenly faculties. The mind resides within the central emptiness so as to rule the five faculties: this is called the Heavenly ruler. It makes into produce what is not of its species in order to nurture its species: this is called the Heavenly nurturance. Those who accord with their species are called fortunate, and those who oppose their species are called unfortunate; this is called the Heavenly governance. ("Tianlun," 11.10a)



And the sage is the figure who most successfully utilizes his inheritance from Heaven:

The sage clears his Heavenly ruler, rectifies his Heavenly faculties, prepares his Heavenly nurturance, accords with his Heavenly governance, nourishes his Heavenly disposition, and thereby brings completion to the Heavenly accomplishments. If he does so, then he knows what he is to do and not to do. Heaven and Earth then perform their functions, and the myriad things serve him. His movements are fully ordered, his nurturance fully appropriate, and his life is without injury. This is called knowing Heaven. ("Tianlun," 11.10b)

If man utilizes properly what Heaven has given him, then the myriad things serve him. Man's duty in the cosmos, therefore, is to bring order to things. And, for Xunzi, *this* represents knowing Heaven. In other words, to attempt to study the workings of the cosmos directly (as many correlative texts of the time were advocating) is mistaken; rather, the goal should be to cultivate oneself, utilize the Heavenly inheritance properly, and thereby take a dominant role in ordering things.

The order that results is a further example of *shen*. For example, in one passage, after discussing how all natural objects and creatures are utilized by man for man's benefit, Xunzi concludes:

Thus, as for what Heaven nourishes and Earth carries, all that is beautiful is utilized, and all that is useful is brought forth. Above, it is used to adorn the worthy and good, and below it is used to nourish the hundred families and give them pleasure. This is called the "Great Divinity" (*da shen*). ("Wangzhi," 5.6b)

The appropriation by humanity for its own use all that has been nourished and carried by Heaven and Earth is the proper, divine order of the cosmos.

And the sage who is able to maintain order in the cosmos is himself divine (*shen*):

What is called the One? I say: holding fast to the divine (*shen*) and being resolute. What is called divine (*shen*)? I say: the utmost goodness and full ordering is called divine. If none of the myriad things (*wu*) are able to overturn him, then he is called resolute. He who is divine and resolute is called a sage. ("Ru xiao," 4.7a)

By definition, the sage is resolute and divine. Resoluteness is the ability not to be overturned by things: the sage should rule things, not vice versa. Divinity (*shen*) is specified as "utmost goodness and full ordering (*zhi*)." This is consistent with Xunzi's other uses of the term *shen*: *shen* is what brings things to their proper order. Thus, the functioning of the cosmos itself is di-

vine (*shen*), the sage who properly uses the endowment given to him by Heaven to rule over the myriad things is divine (*shen*), and the resulting order is greatly divine (*da shen*).

The passage continues: "The sage is the manager of the Way. The Way of all under Heaven is managed by him; the Way of the hundred kings is unified by him. Therefore, the *Poetry*, *Documents*, *Rituals*, and *Music* return us to him" ("Ru xiao," 4.7a). The traditions of the sages, recorded in what we now call the Classics, allow later generations to know the teachings of the sages. But since Heaven has endowed everyone with the ability to become a sage, anyone who studies these ancient records can achieve the same powers:

If you make a man in the street submit to techniques and engage in study, concentrating his mind and unifying his will, thinking, inquiring, examining, adding each day for a long time, accumulating goodness without ceasing, then he will penetrate to the divine clarity (*shenming*) and form a triad with Heaven and Earth. ("Xing'e," 17.6b)

But these powers grant the student neither control over phenomena nor a flawless understanding of the cosmos but, rather, an ability to bring proper order to himself and the world. Xunzi thus utilizes much of the increasingly common cosmological vocabulary of the time but alters it so as to emphasize the crucial importance of following the earlier sages, of continuing the ritual and textual traditions of the past.

We are now in a position to understand Xunzi's reading of sacrifice and divination. In the passage quoted at the beginning of this section, Xunzi defends these practices as *wen*, but not as *shen*. The "Neiye" and "Xinshu" claim divination to be unnecessary because such powers of prognostication are obtainable through human cultivation; Xunzi encourages these practices. But he opposes any attempt to understand the spirits or Heaven, and he opposes any attempt at prognostication: he rejects the claim that one can truly understand a future event (either through divination or intuition). Nonetheless, the practice still has value, for it is a tradition handed down by the sages.

But what does Xunzi mean when he says that sacrifice and divination are not *shen*? For practices to be *shen*, in Xunzi's terminology, they have to bring about a proper order, even though the ultimate causal mechanism is outside ordinary human perception. So, if sacrifice resulted in order, it would be *shen*; if divination succeeded in showing what activities are auspicious, it would be *shen*. But sacrifice and divination cannot do these things, and the belief that they can represents for Xunzi a foolish attempt to control and understand



the cosmos—things that are outside the powers of humans and their arts. Humans can bring about order only by cultivating themselves to utilize their faculties properly and thereby make the myriad things serve them, but they do not have the power to control the wind and rain.

But sacrifice and divination are still *wen*: if understood properly, these practices help humans to understand their proper role in the cosmos. Thus, Xunzi's argument is based not on a claim of rationalism but on the nature of humanity and the nature of the cosmos. Xunzi opposes attempts by humans to use sacrifice and divination to influence spirits, and he equally opposes claims that humans can themselves become spirits and directly exercise control over the cosmos. His response is to argue that humans have a crucial role to play in the cosmos: the human artifices of culture and pattern bring order to the cosmos not by allowing humans to control the wind and rain but by allowing them to cultivate themselves properly, create a correct society, and appropriate natural objects for their own benefit. The cosmos is structured such that humans can emerge and, in this specific sense, give it order. Xunzi thus fully accepts the arguments concerning divinization and the crucial role humans play in the ordering of the cosmos, but he shifts the meaning of each of these terms dramatically. Humans do not become like Heaven; rather, they play a Heaven-given role in bringing order to the world.

And, through this argument, Xunzi provides himself a basis for supporting cultural traditions handed down from the past. Unlike the other texts discussed in this chapter, Xunzi supports sacrifice and divination and opposes the claim that humans can control or understand natural processes.

### Submitting to the Trigrams: The *Xici zhuan*

The *Xici zhuan*, a commentary to the *Yi*, or *Book of Changes*, is one of the most oft-cited texts in discussions of correlative cosmology in China. At first glance, it appears to be yet another late Warring States text, like the chapters of the *Lüshi chunqiu* and *Guanzi*, arguing that a human can through cultivation come to understand the workings of the cosmos and thereby be effective in the world or, in short, become a sage. Without question, the terminology of the text, with its emphasis on a spontaneous, self-generating cosmos which the sages should strive to understand and pattern themselves on, resembles that found in the roughly contemporary texts mentioned above. Nonetheless, appearances aside, the *Xici zhuan* is quite critical of

many of these texts. Contrary to the usual interpretation, its argument is in some ways comparable to that found in portions of the *Xunzi*.

In particular, unlike almost all the texts discussed thus far, the *Xici zhuan* was written in support of the art of divination. Unlike the critiques in texts such as the "Neiye" and "Xinshu," the authors of the *Xici zhuan* argue strongly for the efficacy of divination. And unlike Xunzi, the authors of the *Xici zhuan* support divination not because it is *wen* but because it is *shen*.

The authors of the *Xici zhuan* argue that the cosmos operates through changes put in motion by the alternation of yin and yang. Since change is based on a definable series of processes, the alternation can be formulated numerically.

The numbers of Heaven are twenty-five, the numbers of Earth are thirty. In all, the numbers of Heaven and Earth are fifty-five. It is by means of these that the alternations and transformations are completed and the ghosts and spirits are put into motion.<sup>61</sup>

Hence, to understand change itself is to understand the spirits:

The master said: "He who knows the way of alternations and transformations understands what it is that the spirits (*shen*) do." (A/9)

Spirits, in this definition, are not willful agents who direct phenomena on their own. Instead, they operate through understandable processes of change.

The key, therefore, is to understand these processes. And the way to do it, according to the *Xici zhuan*, is to understand "the Pivot." The Pivot is the point of the alternation of yin and yang, the basis on which all change occurs. Thus, he who understands this mechanism is able to understand change and hence what actions will be auspicious. And because this knowledge gives him the ability to act properly, it means that he, too, can be called divine (*shen*):<sup>62</sup>

The master said: "The one who understands the Pivot, is he not divine? . . . The Pivot is the minutest beginning of movement, the first manifestations of auspiciousness. The superior man sees the Pivot and acts, without waiting until the end of the day." (B/5)

61. *Xici zhuan*, A/9; hereinafter cited in the text. My numbering of each passage follows the Zhu Xi arrangement.

62. Willard J. Peterson ("Making Connections," pp. 103–10) provides an excellent discussion of the notion of *shen* in the *Xici zhuan*. In what follows, I attempt to supplement his study by noting the historical significance of the claims made in the text.

However, the text claims that the *Yi*, or *Changes*, is also divine:

The *Yi* is without thought and without action. Still and not moving, responding and then penetrating the causes of everything under Heaven. If it were not the most divine (*shen*) of all under Heaven, how would it be able to participate in this? (A/10)

Moreover, the passage continues, it was only by means of the *Yi* that the sages were (the past tense, as I will argue later, is necessary here) able to understand phenomena:

The *Yi* is that by which sages went to the limit of the deep and investigated the Pivot. Only because it is deep were they therefore able to penetrate the will of all under Heaven; only because it is a Pivot were they therefore able to complete the work of all under Heaven. Only because it is divine (*shen*) were they therefore not hurried and yet fast, not moving and yet arriving. (A/10)

But note that it is not just that the *Yi* gives one access to the Pivot; in the second sentence, the authors describe the *Yi* itself as a Pivot.

Several questions immediately arise. How can the *Yi* be called divine? How can the *Yi* itself be described as a Pivot? and If it is the text that guided the sages, then where did it come from? I will deal with each of these in turn.

As Willard Peterson has convincingly argued, the basic claim of the *Xici zhuan* is that the *Yi* is itself in accord with the processes of nature.<sup>63</sup>

The *Yi* is adjusted to Heaven and Earth. Therefore it is able to complete and classify the way of Heaven and Earth. Looking up, it observes the patterns of Heaven; looking down, it examines the principles of the Earth. (A/4)

The reason the *Yi* possesses the ability to replicate the changes of the world is that it possesses the Pivot of change itself:

It is for this reason that the *Yi* possesses the Great Pivot (*Taiji*). This generated the two insignia. The two insignia generated the four images. The four images generated the eight trigrams. The eight trigrams determine auspiciousness and inauspiciousness. Auspiciousness and inauspiciousness generate the great undertakings. (A/10)

This passage can be read either as a cosmogony of the universe or as a statement of the generation of the *Yi*. And that is precisely the point: it is both. In other words, the changes in the hexagram lines of the *Yi* mirror the

changes that occur in the natural world, and the work is thus a microcosm of the processual changes of the universe itself:

The hard and the soft push each other and generate changes and transformations. (A/2)

As a consequence, the *Yi* corresponds to the movement of Heaven and Earth itself:

The broad and the great<sup>64</sup> match Heaven and Earth; the alternations penetrate and match the four seasons; the propriety of yin and yang matches the sun and moon. The goodness of ease and simplicity<sup>65</sup> matches the utmost potency. (A/6)

But what makes the *Yi* invaluable for humans is that not only does it correspond to the movements of Heaven and Earth, but it actually penetrates these processes and is thus able to understand what changes are to come:

One yin and one yang is called the Way. That which continues it is called good; that which completes it is called nature. . . . Generating and generating is called change. Completing the images is called Qian; imitating the models is called Kun. Going to the limit of numbers to understand what is to come is called prognostication; penetrating alternations is called serving. What yin and yang cannot measure is called *shen*. (A/5)

The movement of the universe is defined by the interplay of yin and yang; the interplay of yin and yang lines in the *Yi* therefore replicates the interplay of yin and yang forces in the cosmos at large. And that which defines this interplay is divine and therefore not explicable in terms of yin and yang. The *Yi* is divine precisely because it penetrates to the workings of change itself.

And the process of divination grants humans—those with forms—an understanding of these changes.

It is for this reason that the power of the milfoil stalks is round and divine (*shen*), the power of the trigrams is square so as to understand, and the propriety of the six lines is changeable so as to provide. (A/10)

64. The "broad" and the "great" refer to Qian and Kun, respectively; these terms are used to define Qian and Kun in the lines immediately preceding those given here.

65. "Ease" and "simplicity" are further references to Qian and Kun, respectively. An earlier line in the work reads: "Qian knows by means of ease; Kun is capable by means of simplicity" (A/1).

63. Peterson, "Making Connections."

The first part of divination involves the use of milfoil stalks, which are divine and hence attuned to the changes themselves. They are thus round—like Heaven. The milfoil stalks point the user to the trigrams—which are square and thus within human comprehension.<sup>66</sup> The lines then explain what is to come.

Only the sages of antiquity, those who were able to perceive properly, were able to understand how to use the text:

Divine (*shen*) so as to understand what is to come, understanding so as to store what had come, who would be able to participate in this? It is those of antiquity who were sharp of hearing and clear of vision, perceptive and understanding, divinely (*shen*) martial without putting people to death. This is the means by which they illuminated the way of Heaven and explored the practices of the people. (A/10)

The sages of antiquity understood the way of Heaven and the practices of the people because of the Yi.

And where did the Yi come from?

The sages set forth the trigrams and observed the images. They attached words to them and clarified auspiciousness and inauspiciousness. (A/2)

Here we seem to encounter a paradox: the sages created the Yi, and yet they became sages only by following the Yi. This paradox is not, however, the result of confused thinking on the part of the authors. On the contrary, it is precisely the point. The lengthy, and frequently quoted, passage that describes the creation in detail will help explicate this point:

In ancient times Baoxi [i.e., Fuxi] was the king of all under Heaven. Looking up he observed the images in Heaven, and looking down he observed the models on Earth. He observed the patterns of the birds and beasts and the suitability of the earth. Near at hand he took them from his body, and at a distance he took them from things. (B/2)

Baoxi is here posed as purely an observer of patterns in the natural world. He generated the eight trigrams in order to understand and categorize these patterns:

He thereupon first created the eight trigrams in order to penetrate the potency of the divine clarity (*shenming*) and in order to categorize the dispositions (*qing*) of the myriad things. (B/2)

66. As the authors explain elsewhere, "spirits (*shen*) are not square" (*Xici zhuan*, A/11).

By taking the patterns in the natural world and refining them into the trigrams, Baoxi was able to understand the cosmos.<sup>67</sup>

The text then illustrates the divine potency of the trigrams by narrating how the trigrams inspired the sages to create cultural implements. As Willard Peterson correctly points out: "In contending that the great innovations were inspired by trigrams and hexagrams, the 'Commentary' [*Xici zhuan*] effectively subordinates to the Yi the sages who were venerated by the society as culture heroes."<sup>68</sup>

Why does the *Xici zhuan* give such extraordinary prominence to the Yi, even to the point of subordinating the sages themselves? I suggest that the text is a critique of the claims being made for sagehood that were becoming increasingly common in the late Warring States period. To oppose the assertions that one can attain the powers of, even become, a spirit, the text subordinates sagehood to textual authority. The implications of this move were crucial for late Warring States culture.

Although translations of the *Xici zhuan* commonly utilize the present tense to refer to the actions of the sages, I argue, on the contrary, that the past tense is almost always more appropriate. The *Xici zhuan's* account of the creation of the Yi by the sages is a historical narrative, one not unmarked by problems:

As for the arising of the Yi, was it not in middle antiquity? Did those who made the Yi not have anxiety and troubles? (B/7)

The hexagrams are datable to the earliest sages, but the text of the Yi came later, in middle antiquity. And the fact that such explications were necessary is a further sign of decay from the early sages:

The master said: "The Qian and Kun are the gates of the Yi. Qian is a yang thing, and Kun is a yin thing. Yang and yin unite potency, and the hard and soft have embodiment. They thereby embody the arrangements of Heaven and Earth and penetrate the potency of the divine clarity (*shenming*). Their appellations and names are mixed but do not transgress. In examining their categorization, they are the ideas of an age of decline." (B/6)

67. For a fuller discussion of the creation of the trigrams, see chap. 2 of my *Ambivalence of Creation*.

68. Peterson, "Making Connections," p. 112.



The Qian and Kun hexagrams may exhibit the potency of divine clarity, but the text itself reflects an age of decline, more specifically, the era of King Wen, at the end of the Shang dynasty:

As for the arising of the Yi, was it not fitting to be during the end of the Yin and the flourishing potency of the Zhou? [Was it] not fitting to be at the events between King Wen and Zhou? (B/11)

That the text had to be composed at all was a sign of degeneracy, of a period that desperately needed reform.

The vision of history set forth in the *Xici zhuan* is one of gradual loss, with each stage in the process of degeneration being marked by the need for more elaboration of the Yi. The final text of the Yi was put together in middle antiquity, at the end of the Shang dynasty, and, the text is arguing, it is this textual record that must now guide us in this period of even greater degeneration. Our only means of attaining an understanding of the universe is through the Yi, the text authored by the sages of antiquity so that we may act properly in this world. And, the *Xici zhuan* is at pains to point out, the Yi does indeed give us access to the proper understanding held by the sages of antiquity:

The master said: "Writing does not fully express words, and words do not fully express ideas. As such, as for the ideas of the sages, can they not be seen?" The master said: "The sages established the images in order to express ideas fully, set up the hexagrams in order to express the essential and the artificial fully, appended statements to them in order to express their words fully, alternated and penetrated them in order to express the beneficial fully, and drummed them and danced them in order to express their divinity (*shen*) fully." (A/12)

Consequently, a properly trained gentleman will turn to the Yi before he undertakes any actions:

Therefore, when a gentleman is about to take an action, or is to begin moving, he makes a vocal inquiry to it. (A/10)

As I read it, this argument is directed against those who were arguing that, through self-cultivation, one can attain sagehood and achieve divine powers. The authors of the *Xici zhuan*, on the contrary, placed the text of the Yi between their contemporaries and divinity: we can only attain a proper understanding of fortune and misfortune through the Yi. The *Xici zhuan* does not, of course, argue that it would be impossible for a new sage to arise,

but the text does imply that even a new sage would need to be guided by the Yi (although not by the line statements), just as the great sages of antiquity were. Moreover, since the Yi is already divine, this cosmology does not appear even to entertain the possibility that the Yi could be superseded.

In short, the *Xici zhuan* is arguing for textual authority, for a commitment to past teachings, for a recognition that at best the outcome of self-cultivation would be a replication of the sages of antiquity. Hence the recurrent quotations attributed to Confucius and the recurrent quotations from the *Shijing*.

When read this way, one can see a surprising, and somewhat counterintuitive, parallel with the *Xunzi's* concerns: both texts share an interest in supporting divination as a traditional practice, and both argue that we should follow the teachings of the past sages. But they build these arguments in very different ways. The *Xici zhuan* argues that divination does indeed lead to an understanding of the cosmos—an argument *Xunzi* would have rejected as a misguided and improper attempt to know Heaven. *Xunzi* opposed this type of cosmological speculation because it might pull man away from a proper cultivation in the traditions of the past sages; the *Xici zhuan* is claiming that, to the contrary, cosmology and textual authority are inherently linked. In other words, the *Xici zhuan* argues that cosmological knowledge depends on a mastery of the traditions of the ancient sages.

In saying this, I am not claiming that the authors of the *Xici zhuan* were "Confucian," or that they would have perceived themselves as offering a Confucian response to *Xunzi*.<sup>69</sup> But I am claiming that the *Xici zhuan* is making an argument for the authority of past sages and that it was presenting the Yi as the proper textual authority for cosmological speculation.

69. The discovery of the Mawangdui version of the text has sparked a debate whether the *Xici zhuan* was "Confucian" or "Daoist." See, in particular, Wang Baoxuan, "Boshu Xici yu Zhanguo Qin Han Daojia Yi xue"; and Liao Mingchun, "Lun Boshu Xici yu jinben Xici de guanxi." For an excellent overview of the debate, see Shaughnessy, "A First Reading of the Mawangdui Yijing Manuscript." As I have explained in the Introduction, I oppose the attempt to categorize Warring States texts in terms of schools.

As for the question of the relationship between the Mawangdui and the received versions of the *Xici zhuan*, for the specific issues discussed in this chapter, the variants between the Mawangdui *Xici zhuan* and the received text are minor. Although the Mawangdui *Xici zhuan* does not contain the passages concerning the text in middle antiquity, it does include the vast majority of the other statements quoted. Overall, I think the reading given here applies to the Mawangdui *Xici zhuan* as well.

As noted in Chapter 3, the *Mencius* argues that the sage must follow the proper patterns derived from Heaven—even if the actions of Heaven itself are not always in accord with these patterns. In the *Xici zhuan*, however, the patterns that the sages found in nature themselves guide the natural world; in other words, the natural world operates by those patterns, and the sages must emulate them and bring them to other humans. In the *Xici zhuan*, the natural world is more than the repository of normative patterns that can be discovered by a discerning sage; it itself is normative.

But, like the *Lunyu* and unlike the *Mencius*, the *Xici zhuan* relegates the period of the sages—the period when humans were able to model themselves on the cosmos—to the distant past. Textual authority is thus defended through a claim of gradual degeneration: the sages of antiquity discerned the patterns properly, and those born later must use divination and the reading of hexagram line statements to gain access to the patterns. As long as one submits to the divination practices of the *Xici zhuan*, fortune and misfortune are fully knowable. Whereas the authors of the “*Neiye*” and “*Xinshu*” had claimed fortune and misfortune to be knowable by those who practiced self-cultivation to gain the powers of spirits, the authors of the *Xici zhuan* argue that they are knowable only by following the traditions handed down from the ancient sages.

Instead of claiming that divination has been superseded by self-cultivation techniques and instead of supporting divination as *wen*, the authors of the *Xici zhuan* present divination as a crucial art—not because it determines the actions of the spirits but rather because it forms a microcosm to the patterns of the cosmos. The authors of the *Xici zhuan* thus used correlativity to call for a subordination to the traditions of the past sages.

### Conclusion

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Marshall Sahlins, in his re-reading of Lévi-Strauss, argues that Polynesian cultures can be read as both monogenetic and polygenetic—or more precisely, they can be read as either, depending on the perspective of the cultural actors in question and the practice in play. The interesting issue then becomes how these principles are articulated in any given situation. Which is the marked term: continuity or discontinuity? For example, Sahlins argues that in Fiji sacrificial action assumes continuity, and the goal of the sacrifices is thus to introduce and maintain discontinuity.

Recall that in Polynesian thought, as distinguished from the so-called totemism, all men are related to all things by common descent. The corollary would be that, rather than the ancestral or kindred species being tabu, Polynesian social life is a universal project of *cannibalisme généralisé*, or even of endocannibalism, since the people are genealogically related to their own “natural” means of subsistence. . . . All useful plants and animals are immanent forms of the divine ancestors—so many *kino lau* or “myriad bodies” of the gods. Moreover, to make root crops accessible to man by cooking is precisely to destroy what is divine in them: their autonomous power, in the raw state, to reproduce. . . . Yet the aggressive transformation of divine life into human substance describes the mode of production as well as consumption. . . . Fishing, cultivating, constructing a canoe, or, for that matter, fathering a child are so many ways that men actively appropriate “a life from the god.”<sup>70</sup>

The concern, in other words, is to introduce discontinuity, to separate the divine from the human, to mark off a human realm distinct from the divine:

Men thus approach the divine with a curious combination of submission and hubris whose final object is to transfer to themselves the life that the gods originally possess, continue to embody, and alone can impart. It is a complex relation of supplication and expropriation, successively bringing the sacred to, and banishing it from, the human domain. Man, then, lives by a kind of periodic deicide. Or, the god is separated from the objects of human existence by acts of piety that in social life would be tantamount to theft and violence—not to speak of cannibalism.<sup>71</sup>

In this sense, Fijian sacrifice operates according to principles very similar to those found in early Greece (see Chapter 1).

If we were to accept the recurrent arguments of sinologists, we would certainly conclude that China, too, is monogenetic and assumes continuity between the human and the divine realms. And, at first glance, much of the evidence appears to support such a reading. In looking at the sacrificial material discussed in Chapter 1, one could conclude that the predominant concern was similar to that Sahlins describes for Polynesia: an attempt to create discontinuity between the human and the divine realms, to distinguish humans and spirits, to appropriate for human use phenomena controlled by spirits (for example, divinations for the purposes of opening a field for agriculture or setting the boundaries of the capital in part reveal a desire to appropriate land controlled by divine powers and mark it off for human use). One could similarly argue that the correlative cosmologies of the fourth and

70. Sahlins, *Islands of History*, pp. 112–13.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 113.

third centuries BC reveal a recurrent belief in the absolute consubstantiality of all things within a single ancestral line: everything is born from the One, and thus literally everything in the cosmos is related by birth. In such a reading, China, from the Bronze Age through the correlative cosmologies of the late Warring States period, is prototypically monogenetic.

But I have argued for a different reading of this material. In the sacrificial and ritual actions of Bronze Age China, the concern for demarcating a human realm apart from the divine was only a part (and a lesser part at that) of the whole story. The main concern was to transform the spirit world into a pantheon of ancestors that acted on behalf of the living king. Humans were not just claiming land from the spirits; they were transforming the spirits into (deceased) humans. The concern, in short, was to transform a capricious and potentially antagonistic spirit world into a hierarchical pantheon of ordered genealogical descent interested in its living descendants' welfare. The goal was not to introduce discontinuity but to anthropomorphize the divine and thus create genealogical continuity. Both divine and human powers were to be transformed into ancestors and descendants. And the paradigmatic relationship was that of the king and Heaven—through the sacrifices, Heaven would become the father to the king; hence the royal title "Son of Heaven."

Several of the correlative cosmological texts played with these models of ancestral sacrifice because their authors wished to make comparable arguments—with a crucial twist. Whereas divination and sacrifice assumed a world populated by spirits who had control over natural phenomena—spirits who were to be transformed into ancestors—the correlative texts posit a cosmos descended from a single ancestor. More pointedly, if the sacrificial practices assumed an agonistic world, the texts discussed in this chapter argue for a single, continuous cosmos within which all gods, spirits, humans, and nature are linked by chains of genealogical descent.

The debates then turned on the relationship between the sage and that ancestor. Should he strive to be the proper descendant of the One and follow the natural patterns laid down by the ancestor? This is the position taken by the *Taiyi sheng shui* and the "Chengfa" chapter of the *Shiliujing*. Or should the sage go against the natural genealogy and return to the ancestor? This is the position of the *Laozi*, which argues that the sage should return to the One, gain its powers, and thereby give birth to a world of his own. By linking himself to the ancestor of the cosmos, the sage generates his own or-

dered political realm. Or does the cosmos work in such a way that the proper descendant comes to be like his ancestor? This is the position of the "Bensheng" chapter of the *Lüshi chunqiu*: the Son of Heaven, if he cultivates himself properly, ultimately becomes like Heaven and exercises the same powers over the cosmos that Heaven had earlier done.

Throughout these texts, the concern is not to demarcate the human from the divine but the exact opposite—to link man with the ancestor of the cosmos, either through the return of the sage to the ancestor, or through the growth of the sage into the power that the ancestor was, or through the divinization of the sage himself, or through a subordination of oneself to the movements of a series of images handed down by the sages of the past. In other words, the concern, as with so many Warring States texts, is with the divinization of man rather than the de-divinization of nature. And the recurrent concern of all these texts was to deny the agonistic world of the sacrificial specialists who were dominant at the courts.

The authors are thus playing with the model of ancestral sacrifice, but they do not assume monogenesis: in all these practices, monogenesis is the goal, not an assumption. Instead, the authors use ancestral sacrifice because it provides a perfect vocabulary for their claims: just as in ancestral sacrifice, correlative cosmology involves taking spirits and making them into ancestors who can then be understood or even controlled. And the resulting interplay that we have noted in this chapter is therefore similar to that discussed in Chapter 1: the living could be presented as simply following the wishes of the ancestors, or they could be presented as creating the ancestors and pacifying them. The concern in both the sacrificial systems and the correlative texts is to anthropomorphize the divine, either by making the divine into the image of man through sacrifices or by divinizing man and thus literally making the divine human. But, the agonistic world assumed in sacrifice is denied in correlative cosmology, and correlative cosmology grants the sage much more power over this world than does any sacrificial system.

And it was precisely in opposition to positions such as these that Xunzi and the authors of the *Xici zhuan* reasserted the importance of divination and (in the case of Xunzi) sacrifice in order to assert a form of discontinuity, with humans and Heaven fully separated. In the *Xici zhuan*, for example, humans act properly by following a set of refined images that crystallize, in a series of full and broken lines, the movements of the cosmos. The images are continuous with the pivot of the universe, but humans, because they are



separate from the pivot, can act properly only by subordinating themselves to those images. The *Yi*, therefore, was placed between humanity and the rest of the cosmos. Divination was thus reinstated, although without the agonistic cosmology that defined earlier divination practices.

All of this brings us back to Granet. As noted earlier in this chapter, Granet argued that Chinese kingship arose from the sacrifice of totemic creatures: the rulers conquered the gods their people had earlier worshipped. Lévi-Strauss—correctly—would have questioned Granet's discussion of such themes in terms of an actual evolution from totemism to sacrifice—or in terms of an evolution at all, since Granet was discussing texts dating almost exclusively from the third and second centuries BC. I have therefore followed Lévi-Strauss in discussing the texts in terms of the ways they posit continuity and discontinuity. But Granet's point is crucial: even the statements about continuity reveal an attempt to gain for the sage tremendous power over the cosmos. Reading Granet through Lévi-Strauss thus gives us a powerful means of correcting the many sinologists who argue that the early Chinese assumed a continuous universe—a position, ironically, that many of them developed by reading Granet.

Correlative cosmology should not be interpreted as a general "Chinese" way of thinking, nor should it be understood as part of a shift from "religion" to "philosophy." It was, rather, an attempt to transcend the conflict between humans and spirits by overcoming the world of spirits altogether: spirits and the natural phenomena they control, as well as humankind, are placed in a descent line emanating from a single ancestor, with whom the sage, if he follows certain techniques, can gain a special relationship. Correlative cosmology was not an assumption in the Warring States period; it was a rhetoric of critique.

## 5 *The ascension of the spirit*

### Liberation, Spirit Journeys, and Celestial Wanderings

The *Shiwen* (Ten questions), one of the texts discovered at Mawangdui, discusses how one becomes a spirit, becomes liberated from one's form, and ascends to the heavens:

Long life is generated through storing and accumulating. As for the increasing of this life, above one explores the Heavens, and below one distributes to the Earth. He who is capable will invariably become a spirit. He will therefore be able to be liberated from his form. He who clarifies the great way travels and traverses the clouds.<sup>1</sup>

Although this text was discovered fairly recently, the themes of liberation and ascension appear in a number of received works from the late Warring States and early Han periods as well, such as the *Chuci* and *Zhuangzi*. Modern analyses of these narratives of spirit journeys and ascensions often refer either to earlier shamanistic traditions or to later religious Daoism. I will briefly review these claims and then argue for a different approach.<sup>2</sup>

1. *Shiwen*, in *Mawangdui Hanmu boshu*, 4: 146; hereinafter cited in the text. My translation of this passage, as well as all other passages from the *Shiwen*, is heavily indebted to the excellent translation and study by Donald Harper in *Early Chinese Medical Literature*, pp. 384–411. Moreover, my understanding of the content itself is indebted as well to the superb analyses in *ibid.*, pp. 112–25.

2. Portions of this chapter are taken from my "The Ascension of the Spirit."