

Conscientious Rule: Political and Moral Philosophy in “The Way of
Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” (*Zhong xin zhi dao*)

By

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良心政權:<忠信之道>的政治與道德哲學

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Abstract

In this thesis I research the moral significance of “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness” in the excavated text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” (*Zhong xin zhi dao* 忠信之道) to argue that conscientiousness in politics is the ideal political model for Chinese thinkers during the early to the middle of the Warring States period (475-300 BC). I approach the text in two ways in the thesis. First, I analyze the text itself, including the theoretical structure and specific rhetorical uses. This approach is used to illustrate the conceptual meaning and moral significance of “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness.” Second, I compare the text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” with other excavated and transmitted texts in order to reveal how conscientiousness and trustworthiness were regarded as indispensable morals during the Warring States period. I argue that the author of the text wanted to establish an argument that rulers could not establish conscious politics without conscientiousness and trustworthiness.

摘要

本論文透過探究「忠」與「信」在郭店楚簡<忠信之道>的道德重要性，揭示良心政權是戰國中期思想家的理想政治型態。本文從兩個角度研究<忠信之道>的忠、信道德。首先，筆者透過分析簡文的文本結構，諸如其理論架構以及修辭方法，論述簡文中忠與信的道德意義。其次，通過比較<忠信之道>與其他傳世與出土文獻對忠與信的論述，揭示忠與信在戰國時期是不可或缺的道德概念。通過層層分析，本文提出<忠信之道>之忠、信是根植於心的內在道德，並以此論證簡文以忠信道德建立良心政治的可行性。

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Chapter One: Introduction

This work examines a political moral theory in the text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” (*Zhong xin zhi dao* 忠信之道),¹ and of the texts identified from the Guodian 郭店 bamboo slips that were unearthed from a tomb in Hubei province 湖北省. This was an ancient area occupied by the state of Chu in the Warring States period (475-221 BC), a period in ancient China characterized by continual military conflict between states.² The text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” has just nine strips and is the only known text dating to before the Han dynasty (206 BC-220 AD) that completely focuses on the moral values of the two concepts “conscientiousness” (*zhong* 忠) and “trustworthiness” (*xin* 信).³ This text is unique because the content of this text compares “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness” to the cosmological elements of soil (*tu* 土), time (*shi* 時), heaven (*tian* 天), and earth (*di* 地), and the text elevates “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness” to the higher level of “humanity” (*ren* 仁) and “righteousness” (*yi* 義), which is rarely seen in transmitted or excavated texts. I believe that the author of the text attempts to establish conscientiousness and trustworthiness as inner qualities of humans, and then to establish a necessary moral norm with conscientiousness and

¹ Here, I use “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness” as translations for *zhong* 忠 and *xin* 信, as well as for the text “Zhongxin zhi dao” which I translate as “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.” I will later further explain this translation.

² “Jingmen Guodian yihao Chumu,” ed. Hubeisheng Jingmenshi bowuguan, 46–47.

³ Huang, “‘Zhongxin zhi dao’—yu zhanguo shiqi de zhongxin sichao,” 35.

trustworthiness as the basis for moral power in politics. The political goal of the author in the text was to demand that both the rulers and ministers who governed a state must exhibit conscientiousness and trustworthiness.

The main aim of this thesis is to argue how the author established a moral political theory with conscientiousness and trustworthiness, and to explore the supposed efficacy of these two moralities in politics through analyzing the important aspects of the approach used by the text, the moral functions of conscientiousness and trustworthiness, and its political philosophy. I will show that the text conveyed a message that conscientiousness and trustworthiness were the most important moralities that all men who had power to influence the state should have. Generally, most scholars who have studied the text agree that rulers are the main intended audience for “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness”.⁴ Some other scholars further believe that these two moralities are not only meant for the specific role fulfilled by rulers, but also for anyone who had political power.⁵ I also agree that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are key concepts for both rulers and officials in gaining the support of the people and interacting with the people of the border regions. This is because of the use of the term “a man of noble character” (*junzi* 君子) in

⁴ As Masayuki Sato points out, “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” reveals the political power that conscientiousness and trustworthiness can give to a ruler governing a state. Sato, *Zhongguo gudai de zhong lun yanjiu*, 91. Scott Cook also says that the unique aspect of this text is that it did not focus on conscientiousness as a virtue of ministers. Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 569. A similar argument is also made by Li, “Xianqin rujia de zhengzhi lunli jiaokeshu,” 21.

⁵ As Guo Li-Hua 郭梨華 mentions in her article, the text of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” establishes a moral standard for all governor elites, but not only regarding the role of rulers. Guo, “Zaoqi ruxue de daode lunli zhexue tanxi,” 38.

the text represents men who are conscientious and trustworthy. As the text states, “A person with conscientiousness is without falsehood. A person with trustworthiness does not betray. A man of noble character embodies these traits, therefore he does not deceive the living and does not betray the dead” 忠人無譌，信人不背。君子如此，故不誑生，不背死也。⁶ The term “a man of noble character” in the text does not refer to a specific social role, such as the ruler, but a moral model. Although the original meaning of the role “a man of noble character” often refers to a man who occupies a high social position, during the end of the Spring and Autumn period (770-476 BC), “a man of noble character” was transformed from a representative into an ethical model.⁷ In the Warring States period, the *Mencius*, written by Mengzi who was a follower of Confucius’ philosophy, states that everyone has the potential moral power to become “a man of noble character” or “sage,” but this is only possible through self-cultivation. As Mengzi said: “A man with noble character differs from other men in that he retains his heart” 君子所以異於人者，以其存心也。⁸ As modern scholar Sarah Allan said: “Son of the lord (*junzi* 君子) is transformed from a hereditary concept of social class into an ethical ideal.”⁹ The term “ethical” points out that normal people can elevate their own ethical status and this increase in their virtue would not be restricted by external conditions, such as a hereditary system. Therefore, when we consider the

⁶ See the translation in the appendix.

⁷ Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*, 106.

⁸ Translation adapted from *Mencius*, tr. Lau, 94. The Chinese citation is from *Mengzi zheng yi*, ed. Jiao, 595.

⁹ Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*, 106.

meaning of “a man of noble character,” we find that “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” is not only written with regard to rulers but also officials.

In addition, I will argue that the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” implies that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are inborn moralities.¹⁰ When the text compares conscientiousness and trustworthiness with cosmological elements in order to reveal the nature of these two moralities, this points to the idea that they are innate moral values. For example, the text cites: “Perfect conscientiousness has endured a very long time and has not changed. Perfect trustworthiness has endured since high antiquity and still maintains constancy” 大久而不渝，忠之至也。大古而主常，信之至也。¹¹ When I suggest that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are inner qualities, I mean that these two moralities are inborn as a part of human nature (*renxing* 人性). Inner qualities usually refer to a potential power that guides people to make moral decisions or act morally. In Chinese thought, “inherent morality” means an abstraction of inner emotions, and “external norms” usually refers to social norms based on internal qualities. For example, humanity (*ren* 仁) and ritual propriety (*li* 禮) in the Confucian argument is a typical case.¹² There is an example in the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), a collection of Confucius’ 孔子 (551-479 BC) sayings compiled by his disciples or later followers during the

¹⁰ There is a similar point that can be found in Cook’s research. Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 566.

¹¹ See the translation in the appendix.

¹² Rainey, *Confucius and Confucianism*, 38-39.

end of the Spring and Autumn and the early Warring States periods. It says: “To return to the observance of the rites through overcoming the self constitutes humanity” 克己復禮，為仁 and “What can a man do with the rites if he is not humane?” 人而不仁，如禮何?¹³ We can see that whether or not someone is humane is apparent from whether or not he respects ritual propriety. However, the relationship between humanity and ritual propriety reveals the order of priority within moral significance. That is because internal morals are the foundation for external morals. Therefore, the examples from the *Analects* reveal a close relationship between humanity and ritual in terms of internal and external.¹⁴ We might question whether conscientiousness and trustworthiness can be seen as the basis for inner moral power. To the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness,” the answer should be affirmative. This idea might be influenced by earlier opinions about conscientiousness and trustworthiness. I will respond to this question in a later section.

In this thesis, I have four main chapters. The primary purpose of my first chapter is to introduce basic information about the text and the two moralities of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. In my second chapter, I argue that the text uses an analogical approach. This approach links conscientiousness and trustworthiness with the four cosmological elements, and

¹³ Translation adapted from *The Analects*, tr. Lau, 112, 67. The Chinese citations are from *Lunyu zheng yi*, ed. Liu, 483, 81.

¹⁴ Fung, “Lunyu zhong ren yu li guanxi xinquan,” 143.

establishes a stable theoretical framework for these two moralities, and then connects individuals with others through these inner qualities. I am going to show that the analogical approach connects the individual to the society, and to the far regions of the known world. In my third chapter, I make a detailed analysis in order to expose how the author argues moral meaning and what the moral effectiveness of conscientiousness and trustworthiness is according to the author. In my final chapter, after explaining that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are necessary morals for all humans, and especially important to those who have political power, I will analyze the text to show that the main purpose of the author is to establish the moral efficacy of conscientiousness and trustworthiness in politics. I further explain how these are necessary ideas which fit within the historical context of the Warring States period.

Below, I will introduce basic information about “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness,” such as its writing style and the date when it was likely written in order to provide context to the text. I also present what conscientiousness and trustworthiness generally meant before they were defined moralities in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness,” so that we can have a basic understanding of the transformed meanings of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. Next, because I translate *zhong* 忠 as “conscientiousness,” and this is different from some other scholarly translations which prefer “loyalty,” I will also explain my reasons for this choice.

The Guodian Tomb, Its Occupant and the Text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness”

“The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” along with other excavated texts from Guodian were found in a tomb located near the city of Jingmen 荊門, Hubei, which was occupied by the state of Chu 楚 during the Warring States period. The tomb, Guodian Tomb number one, was one of the tombs located in Jishan 紀山 where nobility from the state of Chu were buried.¹⁵ The latest date the tomb could have been built was 278 BC.¹⁶ Therefore, the tomb must have been established before that time. In this Guodian Tomb were discovered a group of texts, written in ink, consisting of around 731 bamboo strips.¹⁷ Through studying some funerary objects in the tomb, most scholars have agreed that the occupant was a social elite who served a ruler of the state of Chu.¹⁸ Furthermore, according to the size and the construction of the Guodian tomb and also the funerary objects, some scholars suspect that the occupant of the tomb might be a member of the middle to lower nobility.¹⁹

When these texts were excavated, the original threads holding each text together were not preserved. Many of the Guodian slips had been damaged or broken when they were discovered. Scholars devoted themselves to repairing and ordering the Guodian slips. Some words in the

¹⁵ Jiang, “Zhongguo xianqin rudao wenxian de zhongda faxian yu shenyuan yiyi,” 462.

¹⁶ Allan and Williams, “The Guodian *Laozi*,” 119. Most scholars agree that the burial date of the tomb is around 300 BC. I will discuss this idea later.

¹⁷ Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 3.

¹⁸ Li, “Xianqin rujia zhuzuo de zhongda faxian,” 14.

¹⁹ Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 4-5.

Guodian texts were difficult to identify because these scripts were very ancient, so scholars organized the slips in two ways. First, they considered certain physical aspects, such as the shape and size of the bamboo slips themselves, and also the calligraphic style of the script. As Allan and Williams explain, some scholars, such as Peng Hao 彭浩, studied and described the similarity of the physical form of the slips, and style of scripts.²⁰ This allowed scholars to organize the slips into various groups. Identification of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” is an example of this method. Scholars found that the shape of the ends of nine slips in the Guodian texts are even. The length of each of these nine slips is around 28.2- 28.3 cm.²¹ Furthermore, these nine slips all concentrate on “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness.” These factors taken together are what led the scholars to decide that these nine slips were all part of the same text, “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.” The second way which scholars categorized the slips was to divide the slips according to their content. This involved comparing the excavated texts with transmitted texts. Excavated texts such as the Guodian “Laozi” 老子 or “Ziyi” 緇衣 were compared to the transmitted texts of the *Laozi* and “Ziyi” in the *Book of Rites*. Although there were many differences between the excavated and transmitted texts, enough similarities existed to help organize the Guodian texts.²² Based on these methods, scholars were

²⁰ Allan and Williams, “The Guodian *Laozi*,” 122.

²¹ Zhou, “Guodian zhujian de xingshi tezheng jiqi fenlei yiyi,” 55.

²² Allan and Williams, “The Guodian *Laozi*,” 121.

able to divide the Guodian slips into different texts. For example, the Guodian text “Laozi” was divided from another Guodian text, “Tai yi sheng shui.”²³ The Guodian texts have already been divided into eighteen different texts.

The Guodian texts may not have been made by the same person or produced in the same place. According to the physical characteristics of the bamboo slips, such as their length or their writing style, scholars further divided the eighteen texts into different groups. For example, the graphic form and style of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” is close to that of the text “Tang Yu zhi dao” 唐虞之道. The writing style of both these texts has been associated with the state of Qi 齊.²⁴ This method of categorization helps some scholars in studying the texts’ philosophical ideas and in considering any possible affiliation for the intellectual lineages of these Guodian texts.

The scholarly affiliation of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” is intensely debated, and generally, there are two main points regarding this issue. Some scholars believe that this text reveals that the author followed Confucius’ ideas, and that this text responds to some early scholarly questions about the philosophies of Confucius and his disciples. For example, Liao Mingchun 廖名春 has argued that this text was closely related to the ideas of Zizhang 子張 (503-447BC), a disciple of Confucius. One reason for this theory is that Zizhang is the disciple

²³ Allan and Williams, “The Guodian *Laozi*,” 122.

²⁴ Zhou, “Guodian zhujian de xingshi tezheng jiqi fenlei yiyi,” 59.

who discussed conscientiousness and trustworthiness with Confucius. In addition, Zizhang was a resident of the state of Chen 陳, and later the state of Chen was defeated by the state of Chu 楚 around 343 BC. Therefore, the ideas of Zizhang might have spread in the state of Chu. That is why the text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” might be influenced or produced by the disciples of Zizhang.²⁵ Some other modern scholars point out that the text might have been influenced by ideas from scholars who accepted or were influenced by Daoist philosophy.²⁶ Li Cunshan 李存山 believes that “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” is a blend of both Confucian and Daoist philosophy. Li suggests that the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” could be Chen Liang 陳良 (d.325-320 BC), a thinker who respected Confucius’ philosophy.²⁷ Chen Liang could have been the author because he had lived in the state of Chu where Laozi’s philosophy and other Daoist philosophy had been created, so Chen’s ideas might have been influenced by Daoist ideas.²⁸ Another modern scholar, Chen Guying 陳鼓應, believes that a connection between the Way (*dao* 道) with conscientiousness and trustworthiness in the text represents the natural qualities of these two morals, such as pure honesty and sincerity.²⁹ Although Chen also believes that the text includes

²⁵ Liao, “Guodian Chujian rujia zhuzuo kao,” 51.

²⁶ Li, “Xianqin rujia de zhengzhi lunli jiaokeshu,” 26. The text of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” can be found in the appendix.

²⁷ Jiang, *Guodian Chu jian yu zao qi ruxue*, 16.

²⁸ Li, “Xianqin rujia de zhengzhi lunli jiaokeshu,” 26.

²⁹ Chen, *Lao Zhuang xin lun*, 43.

Confucius' philosophy, he suggests that the philosophical content of the text is closer to Laozi or his followers' ideas.³⁰ I believe that this text mixed Confucian and Daoist philosophy. However, due to a lack of concrete evidence, it is difficult to pinpoint the exactly school affiliation of this text.

It is important to clarify when the tomb occupant was buried. This is because, although I argue that there were different meanings of conscientiousness and trustworthiness throughout the whole time period of the Warring States, my thesis mainly concentrates on the meanings of conscientiousness and trustworthiness in the text and other contemporary texts. According to the scholars investigating the funerary objects from the tomb, most of them agreed that the burial date was not later than 300 BC. As the report from the "Jingmen Guodian yihao Chumu" points out, the burial time should be the middle of the 4th century BC to the beginning of the 3rd century BC.³¹ Some scholars believe that the burial time for the Guodian tomb should not be later than the 4th century BC. Modern scholar Li Xuexin 李學勤 points out that the Guodian tomb lies outside of the city of Ying 郢 in the state of Chu, where a series of tombs had already been set up. This was a typical burial method associated with the state of Chu around 300 BC.³² Most scholars generally accept this argument.³³ If it is correct, the date these excavated texts were written must

³⁰ Chen, *Lao Zhuang xin lun*, 43

³¹ "Jingmen Guodian yihao Chumu," ed. Hubeisheng Jingmenshi bowuguan, 47.

³² Li, "Xianqin rujia zhuzuo de zhongda faxian," 13-14.

³³ Lu, "Guodian Chujian rujia wenxian wenyiguan yanjiu," 5-6.

have been before or not later than 300 BC, which is around the middle of the Warring States period.³⁴

Many philosophical concepts developed during the Warring States period because political situations changed quickly. Philosophers tried to seek ways to order society and solve problems caused by social change. The argument regarding conscientiousness and trustworthiness in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” was made from this point of view. This argument relates to the sharp change in social mobility. During the Warring States period, due to social, economic, and political changes that were caused by continual warfare, the social status of *shi* 士 became an important group who worked for different rulers in order to gain fame and influence.³⁵ *Shi* was a group of men who devoted themselves to public affairs.³⁶ However, among intellectuals, “a man of noble character” had higher morals than other intellectuals. Regarding the meaning and the translation of *shi*, Yuri Pines has mentioned that the translation of “intellectuals” in the Western language context cannot represent the term *shi* in Chinese because *shi* involved wider meanings. He says: “In different contexts, *shi* can refer to a warrior, a husband, a retainer, or a petty official. In English it has been rendered as ‘gentleman,’ ‘scholar,’ ‘scholar-official,’ ‘officer,’ ‘man of service,’ and ‘knight,’ among others.”³⁷ However, because my argument is generally

³⁴ Pang, “Gumu xinzhi,” 7.

³⁵ Yang, *Zhanguo shi*, 1-6.

³⁶ Yu, *Shi yu Zhongguo wenhua*, 3.

³⁷ Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 118-119.

related to the groups of scholars who devoted themselves to fulfilling their aspirations through education, I still use the translation “intellectual.”³⁸ This social mobility allowed intellectuals to freely decide whom they wanted to serve.³⁹ Social mobility also influenced who was able to hold political power so that it was not always held only by aristocrats who were born in an aristocratic family, but also by other social groups, such as intellectuals. When ordinary people found out that they could change their social status by selling their abilities, they held tightly to every hard-won chance to prove themselves. In order to avoid losing any opportunity, some intellectuals with less moral awareness sought any chance to benefit themselves through unscrupulous means. Therefore, it was inevitable that some people who enjoyed a high social status would behave in ways that violated their conscientiousness and had negative effects on the people or state because these high status individuals preferred to pursue selfish interests. I believe that this social atmosphere is one reason why the author of the text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” made the argument for elevating the moral values of conscientiousness and trustworthiness.

Early Interpretations of Conscientiousness (*zhong* 忠) and Trustworthiness (*xin* 信) before “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness”

“*Conscientiousness*” (*zhong* 忠)

The Chinese character “conscientiousness” (*zhong* 忠) combines two characters

³⁸ Chen, *Kong fuzi yu xiandai shijie*, 41-43.

³⁹ Li, *Early China*, 195.

zhong 中 and *xin* 心 “heart-mind”.⁴⁰ The meanings of *zhong* 中 include “fairness” or “middle.”

Phonologically *zhong* 忠 and *zhong* 中 are indistinguishable, so we can consider the two as

cognate words, *zhong* 忠 meaning “fairness of the heart.”⁴¹ In addition, modern scholar Li

Chenyang points out, the character of *zhong* 中 incorporates the two symbols of “口” and “丨” and

which means the “丨” sits in the middle.⁴² Another modern scholar, Xiao Bing 蕭兵, has pointed

out that the original character for *zhong* 中 was 𠄎. This graph represented a flag that early

Chinese people used to respect spirits. Xiao further cites an argument from another modern

scholar, Tang Lan 唐蘭, who explains that the flag could have represented fairness because tribal

chiefs in early China often set up flags in the middle of a territory in order to gather their people.⁴³

When we consider the meanings of the two characters of “heart-mind” and “fair,” and the

⁴⁰ The reason behind translating the character *xin* 心 as “heart-mind” is because when the early Chinese talked about *xin* 心, its philosophical meaning often referred to human senses, such as eyes or ears, and abstract feelings, such as emotions or desires. There is an example from the *Analects*, a collection of the sayings of Confucius (551-479 BC) that was compiled during the end of the Spring and Autumn period and the early Warring States period by the followers of Confucius. “At fifteen I set my heart on learning; at thirty I took my stand; at forty I came to be free from doubts; at fifty I understood the Decree of Heaven; at sixty my ear was attuned; at seventy I followed my heart-mind’s desire without overstepping the line” 吾十有五而志於學；三十而立；四十而不惑；五十而知天命；六十而耳順；七十而從心所欲，不踰矩。To Confucius, “heart-mind” (*xin* 心) represented the most complete spirit which acts naturally by leading every aspect of an agent without interference from other things. Modern scholar Edward Slingerland has analyzed this paragraph into three pairs of stages of Confucius’ spiritual evolution. He points out that the final two states are the place where someone stays in harmony spontaneously. Although Slingerland’s purpose was not to talk about the idea of heart-mind, but rather to discuss conceptions of effortless action (*wuwei* 無為) and ease in virtue (*an* 安), the disposition of heart-mind still plays an important role in leading people to achieve harmony throughout different stages of cultivation. Translation adapted from *The Analects*, tr. Lau, 63. See Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 59.

⁴¹ Goldin, “When *Zhong* Does Not Mean ‘Loyalty’,” 171-172.

⁴² Li, *The Confucian Philosophy of Harmony*, 72.

⁴³ Xiao, “Zhong yuan shengan shuo,” 52-53.

combination that constitutes the character *zhong* 忠, we find that the character of *zhong* 忠 represents a standard inside the middle of the heart-mind.

The term *zhong* 忠 represented multiple meanings such as personal morality, and social or political morality during the Spring and Autumn period. As a personal moral, some examples from transmitted texts reveal that everyone should aspire to *zhong*.⁴⁴ The *Analects* states: “Make it your guiding principle to do your best for others (*zhong* 忠) and to be trustworthy in what you say. Do not accept as a friend anyone who is not as good as you. When you make a mistake, do not be afraid of mending your ways” 主忠信，無友不如己者。過，則勿憚改。⁴⁵ This sentence says that an individual who avoids making untrustworthy friends is able to do so because he maintains his own conscientiousness and trustworthiness. It implies that when one treats others with conscientiousness and trustworthiness, one can befriend others who have the same moral qualities. This demonstrates that both conscientiousness and trustworthiness must be inner qualities. Therefore, these two morals could become a guiding principle by which to conduct one’s external behaviors. This sentence also represents the importance of conscientiousness in its ability to connect one with others.

When conscientiousness was a social or political moral, it often entailed that someone express his conscientiousness to others. There are multiple subjects who applied

⁴⁴ Pei, “Zhongguo chuantong zhongde guan de lishixing kaocha,” 68-69.

⁴⁵ The *Analects*, tr. Lau, 60. The Chinese citation is from *Lunyu zheng yi*, ed. Liu, 22.

conscientiousness to someone else. For instance, there are several examples in the historical text of *Zuozhuan* 左傳, whose date of compilation was around 403-386 BC.⁴⁶ This text mainly recorded important events during the Spring and Autumn period. As the *Zuozhuan* says:

所謂道，忠於民而信於神也。上思利民，忠也；祝史正辭，信也。

By moral order is meant conscientiousness to the common people and being trusted by the gods. The former gives thought to the benefit of the people; this is conscientiousness. The sacrificial officers prayed in words of truth without exaggeration; this has trustworthiness.⁴⁷

This paragraph reveals that to rule the people with conscientiousness is the duty of rulers, and that this is the same as sacrificial officials praying to gain trustworthiness from spirits. It is apparent that conscientiousness was regarded as a virtue that rulers must have. The political value of conscientiousness also reveals that it is a virtue of ministers. However, conscientiousness here is not referring to a minister showing his conscientiousness to the person of the ruler, but to the interests of a state. This state is an abstract concept comprised of the people, a concrete object.

There are two examples in the *Zuozhuan* which prove that officials treated a state and the people as the main objects to which they expressed conscientiousness. The first example below talks about conscientiousness of ministers expressed to the people. Duke Jin of Ning 晉寧公 asked Chu Mei 鉏麇 to kill Zhao Dun 趙盾, who was also a minister of the Duke Jin of Ning. The reason that Zhao Dun had to die was because he often advised Duke Ning to do good things

⁴⁶ *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu*, ed. Yang, 43.

⁴⁷ *Zuozhuan*, tr. Hu, 67. The Chinese citation is from *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu*, ed. Yang, 111 (Huan 桓 6).

instead of the things he wanted to. However, because Zhao Dun performed reverently and respectfully for his state, Chu Mei decided not to kill Zhao Dun and to kill himself instead:

麴退，歎而言曰，不忘恭敬，民之主也，賊民之主，不忠，棄君之命，不信。
Chu Mei withdrew and said to himself with a sigh: “A man who does not forget to be reverent and respectful in his duties deserves to be called a leader of the people. To assassinate such a good leader of the people would be unconscientiousness (*buzhong* 不忠). But to disobey the sovereign’s command would also be untrustworthy.”⁴⁸

This example reveals that a conscientious minister must consider the people’s interests rather than the demands of rulers to be the most important thing. Chu Mei did not kill Zhao Dun because he knew that Zhao Dun was the one who could benefit the people. If killing Zhao Dun would be unconscientious, respecting someone who worked for the people of a state would be conscientious. Thus, the specific person of the ruler was not the object to which conscientiousness should be expressed. Instead, the people were the group to whom the ministers chose to express their conscientiousness.

There is also a second example below which expresses how conscientiousness was thought of when it was regarded as a virtue used by ministers to help the state:

稽首而對曰：「臣竭其股肱之力，加之以忠、貞。其濟，君之靈也；不濟，則以死繼之。」
公曰：「何謂忠貞？」對曰：「公家之利，知無不為，忠也。」

⁴⁸ Translation adapted from *Zuozhuan*, tr. Hu, 441. The Chinese citation is from *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhe*, ed. Yang, 658 (Xuan 宣 2).

Kowtowing, [Xun Xi] replied, “Apart from being conscientious, I will help him to govern the state with all my might. If I succeed it will be all due to the protection of Your Majesty’s spirit. If not, I will kill myself.” “What do you mean by conscientiousness?” inquired the sovereign. “It [conscientiousness] means that one must put the national interest first, and never fail to do so once one has understood this principle.”⁴⁹

The Duke believed that Xun Xi 荀息 could become a good minister and advise a new ruler because Xun Xi understood that conscientiousness meant to help a ruler govern the state. This included considering the national interest to be a priority. Similar to the first example, both rulers and ministers considered conscientiousness to be a moral value which benefits the whole state. These above examples separately reveal that rulers and officials were the subjects who applied conscientiousness to the various objects of the people, rulers, and states during the Spring and Autumn period.

Through considering these cases, we find that during the Spring and Autumn period, there does not seem to be only one subject and object specified in exchanges involving “conscientiousness.” I believe this is because everyone was an agent who could express the inner quality of conscientiousness. When everyone did the right thing based on their conscientiousness, then rulers, the people, and the state would all become the object which was treated properly. In comparison, in the Warring States period, ministers generally became the main subject of *zhong* (loyalty 忠), which means that *zhong* became a specific moral for subordinates, and rulers were

⁴⁹ Translation adapted from *Zuozhuan*, tr. Hu, 198-199. The Chinese citation is from *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu*, ed. Yang, 328 (Xi 僖 9).

the main object of this concept. However this does not mean that *zhong* as “conscientiousness” did not appear in the transmitted texts, the meaning of *zhong* as a minister’s virtue occupied the texts more than before. I will illustrate this change later.

“Trustworthiness”

The Chinese character *xin* 信 “trustworthiness,” combines the two characters “man” (*ren* 人) and “speech” (*yan* 言). These were not combined until the Warring States period. Before the Warring States period, the ancient character (*guzi* 古字) *xin* 信 was often represented by combining the characters for “man” (*ren* 人) and mouth (*kou* 口), as “𠄎”, or “speech” (*yan* 言) and “a thousand” (*qian* 千), as “𠄎”.⁵⁰ Some alternative characters (*yitizi* 異體字) were found in bronze inscriptions which represent characters combining “speech” and “body” as “𠄎” in the inscriptions found in the state of Zhongshan 中山 from the Warring States period. These characters passed through the Western Zhou dynasty to the Warring States period and all represent that the word “trustworthiness” related to the actions and speech of people. In the transmitted texts, “trustworthiness” is commonly associated with the words “honesty” (*shi* 實) and “sincerity” (*cheng* 誠). These all mean people behaving truthfully or speaking only truth. The *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字 interprets “trustworthiness” as “sincerity:” “Trustworthiness is sincerity” 信，誠也。⁵¹

The *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經), the oldest existing collection of Chinese poetry and songs

⁵⁰ *Jinwen changyong zidian*, ed. Chen, 249.

⁵¹ Dong, *Shuowen jiezi kaozheng*, 90.

from no later than 600 BC.⁵², says: “And how solemnly you swore to be true, so that I never thought there could be a change” 信誓旦旦、不思其反.⁵³

The importance of trustworthiness has been recorded in many transmitted texts, which reflects that “trustworthiness” was an important moral quality in a person, society, or politics. As the *Analects* says: “In guiding a state of a thousand chariots, approach your duties with reverence and be trustworthy in what you say” 道千乘之國，敬事而信.⁵⁴ The *Analects* argued that trustworthiness is a virtue of elites, such as rulers or officials. We can find citations from the *Analects* which clarify when trustworthiness was a virtue used to maintain relationships between people. For example: “A young man should be a good son at home and an obedient young man abroad, sparing of speech but trustworthy in what he says” 弟子，入則孝，出則弟，謹而信; or: “ [Someone] who, in his dealings with his friends, is trustworthy in what he says” 與朋友交，言而有信.⁵⁵ These examples all reveal that trustworthiness was regarded as a necessary moral for everyone. As the *Analects* reveals: “I do not see how a man can be acceptable who is untrustworthy in word” 人而無信，不知其可也.⁵⁶ The *Zuozhuan* also says: “It may be remarked that, to exchange hostages is useless if trustworthiness is not from the center [of the heart-mind]”

⁵² Arthur Waley state that the songs are datable to a range between 800-600 BC. See *The Book of Songs*, tr. Waley, 12. Roger T. Ames and David L. Hall cite the anthology of songs dating to between 1200-600 BC. Ames and Hall, *Thinking Through Confucius*, 63.

⁵³ *The Book of Songs*, trs. Estate and Waley, 51. The Chinese citation is from *Shijing jinzhu jinyi*, ed. and tr. Ma, 98.

⁵⁴ The *Analects*, tr. Lau, 59. The Chinese citation is from *Lunyu zheng yi*, ed. Liu, 11-16.

⁵⁵ These two translations can be found in *The Analects*, tr. Lau, 59, 60. The Chinese citations are from *Lunyu zheng yi*, ed. Liu, 18-19.

⁵⁶ The *Analects*, tr. Lau, 66. The Chinese citation is from *Lunyu zheng yi*, ed. Liu, 67.

信不由中，質無益也。⁵⁷ This reveals that the attitude of trustworthiness should be based on the heart, otherwise it would be a superficial contract such as one made by exchanging hostages. This example demonstrates that trustworthiness is an innate quality. It also reveals that trustworthy performance must be based on the internal quality of trustworthiness.

English Translations of the Terms *zhong* 忠 and *xin* 信

Xin 信 is often translated as “trustworthiness,” for example by Scott Cook, Paul Pakita Goldin, and Yuri Pines.⁵⁸ In addition, *xin* is sometimes translated as “trust” or “truthfulness,” such as by Whalen Lai.⁵⁹ According to the research of Jason A. Colquitt, Brent A. Scott, and Jeffery A. LePine, the basic difference between trust and trustworthiness is that trustworthiness is an inner quality which inspires others to have a reaction of trust.⁶⁰ As these scholars said in their article, “the concept of trustworthiness is central to understanding and predicting trust levels.”⁶¹ In other words, “trust” is the action “to trust” someone who is trustworthy. In the Chinese philosophical context, a more accurate translation of *xin* is “trustworthiness.” This is because *xin* refers to the process of following through with a promise made with sincerity. The *Zuozhuan* mentions that: “One’s mind is formed into words, which are then cast into the shape of good faith.

⁵⁷ *Zuozhuan*, tr. Hu, 15. *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu*, ed. Yang, 27 (Yin 隱 3).

⁵⁸ Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 565; Goldin, “Xunzi in the Light of the Guodian Manuscripts,” 115; Pines, “Friends or Foes,” 44.

⁵⁹ Lai, “On Trust and Being Trust: Towards a Genealogy of Morals,” 257.

⁶⁰ Colquitt et al., “Trust, Trustworthiness, and Trust Propensity,” 909-910.

⁶¹ Colquitt et al., “Trust, Trustworthiness, and Trust Propensity,” 910.

Good faith, in turn, ensures the achievement of one's mind" 志以發言，言以出信，信以立志。⁶²

This reveals *xin* is an internal quality so that the external performance of trustworthiness relates with the internal mind. If we consider this meaning, then the translation of *xin* is close to the moral sense of trustworthiness.

The word *zhong* 忠 is more difficult to translate than *xin* 信 "trustworthiness." This is because before the end of the Warring States period, *zhong* involved multiple meanings other than the meaning of "loyalty," a virtue of ministers, that we know today. Although the translation of *zhong* is often referred to as "loyalty," several scholars argue that the translation of loyalty might not reveal the real meanings of *zhong* in early China.

Paul Goldin, in his article "When *Zhong* Does Not Mean 'Loyalty'," has pointed out that a better definition of *zhong* might be "being honest with oneself in dealing with others."⁶³ Goldin believed that this translation has two crucial points. One point is that *zhong* is a process of making the most of oneself. Based on this point, Paul Goldin notices that this is why D. C. Lau and Chan Wing-tsit 陳榮捷 translated *zhong* as "doing one's best" and "conscientiousness." However, Goldin also points out that these two translations only focus on *zhong*'s innate quality, and do not reveal that *zhong* should be practiced in a relationship between one individual and others. Golden believes that these two scholars might have been influenced by the medieval definition of *zhong*

⁶² *Zuozhuan*, tr. Hu, 915. *Chunqiu zuozhuan zhu*, ed. Yang, 1131 (Xiang 襄 27).

⁶³ Goldin, "When *Zhong* Does Not Mean 'Loyalty'," 169.

as “making the most of oneself” (*jinji* 盡己). This definition was made by Cheng Hao 陳顥 (1032-1085) and Cheng Yi 陳頤 (1033-1107), famous Confucian scholars of the Song dynasty.⁶⁴

However, I believe that Lau and Chan’s translations can express the core meaning of *zhong*. Unlike trustworthiness, whose moral significance has to be proven in bilateral interactions, the moral significance of *zhong* can be demonstrated both in individual moral practice or bilateral interactions. In other words, although *zhong* and *xin* are both innate qualities, ways of evaluating *zhong* or *xin* are different. For example, if someone does self-evaluation to see if he himself is trustworthy, then one should rely on completing a promise made to others. However, if someone does self-evaluation to see if one has *zhong*, then one can find the answer by oneself. To demonstrate that in early China, conscientiousness could be seen as an inner quality, I provide an example from the *Guo yu* 國語 (compiled between the 5th to late 4th century BC), which tells a story about Shu Xiang 叔向 replying to Zhao Meng 趙孟, who was worried about an attack from the state of Chu:

子何患焉…忠自中，而信自身…今我以忠謀諸侯，而以信覆之。

What do you worry about?... Conscientiousness comes from within (*zhong* 中), whereas trustworthiness comes from the self (in action)... Today we treat other dukes with loyalty, and

⁶⁴ Goldin, “When *Zhong* Does Not Mean ‘Loyalty’,” 168-169.

prove our loyalty with trustworthiness.⁶⁵

This episode shows that *zhong* 忠 is the inner foundation for rulers who keep external promises.

As Masayuki Sato has commented, *zhong* 忠 here refers to a psychological state that can support a relationship based on trustworthiness.⁶⁶ As I have mentioned in the previous section, the word

zhong 忠 involves fairness, therefore, *zhong* 忠 is a moral practice from inner judgment to external behavior. Based on this viewpoint, the translation of “conscientiousness” by Chan

Wing-tsit might be a better choice because “conscientiousness” in English presents external

behaviors based on an internal conscientious quality. Consequently, I will translate the “Zhongxin zhi dao” as “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.”

Core Sources

In addition to the excavated text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” as the main research document in this thesis, I also use references from bronze inscriptions, excavated texts, and transmitted texts in my discussion of the concepts “conscientiousness” and

“trustworthiness”. Moreover, considering that the establishment of these two concepts occurred

over a long period of time, the examples used in this thesis cover the time period from the

⁶⁵ The translation of “conscientiousness comes from within, whereas trustworthiness comes from the self (in action)” is adapted from Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 567. The rest is my translation based on Huang Yongtang 黃永堂’s *Guo yu quanyi*, a modern Chinese translation of the original. See *Guo yu quanyi*, tr. Huang, 527.

⁶⁶ Sato, *Zhongguo gudai de zhonglun yanjiu*, 52.

Western Zhou dynasty through the Warring States period. The *Book of Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書), the *Book of Songs* (*Shijing* 詩經), and bronze inscriptions, are the main primary sources used as evidence to discuss “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness” in the Western Zhou dynasty.

These texts express the early use of these two concepts. The *Book of Documents* narrates many episodes from the Western Zhou dynasty, and includes use of the term “trustworthiness”.

However, the dating for the various different texts in this collection raises many questions. In order to avoid using unreliable evidence, I only use examples which also appear in other pre-Qin (先秦) texts. For example, the *Analects* cites examples from “Dayumo”大禹謨, “Gaotaomo”皋陶謨, “Wuzi zhi ge”五子之歌, “Tanggao”湯誥, and so on.⁶⁷ In addition, in order to use more precise evidence, I will also cite bronze inscriptions created in the Western Zhou dynasty. The importance of the *Book of Songs* is that it describes ideas of “trustworthiness,” not only in rulers but in the common people. This work helps us to understand the change in the concept of “trustworthiness” through the end of the Western Zhou dynasty moving into the Spring and Autumn period.

The *Zuozhuan*, *Guo yu*, and the *Analects* are the three primary sources used when discussing the concepts of “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness” during the Spring and Autumn and the early Warring States periods. These three books and the examples from these books are closer to

⁶⁷ See Chan and Ho, *Citations from the Shangshu to be found in Pre-Han and Han texts*.

the Spring and Autumn period when compared with other transmitted texts, even though the date of the collections are in question. For example, the *Analects* is the subject of many debates about both the date and the author of its collections. Nowadays, most scholars agree that the *Analects* were collected by the disciples of Confucius, after they were taught by Confucius.⁶⁸ Since I only use the *Analects* as a source to provide evidence, but do not focus on whether or not the examples cited are actually made by Confucius himself, I will not discuss who the author of the *Analects* was. Whatever the case, it is certain that the *Analects* reflects important philosophical ideas current during the end of the Spring and Autumn period, around 500-400 BC. The *Analects* provides good evidence in regarding both “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness” as personal morals. In addition, I will also use the *Zuozhuan* and *Guo yu* to trace the development of these two concepts through the Spring and Autumn period. Basically, many representative cases in these four texts provide an understanding of “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness” as personal, social and political moralities.

Finally, evidence for the meaning of “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness” in the Warring States period is found in many transmitted texts and other texts from Guodian. Moreover, the importance of these primary sources is also that they hold discussions relating to conscientiousness and trustworthiness. Generally, I will focus on texts whose dates are close to

⁶⁸ For example, E. Bruce Brook argues that the *Analects* was produced by Confucius’ later followers. Brooks, *The Original Analects*, 201-247. Yang, “‘Lunyu’ cheng shu jiqi wenben tezheng,” 99.

“The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.” For example, the *Laozi* discusses conscientiousness and trustworthiness through the Way (*dao* 道).⁶⁹ The *Mencius*, written by Mengzi (372-289 BC) 孟子, the *Mozi* 墨子 associated with Mozi (479-381 BC), and the *Zhuangzi* associated with Zhuangzi 莊子 (369-286 BC). I will compare these sources with “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” in order to analyze complicated ideas about the concepts of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. The *Guanzi* 管子 provides evidence associating conscientiousness and trustworthiness with cosmological elements, such as heaven or earth. Most scholars believe that this book was not written by Guanzi (725-645 BC), and most chapters were associated with the Jixia 稷下 Academy in the state of Qi around 300 BC. Scholars suggested that some chapters of the *Guanzi* were not written in the Warring States period, but produced in the Han dynasty.⁷⁰ In addition to the chapters containing debates, some scholars have demonstrated that chapters such as “Baixin” 白心, “Xinshu” 心術, and “Neiye” 內業, were produced during the Warring States period. For example, modern scholar Chen Guying has proven

⁶⁹ Sarah Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*, 8. Although I consider the transmitted *Laozi* to be a work of from the middle of the Warring States period, there are still many debates as to the issue of the dating of the *Laozi*. Generally, there are three basic ideas: the *Laozi* was created before the Warring States period; the *Laozi* was created during the early to the middle of the Warring States period (475-300 BC); or the *Laozi* was created at the end of the Warring States period, after 300 BC. Until now, scholars still do not agree on when the *Laozi* was created. For example, modern scholar Harold D. Roth discusses three modes to explain relationships between the *Laozi*, the Guodian text of *Laozi*, and the *Laozi* from the Mawangdui silk manuscripts 馬王堆帛書, dated to the middle Warring States period and unearthed in Hunan 湖南 province in 1973. Roth argued that the Guodian *Laozi* and the manuscript *Laozi* might be written based on the transmitted *Laozi*. Or, it is also possible that the transmitted *Laozi* was written based on the Guodian *Laozi*, or that both the Guodian *Laozi* and the transmitted *Laozi* were written based on other possible sources. See Roth, “Some Methodological Issues in the Study of the Guodian *Laozi* Parallels,” 77.

⁷⁰ See Gong, “Bainian lai *Guanzi*-qing zhong niandai wenti yanjiu shuping,” accessed November 21, 2014. <http://www.qlwh.com/jidi/xinshu.asp?id=373>.

that these three chapters reveal a consistent philosophy.⁷¹ Chen also believes that the chapters, “Xingshi” 形勢, “Zhouhe” 宙合, “Shuyan” 樞言, and “Shuidi” 水地 in the *Guanzi* reflect the thought of the Warring States period.⁷² I will, then, focus on those chapters thought to have been produced during the Warring States period when considering relevant material from the *Guanzi*. Furthermore, the two books *Xunzi* 荀子, associated with Xunzi (313-238 BC), and *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, associated with Han Fei (280-233 BC), can be used to reveal the development of the two concepts “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness” in the late Warring States period.

⁷¹ Chen, *Guanzi sipian quanshi*, 17-18.

⁷² Chen, “*Guanzi* ‘xing shi,’ ‘zhou he,’ ‘shu yan,’ ‘shui di’- zhu pian de Huang Lao si xiang,” 1-26.

Chapter Two: Analogical Structure in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness”

This chapter consists of two sections. In the first section, I discuss what an analogical argument is, including its definition, the method of an analogical argument, and its practical results. Later, I will explain why I choose the term analogy rather than metaphor to describe the argument style adopted in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.” In addition, I argue that analogy as a cognitive method used by humans to understand and describe the world they know is different from correlative thinking. In the second section, I will move on to the main topic, the use of analogy in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.” The analogy in the text is used in the interpretation of two relationships. One relationship is between cosmological elements and moral concepts related to “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness.” The other relationship is between the interactive effects of conscientiousness and trustworthiness in individuals, others, a state, and the whole human world. Conscientiousness and trustworthiness were morals which were matched with aspects of the natural world and taken to represent cosmological order. Therefore they became necessary morals to order the human world.

The Definition of Analogy and Its Use

Analogy

“Analogical thinking,” (*leituisiwei* 類推思維) in Chinese, includes two elements: “kind”

(*lei* 類) and “extent” (*tui* 推). According to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, an analogy is a way to compare similarities in objects: “An analogy is a comparison between two objects, or systems of objects, that highlights respects in which they are thought to be similar. Analogical reasoning is any type of thinking that relies upon an analogy.”⁷³ In other words, analogical thinking is a way of thinking that forms from finding similarities between various objects and organizing the objects as different sorts. This way of thinking is similar to the early Chinese thinkers’ comparing various things and finding similarities in order to create an argument. This is why I use analogical thinking to explain the cognitive process in Chinese thought. In a fundamental text of Chinese logic, the *Mozi* 墨子, associated with Mozi (479-381 BC), the idea of “universal love” (*jianai* 兼愛) was discussed. This idea became a well-known scholarly argument of early Chinese thought. Mozi was the first person who clearly used the terms “kind” and “extent.” The *Mozi* says: “A difficulty of extent and kind is to argue the sizes of objects” 推類之難，說在之大小。⁷⁴ Modern scholar Lee Hsain-Chung 李賢中 supposes that this is a method of thought and expression through “the known” (*yizhi* 已知) wherein different things share the same or similar qualities. This meaning is then extended to “the unknown” (*weizhi* 未知).⁷⁵ The formation of Chinese characters reveals how the early Chinese created characters

⁷³ See *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/reasoning-analogy/>.

⁷⁴ My translation. The Chinese citation is from the *Mozi*, tr. Feng, 331.

⁷⁵ Lee, “Lunli qingjing yu leitui siwei tanxi,” 832.

through their daily observations and experiences and extended these to abstract concepts. For example, the original meaning of the character “object” (*wu* 物) was “varicolored ox.” This meaning was made from the combination of the two pictographs characters “ox” (*niu* 牛) and the sound *wu* 勿.⁷⁶ Later, the character for “object” refers to all kinds of things as a generic concept (*gongming* 共名). This case reveals a recognizing process from the known to the unknown in early China. The character *wu* 物 does not only refer to the meaning of “varicolored ox” but to the whole idea of “living things.” The early Chinese had extended the meaning of “object” to an abstract concept, not only for a specific thing. That is because things are diverse, and diversity is similar to a varicolored ox with different colors of fur. The varicolored hair of an ox is “known” and all living things are considered “unknown” according to this model. When the early Chinese used the character *wu* 物, the original indicated the name of a varicolored ox. In order to extend the meaning to “all living things”, all of which no one could know in their entirety, shows an analogical process from “known” to “unknown.” This process helped the early Chinese create a word so that they could more easily express the concept of something whose entirety they could not know.⁷⁷

The method of analogy is the way that the Chinese conceived unknown ideas. The early

⁷⁶ The original meanings of the character *wu* 物 can be found in *Hanyu da zidian*, ed. Hanyu da zidian weiyuanhui 255, 1805.

⁷⁷ Li, “Xianqin bianhua shenhua de jiegouxing yiyi,” 289-290.

Chinese thinkers used analogy to clarify abstract concepts in their arguments. Modern scholar D. C. Lau has pointed out that the “analogical approach” is a method often used by thinkers during the Warring States period. Lau cites Mengzi, who is well known for using analogy to defend his argument, and to defeat those of his opponents.⁷⁸ An example is the debate of human nature between Mengzi and Gaozi 告子. This debate reveals that both thinkers used analogy in their arguments:

告子曰：「性猶湍水也，決諸東方則東流，決諸西方則西流。人性之無分於善不善也，……。」
孟子曰：「水信無分於東西。無分於上下乎？」

Gaozi said, ‘Human nature is like whirling water. Give it an outlet in the east and it will flow east; give it an outlet in the west and it will flow west. Human nature shows no preference for either becoming good or becoming bad... Mengzi said, ‘It is certainly the case that water shows no preference for either flowing east or flowing west, but does it show the same indifference to flowing upwards and flowing downwards?’⁷⁹

Water is a natural element appearing in human life every day. To Mengzi and Gaozi, water is “known,” and the quality of flowing of water reveals similarities to the abstract concept of “human nature,” which is “unknown.” That is why both Mengzi and Gaozi used the characteristics of water to describe human nature. Mengzi argued that human nature is similar to water: just as water inherently flows downward, human nature is inherently good. Mengzi argued that human nature’s potential to be good is an innate quality. This is inborn, and like water, must

⁷⁸ Lau, “On Mencius’s Use of the Method of Analogy in Argument,” 200.

⁷⁹ Translation adapted from *Mencius*, tr. Lau, 122. The Chinese citation is from *Mengzi zheng yi*, ed. Jiao, 735-736.

flow downwards but not upwards. On the other hand, Gaozi argued that human nature is not good or bad because the character of water is to flow anywhere depending on the channel. Each stressed a different aspect of the natural character of water which best fit his argument about human nature.

Sometimes, the method of analogy is only used to strengthen the argument and to fulfill the purpose of the author. In other words, the similarities that an author assumed to have existed might have been used improperly. However, modern scholar JeeLoo Liu, in her research of Mengzi's philosophy, emphasized that the success of Mengzi was to establish a similarity that is "intuitively appealing and in reducing the relevance of the dissimilarities." Therefore, although there are some disanalogies in Mengzi's debate with Gaozi, because similarities are not identities, these disanalogies cannot influence Mengzi's establishment of a successful argument.⁸⁰

An interesting point suggested by Liu is that Mengzi's use of analogy is "intuitively appealing." This might be one reason why the early Chinese thinkers used some common examples that were familiar to the early Chinese in supporting their arguments. For example, the text "The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness" used analogy to reveal the moral value of conscientiousness and trustworthiness by comparing the four cosmological elements of soil, time, earth, and heaven. As the text says: "Perfect conscientiousness is like the soil which causes

⁸⁰ Liu, *An Introduction to Chinese Philosophy*, 65-67.

things to grow but never boasts” 至忠如土，化物而不伐 and “Perfect trustworthiness is like time; it surely arrives without being bound by a contract” 至信如時，必至而不結.⁸¹ To the author of this text, it might be common sense that honesty is the quality of both conscientiousness and soil, and reliability is the quality of both trustworthiness and time. To compare human qualities with cosmological or natural elements was a method used by the early Chinese thinkers to reveal human nature. If we consider the above examples from Mengzi and Gaozi, we might also assume that the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” attempted to argue that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are inner qualities of human beings.

A practical aspect of Chinese analogy is that it can be applied to establishing ethical, social, or political order. The analogical process is also from the “known” to the “unknown”. The goal of establishing social order is to remove conflicts, and conflicts might come from the reality that we usually do not know others’ thoughts. Therefore, some thinkers, such as Confucius, cited the use of analogy as a simple way to understand what others think, and that everyone desires to be treated with empathy. When Confucius expressed this concept, he also used analogy to express it. The *Analects* states: “A man of humanity helps others to take their stand in so far as he himself wishes to take his stand, and gets others there in so far as he himself wishes to get there. The ability to take as analogy what is near at hand can be called the method of [acquiring] humanity.”

⁸¹ See the text in the appendix.

夫仁者，己欲立而立人，己欲達而達人。能近取譬，可謂仁之方也已。⁸² In this example, “self” (*ji* 己) is “known,” and in comparison to oneself, “others” are “unknown.” A similarity between the known and unknown reveals that each is a member of the same humankind. Therefore, Confucius believed that if we treat others as if they were standing in our position, we can achieve humanity and conflicts.

The above examples reveal that finding similarities is the basic goal of the method of analogy in the Warring States period. Mengzi has clearly categorized different kinds of animals and used them in his analogical argument:

麒麟之於走獸，鳳凰之於飛鳥，泰山之於丘垤，河海之於行潦，類也。聖人之於民，亦類也。出其類，拔乎其萃。

The unicorn is the same in kind as other animals, the phoenix as other birds; Mount Tai is the same as small mounds of earth; the Yellow River and the Sea are no different from water that runs in the gutter. The sage, too, is the same in kind as other men.⁸³

We clearly find that Mengzi had categorized humans and sages as the same kind. This example expresses two important ideas about equality: first, the sage is the most outstanding member of humankind; second, under this categorization, all human beings are equal because they are the same kind. This categorization helps Mengzi to strengthen his moral argument established by the method of analogy. Mengzi says: “Treat the aged of your own family in a manner befitting their

⁸² Translation adapted from *The Analects*, tr. Lau, 85. The Chinese citation is from *Lunyu zheng yi*, ed. Liu, 249.

⁸³ *Mencius*, tr. Lau, 35. *Mengzi zheng yi*, ed. Jiao, 218.

venerable age and extend this treatment to the aged of other families; treat your own young in a manner befitting their tender age and extend this to the young of other families, and you can roll the Empire on your palm” 老吾老，以及人之老；幼吾幼，以及人之幼：天下可運於掌。⁸⁴ Again, Mengzi claimed that people can care for the elders and love youths as we care for the elderly and young in our own family. Because all human beings are the same kind, we can universally apply moral concepts from ourselves to others. That is how Mengzi extended morality to the whole of society.

In Mengzi’s example, the purpose of analogy is not to know the “unknown,” but to establish an argument in order to fulfill his purpose. Mengzi’s purpose is to claim that political order was established on the basis of self-cultivation. The approach of analogy helps Mengzi to achieve his goal. As Mengzi said: “The Empire has its basis in the state, the state in the family, and the family in one’s own self” 天之本在國，國之本在家，家之本在身。⁸⁵ This analogy’s most important meaning is that self-cultivation is the foundation of a state.

Consequently, we find that analogy is a method that the early Chinese used to express their world and to recognize the “unknown”. To philosophers, analogy is an approach to establish arguments in order to effectively make their social or political appeals. The basic rule in an analogical argument is to find similarity between the “known,” an object used to make the analogy,

⁸⁴ *Mencius*, tr. Lau, 11. The Chinese citation is from *Mengzi zheng yi*, ed. Jiao, 85.

⁸⁵ *Mencius*, tr. Lau, 79. The Chinese citation is from *Mengzi zheng yi*, ed. Jiao, 493.

and the “unknown,” an object in need of explanation. Sometimes, thinkers had to explain an abstract concept so they often used analogy to illustrate it. Although the process for illustrating an abstract concept is analogy, the comparison might also use metaphor to complete the analogical process. However, in this chapter I only use “analogy” as the main term to illustrate how “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” reveals values of conscientiousness and trustworthiness by analogy. Next, I am going to explain why I do not regard “metaphor” as the main approach the author used in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness”.

Metaphors and Analogy

According to George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, we can understand a specific culture through examining what metaphors they used in their arguments.⁸⁶ Based on this idea, Sarah Allan further points out the concept of the “root metaphor” which helps us understand how the early Chinese observed their world.⁸⁷ She found that water and plants are both root metaphors in early China. When the Chinese thinkers used water or plants as metaphors, they believed objects in the metaphors shared the same principle from water and plants.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Lakoff and Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By*, 4.

⁸⁷ Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*, 12.

⁸⁸ In order to give a clear picture of what a root metaphor is, I use an example from Allan’s research. According to Allan’s research, the early Chinese were influenced by plants and water because the characteristics of water such as flowing in a direction can be found in early Chinese philosophical texts. For example, Allan cites Mengzi who used the image of water to ask what humanity is. In addition, the image of plants also influences early Chinese thought. The Chinese used to include plants and animals in the category of “myriad living things” (*wu* 物). When the early Chinese indicate “myriad living things” in an argument, the “myriad living things” often referred to plants. See Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*, 47, 96-98 and *passim*.

However, rhetoric, analogy and metaphor involve similar functions, because to find similarity between different objects is the function of both analogy and metaphor. Modern scholar Edward Slingerland, based on Gilles Fauconnier's "project mapping," talks about metaphor as: "projection mappings, where part of the structure of a more concrete or clearly organized domain (the source domain) is used to understand and talk about another, usually more abstract or less clearly structured, domain (the target domain)".⁸⁹ If we consider Slingerland's ideas along with the previous ideas about analogy, we find that analogy and metaphor can be difficult to distinguish.⁹⁰ Here is an example from the *Mencius* passage I discussed above about the relationship between water and human nature discussed by Allan. She argues that water is a metaphor in the *Mencius*. Allan points out that Mengzi used water to demonstrate his ideas based on his assumption that the same principle informed both nature and humans.⁹¹ That is why Mengzi used water as the metaphor to describe people's respect flowing down to a ruler when he performed well.⁹² Interestingly, comparing Allan's and Lau's explanations, these two scholars separately used "metaphor" and "analogy" to explain the same example from Mengzi about the flowing quality of water used to demonstrate his main point about human nature being good.

⁸⁹ Slingerland, *Effortless Action*, 21.

⁹⁰ Actually, Slingerland in his other article frequently uses analogy and metaphor in the same position of rhetoric. As he mentioned "A much more common position has been to see metaphor and analogy as important." Slingerland, "Metaphor and Meaning in Early China," 1.

⁹¹ Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*, 42-43.

⁹² Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*, 45.

Therefore, analogy and metaphors might not be defined differently when both of them are used as a method to express an abstract concept by finding similarity to a concrete object.

There is only one reason why I think that analogy is the best method for understanding “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.” It is that the practical value of conscientiousness and trustworthiness is represented by the process of these two moralities being extended from the cultivation from the individual to others. I think this is a unique feature of analogy but not of metaphor. An example from “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” talks about an interaction between individual and large groups:

忠積則可親也，信積則可信也。忠信積而民弗親信者，未知有也。

When conscientiousness grows, then one can be taken as an intimate. When trustworthiness grows, then one can be trusted. There has never been a time when conscientiousness and trustworthiness accumulated in one but the people did not feel close to him and trust him.⁹³

This analogy expresses an “unknown,” which is that a ruler can acquire people when he has conscientiousness and trustworthiness, by using a “known,” the basic idea that people are willing to get close to someone who has these two moralities. This analogy also implies that rulers need to know that if they want to perform successfully in the public arena, then they should perform morally as an individual.

Consequently, I believe that both methods of metaphor and analogy can help us understand

⁹³ See the text in the appendix.

why the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” used soil, water, earth, and heaven to represent the moral values of conscientiousness and trustworthiness, and the moral significance that these four elements represented. However, analogy can reveal the extension in meaning and use of the moral values of conscientiousness and trustworthiness, and that is not the function of metaphor. Therefore, I use the term “analogy” to analyze the theoretical structure in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.”

Correlative Thinking and Analogy

Some scholars argue that correlative thinking was the other way that the Chinese understood their world. “Correlative thinking” is a way to express the cognitive process of the Chinese. Joseph Needham (1900-1995) has argued that “correlative thinking,” or “coordination thinking,” is to place every concept into a pattern wherein these concepts spontaneously influenced each other by inductance.⁹⁴ A typical representative case is from Dong Zhongshu 董仲舒 (179-104 BC), an important philosopher in the Han dynasty, which expresses how human society and cosmology interacted. He says that there is an inductance between heaven and humans.⁹⁵ Angus Graham also points out that correlative thinking is one method that the early Chinese used to understand the world. Graham believes the early Chinese were used to categorizing the world

⁹⁴ Needham, *Science and Civilization in China, vol. II*, 280-281.

⁹⁵ The argument regarding how Dong Zhongshu used his theory to express correlative thinking is made by Needham in Fung, “Lun suowei Zhongguo gudai de ziran zhuyi-ping Joseph Needham de guandian,” 517-518.

through an opposing and relating system, such as heaven and earth or high and low. This view of the world influenced the Chinese to naturally compare the value of humans to that of other beings. In addition, the Chinese believed that things under the same category could influence each other.⁹⁶ According to Graham's argument, correlative thinking is how the early Chinese ordered their world. They categorized different things through finding their similarities. *Yin* and *yang* 陰陽, were often seen as essential factors, and everything was produced by the movements of these contrary forces.⁹⁷

Rogers T. Ames agrees with the views of Marcel Granet, who might have been the first to mention “correlative thinking” and considered it a unique feature of the Chinese way of recognizing the world.⁹⁸ Ames and David L. Hall argue that correlative thinking is the way that the early Chinese decided how they wanted to establish their world. According to Ames and Hall, the early Chinese tried to establish a world that was meaningful to themselves. The totem is an example of this: “In the most superficial understandings of totemic classifications, the association of a clan, family, or group with a particular animal or natural object is not based upon claims of a shared essence or upon an observed or inferred causal connection, but upon the assignment of a meaningful correlation.”⁹⁹ These two scholars believed that causal correlation is a feature of

⁹⁶ Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 332-344.

⁹⁷ Graham, *Disputers of the Tao*, 336-337.

⁹⁸ Ames, *Ziwo de yuancheng*, 182.

⁹⁹ Ames and Hall, *Anticipating China*, 125.

analogical thinking that the early Chinese used to achieve the purpose of their arguments. This process of analogy is not like the analogy used in the Western language context of strict logic, but a causal and correlative mode. As Ames and Hall explain in their book: “From the perspective of correlative thinking, to explain an item or event is, first to place it within a scheme organized in terms of analogical relations among the items selected for the scheme, and then reflect, and act in terms of, the suggestiveness of these relations.”¹⁰⁰ Based on their arguments, analogy is the method the Chinese used to create a meaningful world, and the process of creating these analogies is the correlative thinking of the Chinese. Furthermore, these two scholars suggested that correlative thinking is the basic way that the early Chinese recognized the world. Ames believed that corrective thinking had already appeared before the Han dynasty, and that the scholars of the Han dynasty strengthened it in their cosmological theory.¹⁰¹ Ames points out that the Chinese associated themselves with other existences in the same space. To the Chinese, there was no purely abstract conception: every conception correlated with living things that were always changing. Therefore, Mengzi states: “For a man to give full realization to his heart is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his own nature will know heaven” 盡其心者，知其性也。知其性，則知天矣。¹⁰² This understanding reflected that the Chinese believed that

¹⁰⁰ Ames and Hall, *Anticipating China*, 124-125.

¹⁰¹ Ames, *He er butong*, 228-229.

¹⁰² *Mencius*, tr. Lau, 145. The Chinese citation is from *Mengzi zheng yi*, ed. Jiao, 877.

people can comprehend themselves and others while they cultivated their spirits. Ames believed this is because correlative thinking does not separate subjects and objects.¹⁰³

Through the above discussions, we find that scholars essentially indicated that correlative thinking is a feature of the Chinese recognition of their world, however scholars have differing ideas about where correlative thinking falls in terms of the stages of Chinese thinking, and when correlative thinking first arose in China. Some scholars, such as A. C. Graham, believe that correlative thinking relates to the original ideas of *yin-yang* and the five phases (*wuxing* 五行) of water, fire, wood, gold, and earth. These ideas are from before the Warring States period and were developed by the school of Yin-Yang, a group composed of people who believed in *yin-yang* theory during the Warring States period. Some scholars, such as Wang Aihe, believe that correlative thinking developed from a group of intellectuals who intentionally transformed cosmology. These intellectuals used correlative thinking in ritual and in the political structure to set up a political discourse. Correlative thinking became a discourse that philosophers used to establish the political power of rulers during the Warring States period.¹⁰⁴ Questions remain about exactly how the early Chinese believed the mechanics behind correlative thinking worked and how correlative thinking developed, but I will not go into that here as these questions are outside

¹⁰³ Ames, *He er butong*, 233-235.

¹⁰⁴ As modern scholar Sun Bangjin 孫邦金 introduced these two differences in his article “Cunyou de lianxu yu Zhongguo gudai de guanlianxing siwei,” accessed November 21, 2014. <http://www.hkshp.org/humanities/ph116-02.txt>. Wang, *Cosmology and Political Culture in Early China*, 126.

the scope of my research.

Finally, I would like to explain why I hesitate to use the term “correlative thinking.” I make this choice because “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” does not reveal a strong argument indicating that heaven and human behaviors can influence each other. However, I do believe that the text of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” reveals an idea that implies some relationship between cosmology and the human world. For example, the author intended to compare cosmological elements with conscientiousness and trustworthiness in order to establish and elevate the moral value of these two moralities. This implies that conscientiousness and trustworthiness represent a consistency that matches natural characteristics. Thus, there might be a moral spiritual connection between humans and heaven. Humans can learn correct ways of behaving from cosmology, and humans might have trouble if they do not follow these rules. However, these troubles are not caused by heaven or earth, but by the wrong actions of human beings. The author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” establishes moral significance by means of cosmology. The author does not seem to believe that there is an essential force between cosmological elements and the human world. Therefore, in my thesis, I use “analogy” to express how the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” established his moral political theory. Analogy is a method that explains abstract concepts through different qualities of nature, and establishes a moral connection between an individual and others.

Analogical Thinking in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness”

Analogical Structure in the Relationship between Nature and Human

One purpose of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” is to reveal the universal meaning of the two concepts conscientiousness and trustworthiness. In order to express that it is necessary for these two values to exist, this text treats human society as a part of the cosmos. The way the text demonstrates this is to compare these two concepts with cosmological terms such as “soil,” “time,” “earth,” and “heaven”. It argues that conscientiousness and trustworthiness contain universal meanings because there are similarities between the cosmological terms and these two moral concepts. For example, the sentence “Perfect conscientiousness is like the soil which causes things to grow but never boasts” 至忠如土，化物而不伐 in the second strip implies this viewpoint through a connection between the moral concept “conscientiousness” and a natural element, “soil.”

The character “boast” (*fa* 伐) involves self-praise. As the *Laozi* mentions: “He does not brag, and so has merit” 不自伐，故有功 or “he who brags will have no merit” 自伐者無功.¹⁰⁵ These two sentences state that when sages did something really well, they would never brag. That is because sages did what they thought they had to do. In comparison, ordinary people often want to show off their achievements. Even though a giver’s self-praise is not intended to allow them to

¹⁰⁵ *Tao Te Ching*, tr. Lau, 27, 29. The Chinese citations are from *Laozi jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Chen, 136, 143.

gain anything, they still want to let a receiver for whom they worked know what they did. That is because this type of giver regarded their giving as a sacrifice. The feature of sages is similar to the character of soil which constantly nourishes living things but is frequently underfoot living creatures, yet soil does not stop nourishing these living creatures. In Chinese philosophy, thinkers have noticed this characteristic of soil and used this feature to describe the moral of conscientiousness. Modern scholar Liu Zhao 劉釗 cites an example from the *Xunzi*:

子貢問於孔子曰：「賜為人下，而未知也。」孔子曰：「為人下者乎？其猶土也，深扣之，而得甘泉焉，樹之而五穀蕃焉，草木殖焉，禽獸育焉；生則立焉，死則入焉；多其功，而不息¹⁰⁶。為人下者其猶土也。」

Zigong posed a question for Confucius, saying, “I will be someone’s subordinate, but I do not yet know how to conduct myself.” Confucius said, “Being a person’s subordinate? Is this not like the soil? If one digs deeply into it, one will obtain a sweet spring from it. If one plants on it, the five grains will grow from it. Grasses and trees multiply upon it, and birds and beasts are nourished upon it. When one lives, one stands upon it. When one dies, one enters into it. It provides bountiful merits without cease. To be a person’s subordinate, is this not like the soil?”¹⁰⁷

This example points out that people should learn from the soil which makes a great contribution to nourishing myriad creatures but always keeps a humble attitude. Liu suggests this example helps us understand the use of similar to the term “never boast” (*bufa* 不伐) regarding soil in

¹⁰⁶ Modern scholar Xiong Gongzhe 熊公哲 changed the character “cease” (*xi* 息) to virtue (*de* 德). However, I keep the original character “cease” (*xi* 息) because the term “It provides bountiful merits without cease” is good to present the quality of soil that it continually nourishes creatures. See *Xunzi jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Xiong, 640.

¹⁰⁷ Translation adapted from *Xunzi*, tr. Hutton, 341-342. The Chinese citation is adapted from *Xunzi jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Xiong, 640.

“The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.”¹⁰⁸

Another important argument that the author implies in the analogy about conscientiousness and soil is that perfect conscientiousness should be represented by actions which help and support others. That is because to nourish and support living things is the work of soil. The text encourages rulers and elites to support their people as soil supports living things. Furthermore, because the nourishment of soil is universal to nourish every living thing, rulers or elites should also help and support everyone equally.

Similarly to the connection made between the image of soil and the concept of conscientiousness, the text uses “time” (*shi* 時) to express that truthfulness is the characteristic of trustworthiness. As the text says: “Perfect trustworthiness is like time; it surely arrives without being bound by a contract” 至信如時，必至而不結。¹⁰⁹ This is based on the fact that the early Chinese believed that time is a repeating pattern.¹¹⁰ This idea relates to the early Chinese people’s life experiences. For example, modern scholar Feng Shi 馮時 points out that “time” is an important idea in ancient China because the early Chinese livelihood relied on agriculture, and growing plants or rearing livestock all relied on the changing seasons over time.¹¹¹ Sarah Allan points out that the term “time” in early China represents “seasons.” That is because to the early

¹⁰⁸ Liu, *Chutu jianbo wenzi congkao*, 61.

¹⁰⁹ See the text in the appendix.

¹¹⁰ Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*, 13.

¹¹¹ Feng, *Zhongguo gudai de tianwen yu renwen*, 62-63.

Chinese, time often referred to the appropriate activities for each season. Allan said: “The original meaning of *shi* 時 is ‘season.’ By extension, it also means seasonality or timeliness and refers to doing something at the appropriate time, the time or season at which an action can succeed.”¹¹²

The conception of time to the early Chinese is not abstract but often relates to their life experiences. The concept of cyclical time can be found in the way Chinese thinkers understood history. The *Analects* states: “The Yin built on the rites of the Xia. What was added and what was omitted can be known. The Zhou built on the rites of the Yin. What was added and what was omitted can be known. Should there be a successor to the Zhou, even a hundred generations hence can be known” 殷因於夏禮，所損益，可知也；周因於殷禮，所損益，可知也；其或繼周者，雖百世，可知也。¹¹³ Modern scholar Huang Chun-Chieh 黃俊傑 points out that this example reveals that Confucius believed that historical development is regular. The reason we know a hundred generations after the Zhou is because every dynasty is more or less based on the previous. Therefore, only if we have observed and known the change over several dynasties, could we know the other transformations in the later dynasties. Huang explains that the repeated historical viewpoint represents that early scholars believed that time is reversible. “Reversibility” (*kenixing* 可逆性) is the term that Huang uses to explain that in Chinese thought, time is a recurring pattern

¹¹² Allan, *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue*, 11-12.

¹¹³ Translation adapted from *The Analects*, tr. Lau, 66. This citation is from *Lunyu zheng yi*, ed. Liu, 71.

between past and present.¹¹⁴ This means that historical development must follow a regular pattern, so that people living in the present time can learn from experiences of the past.¹¹⁵ This example also demonstrates that to the early Chinese, time is cyclical, and this understanding often connects with concrete life experiences.

Furthermore, the repetitive conceptual meaning of time also influenced the early Chinese to have an initial idea of trustworthiness. Experiences in the present time and expectations for the future caused the early Chinese to establish the important concept of punctuality. As I have said regarding the argument from Feng, the idea of punctuality implies a promise that would be fulfilled in the future. This idea definitely influenced early Chinese people's activities. That is why the relationship of time and trustworthiness was often cited in transmitted or excavated texts. For example, the excavated text "Huangdi sijing" 黃帝四經 from among the Mawangdui silk manuscripts, discusses the relationship between time and trust:

日信出信入，南北有極，〔度之稽也。月信生信〕死，進退有長，數之稽也。列星有數，而不失其行，信之稽也。

The sun reliably rises and sets, north and south have their limits: these are the models for measurement. The moon reliably waxes and wanes, there is a constancy to advancement and withdrawal: these are the models for calculation. The stellar formations have their quantifiable relations and do not deviate from their paths: these are the models for the trustworthy.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴ Huang, "Zhongguo gudai rujia lishi siwei de fangfa jiqi yunyong," 1-2.

¹¹⁵ Huang, "Zhongguo gudai rujia lishi siwei de fangfa jiqi yunyong," 3-5.

¹¹⁶ Translation adapted from Peerenboom, *Law and Morality in Ancient China*, 44. The Chinese citation is from *Huangdi sijing jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Chen, 180-181.

This example reveals that when the movements of the sun, the moon, or stars were regular, the norms of “measurement” (*du* 度), “calculation” (*shi* 數), and “reliability” (*xin* 信) appeared.

That is because if these cosmological elements are reliable or trustworthy, human standards that were created by following these natural models would also be trustworthy. Some scholars believe that the author of the text tried to advise rulers to rule by following changes in nature. As Peerenboom says: “There is a constancy to nature, an underlying pattern to what may appear to the uninformed to be whimsical madness. It is up to the sage to discover this underlying pattern and to structure society accordingly.”¹¹⁷ Through the above example, we find that trustworthiness is an idea related to the constant and predictable movements of nature. People then further established social norms and applied them in the human world.

The text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” mentions that “the perfect trustworthiness” (*zhixin* 至信) is “like time, it surely arrives without being bound by a contract.” When the virtue of trustworthiness can be called “perfect trustworthiness,” the value of trustworthiness manifests in an individual as the spontaneous act of respecting a promise. This spontaneity is similar to the concept of time in the past, present, and future: naturally coming and leaving. This ideal concept of trustworthiness is compared to the conception of trustworthiness during the Spring and Autumn period and Warring States period. At that time, competition and

¹¹⁷ Peerenboom, *Law and Morality in Ancient China*, 44-45.

betrayal were common within and between states. Since survival was the most important thing, to protect and expand one's own benefits was the most immediate concern. In that situation, rulers could not trust others easily. Therefore, rulers feel that only if they made an oath of alliance (*mengshi* 盟誓) with each other, would there be any chance of trust. Oaths of alliance reflect that the value of "trustworthiness" was transformed to have a superficial meaning. This is the reason why the text stresses that real trustworthiness should be based on inner morality, but not expressed by an external and artificial contract.

The definitions of "conscientiousness" and "trustworthiness" in "The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness" are defined by an analogical approach. The text uses the natural quality of soil to reveal that honesty or sincerity is the content of the value of "conscientiousness." Also, the text uses the movement of time to demonstrate that truthfulness or integrity is the qualities of the value of "trustworthiness." Compared with "perfect conscientiousness" and "perfect trustworthiness," the ideas of "soil" and "time" could be observed in people's daily life, and are less abstract than the two moral ideas. Thus, in order to illustrate the two morals of "conscientiousness" and "trustworthiness," the method of analogy finds similarities in the ideas of "soil" and "time" that are grounded in specific experiences.

In addition, by using natural elements to define "perfect conscientiousness," the text further proves that these two moralities are universal. In the third strip, the text uses conceptions of

space-time to reveal the universal meanings of “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness.” The text states: “Perfect conscientiousness has endured a very long time and has not changed. Perfect trustworthiness has endured since high antiquity and still maintains constancy” 大舊而不渝，忠之至也。大古而主常，信之至也. The two terms “very long time” (*dajiu* 大久) and “high antiquity” (*dagu* 大古) both represent a long period of time, and they imply that the essence of conscientiousness and trustworthiness are innate and not learned. In the fourth and fifth strips, the text uses the ideas of “heaven” and “earth” to strengthen the idea that these two moralities are unchanging. The text states:

大忠不說，大信不期。不說而足養者，地也；不期而可迎者，天也。配天地也者，忠信之謂此。

Great conscientiousness is modest, and great trustworthiness is dependable. That which is modest, but is sufficient to nourish life is the earth. That which has not made an appointment, but can still be met with is heaven. Those which match heaven and earth are called conscientiousness and trustworthiness.¹¹⁸

These strips claim the same characteristics of conscientiousness and trustworthiness as in the earlier examples regarding conscientiousness and soil, and trustworthiness and time. Their use of the representative meanings of “heaven” and “earth” are similar to that of “time” and “soil.” However, “heaven” and “earth” involve meanings of virtue, whereas “soil” and “time” only represent cosmological terms. Modern scholar Chen Jian 陳劍 has pointed out that because this

¹¹⁸ See the text in the appendix.

text used the metaphors of “soil” and “time” to illustrate the qualities of conscientiousness and trustworthiness, the relationship between cosmological elements and moral concepts is parallel. Likewise, “heaven” and “earth” correspond to these two moralities. The relationship is parallel but is not a relationship of principal and subordinate. Therefore, the character “matches” (*pei* 配) refers to a parallel relationship in which the virtues of conscientiousness and trustworthiness match the virtues of heaven and earth.¹¹⁹ For instance, the *Zhong yong* 中庸, associated with Zisi 子思 (483-402 BC), who is the grandson of Confucius, states: “Wherever Heaven spreads its protective canopy, wherever the Earth bears up its charge, wherever the sun and moon shine and the frost and dew descend, there is none with blood and breath within him that does not respond with respect and affection. That is why it is said: ‘He stands as the equal of Heaven’” 天之所覆，地之所載，日月所照，霜露所墜；凡有血氣者，莫不尊親，故曰配天。¹²⁰ And the *Book of Rites* (*Liji* 禮記) states: “In their own peculiar sphere, (this marriage) serves for the regulation of the ceremonies of the ancestral temple, and is sufficient to supply the correlates to the spiritual intelligences of heaven and earth” 內以治宗廟之禮，足以配天地之神明。¹²¹ These examples reveal a one-to-one relationship between moral qualities or activities in the human world with heaven and earth.

¹¹⁹ Chen, “Shi ‘Zhong xin zhi dao’ pei 配 zi,” February 20, 2008, accessed November 21, 2014.

http://www.gwz.fudan.edu.cn/SrcShow.asp?Src_ID=343.

¹²⁰ *Ta Hsueh and Chung Yung*, tr. Plaks, 52-53. The Chinese citation is from *Zhong yong jin zhu jin yi*, ed. Yang and tr. Song, 65.

¹²¹ *Book of Rites*, vol., tr. Legge, 265. The Chinese citation is from *Li ji zheng yi*, ed. Kong et al, 1376.

Consequently, one purpose of the text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” is to set up a political and moral ideology that encourages rulers to rule their people and states with conscientiousness and trustworthiness. This implies that rulers should follow their innate qualities of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. In addition, the analogical approach reveals the author’s analogical thinking about the world, in which goodness exists in human society and nature when everything returns to its natural qualities. From this perspective, the author of the text could claim that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are necessary values to the human world.

Analogical Structure in the Relationship between Individual and Society

Although the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” set up the values of these two moralities by associating them with natural elements, the harmony of human society is the main concern. The idea of a comprehensive harmony is expanded through the possibility of establishing an existing harmony in a small group. Again, through a known, which is the stability of a small group, an unknown can be explained. This harmony is how analogy is used in early Chinese logic. Unlike the above analogical approaches which illustrate the qualities of these two moralities by using natural elements as a comparison, the text here focuses on interactions between an individual and social communities. The analogical thinking is revealed in the process of individual moral practice with others. This text involves two phases of this interaction: the individual interacting with others in the form of a state, and a state interacting with

the whole of the human world. I have to stress that although I distinguish these two modes, this does not mean the interaction is a single line. Each relationship reacts dynamically, which means that individuals and the whole human world can influence each other by applying conscientiousness and trustworthiness to their interactions.

In addition, before moving into the next arguments, I would like to further expand on why the relationships between the individual and others can be established. I think the main reason for this is that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are morals that everyone has. This is the basic condition in the analogy that the author uses to establish the following relationships. In other words, conscientiousness and trustworthiness are something which the individual and others have in common.

1. From the individual to others, from others to the state

The author represents the moral and political efficacy of conscientiousness and trustworthiness made through their establishment between the three relationships of the individual with others, others with the state, and one state with other states. Here is an example in the text:

忠積則可親也，信積則可信也。忠信積而民弗親信者，未知有也。

When conscientiousness grows, then one can be taken as an intimate. When trustworthiness grows, then one can be trusted. There has never been a time when conscientiousness and trustworthiness accumulated in one but the people did not feel close to him and trust him.¹²²

¹²² The text is in the appendix.

At first, we have to notice that the main purpose of being conscientious and trustworthy is to attract people who are willing to get close to one and be trusting. In order to fulfill this purpose, the author designed two situations: 1) only when an agent has conscientiousness and trustworthiness, can the agent obtain others' closeness and trust; 2) when rulers or elites have conscientiousness and trustworthiness, the necessary result of the people being close and trusting must happen. These two situations are of two kinds in the analogy. We might clearly find an interrelation by separating these two kinds.

1) 忠積則可親也，信積則可信也。

When conscientiousness grows, then one can be taken as an intimate. When trustworthiness grows, then one can be trusted.

2) 忠信積而民弗親信者，未知有也。

There has never been a time when conscientiousness and trustworthiness accumulated in one but the people did not feel close to him and trust him.

The first situation is the “known,” and the second situation is an “unknown”. A similarity between these two types of analogy is a desire to get someone to be intimate and trusting. The author assumes that everyone must have this desire. Therefore, the first situation must be a valid assumption because this assumption is based on personal experience. Based on the first assumption, the second situation is also valid. That is because the agent knows it is true that others are willing to get close to one and trust one if he is conscientious and trustworthy. Then the agent can extend this situation to another situation. Returning to the above example, if the author wants

to successfully persuade rulers or elites to rule states with conscientiousness and trustworthiness, analogical thinking is the method that helps rulers or elites to understand the importance of having these two morals. This enables them to gain their people's support.

In addition, the above example also expresses the interrelationship between conscientiousness and trustworthiness with the interaction between individuals, others, and a state.

We can find this by analyzing the example again:

- 1) When conscientiousness grows, then one can be taken as an intimate. When trustworthiness grows, then one can be trusted.

Here, the example talks about a relationship between an individual and others.

- 2) There has never been a time when conscientiousness and trustworthiness accumulated in one but the people did not feel close to him and trust him.

Here, the example talks about a relationship between an individual, others, and a state.

The first phase expresses the interactive effects of conscientiousness and trustworthiness on the relationship between the individual and others. The second is an extended phase based on the first phase, and creates a political effect based on these two morals. This means that both individuals and others are the members that constitute a state. Therefore, the author establishes the moral necessity of conscientiousness and trustworthiness to a state.

In addition, the author further points out that the political effects of conscientiousness and trustworthiness also play a role in attracting people from other states. As the text says:

君子其施也忠，故蠻親附也，其言爾信，故誠而可受也。

The behavior of a person of noble characters is conscientious. Therefore, barbarians want to be close to him and ally with him. His speech is so trustworthy that it is sincere and can be accepted.¹²³

Based on the above arguments, the author's thinking has been expanded from individuals to the outer boundaries of a state, and the effects of conscientiousness and trustworthiness have also expanded. This reveals that when a ruler or officials know the importance of these two morals; they can gain a great benefit, which is to attract more people and thus strengthen their states.

1. The state to the human world

The author expresses that the eventual goal of displaying conscientiousness and trustworthiness is to order and harmonize the human world. The text expands the concept of “state” (*guojia* 國家) to the “human world” (*tianxia* 天下). The example from the text is given below:

忠之為道也，百工不楛，而人養皆足。信之為道也，羣物皆成，而百善皆立。

When conscientiousness is the fundamental principle, then the hundred artisans will not all crudely make [a product], and everything which supports the people is sufficient. When trustworthiness is the fundamental principle, then all living things develop fully and everything good is established.¹²⁴

This example expresses that when conscientiousness and trustworthiness are taken as the universal principles, then everyone lives properly. The two abstract terms of “conscientiousness is

¹²³ The text can be found in the appendix.

¹²⁴ The text can be found in the appendix.

the fundamental principle” and “trustworthiness is the fundamental principle” have been clarified by the series of analogical arguments. These express that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are necessary moralities for everyone to have. When rulers or officials have these two moralities, they can effectively cause conscientiousness and trustworthiness to spread to different realms. Therefore, in this example, the functions of “conscientiousness is the fundamental principle” and “trustworthiness is the fundamental principle” are the “known” in the rule of analogy.

This analysis of the structure and argument style of the text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” demonstrates that the purpose of this text is to emphasize the efficacy of conscientiousness and trustworthiness in reality. There are two ways the author uses analogy to establish the value of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. First, in order to consolidate and strengthen their significance, the author establishes unshakable values of conscientiousness and trustworthiness by linking them to cosmological ideas through the method of analogy. Features such as constancy and stability taken as qualities of soil, time, earth, and heaven are applied through analogy to the moral characteristics of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. Second, the author argues that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are necessary moralities in reality. Again, through analogy, the author establishes the practical value of conscientiousness and trustworthiness to the individual, others, a state, and the whole human world. In the next chapter, I will explain what moral arguments the author establishes to elevate the moral status of

conscientiousness and trustworthiness.

Chapter Three:
Two Moral Ideas: Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness”

In this chapter I will make an argument about the moral meanings of conscientiousness and trustworthiness in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.” First, I analyze how the text shows that both conscientiousness and trustworthiness are necessary morals by linking these two moralities with cosmological elements. Through the analysis, we also find that conscientiousness and trustworthiness involve several features, such as modesty and reliability. In addition, I will show why the specific term “perfect” (*zhi* 至) was added by the author in front of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. This rhetoric reflects what true conscientiousness and true trustworthiness are. Finally, I am going to analyze the relationship between conscientiousness, trustworthiness, humanity, and righteousness in the text. The author considered conscientiousness and trustworthiness to be the moral foundation of humanity and righteousness. This not only reveals that the author intended to elevate the moral values of conscientiousness and trustworthiness to equal humanity and righteousness, but also reflects the important moral status of conscientiousness and trustworthiness during the Warring States period.

Moral Meanings of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness in the Text

Moral Meanings of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness Expressed by Linking Cosmological Elements

“The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” highlights moral meanings by linking them with characteristics of cosmological elements. These characteristics function as a metaphysical foundation to support conscientiousness and trustworthiness as necessary moralities in various realms. This foundation also helps the author to claim that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are the morals which rulers or elites must have. In this section, I am going to analyze this approach along with the extended moral functions of both conscientiousness and trustworthiness represented in the text. I will categorize the relevant sentences of the text into two groups of ideas.

The first group talks about the two features of constancy and changeless time in the text:

大久而不渝，忠之至也。大古而主常，信之至也。

Perfect conscientiousness has endured a very long time and has not changed. Perfect trustworthiness has endured since high antiquity and still maintains constancy. (Strip 3)¹²⁵

This example places conscientiousness and trustworthiness in an unchanged and constant position.

The whole sentence emphasizes that conscientiousness is a moral which exists for a long time and never changes; trustworthiness endures constantly through ancient times.¹²⁶ In the transmitted

¹²⁵ See the text in the appendix.

¹²⁶ Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 577.

texts, we find that “high antiquity” (*dagu* 大古) has been used to highlight the values which the thinkers wanted to emphasize. There is an example from the *Xunzi*:

辭讓之節得矣，長少之理順矣；忌諱不稱，祆辭不出。以仁心說，以學心聽，以公心辨……《詩》曰：「長夜漫兮，永思騫兮，大古之不慢兮，禮義之不愆兮，何恤人之言兮。」

Due measure in polite refusals and courtesy has been attained. The pattern for orderly relations between old and young is obediently observed. Forbidden subjects and tabooed names are not mentioned. Magical incantations do not issue from his lips. He explains with a humane compassion, listens with a studious attitude, and engages in disputation with an impartial mind... The *Book of Songs*: “This long night drags on, I constantly ponder over my faults. If I do not neglect high antiquity, if I do not err in ritual and morality, why be distressed over what men say?”¹²⁷

The *Xunzi* cites a paragraph from the *Book of Songs* to advise rulers that they should rule with moral principles and ritual propriety. Use of the term “high antiquity” implies that moral principles and ritual propriety are worth following because these values are enduring. The extended meaning is that rulers only need to hold to the right principles, but do not need to listen to useless suggestions that easily change from time to time.

In “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness,” the text reveals a similar purpose to the *Xunzi*. In strip four, the author further defines conscientiousness as “not to deceive” and trustworthiness as “not to betray.” As the text mentions:

¹²⁷ *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works Volume III Books 17-32*, tr. Knoblock, 133-134. The Chinese citation is from *Xunzi jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Xiong, 468-469.

至忠無譌，至信不背，夫此之謂此。

This is what is meant by “Perfect conscientiousness is without falsehood and perfect trustworthiness does not betray.” (Strip 5)¹²⁸

If we consider both this and the above examples, we find that the characteristic of

conscientiousness is not to speak falsehood, which is based on the characteristic of stability.

Stability, as a characteristic of conscientious, means a person would not easily change his words.

Similar to conscientiousness, the characteristic of trustworthiness is not to betray, and this is based

on the characteristic of constancy. Therefore, constancy is a characteristic of someone trustworthy

who always keeps his promises. The features of stability and constancy, of “very long time” and

“high antiquity”, support conscientiousness and trustworthiness as universally applicable morals.

This means that everyone should follow the rules of not deceiving and not betraying.

Next, the text emphasizes that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are necessary morals to rulers or elites in order to fulfill their duties. He does this by associating conscientiousness and trustworthiness with the characteristics of cosmological elements, such as soil and time. Below is an example from the second group:

至忠如土，化物而不伐。至信如時，必至而不結。

Perfect conscientiousness is like the soil which causes things to grow but never boasts. Perfect trustworthiness is like time; it surely arrives without being bound by a contract.

(Strip 2)¹²⁹

¹²⁸ See the text in the appendix.

¹²⁹ See the text in the appendix.

This example reveals that conscientiousness involves a humble character. In addition, when we compare this morality with soil, we find that the concept of conscientiousness implies the characteristic of stability.¹³⁰ Trustworthiness involves a dependable and constant character when we compare the characteristics of this moral with those of time. The author defines conscientiousness and trustworthiness by the characteristics of soil and time, which extends the meaning of conscientiousness and trustworthiness to suggest that they are inherent moralities. That is because both the characteristics of stability/humility and constancy come from the natural elements of soil and time. This emphasizes that both conscientiousness and trustworthiness are natural qualities, not artificial moral norms, such as ritual propriety. The implication of this comparison is to advise rulers or elites to support their people constantly, in the same way that time can be counted on to arrive. This also implies that the ruler should fulfill his people's needs naturally but not interfere in their lives. This argument involves a similar idea to that of “no interference” (*wuwei* 無為). Some scholars have argued that this paragraph seems related to ideas in the *Laozi* or *Zhuangzi*.¹³¹ Another example categorized in the second group might offer clearer evidence of this:

大忠不說，大信不期。
不說而足養者，地也。不期而可迎者，天也。

¹³⁰ See my interpretation regarding conscientiousness and soil in chapter two.

¹³¹ Chen Guying argues that the illustration about perfect conscientiousness growing living things but not considering this as worthy of merit is close to the illustration of nature in the *Laozi*. Chen, *Lao Zhuang xinlun*, 43.

Great conscientiousness is modest, and great trustworthiness is dependable. That which is modest, but is sufficient to nourish life is the earth. That which has not made an appointment, but can still be met with is heaven. (Strips 4-5)¹³²

This example reveals that the action of great conscientiousness is not to say any words but to nourish living things, just like the behavior of the earth. Trustworthiness is like time which always arrives on time naturally. The two terms “modest” or “not to speak” (*bushuo* 不說) and “dependable” or “not to make an appointment” (*buqi* 不期) involve an activity that naturally happens. These two moral qualities are like both the earth and heaven which continually grow and support myriad creatures over time.

An extended meaning of the text is to note that rulers should support their people continuously, so that people can naturally trust the rulers who govern with conscientiousness and trustworthiness.¹³³ This kind of governing attitude might reflect “no interference” (*wuwei* 無為). This is a feature of Huang-Lao 黃老 thought, a philosophy which was theorized by thinkers who followed features of the Way (*dao* 道) as in the *Laozi*, respected Huangdi 黃帝, and established a political-moral philosophy in order to advise rulers or officials not to enact policies such as taxation which would interfere with their people’s lives.¹³⁴ Huang-Lao thought dates back to the

¹³² See the text in the appendix.

¹³³ Guo, “Zaoqi ruxue de daode lunli zhexue tanxi,” 38.

¹³⁴ Lewis, *Writing and Authority in Early China*, 350.

Warring States period and was known in the state of Chu where the Guodian texts were buried.¹³⁵

As a text circulating in the state of Chu, it is not difficult to understand that “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” might have been influenced by Huang-Lao thought, a philosophy prevalent in that place at the time. Therefore “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” involves similar ideas of “no interference.” Modern scholar Susan Roosevelt Weld proposes a significant interpretation of both the ideas of conscientiousness and trustworthiness in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.” Weld cites the idea of “foundational natural law” from Randal Peerenboom, and points out that this idea is similar to the situation portrayed in the text: “‘Foundational natural law’: the idea that one alternative to completely arbitrary “rule by man” was rulers’ modeling their government on the reliable laws that govern the natural world. As part of the idea of “rule of law,” a ruler that models himself on the regularity of the earth and the four seasons has less room for the greed and arbitrary use of power that make “rule by man” so dangerous.”¹³⁶ This argument helps us understand the purpose of the author in treating conscientiousness and trustworthiness as necessary virtues of men who have political power. It also reflects the phenomenon of thinkers of the Warring States period realizing that conscientiousness and trustworthiness were the core moralities which could

¹³⁵ Regarding the relationship between Huang-Lao and the state of Chu, direct evidence is found in that Huang-Lao thought is represented in the “Huangdi sijing.” See *Huangdi sijing jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Chen, 43.

¹³⁶ Weld, “Warring States Law and Philosophy,” 143.

influence society and politics directly. If rulers or officials did not value conscientiousness and trustworthiness, this carelessness would cause social and political disorder. Next, I explain how the author of the text established the moral value of these two moralities by redefining their moral meanings.

“Perfect” Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness

The author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” adds *zhi* 至 “perfect” in front of conscientiousness and trustworthiness many times. The text contains the words conscientiousness and trustworthiness around twenty seven times, and the word “perfect” describes these two moralities ten times. This specific rhetoric involves two possible purposes. One purpose is to distinguish conscientiousness and trustworthiness in the text from the common understanding during the time. The other purpose is to reveal that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are very important moral qualities that rulers or officials should have. In addition, these two purposes are based on the reaction of the author to the chaotic conditions in the Warring States period. Below, I argue that the addition of “perfect” in front of conscientiousness and trustworthiness is to present characteristics of “true conscientiousness” and “true trustworthiness,” and then explain the redefinition of conscientiousness and trustworthiness in the text.

Before discussing how the definitions of conscientiousness in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” differ from the common understanding of the term, I

want to address that the use of “perfect” can be found in the *Zhuangzi*. The *Zhuangzi* uses the term “perfect” to redefine the concept of humanity (*ren* 仁) from Confucian philosophy and scholarly arguments often made by Confucius’ followers:

商太宰蕩問仁於莊子。莊子曰：「虎狼，仁也。」曰：「何謂也？」莊子曰：「父子相親，何為不仁？」曰：「請問至仁。」莊子曰：「至仁無親。」

Tai, the prime minister of Shang, asked Zhuangzi about humanity. Zhuangzi said, “Tigers and wolves—they are humane.” [Tai asked:] “How can you say that?” Zhuangzi said, “Sire and cubs are affectionate to each other—why do you say they are not humane?” “What I am asking to hear about is perfect humanity.” “Perfect humanity knows no favoritism.” said Zhuangzi.¹³⁷

In the *Zhuangzi*, “perfect humanity” (*zhiren* 至仁) is true humanity, which shows “no favoritism” (*wu qin* 無親). The argument “perfect humanity knows no favoritism” is made against the idea of humanity found in Confucian philosophy. The Confucian philosophy that was prevalent at the time regarded humanity as based on kinship. In other words, “no favoritism” does not mean that Zhuangzi opposed favoritism, but rather opposed favoritism under a patriarchal system. Chen Guying points out that “perfect humanity” reveals that a core value of humanity in the *Zhuangzi* is natural virtue, which is based on the Way, without any favoritism. Chen also says that the reason Zhuangzi redefines humanity or righteousness is because these two moral concepts had been used by some people as a moral shield for gaining benefits.¹³⁸ The example from the *Zhuangzi* gives

¹³⁷ Translation adapted from *The Complete Works of Chuang Tzu*, tr. Watson, 155. The Chinese citation is from *Zhuangzi jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Chen, 363.

¹³⁸ Chen, *Zhuangzi zhixue*, 69-71.

us a picture to learn how the author established his own concepts through the use of specific terms in his writings.

In contrast to the *Zhuangzi* which used “perfect humanity” to criticize other scholarly arguments, the reason that “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” added “perfect” to conscientiousness and trustworthiness was to criticize the phenomenon of “unconscientiousness” (*buzhong* 不忠) and “untrustworthiness” (*buxin* 不信) during the Warring States period. Because the main audience of this text was rulers or elites, they may have also been the main object of its critique. Although we do not have evidence from “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness,” an example from the *Zhanguo zongheng jiashu* 戰國縱橫家書 gives us a sense of the meaning intended by the author. The *Zhanguo zongheng jiashu* is a text from the Mawangdui silk manuscripts, and talks about historical events around the mid-late Warring States period.¹³⁹ Here is an example:

王曰：「齊王之多不忠也，殺妻逐子，不以其罪，何可怨也。」

King [of Yan] said: “The king of Qi is not conscientious. [The king of Qi] killed his wife and expelled his sons, and he did not admit his mistake. How could we only hate [but not punish him] ?”¹⁴⁰

According to modern scholar Meng Qingxiang 孟慶祥, this episode happened around 286 BC.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ *Ancient and Early Medieval Chinese Literature (vol.3 & 4)*, eds. Knechtges and Chang, 2202-2203.

¹⁴⁰ My translation. *Zhanguo zongheng jiashu*, ed. Mawangdui Hamu zhengli xiaozu, 10.

¹⁴¹ Meng, *Zhanguo zongheng jiashu lunkao*, 26.

At that time, king Min of Qi 齊湣王 was on the throne.¹⁴² One significant aspect of “unconscientiousness” in the *Zhanguo zongheng jiashu* is that conscientiousness might have been acknowledged as a moral evaluation to judge the performance of rulers or officials at that time.

In the same way, the value of trustworthiness also faced a challenge. The following example is from the *Book of Rites*:

有虞氏未施信于民，而民信之。夏后氏未施敬於民，而民敬之。何施而得斯于民也？對曰：「墟墓之間，未施哀於民而民哀。社稷宗廟之中，未施敬於民而民敬。殷人作誓而民始畔，周人作會而民始疑。

The lord of Yu, had not shown his good faith to the people, and yet they put confidence in him. The sovereign of Xia had not shown his reverence for the people, and yet the people revered him - what shall I exhibit that I may obtain such things from the people?' The reply was: 'Ruins and graves express no mournfulness to the people, and yet the people mourn (amidst them). The altars of the spirits of the land and grain and the ancestral temples express no reverence to the people, and yet the people revere them. The kings of Yin made their solemn proclamations, and yet the people began to rebel; those of Zhou made their covenants, and the people began to distrust them.¹⁴³

This example is from a chapter called “Tan Gong” 檀弓, and some modern scholars believed this chapter was produced during the Warring States period.¹⁴⁴ It seems to admire trustworthiness and reverence in the previous dynasties before the Zhou and blames the rulers of the Zhou for not protecting these two morals and for not gaining the people’s trust. Mengzi also criticized rulers or

¹⁴² According to modern scholar Qian Mu 錢穆 (1895-1990), the first year of the rule of King Min of Qi might have been the fifteen year of the rule of King Nan of Zhou 周赧王. This was around 299 BC. Qian Mu points out that the true total years King Min of Qi ruled was fourteen years. Therefore, the King of Qi in the *Zhanguo zongheng jiashu* which I cited above should be King Min of Qi. Qian, *Xianqin zhuzi xinian*, 395-397.

¹⁴³ Translation adapted from the *Book of Rites vol. 1*, tr. Legge, 191. *Li ji zheng yi*, ed. Kong et al, 311.

¹⁴⁴ Wang, *Liji chengshu kao*, 65-70.

elites who were not conscientious and trustworthy. Mengzi pointed out that some rulers or elites acted conscientiously and trustworthily superficially:

居之似忠信，行之似廉潔，眾皆悅之，自以為是，而不可與入堯舜之道，故曰德之賊也。 He [Xiang Yuan 鄉愿] pursues such a policy and appears to be conscientious and trustworthy, and to show integrity in his conduct. He is liked by the multitude and is self-righteous. It is impossible to embark on the way of Yao and Shu with such a man. Hence his name is “enemy of virtue”.¹⁴⁵

Mengzi indicated that the actions of elites who pretended to be conscientious and trustworthy were not based on their mind-heart. The values of conscientiousness and trustworthiness became a moral facade that elites used in order to deceive others. That is why the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” used the term “perfect conscientiousness” or “perfect trustworthiness” to indicate what true conscientiousness or true trustworthiness is.

The above examples reflect situations where the values of conscientiousness and trustworthiness faced a challenge. This is the reason that the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” was eager to argue in favor of the moral values of conscientiousness and trustworthiness by using the term “perfect.” In the text, we find that the author has indicated that “not speaking falsehood” (*bue* 不譌) and “not to betray” (*bubai* 不背) are the practical requirements for true conscientiousness and true trustworthiness. This implies

¹⁴⁵ Translation adapted from *Mencius*, tr. Lau, 167. *Mengzi zheng yi*, ed. Jiao, 1031.

that “not speaking falsehood” is perfect conscientiousness and “not to betray” is perfect trustworthiness, the central characteristics of perfect conscientiousness and perfect trustworthiness.

More details about these characteristics of conscientiousness and trustworthiness are in the text as bellow:

至忠如土，化物而不伐。至信如時，必至而不結。忠人亡譌，信人不背。

Perfect conscientiousness is like the soil which causes things to grow but never boasts. Perfect trustworthiness is like time; it surely arrives without being bound by a contract. A person with conscientiousness is without falsehood. A person with trustworthiness does not betray.

(Strip. 2)¹⁴⁶

In this example, we find that the author clearly defines “perfect conscientiousness” and “perfect trustworthiness” as “not speaking falsehood” and “not to betray” by comparing these concepts with the qualities of soil and time. There are also other examples where the author frequently connects “not speaking falsehood” with “conscientiousness,” and “not to betray” with “trustworthiness”. For instance, the text states:

大舊而不渝，忠之至也。大古而主常，信之至也。至忠無譌，至信不背，夫此之謂此。

Perfect conscientiousness has endured a very long time and has not changed. Perfect trustworthiness has endured since high antiquity and still maintains constancy. This is what is meant by “Perfect conscientiousness is without falsehood and perfect trustworthiness does not betray.” (Strips. 3-5)¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ The text is in the appendix.

¹⁴⁷ These examples can be found in the appendix.

Here again, in strips three to five, the author expresses the same definition of true conscientiousness and true trustworthiness. Through the above examples, it is evident that not speaking falsehood and not betraying are the main moral contents of conscientiousness and trustworthiness, and that this is what the author believed in and expected.

In addition, the discourse about conscientiousness and trustworthiness reflects that rulers were portrayed as the political-moral authority. That is because the two definitions of not speaking falsehood and not betraying reveal the particular historical situation of the Warring States period, when speaking falsehood and betrayal frequently occurred. These behaviors might have contributed to the chaotic atmosphere at the time since when rulers behaved unconscientiously or untrustworthily, their subordinates would not trust them. This is why the text continually emphasizes that perfect conscientiousness and perfect trustworthiness are connected to not speaking falsehood and not betraying because the text wants to establish a stable society.

Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness with Humanity (*ren* 仁) and Righteousness (*yi* 義) in the Text

The whole text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” focuses on the two concepts of “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness.” However, at the end of the text a connection between conscientiousness and trustworthiness with humanity and righteousness

unexpectedly appears: “Conscientiousness is the substance of humanity. Trustworthiness is the foundation of righteousness” 忠，仁之實。信，義之基。¹⁴⁸ This argument seems to regard conscientiousness and trustworthiness as more important moralities than humanity and righteousness because conscientiousness and trustworthiness are portrayed as the substance of humanity and righteousness. This illustration reflects a specific scholarly approach that elevated the moral status of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. In order to clarify this scholarly viewpoint, I am going to compare the text with other Guodian texts and the *Analects* and the *Mencius*. I will prove that over time, the importance of conscientiousness and trustworthiness was strengthened. This study might help in understanding the transformed moral meanings of these four moralities.

Before moving to the main argument, I want to bring up a question about the different interpretations of the character “昃”, which was originally interpreted as “expectation” (*ji* 期), and as “expectation” or “foundation” (*ji* 基) by some scholars. I follow the latter interpretation of “foundation,” and it influences my argument about the four moralities.

Interpretations of 昃

According to the original transcription of the text published by Hubei Sheng Jingmen Shi

¹⁴⁸ See the text in the appendix.

Bowuhuan 湖北省荊門市阜物館, the graph *ji* 昃 that appears in some places in the text should be interpreted as *qi* 期, meaning “dependable,” “expectation,” or “arrangement.”¹⁴⁹ For example, the term used in the sentence of “great trustworthiness is dependable” 大信不昃 (期). Therefore, some scholars follow the interpretation “expectation” when the character 昃 appears in the sentence about the relationship between trustworthiness and righteousness.¹⁵⁰ Most of them believe that the interpretation of “expectation” (*qi* 期) seems to express that righteousness is the substance of trustworthiness, so that righteousness contains a more important moral meaning than trustworthiness.¹⁵¹

However, if the character of 昃 can only be interpreted as “expectation,” this might bring up some questions in the interpretation of the whole sentence. That is because if we consider the whole sentence “Conscientiousness is the substance of humanity, trustworthiness is the expectation of righteousness” 忠，仁之實。信，義之期. We might expect there to be a parallel which reveals how the author expresses the importance of conscientiousness and trustworthiness by arguing that these two moralities are the core moral values of humanity and righteousness.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁹ The original graph of 昃 in *Chude chutu zhanguo jiance Heji 1*, eds. Wuhan daxue jianbo yan jiu zhongxin and Jingmen bowuhuan, 55.

¹⁵⁰ See Li, “Guodian chu jian ‘zhongzhu zhi dao’ de sixiang yingxiang,” 97. Li, “Xianqin rujia de zhengzhi lunli jiaokeshu,” 20. The citation of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” can be found in the appendix.

¹⁵¹ Liao, *Xinchu Chujian shilun*, 26.

¹⁵² According to the illustrations of conscientiousness and trustworthiness, we find that these two moralities share an equal moral position in the text “The way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.” For example, the text uses the same term meaning “perfect” and “great” to describe both conscientiousness and trustworthiness. For example, “Perfect conscientiousness is like the soil which causes things to grow but never boasts. Perfect trustworthiness is like time; it surely arrives without being bound by a contract” 至忠如土，化物而不伐；至信如時，必至而不結.

However, if we interpret 昇 as “expectation” in this sentence, conscientiousness and trustworthiness might not retain the same moral significance. That is because the meaning of the sentence would change to mean that conscientiousness is a foundational moral of humanity, but trustworthiness is not the foundational moral of righteousness. Therefore, aside from the interpretation of the character 昇 as “expectation,” we might need another interpretation to explain the relationship between the four moralities of conscientiousness, trustworthiness, humanity, and righteousness.

According to a rule in the formation of Chinese, words can become loans when they share the same Chinese finals (*yunmu* 韻母). Some scholars believe that the interpretation of the character “expectation” (*qi* 期) should be read as “foundation” (*ji* 基). For example, modern scholar Dirk Meyer says: “the two words fulfill the criteria for phonetic similarity in Old Chinese for loan characters and phonetic components.” Another scholar, Chen Wei 陳偉, makes an interpretation of “foundation” which I have followed based on the same reasoning. In addition, there is another parallel point the scholars noted when they interpreted the character 昇. An important argument from Chen points out that the term “substance” (*shi* 實) in the Chinese often referred to the kernel of a fruit, and had an extended meaning of connotations. Thus, if we agree that conscientiousness is the substance of humanity, we might also expect the interpretation of 昇

to be “foundation” (*ji* 基).¹⁵³ Chen implies that the lines in the text are parallels. Dirk Meyer argues that the relationship between conscientiousness, trustworthiness, humanity, and righteousness in the text reveal a certain consistency.¹⁵⁴ In addition to the above reasons, Chen also found a similar illustration of the term “foundation” with conscientiousness and trustworthiness from the book *Qian fu lun* 潛夫論, written by Wang Fu 王符 (83-163) in the Eastern Han dynasty (25-220). It states: “conscientiousness and trustworthiness along with carefulness, this is the foundation of virtue and righteousness” 忠信謹慎，此德義之基也。¹⁵⁵ Chen believed that this citation is similar to the idea of trustworthiness as the “foundation” (*ji* 基) of righteousness of expressed in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness”.¹⁵⁶ That is why I follow the identification of 昷 as denoting *ji* 基 “foundation” in this sentence.

Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness with Humanity and Righteousness

We now return to our discussion of the line “conscientiousness is the substance of humanity. Trustworthiness is the foundation of righteousness” 忠，仁之實。信，義之基 in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.”¹⁵⁷ The indication of conscientiousness and trustworthiness as the substance of humanity and righteousness seems to elevate the moral status of conscientiousness and trustworthiness and to redefine the two concepts of humanity and

¹⁵³ Chen, *Guodian zhushu bieshi*, 81.

¹⁵⁴ Meyer, *Philosophy on Bamboo Text and the Production of Meaning in Early China*, 266.

¹⁵⁵ My translation. *Qian fu lun jian jiaozheng*, tr. Peng, 17.

¹⁵⁶ Chen, *Guodian zhushu bieshi*, 82.

¹⁵⁷ The text can be found in the appendix.

righteousness. The significance in this sentence is treating conscientiousness as the substance of humanity. This is not a common idea because “humanity,” in Confucian philosophy and philosophical arguments based on Confucius’s ideas, is the most basic virtue underlying all other virtues.¹⁵⁸ Regarding humanity in the thoughts of Confucius, here is an example from the

Analects:

子張問仁於孔子。孔子曰：「能行五者於天下，為仁矣。」請問之。曰：「恭、寬、信、敏、惠。」

Zizhang asked Confucius about humanity. Confucius said, “There are five things and whoever is capable of putting them into practice in the Empire is certainly ‘humane.’” “May I ask what they are?” “They are respectfulness, tolerance, trustworthiness, quickness and generosity.”¹⁵⁹

In this example, Confucius has regarded humanity as the highest morality, and the other five morals of respect, tolerance, trustworthiness, quickness, and generosity are all conducted under humanity.¹⁶⁰ Regarding the humanity-conscientiousness relationship, we find another example

from the *Analects*:

子張問曰：「令尹子文三仕為令尹，無喜色；三已之，無慍色。舊令尹之政，必以告新令尹。何如？」子曰：「忠矣。」曰：「仁矣乎？」曰：「未知，焉得仁？」

Zizhang asked, “Ling Yin Ziwen gave no appearance of pleasure when he was made prime minister three times. Neither did he give any appearance of displeasure when he was removed from office three times. He always told his successor what he had done during his term of office. What do you think of this?” The Master said, “He can, indeed, be said to be a man with conscientiousness.” “Can he be said to be humane?” “He cannot even be said to be wise. How

¹⁵⁸ Modern scholars hold this viewpoint such as in Yu, *Lun tian ren zhiji*, 99-100.

¹⁵⁹ Translation adapted from *The Analects*, tr. Lau, 144. The Chinese citation is from *Lunyu zheng yi*, ed. Liu, 683.

¹⁶⁰ Ames and Hall, *Thinking Through Confucius*, 122.

can he be said to be humane?”¹⁶¹

This example reveals that even though a man behaved with conscientiousness,

Confucius still did not necessarily consider that man to be humane. We find that during the end of the Spring and Autumn period and early Warring States period, according to Confucian philosophy, humanity was seen as a more basic moral than conscientiousness.¹⁶² It reflects that the relationship between conscientiousness and humanity in the *Analects* is quite different from that described in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.”

However, Mengzi, as a scholar who continually expressed his respect for Confucius, elevated conscientiousness and trustworthiness to be equally important to humanity and righteousness in some ways. Two examples from the *Mencius* can illustrate this point. The first example clearly indicates that both humanity and righteousness are innate moralities. It reveals that these two moralities are still of central importance to Mengzi. The second example reveals that Mengzi intended to elevate humanity, righteousness, conscientiousness, and trustworthiness as equal moralities. These two examples are as below:

¹⁶¹ Translation adapted from *The Analects*, tr. Lau, 79. The Chinese citation is from *Lunyu zheng yi*, ed. Liu, 193.

¹⁶² Although there are scholars both in the past and today who have had various questions about the facts of the *Analects*, such as its author and date, most scholars still agree that the chapter “Gong ye chang” 公冶長 which I cite above from the *Analects* should have been produced near the time of Confucius. Thus, I believe that the example in the chapter reflects historical truth to a certain degree. E. Bruce Brooks has said that Arthur Waley (1889-1966) believed that chapters three to nine of the *Analects* were the earliest texts of the *Analects*. Brooks believed that the fifth chapter, “Gong ye chang” was not produced by Confucius but might have been written close to the time of Confucius; he clearly indicated that the fifth chapter might date to 470 BC. Brooks, *The Original Analects*, 201-203, 210.

惻隱之心，仁之端也。羞惡之心，義之端也。辭讓之心，禮之端也。是非之心，智之端也。人之有是四端也，猶其有四體也。

The heart of compassion is the germ of humanity; the heart of shame, of righteousness; the heart of courtesy and modesty, of observance of the rites; the heart of right and wrong, of wisdom. Man has these four germs just as he has four limbs.¹⁶³

In this example, Mengzi strengthened the moral significance of humanity and righteousness through arguing that these two moralities are part of one's inborn nature based on heaven. Modern scholars agree that humanity and righteousness are important moral concepts to Mengzi who uses them to assert that human nature is good.¹⁶⁴ However, we also find that Mengzi has at once juxtaposed the four moralities of humanity, righteousness, conscientiousness, and trustworthiness as equally important moralities:

有天爵者，有人爵者。仁義忠信，樂善不倦，此天爵也。公卿大夫，此人爵也。古之人脩其天爵，而人爵從之。今之人脩其天爵，以要人爵；既得人爵，而棄其天爵，則惑之甚者也，終亦必亡而已矣。

There are honours bestowed by Heaven, and there are honours bestowed by man. Humanity, righteousness, conscientiousness, trustworthiness, unflinching delight in what is good, -- these are honours bestowed by Heaven. The position of a Ducal Minister, a Minister, or a Counsellor is an honour bestowed by man. Men of antiquity bent their efforts towards acquiring honours bestowed by Heaven, and honours bestowed by man followed as a matter of course. Men of today bend their efforts towards acquiring honours bestowed by Heaven in order to win honours bestowed by man, and once the latter is won they discard the former. Such men are deluded to the extreme, and in the end are sure only to perish.¹⁶⁵

In this example, the argument that Mengzi makes about humanity, righteousness, trustworthiness,

¹⁶³ Translation adapted from *Mencius*, tr. Lau, 38. The Chinese citation is from *Mengzi zheng yi*, ed. Jiao, 234-235.

¹⁶⁴ Csikszentmihalyi, *Material Virtue*, 103.

¹⁶⁵ Translation adapted from *Mencius*, tr. Lau, 131. *Mengzi zheng yi*, ed. Jiao, 796.

and conscientiousness as necessary moralities is made through a political-moral perspective.

Some scholars believe that this example reveals that Mengzi elevated the four moralities as inborn qualities because humanity, righteousness, trustworthiness, and conscientiousness are associated with heaven. As modern scholar Li Minghui 李明輝 has mentioned, the *Mencius* compared “honours bestowed by Heaven” (*tianjue* 天爵) with “honours bestowed by man” (*renjue* 人爵).

It explains that these four moralities are inborn, and not gained through effort in the way men become officials.¹⁶⁶ I agree with the idea that conscientiousness and trustworthiness in the example have been elevated to a high moral status. However, I also think this passage reveals that one of Mengzi’s specific purposes was to advise intellectuals or anyone in power that they should have the four moralities. In this argument, he claimed that the four moralities should be the qualification for intellectuals who want to take an official position. However, during the middle of the Warring States period, most intellectuals might have only cared about gaining official positions but not about whether or not they were truly qualified to become officials. We learn this because in his argument, Mengzi compared both past and present officials and then argued that officials in the past gained honor bestowed by man because they had the four moralities. That is what made those men qualified to be officials. In comparison, the officials in his time cultivated themselves only because they wanted to have honor bestowed by man. After

¹⁶⁶ Li, *Rujia shiye xia de zhengzhi sixiang*, 58.

gaining what they wanted, these officials abandoned the four moral qualities. Actually, this critique is similar to an example in the *Mencius* which I mentioned above, in which Mengzi criticized intellectuals for behaving with conscientiousness and trustworthiness in order to only please others. Therefore, the example about “honours bestowed by Heaven” not only expresses the moral status of humanity, righteousness, conscientiousness, and trustworthiness; it also reflects the historical fact that intellectuals might gain benefits by performing with artificial moral behavior. In addition, the above example demonstrates that Mengzi portrayed an ideal political-moral authority as requiring these four moralities. From this viewpoint, we might assume that around the middle of the Warring States period, conscientiousness and trustworthiness were regarded as important moral concepts in politics. This could explain why “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” intends to elevate the moral status of conscientiousness and trustworthiness.

In the other Guodian texts we also find examples that join conscientiousness, trustworthiness and humanity in the same moral description. A typical example can be found in the excavated text “Yu cong” 語叢 from the Guodian bamboo slips. It says: “As for those that emerge from the inside/the endogenic ones: these are humanity, conscientiousness, and trustworthiness. As for those [which enter from the outside these are ritual propriety, music, and punishments]” 由中出

者：仁忠信。由〔外人者：禮樂刑〕。¹⁶⁷ This sentence reveals that humanity, conscientiousness, and trustworthiness are the internal substance supporting the external moral or social norms. In that text, the idea is that conscientiousness and trustworthiness are regarded as the foundational moralities which apply in various realms.

Several thinkers in the Warring States period elevated the practical significance of both conscientiousness and trustworthiness in politics. That is because these two moralities are solutions which correspond to practical problems in politics and society. In that time period, as moral forces that caused rulers or elites to perform morally, humanity and righteousness might not have had the same moral power as conscientiousness and trustworthiness, which could help rulers or elites solve political difficulties, or help thinkers to restrict the political power of rulers or elites. Therefore, thinkers concentrated on claiming that conscientiousness and trustworthiness were innate moralities. “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” is a good example of this. In the next chapter, I am going to explain the way in which conscientiousness and trustworthiness could influence rulers or officials.

¹⁶⁷ Translation adapted from Harbsmeier, “Reading of Guodian 郭店 manuscript Yucong 語叢 1,” 40. Although I followed the interpretation of Harbsmeier, scholars have many different ideas on the interpretation of the lacunae. Most of them agree that the first three characters should be “as for those which enter from the outside” 由外人者 due to a comparison with “as for those that emerge from the inside” 由中出者. Different interpretations are made for the rest of the three missing characters. Those interpretations are “ritual, music, and punishments” 禮樂刑, “propriety, ritual, and punishments” 義禮刑, “propriety, ritual, and music” 義禮樂. See Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 823. Although there are different interpretations, it is logical that the missing graphs talks about some things being from the outside.

Chapter Four:
**The Political Functions of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness in “The Way of
Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness”**

According to the text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness,” conscientiousness and trustworthiness are moralities that everyone should have and apply in their life universally. In addition to citing a universal moral significance, the text concentrates on establishing a political-moral authority; anyone who has the possibility of being involved in government is the audience of the text. Thus, this chapter is going to outline what moral requirements are mentioned in the text.

In this chapter, the first section explains why the author of the text believes that rulers can acquire their people’s support through being conscientious and trustworthy. My argument will focus on the historical development in the Warring States period to point out that warfare caused every ruler to need to expand the population of his state in order to strengthen it. The second section argues that elites or intellectuals are the audience of the text. An important reason that officials, ministers, and intellectuals should be conscientious and trustworthy is because they are the ones who advise rulers. I will point out that some of these advisers do not use their conscientiousness and trustworthiness to specifically serve the person of the ruler, but instead to serve an abstract political ideal of how to establish a stable society. That is why the author of the text mentions the moral significance of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. The author of the

text expects that all men who have political power should be conscientious from their heart-mind, and trust others in order to establish a harmonious human world.

The Concrete Efficacy of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness in Politics: Assembling the People

To establish a stable state or a harmonious society is often the main political goal for early Chinese philosophers. Similar to other philosophers, the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” also reveals this tendency. Throughout the previous chapters, we have found that the author of the text applies the qualities of constancy, regularity, necessity, or universality from cosmological elements to his expectation of the rulers and officials who were seen as the group responsible for achieving the goal of establishing a stable state.¹⁶⁸

In “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness,” conscientiousness and trustworthiness are a key point which connects the human world with the cosmos. As I have argued in the second chapter, the text uses the word “matches” (*pei* 配) to argue the value of conscientiousness and trustworthiness in the human world and compares them to heaven and earth which offers benefits to myriad creatures. As the text says, “Great conscientiousness is modest,

¹⁶⁸ Many modern scholars have argued that “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” was written only in relation to the role of “rulers.” For example, Li Cunshan has mentioned that this text was a political textbook for rulers to advise them on how to rule their states. Li, “Xianqin rujia de zhengzhi lunli jiaokeshu,” 21. However, during the Warring States period, rulers and their officials had almost equal political power to influence states. Sometimes, officials might have been the main group to urge rulers to maintain the social order. I will make an argument for this in the next section.

and great trustworthiness is dependable. That which is modest, but is sufficient to nourish life is the earth. That which has not made an appointment, but can still be met with is heaven. Those which match heaven and earth are called conscientiousness and trustworthiness” 大忠不說，大信不期。不說而足養者，地也；不期而可迎者，天也。配天地也者，忠信之謂此。¹⁶⁹ During the Warring States period, it was common for philosophers to theorize their ideal politics by comparing moral values with heaven and earth in order to express their political ideas -- to establish a human world with the same qualities which could be observed in the cosmos.¹⁷⁰ Here is an example of the connection between cosmological elements and political purpose from the

Guanzi:

天生四時，地生萬財，以養萬物，而無取焉；明主配天地者也，教民以時，勸之以耕織，以厚民養，而不伐其功，不私其利；故曰：「能予而無取者，天地之配也。」

Heaven produces the four seasons and Earth produces all resources, thereby nourishing all things but not taking anything in return. The enlightened ruler matches Heaven and Earth. He instructs the people in accordance with the seasons. He exhorts them to plough and weave in order to enrich their livelihood, and does not push his own achievements nor regard his gains as belonging to himself. Those who can give without taking in return match heaven and earth.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁹ See the text in the appendix.

¹⁷⁰ Modern scholar Yuri Pines points out that the early Chinese philosophers wanted rulers to learn from heaven and earth and apply their qualities in the human world. As he said: “While it [to illustrate rulers as a cosmic figure or at least potentially, as a divinized sage of Laozi] was this latter view that became particularly prominent by the end of the Warring States period, we shall begin with the first one, namely, the ideas of those who encouraged the ruler to become really worthy of his elevated position. Through emulation of Heaven and Earth, the natural repositories of the Way, the ruler was supposed to become a true counterpart of the cosmic forces, attaining superhuman dimensions.” Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 38. Although I disagree with the point that Pines makes that Laozi portrayed rulers as cosmic figures, I agree with his point that the early Chinese philosophers attempted to moralize rulers through moral ideals. One example is Yao 堯 whose morals were beyond those of normal people.

¹⁷¹ Translation adapted from The *Guanzi*, tr. Rickett, 78. The Chinese citation is from *Guanzi jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Li, 946.

To the early Chinese philosophers, an enlightened ruler should behave like the cosmological elements which offer benefits to the myriad creatures constantly without receiving rewards in return. That is why the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” suggests that rulers should employ conscientiousness and trustworthiness, the qualities which they could learn from cosmological elements, in order to prolong their government and establish a stable society.

However, the terms “ordered” and “stable” are abstract. Due to the special historical background of the Warring States period, philosophers believed that gaining the support of the people was a concrete way to approach the problems of a state. Robin McNeal has pointed out that because warfare increased dramatically at that time, strengthening the military forces and increasing the numbers of soldiers while creating economic growth was most important.¹⁷² That is why the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” argued that the two moral values of conscientiousness and trustworthiness were necessary for rulers to gain power to rule their states because they could win the support of the people and therefore establish a stable society.¹⁷³

¹⁷² McNeal, “Acquiring People,” 27.

¹⁷³ The author of the text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” stated his expectations of a society in this way: “When conscientiousness is the fundamental principle, then the hundred artisans will not all crudely make [a product], and everything which supports the people is sufficient. When trustworthiness is the fundamental principle, then all living things develop fully and everything good is established” 忠之為道也，百工不榘，而人養皆足。信之為道也，羣物皆成，而百善皆立. See the text in the appendix.

Since they help gain the people's support, conscientiousness and trustworthiness are clearly necessary to governing a state. In the beginning of the text, the author cites: "There has never been a time when conscientiousness and trustworthiness accumulated in one but the people did not feel close to him and trust him" 忠信積而民弗親信者，未知有也 and at the end of the text it says: "That is why the ancients were successful in dealing with the barbarians" 故古之所以行乎閔嘯者，如此矣。¹⁷⁴ Many modern scholars have argued that gaining the people's support is the core reason why rulers must possess these two moral values. For example, Li Gang argued that although the author of the text did not exactly mention that the people are important to a state, we still can find how the text regarded the people as an important element to a state. In particular, the text states: "Acting and striving merely to please the people" 故行而爭悅民, and it demonstrates how rulers wanted to have more and more supporters in terms of a larger population.¹⁷⁵

To acquire the support of the people became a very practical consideration for rulers who wanted to prolong their political power. Modern scholar Li Feng 李峰 argues that the rise of the county (*xian* 縣) was one reason the role of people became a fundamental feature of a state as far as rulers were concerned. During the Spring and Autumn period, a county was a piece of land which might be newly conquered or acquired by a ruler of the state. Rulers of states generally

¹⁷⁴ See the text in the appendix.

¹⁷⁵ Li, "Guodian Chujian 'Zhong zhu zhi dao' de sixiang qingxiang," 98. See also Chen, "Cong chuanshi ru dian yu Guodian ru jian kan xianqin ruxue de zhongxin zhi de," 12.

appointed a magistrate, who did not have a kinship relationship with the ruler, to these counties. These counties supplied soldiers and taxes to rulers, who used these to compete with other states. Li also emphasizes that although the people in these counties were burdened with taxes or conscription, when compared with the people in the lineage of the original state, the people in the counties were still relatively free because they did not have as many obligations as the residents from the original lineage. Li argues that, because rulers of states often offered tax exemptions for people living on the virgin land of counties, this indeed attracted residents from the lower social classes, such as peasants, who left their lineage groups to move to counties.¹⁷⁶ Examining Li Feng's study of the relationship between the rise of counties and social mobilization, the reason why the role of the people was important in both time periods of the Spring and Autumn period and Warring States period becomes apparent. That is because the population of a state was the main factor which influenced a state's economy and military forces. In addition, because people would move from one state to another state or to various counties, there was no ruler who did not seek ways to assemble those people and prevent losing them. An example from the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, by Han Fei 韓非 (280-233 BC), who is generally seen as a legalist, recorded a description of political conditions stating that acquiring the support of the people can strengthen a state: "A state has much strength, and then no one will be able to invade it... a state loves strength, that is what

¹⁷⁶ The above discussion is summarized from new research by Li Feng. Li, *Early China*, 166-173.

causes it to be seen as difficult to attack” 國多力，而天下莫之能侵也……國好力，此謂之以難攻。¹⁷⁷ Based on the above discussion, the strength of a state was often related to the size of the population. “The people” might not have had any essential power in politics, but they certainly had the potential power to influence a state’s development and the power of its rulers. Yuri Pines points out that mass infantry armies, economic development, and the changed composition of the ruling elite are the three reasons that explain why “the people” are the main focus of philosophers in the Warring States period.¹⁷⁸ Pines explains that the massive development of wastelands and other labor- consuming projects influenced migration of “the people,” so to win the support of “the people” of the world was the rulers’ main task.¹⁷⁹ According to this point of view, it is not hard to understand why the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” advised rulers that they needed to attract the people’s support, both from their own state and from other states. It is common to see that the philosophers during the Warring States period mention the relationship between conscientiousness and trustworthiness and successfully assembling the people. For example, the *Mozi* said:

古者明王聖人，所以王天下，正諸侯者，彼其愛民謹忠，利民謹厚，忠信相連，又示之以利，是以終身不饜，歿世而不卷。古者明王聖人，其所以王天下，正諸侯者，此也。
The ancient illustrious kings and sages ruled over the empire and headed the feudal lords because they loved the people with conscientiousness and blessed them with many benefits.

¹⁷⁷ My translation. *Hanfeizi jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Shao, 1017-1019.

¹⁷⁸ Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 198-201.

¹⁷⁹ Pines, *Envisioning Eternal Empire*, 200.

Conscientiousness calls out trustworthiness. And, when blessing is shown in addition, the people were not wearied during their whole life and did not feel tired until their death. That the ancient illustrious kings and sages could rule over the empire and head the feudal lords is just because of this.¹⁸⁰

The main argument here points out that a ruler who could “rule over the empire and head the feudal lords” must love his people with conscientiousness and trustworthiness.

As philosophers devoted themselves to create solutions in order to prevent rulers from losing their people, the author of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” also wrote this text to advise rulers to make use of the moral significance of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. However, another question which deserves further consideration is why conscientiousness and trustworthiness enable a ruler to have power to attain the people’s support. The author points out that only if rulers have these morals, will the people trust the rulers. According to the text, “There has never been a time when conscientiousness and trustworthiness accumulated in one but the people did not feel close to him and trust him” 忠信積而民弗親信者，未知有也。¹⁸¹ The concept of “trustworthiness” in the text is discussed from both the points of view of the rulers and the people. This indicates that rulers must express a true and sincere attitude – conscientiousness and trustworthiness – to the people, and then the people can trust their rulers.

Huang Junliang cites an episode from the *Guo yu* to argue that to win the trust of the people was

¹⁸⁰ This translation adapted from *The Ethical and Political Works of Motse Mozi*, tr. Mei, 120. The Chinese citation is from *Mozi jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Li, 162.

¹⁸¹. See the text in the appendix.

the most important thing to a ruler:

「救饑何以？」對曰：「信。」公曰：「安信？」對曰：「信于君心，信于名，信于令，信于事。」公曰：「然則若何？」對曰：「信于君心，則美惡不逾，信于名，則上下不干。信于令，則時無廢功。信于事，則民從事有業。于是乎民知君心，貧而不懼。」

In which way could I resolve famine? [Ji Zheng 箕鄭] replied: ‘Trust.’ The Duke Wen of Jin asked: ‘How can one be trustworthy?’ [Ji Zheng] replied: ‘Trustworthiness comes from a ruler’s mind, the name of a person’s status, application of political norms, and employing the people.’ Duke Wen of Jin asked: ‘What is the effectiveness of this?’ [Ji Zheng] replied: ‘If the ruler’s mind is trustworthy, there would not be any confusion between good and evil. If trustworthiness comes from the rectification of names, there would not be any conflicts. If trustworthiness comes from correct application of political norms, there would not be any situations of delayed timing and discarding achievements. If trustworthiness comes from the process of employing the people, the people would get what they want. That is why the people would not be afraid in a poor condition because they know their ruler’s mind.’¹⁸²

Simply put, this episode discusses a minister, Ji Zheng, who advised Duke Wen of Jin 晉文公 on ways to solve the problems of a famine. The advice of Ji Zheng was to win the trust of the people.¹⁸³ Although this episode happened in the Spring and Autumn period, at that time trustworthiness is still claimed to be the only way to win the people’s support and to keep it stable. That is because no matter whether in the Spring and Autumn period or the Warring States period, warfare happened frequently. There were no exceptions to the fact that rulers had to win the trust of their people. Therefore, “trustworthiness” became an important political goal for both rulers and their ministers who wanted to reassure their people. It was believed that the best way to win

¹⁸² My translation. The Chinese citation is from *Guo yu quanyi*, tr. Huang, 422.

¹⁸³ Huang, “‘Zhongxin zhi dao’—yu zhanguo shiqi de zhongxin sichao,” 39.

others' trust was to show one's sincerity, and many thinkers claimed that having conscientiousness and trustworthiness was the only way to acquire others' trust.¹⁸⁴

Throughout the series of discussions regarding conscientiousness and trustworthiness, it is apparent that "the people" in the text "The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness" were regarded as the basis of a state. When we consider that the premise of the text is that rulers have to display conscientiousness and trustworthiness to the people if the rulers expect to win their support, we find the position of the author of the text seems to be on the side of the people. Or, even if the author was not the people's advocate, he might have viewed the roles of rulers and the people equally. This is because the behavior of conscientiousness and trustworthiness is a trait that rulers advertised in order to gain the support of the people. This interaction reveals a certain degree of equality in the relationship between rulers and their people.

Consequently, acquiring the people's support was the goal that most thinkers stressed when discussing conscientiousness and trustworthiness as a virtue of rulers. We find that other Guodian texts also mention that these two moralities play an important role for a state. For example "The Six Virtues" (*Liu de* 六德) points out that there are six important virtues in the human world: sagacity (*sheng* 聖) and knowledge (*zhi* 智); humanity (*ren* 仁) and righteousness (*yi* 義);

¹⁸⁴ Huang, "Zhongxin zhi dao'-yu zhanguo shiqi de zhongxin sichao," 39.

conscientiousness (*zhong* 忠) and trustworthiness (*xin* 信).¹⁸⁵ The text explains the practical results of applying conscientiousness and trustworthiness from among these six virtues: “To assemble the people, to cultivate the land, and to see to the people’s needs so as to employ them in life or death—none but conscientiousness and trustworthiness are capable of this” 聚人民，任土地，足此民爾，生死之用，非忠信者莫之能也。¹⁸⁶ This argument is similar to the idea of conscientiousness and trustworthiness in the text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.”

However, illustrating conscientiousness and trustworthiness as the virtues of rulers was not the only point of the text. These two moralities were also used in discussing particular ethical positions. For example, although “The Six Virtues” mentions that all the people can receive benefits if their rulers govern the state using these two moralities, the main argument of “The Six Virtues” focuses on conscientiousness and trustworthiness as particular virtues specific to the relationship between rulers and ministers, and husbands and wives.¹⁸⁷ This is because during the Warring States period, conscientiousness and trustworthiness involved multiple meanings. At that time, some philosophers had noticed the effectiveness of these two moralities both in society as a

¹⁸⁵ The translation of the six virtues and the following record of the “The Six Virtues” are adapted from Cook’s translation work. See in Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 773.

¹⁸⁶ Translation adapted from “The Six Virtues” in Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 775.

¹⁸⁷ This idea generally comes from the “The Six Virtues” which mentions three basic pairs of human relationships involving six different roles: husband and wife, father and son, and rulers and ministers. Each role is associated with particular virtues. See “The Six Virtues” in Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 771-773. The argument regarding the six roles and six virtues can be found in Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 751.

whole, but also where ethics was concerned. In other words, these two moralities were regarded as the fundamental factor of all moralities, and were the morals by which all humans should live.

“The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” is an example of this. As the text says:

“Conscientiousness is the substance of humanity. Trustworthiness is the foundation of righteousness” 忠，仁之實。信，義之基。¹⁸⁸ It suggests these two moralities were the fundamental basis of humaneness and righteousness. Some philosophers believed that conscientiousness and trustworthiness were moralities that referred to specific ethical positions, such as in “The Six Virtues.” The use of conscientiousness in particular was gradually associated specifically with ministers. However, modern scholars have differing viewpoints as to the main objective of conscientiousness when it was a virtue associated with ministers.

According to Masayuki Sato’s research, around the middle to the end of the Warring States period, the moral idea of conscientiousness was gradually developed as specifically necessary for ministers. However, previously, conscientiousness had multiple meanings. Conscientiousness might have been a virtue needed by rulers to govern their people or states, or a virtue of ministers to advise their rulers or help govern their states.¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, Sato also points out that even though conscientiousness gradually became associated with the attitude of ministers toward their

¹⁸⁸ See the text in the appendix.

¹⁸⁹ Sato has analyzed the meanings and transformations of “conscientiousness” through the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods in chapters one to three of his book *Zhongguo gudai de zhong lun yanjiu*. About how conscientiousness as a virtue of ministers during the Warring States period can be found in chapter four of *Zhongguo gudai de zhong lun yanjiu*, 131-140.

rulers, the purpose of this was not to further centralize the rulers' power. Xunzi is an example of a thinker who defined conscientiousness in several different ways. Sato believes that although Xunzi indicated conscientiousness to be a virtue of ministers, Xunzi also pointed out that conscientiousness should be a virtue of rulers. As written in the *Xunzi*:

用國者，得百姓之力者富· · · · · 故厚德音以先之，明禮義以道之，致忠信以愛之。 In the use of the state, one who gains the strength of the hundred clans will be rich...Hence you should develop the moral force of your inner power and its resonating attraction in order to lead the way. You should elucidate ritual and moral principles in order to guide them. You should be conscientious and trustworthy in the extreme to manifest love for them.¹⁹⁰

Therefore, Xunzi still regarded a state as the most important entity. Even though Xunzi mentions conscientiousness as a virtue of ministers many times, he emphasizes that a minister could be seen as having “great conscientiousness” (*da zhong* 大忠) only if the minister serves his ruler with morality.¹⁹¹ As the *Xunzi* says, “There are those who are conscientious/loyal in the highest degree...To support the lord by attuning to him through virtue: this is conscientiousness/loyalty in the highest degree” 有大忠者……以德覆君而化之，大忠也。¹⁹² Many other scholars such as Paul Goldin consider the conscientiousness/loyalty of Xunzi to be defined as the straightforward meaning of *zhong*, or loyalty. As Paul Goldin points out in the above example from the *Xunzi*, “a

¹⁹⁰ Translation adapted from the *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works Volume II Books 7-16*, tr. Knoblock, 166-167. The Chinese citation is from *Xunzi jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Xiong, 231-232.

¹⁹¹ Sato, *Zhongguo gudai de zhong lun yanjiu*, 136-140.

¹⁹² Translation adapted from Paul Goldin who cited in his article “When *Zhong* 忠 Does Not Mean ‘Loyalty’,” 166. The Chinese citation is from *Xunzi jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Xiong, 269.

straightforward early example of the use of *zhong* in the sense of ‘loyalty’ appears in the *Xunzi*.¹⁹³ Pines also indicates that the concept of conscientiousness in the *Xunzi* was a way for ministers to show their loyalty to their rulers. This is because the main idea of the Way (*dao* 道) as defined by Xunzi was tied into a state’s interests and the proper way to rule. As Pines says: “Xunzi quoted Confucius’ notion of following *Dao* rather than the ruler. In Xunzi’s interpretation however, *Dao* was identical to the state’s interests, a Way of proper rule, which comprised, but was not tantamount to, personal morality. Thus, loyalty to one’s principles, to *Dao*, meant loyalty to the state, which by definition meant loyalty to the ruler.”¹⁹⁴ That is why Pines points out that the object of conscientiousness as a ministerial virtue changed from the state to the ruler.

Basically, Sato and Pines both expressed that the role of rulers in the *Xunzi* was to be able to conduct a state properly. The difference between the two scholar’s ideas is that Pines argues that Xunzi’s philosophy changed through the social sphere within the historical context, while Sato focuses on the inner motive of why Xunzi considered influencing rulers to be his main objective. Therefore, Pines believes that in the *Xunzi*, the role of rulers represented the interests of a state, which is why ministers had to show their loyalty to the ruler. As Pines points out, “Xunzi avoided distinguishing the ruler’s interests from that of the altars; to benefit the state was to benefit a ruler

¹⁹³ Goldin, “When *Zhong* 忠 Does Not Mean ‘Loyalty’,” 166.

¹⁹⁴ Pines, “Friends or Foes,” 67-71.

and vice versa.”¹⁹⁵ In contrast to Pines, Sato believes that the main purpose of Xunzi was to treat the role of the state as primary. In other words, to respecting rulers is effective under the condition that the ruler must do good things for the state. However, Sato also points out that around the end of the Warring States period, the value of conscientiousness did not occupy an unquestionable moral status in the same way as it had before. He cites *The Annals of Lu Buwei* (*Lushi chungiu* 呂氏春秋), text compiled around 239 BC, which connects the concept of conscientiousness with the virtues of ministers. However, Sato also believes that this book did not only strictly define conscientiousness as ministers’ absolute obedience to their rulers. As he mentions in an example from the *The Annals of Lu Buwei*, “‘It is a crime for a subject to be disloyal and unreliable,’ said Chizhang Manshi. ‘Now, if one who is loyal and reliable is not used, he may put himself at a great distance.’” 赤章蔓支曰：「為人臣不忠貞，罪也。忠貞不用，遠身可也。」¹⁹⁶ Sato indicates that the purpose of the author of this text in *The Annals of Lu Buwei* was to show that conscientiousness should benefit the whole state, and not the individual person of the ruler.¹⁹⁷ Sato’s purpose is to express that even though there were different illustrations of conscientiousness during the Warring States period, scholars still regarded the whole state as the target of their argument. In contrast, Pines holds that the historical background of the Warring

¹⁹⁵ Pines, “Friends or Foes,” 70.

¹⁹⁶ *The Annals of Lu Buwei*, tr. Knoblock and Riegel, 345-346. The Chinese citation is from *Lu shi chungiu jin zhu jin yi*, ed. and tr. Lin, 423.

¹⁹⁷ Sato, *Zhongguo gudai de zhong lun yanjiu*, 155.

States period was what enabled the appearance of an empire of Qin 秦. Pines believes that some arguments of conscientiousness/loyalty made by scholars during the end of the Warring States period were meant to limit the power of ministers and help rulers to strengthen their own power. These arguments indeed influenced the later empire of Qin. For example, unlike Xunzi, who combined ruler and state interests, the legalist Han Feizi 韓非, who was Xunzi's disciple, directly argued that a ruler should not rely on ministerial loyalty. An example from the *Han Feizi* states: "The loyalty or deceitfulness of the ministers depend on the ruler's behavior. When the ruler is clear-sighted and stern, the ministers are loyal; when the ruler is cowardly and benighted, the ministers are deceitful" 臣之忠詐，在君所行也。君明而嚴，則羣臣忠；君懦而闇，則羣臣詐。¹⁹⁸ As Pines said: "Han Feizi leaves no doubt: a minister is potentially a mortal enemy of the ruler...Every minister is a potential traitor."¹⁹⁹ Considering conscientiousness in the *Han Feizi*, we find that rulers had more power closer to the end of the Warring States period.

I agree with both Sato and Pines' arguments. I believe that during the Warring States period, various messages of moralities were expressed from different thinkers. Although the main purpose of these philosophers was to illustrate conscientiousness in order to advise rulers on how to establish a stable society, they also added new meanings to some moralities in order to fit their

¹⁹⁸ Translation of *Hanfeizi* from Pines who cited in his article "Friends or Foes," 66. The Chinese citation is from *Hanfeizi jinzhū jinyi*, ed. and tr. Shao, 406.

¹⁹⁹ Pines, "Friends or Foes," 62-71.

current needs. This caused variation in the ways these morals were illustrated. Because these thinkers lived in time periods when ideology and political structure both dramatically changed, their discourses revealed points of tension between ideas. Although their arguments might have emphasized the importance of the role of rulers in regards to the state, some arguments explaining how ministers should respect their rulers might have been based on the ministers' ideal aspirations. The example from Xunzi which I have mentioned in the above is one instance of this. Therefore, in some cases, rulers often became the ones to which ministers superficially showed their conscientiousness. Actually, the aspiration to an ideal is the concept to which these intellectuals tangibly express their conscientiousness. For example, among the Guodian bamboo slips, one text, "Lord Mu of Lu asks Zisi" (*Lu Mu gong wen Zisi* 魯穆公問子思) cites that a "loyal minister" is one who can "consistently mention his ruler's flaws" 恆稱君之惡.²⁰⁰ This definition of "loyal minister" might also reveal the ideal mission of a minister who conducted himself in the proper way in order to help the ruler govern.²⁰¹ In other words, the person of the ruler is not the object to which ministers express their conscientiousness. Rather the concept of how to establish a stable society is what ministers are actually concerned with. That is why "consistently mentioning his ruler's flaws" is a feature of the "loyal minister" in the "Lord Mu of Lu asks Zisi." Therefore, when some ministers expressed their conscientiousness to rulers, they might not have been

²⁰⁰ See the translation of the "Lord Mu of Lu asked Zisi" in Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 426.

²⁰¹ Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 423.

directly loyal to the role of the “ruler” but to an ideal belief that they held. I will discuss this further in the next section.

Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness as the Moral Values of Officials

Throughout the previous arguments, I mainly focus on the role of rulers. In this section, I am going to argue that conscientiousness and trustworthiness were also considered to be important virtues which ministers should exhibit. In addition, the special term of “a man with noble characters” (*junzi* 君子) reveals a moral expectation that the author of the text encourages ministers to meet, and this expectation is based on the two moralities of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. However, most modern scholars believe that conscientiousness and trustworthiness in “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” were intended to be specific to rulers. For example, Sato points out that the core idea of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” shows the importance of conscientiousness and trustworthiness to a ruler governing his state.²⁰² Li Cunshan clearly points out that the text was made to present “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness” as morals which could strengthen the power of kings.²⁰³ Sato and Li’s reasoning which they have in common is that the two terms “the people” and “rulers” usually function as opposite concepts. In addition, both scholars believe that the term “a man with noble characters” functioned as a moral model to rulers. However, I argue

²⁰² Sato, *Zhongguo gudai de zhong lun yanjiu*, 91.

²⁰³ Li, “Xianqin rujia de zhengzhi lunli jiaokeshu,” 21.

that “a man with noble characters” did not only refer to rulers but also to officials, or someone who had power in ruling a state. Moreover, during the Warring States period, ministers had a certain degree of equality to their rulers. That is because the relationship between rulers and officials was similar to a contractual relationship between modern employers and employees. For instance, the Guodian text “Yu cong” 語叢 says: “ [The ruler] differs from the father insofar as [the minister] may desist if ruler and minister do not support each other, may leave if displeased, and may refuse to accept anything improper that [the ruler] places upon him” 君臣不相在也，則可已。不悅，可去也。不義而加諸己，弗受也。²⁰⁴ This text reveals that ministers can freely leave their rulers. As Pines also argues, “this amounts to a notion of near equality, or at least a very radically conceived reciprocity in ruler-minister relations.”²⁰⁵

During the Warring States period, the role that ministers played in politics reveals that they enjoyed a certain degree of equality to their rulers. This is a special phenomenon that is based on the historical context of the changed composition of the ruling elite caused by the social mobility of the lower social classes during the Warring States period. As Hsu Cho-Yun argues, the rise of the intellectuals reveals how social change had occurred during the Spring and Autumn period and created remarkable change during the Warring States period. Intellectuals were a group in the lower social class but could become educated and employed in the government based on their

²⁰⁴ Translation of “Yu cong III” from Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 878.

²⁰⁵ Pines, “Friends or Foes,” 41-42.

abilities. According to Hsu's ideas, a typical example of intellectuals in the Spring and Autumn period was Confucius who worked with livestock when he was young but later attained high social status because some of his followers achieved great success in politics. This phenomenon of people from lower social classes succeeding at the higher levels of society occurred more frequently in the Warring States period than previously.²⁰⁶

“A man with noble characters” is a special term because its definition often involved exceptional morals. During the Warring States period, a man with noble characters was often connected with the term “intellectuals” (*shi* 士) as in *shijunzi* 士君子, as a special group among the intellectuals, which expresses the meaning of a man of virtue.²⁰⁷ Because the composition of the groups of intellectuals was complex, their aspirations were different from one another. Most of them hoped to fulfill their own benefits. To those individuals, a relatively efficient way to attain their goals was to become an official. However, among the intellectuals, a man with noble characters in the group was especially expected to benefit society. As *Mencius* said: “When a man with noble characters stays in a state, if he is employed he can make the prince secure, rich and honoured” 君子居是國也，其君用之，則安富尊榮。²⁰⁸ Therefore, when intellectuals were called

²⁰⁶ Hsu, *Ancient China in Transition*, 34-45. Also see Table 4 in his book on page 39. According to Hsu, the decline of rulers' power was one reason among many complex reasons that this kind of social change occurred. My purpose in this section is not to discuss what influenced social change during the Warring States period, so I will not continue this argument here.

²⁰⁷ Lao and Liang, *Zhongguo wenhua yaoyi xinbian*, 153.

²⁰⁸ Translation adapted from *Mencius*, tr. Lau, 152. The Chinese citation is from *Mengzi zheng yi*, ed. Jiao, 926.

“a man with noble characters,” that appellation indicated they agreed to accept the social responsibility of ordering society. In the text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness,” the connections between a man with noble characters and the moral values of conscientiousness and trustworthiness can be interpreted to apply to the man who himself held the noble aspiration of establishing a stable society.

Governing elites or any intellectuals who had noble aspirations realized that a better way of fulfilling their aspirations was to maintain a good relationship with their rulers. Expressing conscientiousness and trustworthiness was the method the ministers used. However, because the ruler-minister relationship was different from the relationship in the Imperial Qin Dynasty 秦 (221-206 BC) or in the later dynasties that we are familiar with today, the meanings of conscientiousness and trustworthiness were also different from how they are defined today. As I have mentioned before, this relationship at that time reveals a kind of equality. The Guodian text “Yu cong” offers a good example of the friend-like relationship between rulers and ministers. As recorded in strip 87 in the “Yu cong” 1: “Relations between ruler and minister, and between friends, are the sort that are elective” 君臣、朋友，其擇者也。²⁰⁹ And strip 6-7 in “Yu cong” III says: “Friendship is the way proper to the ruler and [his] minister [s]” 友，君臣之道也。²¹⁰ This text indicates that the relationship between rulers and ministers was not an innate relationship

²⁰⁹ Harbsmeier, “Reading of Guodian 郭店 Manuscript *Yu cong* 語叢 1,” 32.

²¹⁰ Cook, *The Bamboo Texts of Guodian*, 878.

such as that between father and son, but more like friendship. This author seems to have compared these two relationships in order to imply that both ministers and rulers can end their relationship if either one is dissatisfied with the current situation.²¹¹ This kind of relationship was established by the specific historical context in which ministers could freely decide if they still wanted to stay in their current relationship. Pines points out that early Chinese thinkers insisted that the object of intellectuals' moral behavior in the Spring and Autumn period should be the Way (*dao* 道). However, during the Warring States period, because being loyal to the Way might have been too vague and intangible for ministers who sought to establish more effective relationships with rulers, philosophers directed the ministers' loyalty toward rulers. However, the meaning of "to be loyal to rulers" (*zhongjun* 忠君) is still different from the latter understanding of being conscientious (or loyal) in the ruler-minister relationship during the imperial period. Pines believes that "to be loyal to rulers" in the early to middle Warring States period is meant to emphasize reciprocity but not hierarchy.²¹²

Generally I agree with Pines' argument that the indicated ruler-minister relationship is a relation of reciprocity but not hierarchy. However, within the ruler-minister relationship, the noble aspiration of ministers to benefit society is the key which holds the relationship together. Some ministers were willing to work for a ruler because both of them had the same beliefs in terms of

²¹¹ Wang, *Jianbo sixiang wenxian lunji*, 283.

²¹² See more arguments in Pines, "Friends or Foes," 55-57.

establishing a good state. Therefore, to these ministers, the object of their conscientiousness was not the person of rulers but an abstract ideal in which they believed and tried to attain in concrete ways. The above discussions have shown that the ruler-minister relationship was like friendship, and ministers could leave their current relationships with rulers who did not perform as those ministers expected, which is to establish a stable society or state. Based on the context of “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness,” the text argues that conscientiousness and trustworthiness involve not speaking falsehood and not deceiving; the significance of these requirements particularly refers to ministers truthfully expressing themselves. Therefore, this text does not only advise rulers to act with these two morals in mind; anyone who might possibly participate in governing is the object of the author’s advice. In the text, “a man of noble character” is an ideal model with true conscientiousness and trustworthiness which the author set up for intellectuals to follow. If we believe that officials or intellectuals are the audience for the text, it would follow that the author expects that any intellectuals can serve their ideals sincerely.

Chapter Five:

Conclusion

“The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” reflects the perspective of Warring States period philosophers who considered conscientiousness and trustworthiness to be key moralities necessary for resolving social or political problems. The reasons for emphasizing the moral significance of conscientiousness and trustworthiness can be traced to historical influences. Warfare was prevalent during the Warring States period, and this caused dramatic change. Philosophers realized that in order to solve problems, influencing the thinking of the men who had the power to rule the states was key. Conscientiousness and trustworthiness were morals that could be applied effectively in the political realm. That is why “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” established a moral theory based on conscientiousness and trustworthiness to advise those who held political power. The main goal of my thesis is to answer the question: Why did the author consider conscientiousness and trustworthiness to be indispensable morals? According to my research, the answer to this question is that during the early to middle Warring States period, the two morals of conscientiousness and trustworthiness were the most efficient way for governing elites to frame their attempts to resolve social and political problems. This is the reason that the author established a moral argument of conscientiousness and trustworthiness to advise governing elites to become political-moral authorities. My work also answers the

following secondary question: How did the text establish the moral significance of conscientiousness and trustworthiness?

First, I argue that the author of the text “The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness” established an effective moral argument through analogy. Analogy presents a holistic way to see the importance of conscientiousness and trustworthiness, and allows for the author to set up a moral theory. The author used analogy to set up a metaphysical foundation for conscientiousness and trustworthiness, and to express the possibility of connecting all the people in the world by applying the moralities of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. The moral significance of conscientiousness and trustworthiness is analogized by comparing these two moralities with the cosmological elements of soil, time, earth, and heaven. Each of these can benefit living creatures every day. Stability and constancy are the main characteristics of these cosmological elements. The fact that the author used these four cosmological elements to compare with conscientiousness and trustworthiness demonstrates that stability and constancy are their moral significance. It implies that a stable society can be established when rulers or other governing elites possess these two morals. As crucial morals in the human world, the main function of conscientiousness and trustworthiness is to strengthen and expand a state. We see that analogy is used again by the author to extend the effectiveness of “conscientiousness” and “trustworthiness” to be applied to a society. Analogy is further used to demonstrate that if governing elites are conscientious and

trustworthy, then they would attract people, not only in their own state, but also from outside the borders. This particular result helps the author to fulfill an abstract ideal, a harmonious world.

Next, I analyze the specific term “perfect” which the text uses to modify the terms conscientiousness and trustworthiness. I believe that the author intends to reveal true conscientiousness and true trustworthiness. This perspective reflects the fact that, during the Warring States period, some governing elites or intellectuals might have behaved morally, but were actually unconscientious and untrustworthy. To the author of the text, displaying false morality was one cause of social problems. This is because if the social elites who held political power were immoral, this would harm society to a greater degree than if ordinary people were immoral. Therefore, it is not hard to see why the text continually argues that the manifestation of true conscientiousness and trustworthiness includes not speaking falsehoods and not betraying others. These requirements are based on the heart-mind of an individual, which shows that they are considered innate morals.

If we agree that the text implies that conscientious and trustworthiness are innate, it is not difficult to understand why the author established a relationship where conscientiousness and trustworthiness were related to humanity and righteousness. This is because the author wanted to emphasize the inherent significance of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. As I have discussed in the third chapter, humanity and righteousness are often seen as inherent moralities, especially in

the Confucian philosophical tradition. Therefore, the relationship between the four moral concepts reveals the attempt of the author to consider conscientiousness and trustworthiness as innate moralities. Only if these two moralities are innate, can their moral necessity be established justifiably. Then the author can convince governing elites to apply them.

Finally, I have shown that rulers and other social elites were the main audience for the text. The author not only establishes abstract moral concepts, but he cites the practical result of acquiring the people's support to make these two morals attractive to rulers. That is because rulers in the Warring States period cared about how to strengthen their state's power in order to protect themselves and attack others. According to the text, expanding the population of a state is clearly a practical result of the ruler being conscientious and trustworthy. As the text states, "There has never been a time when conscientiousness and trustworthiness accumulated in one but the people did not feel close to him and trust him" 忠信積而民弗親信者，未之有也 and "The behavior of a person of noble characters is conscientious. Therefore, barbarians want to be close to him and ally with him" 君子其施也忠，故蠻親傅也. These two lines outline specific results that will convince rulers to apply the two morals of conscientiousness and trustworthiness. To advise rulers on how to acquire the people's support, the author clearly points out that if rulers have conscientiousness and trustworthiness, they can convince their people to trust them.

In addition to rulers, I also point out that ministers/elites were another targeted audience for

the text. This is because some ministers/intellectuals of noble character served their own ideals, but not the person of the ruler. Therefore, the author expected those intellectuals to be able to restrict the rulers' power. This is why the author of the text offers a moral requirement. He notes that the men who are willing to fulfill political ideals should always base their intentions on inner conscientiousness and trustworthiness. I make this argument based on the historical context of the Warring States period. This is because at that time, rulers did not have absolute power over their ministers. The excavated texts demonstrate that ministers could leave their rulers if they were not satisfied with their current relationship. Unlike the ruler-minister relationship in later dynasties which was hierarchical, during the Warring States Period, some texts suggest that the ruler-minister relationship was more like a friendship. This is why I believe that rulers are not the only audience in 'The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness.'

Finally, through the analysis of "The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness," we find that the author believed that conscientiousness and trustworthiness were the most effective morals to help rulers establish a conscious political method. In order to achieve this political goal, it was necessary for conscientiousness and trustworthiness to be set up as innate morals. This is because only if all actions were based in an individual's heart-mind, could his actions be performed in the right way. In later dynasties, the concept of conscientiousness was converted to the idea of "loyalty," an idea representing absolute obedience in the leader-subordinate

relationship. However, the old meaning of the concept of conscientiousness still existed and was hidden in the new concept of “loyalty.” This is apparent through some historical texts which reveal that when loyal ministers faced a dilemma where they had to choose between being loyal to the ruler or the country, they regarded the interests of the whole country as more important than the interests of the ruler. Even though in some cases, loyal ministers obeyed the mandate of their rulers, these ministers’ internal psychological struggle in the process of considering whether to choose ruler or country as the most important object of loyalty reveals that a ruler’s importance did not surpass that of the country. This demonstrates that although rulers often represented the country, the interests of the country still differed from the interests of the ruler. In other words, the aspiration to have a conscious politics with the target of a stable society existed in the later Warring States, and was surely influenced by the earlier idea of conscientiousness.

Appendix One:
“The Way of Conscientiousness and Trustworthiness”
<忠信之道>

Not speaking falsehoods is perfect conscientiousness. Not deceiving those who do not know is perfect trustworthiness. When conscientiousness grows, then one can be taken as an intimate. When trustworthiness grows, then one can be trusted. There has never been a time when conscientiousness and trustworthiness accumulated in one but the people did not feel close to him and trust him.

不譌不孚，忠之至也。不欺弗智，信之至也。忠積則可親也，信積則可信也。忠信積而民弗親信者，未之有也。

Perfect conscientiousness is like the soil which causes things to grow but never boasts. Perfect trustworthiness is like time; it surely arrives without being bound by a contract. A person with conscientiousness is without falsehood. A person with trustworthiness does not betray. A man of noble characters embodies these traits, therefore he does not deceive the living and does not betray the dead.

至忠如土，化物而不伐；至信如時，必至而不結。忠人亡譌，信人不背。君子如此，故不誑生，不背死也。

Perfect conscientiousness has endured a very long time and has not changed. Perfect trustworthiness has endured since high antiquity and still maintains constancy. This is what is meant by “Perfect conscientiousness is without falsehood and perfect trustworthiness does not betray.”

大久而不渝，忠之至也。大古而主常，信之至也。至忠亡譌，至信不背，夫此之謂此。

Great conscientiousness is modest, and great trustworthiness is dependable. That which is modest, but is sufficient to nourish life is the earth. That which has not made an appointment, but can still be met with is heaven. Those which match heaven and earth are called conscientiousness and trustworthiness.

大忠不說，大信不期。不說而足養者，地也；不期而可迎者，天也。配天地也者，忠信之謂此。

Rather than speaking kind words but not following through with them, a man of noble character does not speak those words. Rather than [feeling distant in his heart but displaying an appearance of closeness,] a man of noble character does not express that closeness. Acting and striving merely to please the people is something a man of noble character does not do.

口惠而實弗從，君子弗言爾。心□□□〔疏而貌〕親，君子弗申爾。故行而爭悅民，君子弗由也。三者，忠人弗作，信人弗為也。

When conscientiousness is the fundamental principle, then the hundred artisans will not all crudely make [a product], and everything which supports the people is sufficient. When trustworthiness is the fundamental principle, then all living things develop fully and everything good is established. The behavior of a person of noble characters is conscientious. Therefore, barbarians want to be close to him and ally with him. His speech is so trustworthy that it is sincere and can be accepted.

忠之為道也，百工不梏，而人養皆足。信之為道也，羣物皆成，而百善皆立。君子其施也忠，故蠻親傳也；其言爾信，故誠而可受也。

Conscientiousness is the substance of humanity. Trustworthiness is the foundation of righteousness. That is why the ancients were successful in dealing with the barbarians.

忠，仁之實也。信，義之基也，是故古之所以行虜乎閔嘯者，如此也。

不將不固也止也且不將我欲信也止也忠願泉可幸也信願泉可將也忠

信願泉可將也忠信願泉可將也忠信願泉可將也忠信願泉可將也忠

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²¹³ Besides *Zuozhuan*, translated by Hu Zhihui and other English translated books, other translated versions are translated by scholars from classical Chinese to modern Chinese.

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