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The Evolution of the Concept of *De* 德 in Early China

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The Evolution of the Concept of *De* 德 in Early China

Scott A. Barnwell
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子曰：「由！知德者鮮矣。」

The Master said, "Zilu, those who understand *De* are rare indeed."

—*Lunyu* 15.4

The present research paper explores the semantic space occupied by the ancient Chinese concept of *De* 德 over time. As Confucius observed in the epigraph, few people seemed to understand it in his day and many still do not today. In this paper, we will examine the various connotations conveyed by the word in the earliest written material — bronze inscriptions from the eleventh century B.C.E. — to the Han Dynasty (漢, 202 B.C.E. – 220 C.E.): roughly the first one thousand years. As it is a *research* paper, there will be no sustained argument defending some thesis, as is expected in a philosophy paper. It is rather a comprehensive, exploratory, educational tour of the semantic field of *De* in early Chinese literature. The critical reader should adjust his expectations accordingly.

Lin Yutang, referring to *De*, once wrote, "'Character' is a typically English word. Apart from the English, few nations have laid such stress on character in their ideal of education and manhood as the Chinese. The Chinese seem to be so preoccupied with it that in their whole philosophy they have not been able to think of anything else."[1] I suspect that what many scholars mean by "Virtue" — the most common English translation of *De* — is "character," or *good* character. However, "character" has a wider field of reference than "virtue" tends to in English usage.

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[1] Lin Yutang 林語堂, *My Country and My People* (Halcyon House, 1938 [1935]), p. 42.

Other translations/glosses have been offered, such as Power, Potency, Excellence, Integrity, Nature, Moral Charisma, Kindness, Generosity, Rewards and Gratitude. *De* has similarities not only with ancient Greek *Aretê* and Latin *Virtus*, but also Greek *Ethos*, *Kharis*, *Kalokagathía*, *Dunamis*, *Eunoia*, *Chrēstotēs* and Latin *Bonitas*, *Bonum*, *Indoles*, and *Mores*. All of these are accurate in some contexts, but there have been misguided attempts by many to choose a single translation or gloss and use it in every single passage, sometimes across numerous texts. This paper argues against such a simplification.

De is spoken of in texts of this period as something that can be present or absent, abundant or slight, high or low, bright or dark, good or bad, consistent or inconsistent. *De* can be accumulated, or it can be distributed and spread abroad. It can be maintained or neglected, kept intact or dissipated. *De* is something that can elicit changes in living things. It can be used by rulers to pacify a population and it can win the people's hearts and minds, making people turn to them for direction. It can be used to guide and transform others. Although *De* is almost always attributed to human beings, the literature also shows that both Heaven and Earth have some sort of *De*, as does a ruling house, a government, the seasons, milfoil, roosters, jade, and alcohol, among other things.

Possessing *De* is contrasted not only to "lacking *De*," but also with "physical force/strength," "punishment," a "baneful power," and "ill will" or "resentment." Accordingly, *De* is an attitude, disposition, temperament, concrete beneficent behavior/acts, power as well as an (other-praising) emotion, used both as a noun and a verb.

We will begin with an "epigraphical analysis" of the character/graph 德. This is not to give weight to this type of analysis, but, on the contrary, to "get it out of the way" in order to move on to more important things, such as the evolution of the *word*'s meaning in the first one thousand years of its appearance in written documents. While many scholars in China and the rest of the world have placed (undue) weight on the character itself to explain the word's meaning,[2] one

[2] E.g., Shirakawa Shizuka, Joseph Needham, Alan Watts, W.E. Soothill, Ellen M. Chen, Roger T. Ames, Jonathan Star, etc.

must recognize that the word existed much earlier than its written form and that illiterate Chinese could surely understand and use the word in speech without knowing how to write it. Even though the eventual creators of the *character* may have chosen components that carried relevant semantic connotations of the *word*, almost all Chinese characters contain a phonophoric or phonetic component which ordinarily only conveys the sound of the word in question.[3] Additionally, the semantic components, or "significs," were often added *later* to a pre-existing character (i.e., a phonetic loan, or *Jiajie* 假借), for purposes of disambiguation.

The character *De* 德 is (now) comprised of 1) an eye (目 → 罒) with a straight vertical line on top, now crossed (十); 2) a semantic signifier (彳) indicating movement or conduct; 3) a semantic signifier (心) indicating that the word pertains to an inner quality of a person's heart or mind; and sometimes 4) a horizontal line between the heart and eye elements which probably originated from *De*'s connection with the graph *Zhi* 直 and its curved ㄴ-shaped stroke underneath the eye. Many explain the word's graph as "(morally) upright (直) heart (心) ," thus considering it a *Huiyizi* 會意字, "Conjoined Meaning Character."[4] However, if *De* is a *Huiyi* character, the meanings of the two significs (心 and 彳) may be more central in suggesting the meaning of *De* but less so with the 直 part. The reason is that 直, written as [illegible] / 徝, is the *phonetic* signifier in the character *De*, making *De* a *Xingshengzi* 形聲字, "phonograph." The pronunciation of *De* from the pre-Han era has been reconstructed as *tək and *Zhi* as *drək.[5] 直 serves as the phonetic element in many characters, such as 植, 殖, 値, 埴, 犆 (= 特), and 徝

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[3] In making this point, I follow the views of William G. Boltz, Peter A. Boodberg, Victor H. Mair, Lothar Von Falkenhausen, Wolfgang Behr, Edward McDonald, etc. Roger T. Ames, in his second appendix to his and Henry Rosemont's *Analects* translation and study, argued that the choice of a phonetic component would be a "semantically motivated choice" (*The Analects of Confucius: A Philosophical Translation* [Ballantine Books, 1998], p. 297). Wolfgang Behr, a specialist in Chinese linguistics, denies this possibility based on the fact that there were not many distinct Old Chinese syllables to choose from (personal communication, Sept. 2010).

[4] For example, Bernhard Karlgren in his *Analytic Dictionary of Chinese and Sino-Japanese* (1980 [1923] p. 282).

[5] Reconstruction by Axel Schuessler (*ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese*, 2007). Nearly all proposed reconstructions of *De* in Old Chinese (*Shanggu Hanyu* 上古漢語) are quite similar to this one, like those of Bill Baxter and Laurent Sagart, Zhou Fagao 周法高, Bernhard Karlgren, and Sergei Starostin. An asterisk before a word indicates the spelling is a reconstruction, and is not directly attested.

(= 陟).[6] Peter Boodberg fixated on "straight, erect, upright" (*Zhi* 直) in his examination of *De*'s early meaning. This led him to create neologisms like "indarrectivity," "arrectivity" and "enrectivity."[7] These are not without merit, yet they do not fully succeed in capturing the word's meaning as used on Western Zhou (Xi Zhou 西周, 1045–771 B.C.E.) bronzes, even with the inclusion of "inda-" and "en-" to connote innerness or an inner quality. Nevertheless, the uprightness (直) of a person's heart/mind (心) and conduct (彳) remains an appealing explanation. It also seems that, regardless of what the word's original meaning (*Benyi* 本義) was, some Chinese literati altered (or narrowed) the meaning of the *word* by analyzing the graph itself. It was in this manner that semantic content was drawn from the (originally) phonetic signifier 直, at least for some.[8]

In the early Western Zhou bronze inscriptions we find the graph [illegible] / [illegible] used to represent a person's name,[9] but also as an attribute of a person, perhaps their character or their

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[6] As already mentioned, the phonetic element in a phonograph usually contributes little or no semantic information and 直/[illegible]/徝 may simply have been borrowed to represent the word *De* because it was near-homophonous, (just as 悳 itself was in the rare characters [illegible], 聴, and [illegible]). One might also think of *Ting* 聽 (聴聽), "to listen," but 悳 seems to carry neither any semantic *nor* phonetic content here.

[7] "The Semasiology of Some Primary Confucian Concepts," pp. 323–325. Boodberg's analysis in fact contains a number of mistakes that can be corrected by study of Western Zhou bronze inscriptions and more recent phonological advances. I find it quite odd that Boodberg relies heavily on the *phonetic* element 直 for *semantic* content but neglects the semantic signifier 彳. Both Boodberg and Boltz do allow a character component to be both a phonetic and a semantic signifier. See William G. Boltz, *The Origin and Early Development of the Chinese Writing System*, American Oriental Series, vol. 78 (2003), p. 122 (originally published in 1994). Qiu Xigui 裘錫圭 calls these *Youyi De Shengpang* 有意的聲旁 "semanto-phoric phonetics," but they are not many in number (*Chinese Writing*, pp. 255–257).

[8] A blatant example of a (failed) attempt to re-define a word based on its graphic components is *Wu* 武. In the *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, Duke Xuan (春秋左傳・宣公) we find: "to stop (the use of) weapons is *Wu*" (止戈為武) (12th year).

[9] See bronze inscriptions # 2405, 2661, 3388, 3942, etc. in the CHANT (Chinese Ancient Texts) Database, all from the early Western Zhou period.

beneficence.[10] As a person's name it also occurs *with* the heart signific 心 beneath the eye:  /德[11] and are simply graphic variants (allographs) of the same word or phoneme. These early Western Zhou bronzes are the first time we truly encounter the word *De* in written form, although the concept and spoken word undeniably existed prior to this.

On the oracle-bone inscriptions (OBI) of the Shang Dynasty (dating from around 1200 B.C.E.), there appear three characters that bear some visual resemblance to the character for *De*. All three contain a pictograph of an eye with a line attached to or emerging from the top. The simplest of these:  is believed to be a protoform of the character *Zhi* 直, "direct, straight, just, rectitude, straightforward." Although this is likely correct with respect to the graph itself, I agree with Donald Munro that the character's use on the OBI seems to be that of a verb pertaining to "looking" (hence the eye), as in "looking directly at/to" something or someone and perhaps also "to consult,"[12] in that in some religious rites one might look directly up to the sky, to one's ancestors, to consult them on some important matter.[13] This sense of "looking" was shared by all oracle-bone characters (*Jiaguzi* 甲骨字) with the eye component such as *Xing*  (= 省), *Jian* 見, *Wang* 望, *Xiang* 相, and *Jian* 監. Interestingly, Xu Shen 許慎, in his dictionary *The Explanation of Characters* (*Shuowen Jiezi* 說文解字), compiled during the early second century C.E., defined *Zhi* 直 as "straight/direct observation" or the "correct view" (*Zheng Jian* 正見),

[10] See bronze inscriptions #2660, 6015b. These should be considered rare, and not fully-understood examples.

[11] See bronze inscriptions # 2171, 3585, 9419, etc.

[12] Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China,* pp. 187–190, 226–227 n110.

[13] Xu Zhongshu 徐中舒 and his collaborators in his *Dictionary of Oracle-bone Script* (*Jiaguwen Zidian* 甲骨文字典) claim that the character  was indeed the protoform of *Zhi* 直 and meant *Dang* 當, "should, ought" (?) on the oracle-bone inscriptions (p. 1385). The nature of the oracle-bone writing, however, makes interpretation of them difficult and hence there are many conflicting theories. I find the explanation of Donald Munro (and of others, like Kaizuka Shigeki 貝塚茂樹 and Wen Yiduo 聞一多, whom he quotes) more plausible. In fact, Donald Munro's *The Concept of Man in Early China* (1969/2001) contains over forty pages dealing with *De* and is most impressive. See pp. 96–113, 124–128, 185–197 and also notes on pp. 222–229.

perhaps showing that he felt it originally had something to do with "looking."[14] *Zhi*, however, is noticeably absent from Western Zhou Dynasty sources, appearing on only two bronze inscriptions. Neither does it appear in any bronze inscriptions of the following Spring and Autumn period (Chunqiu 春秋, 771–475 B.C.E.), nor any of the early odes of the *Classic of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經), nor early chapters of the *Exalted Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書).[15] When we do encounter it, no sense of "looking" remains and it has the meaning of "straight," "direct," and by extension, "probity," "moral rectitude." It resembled the Shang graph  , but with an 𠂤-element added. (In addition, during the Warring States era the eye 罒 element was rotated 90°: 目.)

David S. Nivison, among others, believed that the protoform characters of *De* are the oracle-bone characters  .[16] These characters, (which can also be transcribed as  or 值),

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[14] See also A.C. Graham's *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science,* p. 307, where he discusses the relation of sight and straightness. Xu Shen also defined *Yi* 眙 similarly as 正視也. It means "to look steadily at, to stare."

[15] That is, *Zhi* 直 does not appear in the *Hymns* (*Song* 頌) section of the *Shijing*, nor in any of the *Shangshu* chapters generally believed to be the oldest, e.g. *Kang Guo*, *Jiu Gao*, *Shao Gao*, *Luo Gao*, *Jun Shi*, *Zi Cai*, etc. It does appear on the *Classic of Changes* (*Yijing* 易經) line statement of hexagram #2 *Kun* 坤, but see Shaughnessy, *Before Confucius*, p. 216 n17. Thus, the character 直 should not be *assumed* to mean "straightness, directness" in the OBI either.

[16] See David S. Nivison's "Royal 'Virtue' in Shang Oracle Inscriptions" in *Early China* 4, "'Virtue' in Bone and Bronze" in *The Ways of Confucianism*, Open Court 1996, and other writings. In my opinion, Nivison tries much too hard to read *Chunqiu* and *Zhanguo* era Confucian morality back into the Shang era. Nivison interpreted inscriptions that could be considered rare and supported them with literature from many centuries later. The methodology Vassili Kryukov instead endorses moves from "context to concept, and not the other way around," which he claims Nivison has done ("Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China (On the Anthropology of *De*) Preliminary Assumptions," p. 322). Since, he claims, that Nivison's examples appear on only single isolated oracle-bones, the phrases "cannot be subjected to verifiable interpretation" (p. 323). See note 25, page 323, for Kryukov's arguments against specific examples Nivison uses. Kryukov does feel that the two words are connected, however. He believes that for the Shang, killing/sacrificing people gave one a kind of magical power but for the Zhou this power was achieved through ritual "without resort to violent excesses" (p. 326). I don't find this especially convincing either. John C. Didier critiques Kryukov's own conclusions in "Terrestrial and Celestial Transformations in Zhou and Early-Imperial China" in "In and Outside the Square: The Sky and the Power of Belief in Ancient

resemble the earliest bronze versions. Like the previous character mentioned, however, this word (*pāce* Nivison) is a *verb* that has to do with "looking," and in this case, it means either 1) to go on a (military) tour of inspection, reconnaissance or surveillance, or 2) either a type of sacrifice or an act involved in the sacrifice.[17] In the first case, we find 𠂤 accompanying or substituting the words "to attack" (*Fa* 伐), "to correct" (*Zheng* 正) and "to campaign against" (*Zheng* 征) with regards to questions regarding foreign tribes, especially the Tu tribe (*Tu Fang* 土方). For example, "… (if the) king goes to inspect and attack (the people of) the Tu tribe, he will receive aid" (…〔王〕𠂤伐土方，受〔㞢㞢〕。).[18] The combination of "inspect" and "attack" may even be an ancient equivalent of "reconnaissance in force," a modern military term meaning "an offensive operation designed to discover and/or test the enemy's strength or to obtain other information."[19] Xu Zhongshu consequently defines 𠂤 as "to go on an inspection tour" (*Xunxing Chashi* 循行察視) and Wen Yiduo 聞一多 (and others) see it as a protoform of *Xun* 循, not *De* 德, with the meaning of "to inspect" or "go on an inspection tour" (also written as *Xun* 巡).[20] Its connection with attacking enemy tribes distances this word from *De* 德 of the

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China and the World, c. 4500 BC – AD 200," *Sino-Platonic Papers*, 192, vol. 3 (September, 2009), pp. 22–26. Didier's own interpretation of *De* as "ancestor-bestowed authority" (p. 25) is not unproblematic.

[17] Xu Zhongshu, Donald Munro, Edward Shaughnessy, Vassili Kryukov, and others. According to Constance Cook, Paul Serruys interpreted the graph as "the Latin *Visere* 'to go and see,' as in an official visit to dispense awards or punishments" (*Early China* 20, p. 246, and *Defining Chu,* p. 196 n10).

[18] OBI #H06400.2 in the CHANT Database. See also # H06399.1, H00559.6, H00558.4, H06535, H06545.1, H06733, H20540.1, etc. Another interesting possibility is that the OBI character is actually the proto-form of *Cu* 徂, "to go." We have no examples in *Jiaguwen* 甲骨文 or *Jinwen* 金文 that I know of, so we can't know if the component on the right originally was 且 or 目. In the *Shangshu* 尚書 we find it twice preceding *Zheng* 征: "go and correct him" Shun said to Yu regarding the disobedient Miao 苗 in "*Da* Yu *Mo*" 大禹謨, and "go and punish them" in "*Yin Zheng*" 胤征. In the *Shijing*, Ode #207, we find "marched on this expedition" (征徂) (all three are James Legge's translations.) Obviously, *Cu* 徂 in these examples matches the position, context, and proposed meaning of 𠂤 in the inscriptions mentioned.

[19] *The Department of Defense Dictionary of Military Terms*
http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/dod_dictionary/data/r/6557.html. Accessed July 16, 2011.

[20] *Wen Yiduo Zhuanji* 聞一多專輯 (*Complete Works of Wen Yiduo*), Vol. I; *Gudian Xinyi* 古典新義 (*New*

Zhou era, where we shall see that it has a more benign connotation. In sacrificial contexts we find inscriptions like "Divined: (should a) 𢍏 — sacrifice (be made) to ancestor Zuyi?" (貞𢍏𡆥于祖乙。).[21] It is perhaps most likely that this character when appearing in sacrificial contexts is not really related to the other, as *very* many characters appear to be used as names for sacrifices in addition to having other meanings. Perhaps all they had in common was pronunciation.

Accordingly, the original form (*Benzi* 本字) of the word seems perhaps to have been the bronze script (*Jinwen* 金文) 𢍏 (𢛳 minus the horizontal line intersecting the vertical line on top of the eye, which was a later development). To this was added a heart signific, resulting in 德 (and occasionally 𢛳).[22] It was, in fact, one of the earliest characters to appear on Western Zhou bronze inscriptions with a heart signific. Rarely in the Western Zhou bronze inscriptions do we find *De without* the movement signific (彳) on the left, appearing as 悳 or 惠 or 𢘑 (sometimes written now as 𢘑), but this abbreviated allograph appears regularly on Warring States period (*Zhanguo* 戰國, c. 475–221 B.C.E.) bronze inscriptions and bamboo writings.[23] It

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Interpretation of Ancient Terms). N.p.: *Kaiming shudian* 開明書店, n.d., quoted in Munro p. 187 and p. 195 n18. If 𢍏 is the protoform of *Xun* 循 (Baxter-Sagart: *s.Gu[n]), then it would seem to have nothing to do with either *Zhi* 直 or *De* 德 because their pronunciations are too different. However, *Xun* does not appear on any bronze inscriptions, does not appear in the *Shijing*, and appears but once in the entire *Shangshu*, but meaning "to comply" and not "inspection tour." It seems unlikely that a word would be used regularly for "inspection tour" and then disappear for a thousand years before showing up again. It seems then, that 𢍏 represented a different (and obsolete) word for "inspect, inspection tour" (William Baxter, personal communication 2/17/2008). Or, perhaps it is simply a variant of 𡆥/省/𤴔, which, again, is unrelated to *De*.

[21] OBI # H00272.5. See also # H06209.6 and H40817.

[22] For example, on bronze inscriptions # 238–242 from the late Western Zhou era. The heart signific may not have been "added": they may have coexisted and simply have been allographs.

[23] See bronze inscriptions # 3585, 10076, 132.3, 9735.1, 2840.2, etc., and bamboo texts such as the ones found at Guodian 郭店, Jingmen, Hubei Province. More precisely, they appear as 𢘑/惠, but where the horizontal line *above* the eye is either absent or simply is a slight bulge on the vertical line. I would like to add that by referring to different graphs as variants I do not mean to suggest that any one of them is the *correct* one (See Imre Galambos's *Orthography of Early Chinese Writing*, 2006).

wasn't until later (post Han Dynasty?) that all the components in the modern character were present. Xu Shen, in his *The Explanation of Characters*, mistakenly believed 悳 to be the orthograph for *De* 德 (which he wrote as 𢛳). But the oldest material he likely had at his disposal was from the Warring States era written in Seal Script (*Zhuanwen* 篆文), so he couldn't have known about early Western Zhou versions written in bronze script, which almost always had the movement significs (and sometimes even lacked the heart signific). His puzzling definition of *De* as *Sheng* 升, "to rise up" or "to promote," seems also to be erroneous,[24] since this meaning is unattested.

As far as genuine etymology of the word *De*, some have speculated about it being cognate to *Zhi* 直, "straight, direct, rectitude," *De* 得, "to obtain, get, achieve," or Tibetan *t^{h}ub*, "a mighty one, having power."[25] Victor Mair, for his part, moved beyond Tibeto-Burman, Austro-Asiatic, etc. to Indo-European. His reconstructed Old Chinese pronunciation for *De* is *dugh, which, although unlike all other proposed reconstructions, helps him locate a large list of cognates stemming from a proto-Indo-European word *dhugh meaning "to be fit, of use, proper; acceptable; achieve."[26] The merits of this hypothesis await further research.

The earliest appearance of *De* in the written material of China is in inscriptions found on bronze sacrificial vessels and bronze bells of the Western Zhou period (*Xi Zhou* 西周, 1045–771 B.C.E.). These bronze inscriptions were cast by members of the aristocracy/nobility for a number of reasons, such as prayers and reports to deceased ancestors, the recording of family histories, commemoration of administrative or military merit and the preservation of important treaties or territorial exchange.[27]

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[24] It seems to me that Xu Shen's definition was supposed to be for *Zhi* 徝, also written as 陟, (*trək), which does indeed mean "to ascend."

[25] Schuessler's *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* (2007), p. 208.

[26] See Mair's *Tao Te Ching*, pp. 133–135. For an expanded discussion, see "[The] File [on the Cosmic] Track [and Individual] Dough[tiness]: Introduction and Notes for a Translation of the Ma-wang-tui Manuscripts of the Lao Tzu [Old Master]" in *Sino-Platonic Papers* #20 (1990), pp. 23–25.

[27] Li, *Bureaucracy and the State in Early China*, p. 15

Often preceded by the possessive pronoun *Jue* 毕 (厥), "his, their," *De* 德 referred to a/the property(-ies), attribute(s) or quality(-ies) of deceased ancestors (e.g., *Kao* 考, deceased father, *Zu* 祖, deceased grandfather) or *Xianwang* 先王, former king(s)). Although we can't be absolutely sure, "character," being an aggregate of distinctive traits, attitudes, strengths and conduct of a person, and "ethos," being the customary habits, attitudes and values of a person (or group) are provisionally fitting translations of *De*. This quality or character was always viewed positively, since the patrons of the bronzes piously expressed a desire to "comply with and model" (*Shuaixing* 帥型)[28] themselves on and maintain or hold onto (*Bing* 秉) their father's and/or grandfather's *De*, or that of the former king(s). Stereotypical examples being the inscription on Xing's Bell: "I, Xing, do not dare not to comply with my deceased grandfather and father, maintaining (their) brilliant *De*" (癭不敢弗帥祖考秉明德);[29] Shanbo Yisheng's Bell: "I, the young child, will proceed to follow the examples of my venerable deceased grandfather's and father's exemplary *De*" (余小子肇帥型朕皇祖考懿德);[30] and Fansheng's Tureen:

> Greatly illustrious are my august grandfather and father! Solemnly and reverently (I) am able to comprehend their *De*. Majestically residing above, (they) broadly opened up (ways for) their grandsons and sons below, (and) harmonized the great service. Fansheng does not dare not to follow and model (his) deceased grandfather's and father's greatly felicitous prime *De*, with which to extend and promote the Great Mandate, supporting the position of the king.

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[28] Although written as 井 or 井 on the bronze inscriptions, the second character is read as 刑 or 型, "to model, imitate," which are later ways of writing the same word. See Shaughnessy *Sources of Western Zhou History*, p. 187.

[29] The Xing *Zhong* 癭鐘, #247–50. The bronze inscriptions are taken from the CHANT database, but in several places I have replaced a character with a "well-accepted" modern version, such as writing *Zu* 祖 "grandfather/ancestor" for *Qie* 且 ("moreover; about to"), and the above-mentioned 型 for 井. The translations of the bronze inscriptions are my own, guided and influenced by translations in various books and essays by Edward Shaughnessy, Vassili Kryukov, Constance Cook, Robert Eno, Donald Munro, W.A.C.H. Dobson and Li Feng.

[30] The Shanbo Yisheng *Zhong* 單白昊生鐘, #82.

丕顯皇祖考穆穆克哲厥德嚴在上廣㪟厥孫子于下緐于大服番生不敢弗帥型皇祖考丕杯元德用𤔲圞大命粤王位[31]

At this point in time, it is not clear whether all men and women possessed or were capable of possessing *De*. The inscriptions, and most of the early passages in the *Documents* and the *Odes* only mention the *De* of the (male) nobility and royalty.[32] If *De* was considered an attribute of the nobility only, and if it denoted good character and conduct, we have here a Chinese counterpart to the Greek *Kalokagathía* discussed by Aristotle and others.[33] However, these texts do not make a point of discussing the qualities or attributes of the royal subjects or "common people," the *Min* 民. It may be that all people had, or *could* have *De* but only that of respected leaders and ancestors (the *Wenren* 文人, "accomplished/civilized men") was worth mentioning, because they were the ones believed to be exemplary role models. Moreover, it is evident that it was *possible* for these nobles *not* to follow or maintain their ancestor's *De*; so, it was not a given, at least not entirely.

These inscriptions, and many others like them,[34] suggest that in the early Western Zhou period, *De* referred to good, admirable character and the conduct that is an expression of it. The men who commissioned and used these bronze ritual vessels desired to live up to the expectations of their ancestors and follow in their footsteps. They inherited this character from

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[31] The Fansheng *Gui* 番生簋, #4326, trans. by Li Feng (modified) in *Bureaucracy and the State in Early China*, p. 65.

[32] The *Documents* (*Shu* 書) is the earliest name for what we now refer to as the *Exalted Documents* (*Shangshu* 尚書) or the *Classic of Documents* (*Shujing* 書經). The *Odes* (*Shi* 詩) is the earliest name for what we now call the *Classic of Odes* (*Shijing* 詩經).

[33] Liddell and Scott define *Kalokagathía* as "the character and conduct of a *kalōs kagathos*, nobleness, goodness" in their *An Intermediate Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1889). Accessed (September 6 2010) at: http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0058%3Aentry%3Dkaloka)gaqi%2Fa. *Kalōs kagathos* refers to noble persons. See Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics* 8.1248b 8–11.

[34] E.g., #247–50, 82, 109.1, 192, 4242, 4326, 4315.1, etc.

their ancestors,[35] at least to a certain extent, and they apparently could lose it, as we find them focused on diligently maintaining (*Bing* 秉), making it shine (*Ming* 明) and, later, cultivating (*Xiu* 修) it. This will be discussed more below.

Weiyi 威儀, a word meaning awe-inspiring decorum, fearsome demeanor or perhaps *gravitas*, was often mentioned in connection with *De* and hints at the semantic field of the latter. For example, "I, the little child, will take charge (like) my venerable deceased father, beginning with following and modeling my former cultured ancestors, joining with[36] their brilliant *De* and maintaining their awe-inspiring decorum." (余小子司朕皇考肇帥型先文祖共明德秉威儀。).[37] A line in the *Odes* reads, "A grave and awe-inspiring demeanor is (one) corner of *De*" (抑抑威儀, 維德之隅).[38]

"Beneficence" is another early meaning of *De*, or an important aspect of *De*-as-character. An inscription on Shi Qiang's basin and reproduced on a bell of his descendant, Xing, contain a passage which reads, "Shangdi sent down excellent *De* and great security" (上帝降懿德大粤).[39] Shangdi, the highest divinity of the Shang Dynasty civilization, along with the Zhou's *Tian* 天, "Heaven," and the *Shen* 神, "spirits," are regularly spoken of as "sending down" (*Jiang* 降) things like rain and drought, good and bad fortune, calamity and blessing. Although not unheard of (as we shall see), sending down good character to people below seems less appropriate here than "beneficence, blessing, grace or favor."[40]

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[35] *Yi* 遺, "to inherit," is found associated with *De* in Warring States bronze inscription #9735.1 and *Zhuangzi* 莊子 29.

[36] "Joining with" is my translation of the character 共, which can mean "all together," "to join the hands," "to hold round with both hands" (Schuessler pp. 256–257). It may be an allograph or orthograph of *Gong* 拱, "to grasp in one's hands" or perhaps *Gong* 恭, "to revere, respect," as *Gong Ming De* 恭明德 is found in the "Lord Shi" 君奭 chapter of the *Shu* 書.

[37] The Shu Xiangfu Yu *Gui* 叔向父禹簋, #4242. *Weiyi* also appears in connection with *De* on other inscriptions such as #238.1, 247 and odes #299, 249, 220, etc.

[38] # 256: "Grave" (*Yi* 抑). See also Ode "*Minlu* 民勞" (#253): 敬慎威儀、以近有德 。.

[39] The Shi Qiang *Pan* 史牆盤, #10175 and the Xing *Zhong* 癲鐘, #251, respectively.

[40] John C. Didier makes much of this inscription, taking *De* to be "authority" granted by the Heavenly spirits: "This

Parallels exist in odes from centuries later, such as "Rain Without Limit" (*Yu Wuzheng* 雨無正): "Broad and vast is mighty Heaven, yet it keeps its grace (*De* 德) from us, but rather sends down (*Jiang* 降) death and famine, war and destruction to all the states,"[41] and "Majestic Indeed" (*Huang Yi* 皇矣, #241), where we find that the "Lord on High transferred (his) Brilliant *De*" (帝遷明德), from one clan, the Zi 子 (the ruling clan of the Shang 商 Dynasty), to another, the Ji 姬 (the ruling clan of the Zhou 周 Dynasty). *De* undoubtedly means "grace" or "favor" here and corresponds to the ancient Greek words *Khâris* and *Khârisma*.

In some bronze inscriptions, we find the patron of the inscription pleading for long life (*Shou* 壽) and good fortune (*Fu* 福) and in other similarly worded inscriptions pleading for long life and "excellent/fine *De*" (*Yi De* 懿德).[42] This suggests a close relation between good fortune and *De* and is attested in literature from later on. Both words rhymed, and were often near-synonyms (as "blessing, boon").[43]

Two other bronzes, Shi Yu's tripod and Shi Yu's wine vessel use *De* in a stock phrase, "Yu, in return (for being awarded some precious metal by the king) extolled his *De*" (艅則對揚厥德).[44] While Yu could be praising his king's good character, the fact that numerous nearly identical expressions throughout the bronze inscriptions and classical literature use *Xiu* 休, "beneficence" in place of *De* help clarify its meaning as "beneficence," "goodwill" or

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authority was *not* self-generated exclusively via a process of internal reflection [as it was later on]. It was thus *not* purely internal, but still, rather, equally external. It originated equally both externally and internally: one needed socio-politically to *be* a certain someone related to the exalted dead ancestors even to be a candidate for receipt of this authority, while internally such a candidate also needed to prepare himself ritually for his magical absorption of the ancestor-bestowed authority" ("In and Outside the Square" Vol. III, p. 25).

[41] Ode #194, translated by Joseph Allen, slightly modified, in Waley, 1996, p. 172.

[42] The Qi Zhong *Zhi* 㠯仲觶, #6511.1.

[43] E.g., *Laozi* 老子 65 says "Not using so-called wisdom to order the state is a *Fu*-benefit to the state" (不以智治國, 國之福), but the ancient Mawangdui texts of the *Laozi* (as well as the *Wenzi*) say "Not using so-called wisdom to order the state is a *De*-benefit to the state" (不以智治國, 國之德也). See also *Shijing* ode #260, "*De* is light as a hair" (德輶如毛) and *Zhuangzi* 4, "*Fu* is light as a feather" (福輕乎羽).

[44] The Shi Yu *Ding* 師艅鼎, #2723b, and Shi Yu *Zun* 師艅尊, #5995b, respectively.

"generosity."[45] As we will see later on, *De*, as generosity or kindness, came to be associated with gratitude, and the natural inclination to "requite" (*Bao* 報) said kindness.

Before drawing the conclusion that *De* in the early Zhou referred to beneficent character or Virtue, it's important to acknowledge that these revered ancestors, as well as the men who were honoring them, were members of a warrior aristocracy.[46] Among the Zhou royal family, Ji Chang 姬昌, the so-called "Civilized" or "Cultured" King (*Wenwang* 文王), is recorded as leading his armies in numerous battles[47] and was celebrated for his "martial accomplishments" (*Wugong* 武功).[48] His father Ji Li 季歷, his sons Ji Fa 姬發 (the "Martial" or "Militant" King: *Wuwang* 武王) and Ji Dan 姬但 (the Duke of Zhou: *Zhougong* 周公) all were accomplished military leaders and warriors.[49]

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[45] See bronzes #2812, 2830, 4261, 4199, 2721, etc. and Ode # 262 of the *Shijing*. In fact, a third vessel, Shi Yu *Pan* (師艅簋, #4277), uses *Xiu* and not *De*: 對揚天子丕顯休.

[46] This is a term coined by Mark Edward Lewis in *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* (1990). The first chapter of this book, (pp. 15–52), contains an excellent discussion of this warrior aristocracy in the Chunqiu period, which itself was a continuation of that of the earlier Western Zhou aristocracy. Robert Bagley, in his chapter on Shang Archaeology, refers to the Shang as "a society of warrior aristocrats" as well (*The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, Cambridge University Press, 1999, p. 206).

[47] See especially *Shijing* ode #241: "Majestic!" 皇矣 where, following Shangdi's orders, he attacked both the Mi people 密人 and Chong 崇 (completed by cutting off of heads/ears: 馘), and #244 "King Wen's Fame" 文王有聲, where he had "military achievements" (*Wu Gong* 武功) and attacked Chong 崇. In both of these poems, it is said that there were none in the realm who did not submit to him. Ed Shaughnessy writes "According to both the *Shiji* and *Zhushu Jinian* … King Wen led an army through southern Shanxi attacking and defeating the state of Li 黎 (also known as Qi 耆) … [and] also defeated Yu 盂 (邘?)" (*The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, p. 307). See pp. 90–92 of *Western Zhou Civilization* by Cho-Yun Hsü (Zhuoyun Xu) and Katheryn M. Linduff (Yale University Press, 1988) for more on King Wen's military projects.

[48] Ode #244.

[49] For Ji Li 季歷 (alt. Zhouwang Ji 周王季 or Zhougong Jili 周公季歷), see p. 64 of Hsu and Linduff's *Western Zhou Civilization*, and/or the *Zhushu Jinian* 竹書紀年, Wu Yi 武乙: 35th year and the second, fourth, seventh and tenth years of Wen Ding 文丁. Both King Wu's overthrow of the Shang by force and the Duke of Zhou's quelling of a rebellion (and further Zhou expansion) after King Wu's death are well known from traditional sources. Hsu and Linduff explicitly refer to the Zhou leaders also as warriors (p. 237).

As seen displayed on many oracle-bones inscriptions, the Shang nobles and their armies engaged in nearly constant battles with their neighbors. The Shang were eventually defeated by one of these neighbors, the Zhou and their allies, on the battlefield. The Zhou didn't stop there, for, as Li Feng writes,

> The first century after the conquest was a period of rapid expansion when the Western Zhou state continued to pursue military goals in all directions ... new land continued to be conquered and transferred into regional states.[50]

The bronze inscriptions from this period are mostly concerned with military matters.[51] Li proclaims that this "certainly suggests the militant character of the early Western Zhou government in an age of great territorial expansion that provided reasons for the young and senior elites to cast inscriptions to celebrate their military contributions to the Zhou state."[52]

Of course, not all battles fought by the Zhou were belligerently aimed at expansion and subjugation of other tribes. As the Western Zhou period drew to a close, the Zhou's offensives had declined and an increasing number of defensive battles were fought, against groups like the indigenous Yi 夷 peoples in the east and south and the Xianyun 玁狁 in the northwest.[53] Into the Spring and Autumn period, wars between now-distant relatives occurred also, fighting for land and honor. Mark Edward Lewis, in his book *Sanctioned Violence in Ancient China,* writes that "Warfare was ultimately a matter of prestige or honor, in which the living sought to preserve or augment the glories of their predecessors; it was through its role in defending the state's or lineage's honor that warfare became a fundamental part of the ancestral cult."[54] Thus, one would not be considered lacking virtue or admirable character by engaging in war and killing one's

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[50] *Bureaucracy and the State in Early China*, pp. 33–34. See also Edward Shaughnessy in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China*, p. 311.

[51] Ibid., pp. 36 and 50.

[52] Ibid., p. 50.

[53] Ibid., p. 40.

[54] *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, p. 36.

enemies. On the contrary, Lewis asserts that, for these elites or nobles, "martial prowess and military glory were their central concerns and indeed the very definition of manhood."[55]

The aristocracy could therefore be expected to value martial virtues such as courage, fortitude or inner strength, martial prowess, and, perhaps most importantly, loyalty. Later, as the armies grew very large, it became more practical for those on the battlefield to be disciplined into obedient and motivated pawns. Still, soldiers were encouraged to display courage and think highly of dying in battle, killing many enemies or being injured in battle.[56] Cowardice (*Qie* 怯), was always a deplored character trait. This is one reason "character" is preferable to the standard "virtue" as a gloss of *De*, inasmuch as "virtue" has narrower, moralistic connotations, which is only an accurate definition in some instances.

As time went on, and away from the battlefields, the martial virtues diminished in value and were either transformed into or replaced by milder virtues felt more conducive to achieving and maintaining social harmony in the state. A warrior's fortitude (*Yongde* 勇德) or courage (*Yong* 勇), for example, came to be valued by the literati more in moralistic terms: courage to do what is right and resist temptation to do what is wrong. Conquering oneself was deemed more impressive than conquering others.[57]

One of these literati, the Confucian Mengzi 孟子 (c. fourth century B.C.E.), was uncomfortable with the story handed down from antiquity that King Wu, the "Martial King," spilled much blood in the battle at Muyi, when he conquered the Shang.[58] The story was that so much blood was spilled that mortar pestles could float in it. Not only that, but the tyrant[59] Zhou 紂, the Shang king, was beheaded by King Wu.[60] This was not an uncommon practice, as the

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[55] Ibid., p. 243.

[56] See the *Mozi*, chapter 5.3: *Feigong xia* 非攻下. (CHANT chapter divisions).

[57] *Laozi* 33: 勝人者有力也自勝者強也.

[58] Chapter 7B3, or 14.3 in CHANT divisions. Mengzi 孟子 also criticizes those who are "good at war" (*Shan Zhan* 善戰), at 7.14 (4A14) and 14.4 (7B4), which, ironically, would actually include his heroes Kings Wen and Wu!

[59] *Alleged* tyrant: we do not have unbiased reports.

[60] *Xunzi* 18, *Yi Zhoushu*: *Shifu* 逸周書 • 世俘.

severing of heads and the presentation of these heads, scalps or ears (*Guo* 馘/聝) is mentioned on the bronzes and traditional texts, and served to demonstrate one's military prowess and merit (*Ronggong* 戎功, *Wugong* 武功).

The Confucian Xunzi 荀子 (c. third century B.C.E.), in chapter 15 of the text bearing his name, argues that the legendary sage kings Yao 堯, Shun 舜, Yu 禹, Tang 湯, Wen and Wu only led "benevolent and righteous armies" (*Renyi Zhi Bing* 仁義之兵) and that these armies "did not bloody their blades" (*Bu Xue Ren* 不血刃). (Perhaps he meant that very *little* blood was spilled?) But this "righteous use of weapons" (*Yibing* 義兵) was a Warring States era ideology, largely irrelevant in the early Zhou, Shang or Xia dynasties.[61] Mengzi, Xunzi and other literati projected their moral views back into antiquity in order to give them a legitimate authority, in the process changing the way the Chinese would remember their history.[62]

The Roman concept of *Virtus* and the Greek concept of *Aretê* both underwent similar changes as *De* did. They were originally used in reference to warriors, connoting a martial quality, which entailed qualities such as "manliness," courage, fortitude and excellence on the battlefield. The semantic field of both *Virtus* and *Aretê* widened as time went on, just like *De*, all of which came to refer to an inner strength, power or potency within all sorts of things, and in humans, "moral excellence" came to be the most frequent meaning.[63]

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[61] As Arthur Waley once observed, "the people who wrote the *Songs* (*Odes* 詩) believed that empires were won by catapults and battering-rams, at the command of God," (pp. 293–94 of the 1960 edition). The Xia 夏 Dynasty is a quasi-legendary dynasty dated 2070–1600 B.C.E. Yu was believed to be the first ruler of the Xia, with Yao and Shun predating even him.

[62] See C.H. Wang's "Towards Defining a Chinese Heroism" in vol. 92 n.1 of the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, Jan.–Mar., 1975. Wang explains well how ancient Chinese poets suppressed the martial elements of their history, although he doesn't seem to question the accuracy of the odes he discusses and seems to assume that *all* Chinese shared the "Confucianized" picture of the past.

[63] See *Roman Manliness*: "*Virtus" and the Roman Republic* by Myles McDonnell (Cambridge University Press, 2006); *Moral Values in the Ancient World* by John Ferguson (Methuen, Great Britain, 1958); "Protagoras's Pedagogy of Civic Excellence," by David C. Hoffman in the *Anistoriton Journal*, vol. 10 (2006). See also the entries for both words in *A Greek-English Lexicon* by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott and *A Latin Dictionary* by Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short, at http://www.perseus.tufts.edu

Evidently, many Warring States literati believed that moral excellence, moral authority and cultural attraction ("soft power"[64]) alone could succeed in uniting the world. In chapter 16 of the *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), Confucius 孔子 (c. 551–479 B.C.E.) gives the advice that a ruler should look after things within his own borders first, but if "the people of far-off lands still do not submit, then the ruler must attract them by enhancing the prestige of his culture (*Wen De* 文德); and when they have been duly attracted, he contents them."[65] Few rulers tried this out. Ralph Sawyer singles out Mengzi as a chief culprit in spreading this "myth" of cultural attraction, calling it a "luxurious delusion," yet acknowledges that Mengzi sanctioned "punitive expeditions undertaken by righteous authorities."[66] Naturally, many kings, regional rulers and hegemons *proclaimed* they had benevolent and righteous motivations for their "rectification campaigns" (*Zheng* 征) against their neighbors. Undoubtedly, not all were being honest. Numerous chapters of the *Documents*, especially the "Oaths" (*Shi* 誓), contain speeches given prior to battles and include moral justifications for the upcoming offensive. This suggests that these speeches were composed by, and perhaps for, those who lacked a warrior ethic and who needed such justification — probably the literati from centuries after the fact.

Returning to *De*, the pledges inscribed for posterity on expensive bronzeware to follow and model oneself on one's ancestors and hold to their *De* was vital to the ancestral cult and an important part of Chinese "moral" education. "Model emulation" was a well-established practice or tradition in ancient China, as Donald Munro has stressed:

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[64] "Soft Power" is a term coined by Joseph Nye in *Bound to Lead*, a book he published in 1990. He has since written a book on it: *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs, 2004. He defines it as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments" (p. x).

[65] 遠人不服，則脩文德以來之。既來之，則安之。 Trans. by Waley, p. 203. Waley's note refers us to p. 39 of his introduction, where he writes: "In particular, *Wen* [文] denotes the arts of peace (music, dancing, literature) as opposed to those of war. The arts of peace, however, everything that we should call culture, have a *De* that is useful for offensive purposes. They attract the inhabitants of neighboring countries…" *De* here unmistakably refers to Nye's "Soft Power."

[66] "Warfare: The Paradox of the Unlearned Lesson," http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/ accessed August 2009. "First presented at the Triangle Securities Studies seminar" (March 1996), originally published in *American Diplomacy* 1999.

> The Chinese theory of learning assumes that people are innately capable of learning from models. This learning can occur unintentionally, through the unconscious imitation of those around one … Or it can occur intentionally, through the purposive attempt to duplicate the attitude or conduct of a teacher, scholar-official, or ancestor.[67]

In the bronze inscriptions, it is usually one's ancestors which serve as exemplary models, but in later texts, meant for a wider, less specific audience, it is culture heroes like Yao, Shun, King Wen, the Duke of Zhou and, more generically, sages (*Shengren* 聖人), noblemen (*Junzi* 君子), superiors (*Shang* 上), worthies (*Xian* 賢), etc. This was not only a means of *honoring* one's ancestors, culture heroes and those who demonstrated their excellence, but also a way to solidify admired family and cultural attitudes, values and behaviors. These were the "norms" that Munro refers to when he defined *De* as the "consistent attitude toward the Heaven-decreed norms, which, in the case of ideal *De*, displayed itself in regularly appearing action in accordance with the norms."[68]

In modeling oneself on one's ancestors and being able to comprehend their *De* (克哲厥德),[69] one was able to grasp and maintain (*Bing* 秉) the family ethos, character, reputation, legacy, and prestige — all nuances of the content of *De* — and ensured that the ancestral spirits would treat one favorably. These spirits are often spoken of as "inspecting" (*Jian* 監) those

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[67] *The Concept of Man in Early China*, p. 96.

[68] Ibid., p. 185. Graphically, this view is nicely supported, in that the "attitude" Munro mentions is indicated by the "heart-mind" signific (心) at the bottom of the graph, and the "action" or "conduct" aspect represented by the component 彳 (an abbreviated form of 行). Munro continues, "Eventually, in the Zhou period, *De* developed the extended sense of a bestowal of bounties by a ruler (or more simply, 'kindness') because this activity was believed to accord with one of Heaven's major decrees. *De* in this sense would automatically produce affection and loyalty in the hearts of the people, and would attract them to the person practicing it." Admiration and emulation would automatically follow.

[69] This expression is found on numerous bronzes, such as #2812, 109.1, 192, 2836, 4326, etc. It seems to me that the character 悊, commonly read as *Zhe* 哲, might instead be *Zhe*, 悊 "to revere," seeing as though the *Jinwen* character always has the heart and not the mouth signific. CHANT transcribes it as *Shen* 慎, "careful, cautious."

below, to see if they measure up, and the *Odes* refers countless times to blessings or good fortune sent down by these spirits or Heaven.

Chronologically, the *Documents* (*Shu* 書), *Odes* (*Shi* 詩) and the *Changes* (*Yi* 易) are the texts next in line that include *De*. Some of the content of these classics may well have been kept in the royal archives during the Western Zhou period, and some, particularly some of the odes, were memorized and orally transmitted. Nonetheless, they were not created or written down all at once, but rather over many centuries and have been edited and copied innumerable times. According to modern scholarship, only the earliest portions, such as the "Proclamations" (*Gao* 誥) of the *Documents*, the "Hymns" (*Song* 頌) and perhaps the "Major Elegantiae" (*Da Ya* 大雅) of the *Odes*, and core *Zhou Changes* (*Zhouyi* 周易) date from the Western Zhou period, specifically, the mid-to-late Western Zhou.[70] With regards to the "Proclamations" (and a few other *Documents*' chapters), the language used, although quite archaic, differs so much from bronze inscriptions that a Chunqiu date might be more reasonable. The remainder of the material was written over the next five hundred years, with the exception of a number of "forgeries"[71] in the *Documents* written around the fourth century C.E.

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[70] Scholars such as Herrlee Creel, W.A.C.H. Dobson, Edward Shaughnessy and Michael Nylan have affirmed that the "Proclamations" and a few other chapters from the *Zhoushu* 周書 section of the *Documents* date from the *early* Western Zhou period (see Shaughnessy, p. 379 in *Early Chinese Texts*). But Kai Vogelsang's "Inscriptions and Proclamations: On the Authenticity of the 'gao' Chapters in the *Book of Documents*" *Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities* 74, (2002) shows the language employed is significantly different from that of the early Western Zhou bronze inscriptions. Martin Kern has accordingly suggested a date of "late-Western or early Eastern Zhou" for these chapters as well as the earliest odes in *Early Chinese Religion*, p. 145. More forcefully, Kern writes "the claim that the speeches [the 12 in the *Shangshu*] come from the time of their purported speakers is supported by nothing but the pious claim of tradition" (ibid., p. 183). Shaughnessy, in his 1988 dissertation on the *Zhouyi* imagines a scenario that might support a late Western Zhou date: "At some point in history the oral traditions were put into writing. We might suspect that a period of crisis would occasion such a change in the means of transmission. At a time when a people feels its future threatened, when its chain of social inheritance dissolves, the people would for the first time feel the need to commit their oral traditions to writing." Both crises he mentions occurred at the end of the Western Zhou period ("The Composition of the *Zhouyi*," Stanford University, pp. 46–47) Kern has a similar argument (*Early Chinese Religion,* p. 150).

[71] These forgeries do contain some older material, and were possibly not intended to deceive others, as "forgery"

Many of these texts that purport to record speeches and events and convey values from the early Zhou dynasty and earlier were written and edited by literati who wanted to encourage morality and more of a "civilized" way of living. The *Documents*' stories and exempla were written to illustrate "instances of normative conduct by exemplary kings and officials,"[72] to be emulated by rulers and officials of later times. Like the bronze inscriptions, they record what the composer *wanted to be remembered*, whether accurate or not. They are idealizations, often moralizing, and are attempts to provide an ancient pedigree for the ideas within them.

The earliest odes commemorate the founding of the Zhou Dynasty and especially King Wen. In the Zhou *Hymns* (Zhou *Song* 周頌) we find mention of knights who grasp or maintain (*Bing* 秉) the *De* of King Wen.[73] In the "Major Elegantiae" (*Da Ya* 大雅), to King Cheng it is said, "Do not but think of your deceased grandfather (King Wen) and so keep his *De* in good repair. … In your deportment, model King Wen, and the myriad regions will place their trust (in you)" (無念爾祖，聿脩厥德 ... 儀刑文王，萬邦作孚)."[74] Here, "prestige" is the underlying theme, which developed from King Wen's character and conduct. Like the bronze inscriptions, it is proper to model oneself on one's ancestors, especially highly respected ones. And in doing so, one is thus a model (*Xing* 刑 = 型) not only for one's own descendants but also for anyone who wished to command respect and authority: "Greatly illustrious is (the king's) *De*, all the rulers may take him as their model" (丕顯維德，百辟其刑之).[75]

De is one of the most common words in the *Documents*, appearing over 240 times. Like the early odes, the earliest chapters center on the Zhou royal family, and so reference to their and their ancestors' *De* is common. In the "Proclamation to Kang" (*Kang Gao* 康誥), the Duke of Zhou says to his younger brother Feng 封, "Your grandly illustrious deceased father King Wen

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implies. They may have been genuine attempts to recover lost material, possibly based on texts from private collections.

[72] Nylan (2001), p. 122. Martin Kern writes, "In the speeches, the early rulers are at once generic paradigms of virtue and … generalized as models to emulate." (*Early Chinese Religion*, p. 184).

[73] Odes #266: "The Pristine Temple" (*Qing Miao* 清廟). Ode #267 also mentions the *De* of King Wen.

[74] Ode #235: "Wenwang" 文王.

[75] Ode # 269: "Valorous/Brilliant and Cultured" (*Liewen* 烈文).

was able to make shine/clarify *De* and be circumspect (with regards to) punishments" (惟乃丕顯考文王克明德慎罰).[76] While "make bright his character/virtue(s)" is an option, paired with punishments (*Fa* 罰), *De* seems to mean beneficence, and anticipates a later meaning of "rewards," since later Feng is also instructed to "make shine/clarify your punishments" (明乃罰).[77]

As a verb, *Ming* 明, "(to make) bright, shine, radiant, illustrious, clear, conspicuous, manifest" was used with both *De* and *Xin* 心, "heart" and/or "mind." For example, bronze inscriptions mention "make shine/enlighten their *Xin*" (明厥心) and "reverently make shine/enlighten your *Xin*" (敬明乃心),[78] whereas the last king of the Shang, the tyrant Zhou 紂, was said to have "not made shine his *De* (不明厥德).[79] The Lu Hymn "Waters of Pan" (*Pan Shui* 泮水, #299) tells of the Marquis of Lu, who, "Reverently making shine his *De*, and reverently watching over his awe-inspiring decorum, (serves as) an exemplar for the people" (敬明其德，敬慎威儀，維民之則). The ode goes on to tell of the marquis's brave warriors, who return from battle to present to him the prisoners and the ears/scalps/heads of their slain enemies, and further of his legions of knights who were "able to spread wide (his) *De* and *Xin* (will?)" (克廣德心) while on their military expeditions. Here, *Virtus* (manliness, fortitude) or "prestige" seem more appropriate than "virtue" (Karlgren, Legge).[80] Consequently, making one's *De* shine

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[76] "Grandly illustrious deceased father King Wen" (*Bixian Kao Wenwang* 丕顯考文王) appears in an inscription on the early Western Zhou bronze vessel, the Tian Wang *Gui* 天亡簋, (#4261). "Make clear *De*, be circumspect (with regards to) punishments" (*Ming De Shen Fa* 明德慎罰) also appears in "Lord Shi" (*Jun* Shi 君奭) of the *Documents*.

[77] Recall also that in the Shi Yu bronze vessel inscriptions Shi Yu praised the king's *De* after receiving a gift.

[78] The former is found on Western Zhou bronze inscriptions the Xing *Zhong* 癲鐘 (#247–50), the Shi Wang *Ding* 師望鼎 (#2812) and the Chunqiu period Qingong *Bo* 秦公鎛 (#262–269.2). The latter on the Shi Hong *Gui* 師訇簋 (#4342) and the ? *Xu* 盨盨(#4469).

[79] "Many Knights" (*Duo Shi* 多士) of the *Documents*.

[80] The "Waters of Pan" is ode #299. Similar expressions regarding making one's *De* bright appear in odes #241 and 255. Another word, *La* 剌, "valorous, valiant," was both an epithet used for ancestors as well as a modifier of *De*, on Western Zhou bronze inscriptions (#141, 2830, 4293, 10175, 82, 2805, 9721, etc), and odes in the *Shijing*. Later it

or radiate presumably means that one has made it *worth taking notice of*; it is spotless, illustrious, conspicuous, and difficult to ignore. One could say that one whose *De* shines is an *illus*tration of what good character looks like, manifested in the excellence of their conduct, resulting in a shining reputation.

Returning to the *Documents*, Ji Song 姬誦, the "Consummate King" (*Chengwang* 成王), says to Feng, his uncle, "make peaceful your *Xin*, attend to your *De*" (康乃心顧乃德), which pairs the heart/mind again with *De* (character, ethos)[81] and points again to the notion that there is something we need to *do* with our *De*, that is, it needs tending to. In the "Proclamation to Shao" (Shao *Gao* 召誥), the Duke of Zhou says the last kings of the Xia and the Shang lost the Mandate of Heaven because they "did not reverently (tend to) their *De*" (不敬厥德), and so urges the king to "piously tend to his *De*, and may the king by means of this *De*, pray to Heaven for its eternal Mandate" (疾敬德王其德之用祈天永命). If he can do this, his subjects will use him as their model (*Xing* 刑).

In "The Numerous Regions" (*Duo Fang* 多方), the Duke of Zhou passed on King Cheng's orders to the disquieted regional rulers and people of Shang. He argued that the Zhou are favored by Heaven, are following Heaven's Mandate, just as the Shang's own first king, "Consummate Tang" 成湯 had when the depraved last ruler of the legendary Xia got lax in his duties to the people. As the Zhou had just done, Tang had meted out punishment on behalf of Heaven. Now, the Zhou had resettled many of the Shang families to Luoyi 洛邑, but the people were being unruly and disobedient. The people are warned, if they disobey the king's orders, they will suffer severe punishments and be put to death. He then says, "It is not that we, of Zhou, grasp a *De* that is not peaceable; it is you who have brought these hardships upon yourselves"

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became read as *Lie* 烈, which, although it *also* meant fierce, intense and valorous, is regularly interpreted simply as "brilliant, glorious." One particular person, Liu Sheng 劉生, is referred to as *La* Liu Sheng, who, as described on the late Western Zhou bronze inscription, Liu Sheng *Xu* 劉生盨 (#4459–61), accompanied the king on military expeditions and cut off the heads (*Zhe Shou* 折首) of his enemies. "Valorous" and "valiant" seem more appropriate here. See Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History*, p. 188).

[81] From the "Proclamation of Kang." Ode #255, "Vast" (*Dang* 蕩) also says of the men of Shang, "you do not make bright your *De*" (不明爾德). Vassili Kryukov interprets the heart/mind as the "receptacle of *De*" ("Symbols of Power and Communication in Pre-Confucian China (On the Anthropology of *De*) Preliminary Assumptions," p. 316).

(非我有周秉德不康寧乃惟爾自速辜).[82] The Duke of Zhou was trying to assure the people that the Zhou *ethos* was peaceful, yet cautions that their superiors will not be afraid to admonish them for their *Xiong De* 凶德, "bad dispositions/conduct."

Having *De* which is "not peaceable" or "bad" is a real possibility, as is confirmed in the ode "Magnificent" (*Dang* 蕩), where we find a startling assertion that, regarding the men the Shang tyrant Zhou employed, "Heaven has sent down (to them) incorrigible *De*" (天降慆德). Here it is apparent that *De* denotes the "character" or "disposition" of the cruel, and ostensibly *cursed* men employed by the last ruler of the Shang.[83] Further removed, but perhaps still related, is a passage in the *Analects* of Confucius that records Confucius proclaiming that "Heaven generated the *De* in me" (*Tian Sheng De Yu* 天生德於予).[84] Here, "grace" may also be appropriate, meaning a refined quality, fitness, or even charm. Confucius felt empowered by Heaven and the *De* it gave him gave rise to a certain fearlessness (at least in this particular instance), and "charisma" — in both its original meaning of a "divine gift" and its more usual meaning as the power to influence others (in Confucius' case, this would be *moral* charisma) — is also fitting. As hinted at in a few other passages, Confucius seemed to have seen himself as on a mission sanctioned by Heaven.

Used with *De*, negative or derogative adjectives/modifiers in the *Documents* and *Odes* signal a broadening of the concept and continued to be used throughout the rest of the classical period. *Xiong* 凶, "evil, baleful, inauspicious, faulty," modifies *De* in a number of texts and refers to "inauspicious virtues," or perhaps better, "bad character traits."[85] It is the most common negative modifier used with *De*, but occasionally, others occur, such as *Bao* 暴, "violent, cruel" and *Hun* 昏, "muddled, impaired, chaotic," both used in reference to the legendary tyrant of the Xia Dynasty, Jie 桀,[86] as well as *Shuang* 爽, "flawed."[87] Even positive or laudatory modifiers,

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[82] A similar passage occurs in the "Numerous Knights" (*Duo Shi* 多士): 非我一人奉德不康寧時惟天命無違.

[83] Later in this same ode, *De* is used without any adjectives and connotes *good* character or qualities.

[84] *Lunyu* 7.23.

[85] *Shangshu*, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, *Zhuangzi*, *Lüshi Chunqiu* and the *Xiaojing* 孝經, etc.

[86] The former in "Establishing Government" (*Li Zheng* 立政) chapter of the *Shu*, once believed to be an authentic

like *Ling* 令, "good," often indicate that the opposite is a real possibility.[88] It may be noted that this understanding that a person's *De* might not be good will be problematic for those who want to believe that the meaning of *De* is to be found in the character itself, for example, as a "(morally) upright (直) heart (心)."

Consistency of character (*De*) was a concern for ancient Chinese thinkers. Both King Wen and the ancient ancestress of his family, Jiang Yuan 姜嫄, are said to have had unwavering (*Buhui* 不回) *De*, which suggests that one's *De could* waver.[89] Likewise, the *Changes* talks of "constant/consistent" (*Heng* 恆) and "inconstant/inconsistent" (*Buheng* 不恆) *De*[90] and a woman in the ode "Simple Peasant" (*Mang* 氓, #58) accuses her man of having "erratic/inconsistent" (*Ersan* 二三) *De*. One of the (forged) chapters of the *Documents*, "Each Has Consistent *De*" (*Xian You Yi De* 咸有一德) deals almost exclusively with this topic, relating a story of the Shang king Tang 湯, and his minister-advisor Yi Yin 伊尹. Again, one's *De* can be constant (*Chang* 常) or inconstant (*Feichang* 匪常), and Heaven, being displeased with the last Xia king, Jie, (because, among other things, he was "unable to moderate his *De*" 弗克庸德), looked for those with "unitary" or "consistent" *De* (*Yi De* 一德). Heaven found Tang and Yi Yin,

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Western Zhou text, but probably written in the Springs and Autumns or early Warring States era; the latter in the *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, Duke Xuan (春秋左傳 · 宣公) 3.3 and Duke Xiang 襄公, 13.3 and also the "Proclamation of Zhonghui" (*Zhonghui Zhi Gao* 仲虺之誥), a fourth century C.E. forgery, at least partially based on a Warring States text of that name. That Jie 桀 was believed to be disposed to violence is not surprising, as his name is found in the *Shijing* ode #62, "Bo!" (伯兮) meaning "hero," (more commonly written as 傑), and is cognate to *Jie* 竭, "martial, martial-looking" (Schuessler p. 313).

[87] "Pan Geng" 盤庚 chapter of the *Shu*, where it is implied that not concurring with (*Ji* 暨) and not sharing the same heart/mind (*Tong Xin* 同心) as the ruler is what is meant by having this "flawed *De*." Although *Shuang* can mean "bright," the ancient dictionary *Erya* 爾雅 provides more fitting glosses for *Shuang*, such as *Cha* 差, "mistake, error" and *Te* 忒, "excessive, error." *De* that is *not flawed* (*Bu Shuang* 不爽) is mentioned in the ode "Thick Southernwood" (*Liao Xiao* 蓼蕭, #173), which implies that the opposite is possible.

[88] "Good *De*" (*Ling De* 令德), occurs in odes #173, 174, 218, 249 and in a number of later texts.

[89] "Great Brightness" (*Da Ming* 大明, #236) and "The Closed Temple" (*Bi Gong* 閟宮, #300), respectively. *De Buhui* 德不回 is also found in ode #208 and later in the *Mengzi* 孟子 14.33 (7B33).

[90] Hexagram 32: *Heng* 恆.

"each (who) had consistent *De*" (咸有一德).[91] Having a consistent character and being consistent in one's conduct is a boon to any leader who wishes to obtain the support of his subjects, for one will find this difficult if one is morally or psychologically unreliable and unpredictable.

In the odes "High and Lofty" (*Song Gao* 崧高, #259) and "The Multitudes of People" (*Zheng Min* 烝民, #260), we hear of the *De* of the Elder of Shen (申伯之德) and the *De* of Shanfu, the second-born (仲山甫之德), respectively. The Elder of Shen's *De* is described as "gentle" (*Rou* 柔), "kind" (*Hui* 惠) and "straightforward/just" (*Zhi* 直); Shanfu's *De* as a "pattern of gentleness and pleasantness" (柔嘉維則). In these, as in the example with a negative adjective, *De* — character, nature, comportment — has a *neutral* meaning, for describing someone's *De* as gentle, kind and just implies that the opposite also exists, otherwise there would be no need to explain the nature of a person's *De* (i.e., it would be like saying "his kindness was kind"). Indeed, centuries later the Di 狄 people would be described as having the "*De* of ravenous wolves" (豺狼之德) and the *De* of the crown prince of Wei 衛 was once described as "naturally (disposed to) killing" (*Tiansha* 天殺)."[92]

The lengthy ode "Restrained" (*Yi* 抑, #256), one of the most cited odes by Warring States writers, discloses a number of things regarding *De*. One, as seen earlier, an awe-inspiring demeanor is an aspect of good character, or *De* (威儀維德之隅), which allows one to serve as a "pattern for the people" (民之則). Two, the people will follow and obey (*Shun* 順) one who exemplifies *Dexing* 德行, "virtuous conduct," that is, conduct befitting a person with good character. Three, alcohol abuse undermines (*Dianfu* 顛覆) one's *De* and is often the cause of disorder in the country/state (see below). Four, reciprocity is introduced: there are "no words spoken that are left unanswered, no *De* (act of kindness) that is not repaid" (無言不讎無德不報).

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[91] This portion of the text (惟尹躬暨湯咸有一德), is quoted in the "Black Robes" chapter of the *Liji* (禮記 • 緇衣), which is, in turn, found on both the Guodian and Shanghai bamboo slip versions of the "Black Robes" as 惟伊尹及湯，咸有一德 (said to be from the "Proclamation of Yin," *Yin Gao* 尹誥). Thus, some of this forged chapter existed in the fourth century B.C.E.

[92] *Guoyu*: Zhou *Yu* 國語 • 周語 1.15 and *Zhuangzi* 4, respectively.

And finally, the people will encounter great difficulties if the ruler's *De* is circuitous and perverse (*Huiyu* 回遹).

Jiu 酒, "alcohol,"[93] and *De* have an interesting relationship in early Chinese literature. Similar to "Restrained," the ode "The Guests Begin to Take Their Mats" (*Bin Zhi Chu Yan* 賓之初筵, #220) says that drunkenness (*Zui* 醉) has a detrimental effect on one's *De*, saying that it "assaults/does injury to *De*" (*Fa De* 伐德). The early Zhou rulers are recorded as warning their regional lords against drunkenness, with King Cheng and his son King Kang, the "Peaceful King" (*Kangwang* 康王), claiming it played a significant role in bringing the Shang's rule to an end.[94] In the "Proclamation on Alcohol" (*Jiu Gao* 酒誥), it is written that King Wen had cautioned all those under his command to be moderate in their consumption of alcohol, lest they "extinguish their *De*" (*Sang De* 喪德) and be punished by Heaven. In "Take No Ease" the Duke of Zhou warns his young king against following in the footsteps of Zhou 紂, who was "under the intoxicating *De* of alcohol" (酗于酒德). Rather than being a quality of a human being, *De* here is found to be a quality or property of alcohol, specifically, its potency, power or influence. A variation of this story is mentioned in the Warring States text *Mozi* 墨子, where, because Heaven was "not pleased with his *De*" (不享其德), three spirits drowned Zhou in alcohol's *De* (*Jiu De* 酒德); the first *De* refers to Zhou's character and conduct, the second to the debilitating power of alcohol.[95]

Entering into the Warring States period, the meaning and connotations of *De* further expand, although most often it still refers to a person's character and its manifestation in their conduct. In an exceptional passage in the *Discourse of States* (*Guoyu* 國語) explaining the principle of exogamy, Huang Di 黃帝, the legendary "Yellow Emperor," was "perfected by the waters of the Ji river" (以姬水成) and consequently took the surname Ji. His brother Yan Di 炎

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[93] Usually translated as "wine"; however, it was more of a strong beer, since it was made from grain and not grapes.

[94] King Kang 康王 (1005–978 B.C.E.), warned a certain Yu 盂 about drunkenness, saying it brought about Yin's (Shang's) demise (Da Yu *Ding* 大盂鼎, #2837.s1).

[95] *Mozi* 5.3 (CHANT divisions) "Disavowal of Offensive Warfare" (*Fei Gong* 非攻). Also mentioned in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 16.1: 商王大亂，沈于酒德.

帝, the "Fiery Emperor," was perfected by the waters of the Jiang 姜 river and took that name. These different locales had an effect on their *De*,[96] which became different (*Yi* 異), and resulted in friction and conflict between their families. Accordingly, "If different surnames, then different *De*; if different *De*, then different pedigree"[97] (異姓則異德，異德則異類). Further, "If the same surname, then the same *De*; if the same *De*, then the same *Xin*; if the same *Xin*, then the same *Zhi*" (同姓則同德，同德則同心，同心則同志). *Xin* 心, as we have seen, generally refers to one's heart or mind and overlaps with *Zhi* 志, "intention, purpose," as well as with *De*. The author suggests that those who share the same surname have a similar character, ethos, temperament and similar values, sensitivities, aims, likes and dislikes. For these reasons, the author argues that regardless of how far apart from or near they live to one another, only men and women with a different pedigree, with different surnames, can marry and have children. Marriage between those with the same surname will be disastrous.[98]

That relatives might share the same *De* should not be surprising, for we have already seen Western Zhou aristocrats religiously inscribing on their bronzes pledges to model themselves on their ancestors and their *De*. Children inherit some qualities or traits biologically from their parents, but perhaps most of what becomes their character and ethos is, like language, learned, both implicitly and explicitly.[99] However, like Huang Di and Yan Di, not all brothers or sisters

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[96] The "Water and Earth" (*Shuidi* 水地) chapter of the *Guanzi* 管子 also talks of how rivers help determine the character of the people who live on/around them.

[97] *Lei* 類 (*rus), would normally be glossed as "class, category or type"; however, its Tibetan cognate (*Rus*) means "clan, lineage" (Schuessler p. 347), therefore "pedigree" seems more fitting in this context.

[98] *Guoyu*: Jin *Yu* 國語 • 晉語, part 4.35. This helps explain how, in the "Proclamation at Kang" King Cheng, (through the Duke of Zhou), says to his uncle, Feng, "my *Xin*, my *De* you know" (朕心朕德惟乃知), which may have been because they were from the same family and shared the same ethos, values, etc. Perhaps related is the *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, Duke Xiang (春秋左傳 • 襄公) 29.8, where abandoning those who share the same surname in favor of those who do not is called "separating (from) *De*" (*Li De* 離德).

[99] The recently discovered Guodian text *Xing Ziming Chu* 性自命出 says, "teaching is that which generates *De* within" (教所以生德於中者也). The same passage is found in the newly discovered text *Xing Qing Lun* 性情論, from the Shanghai Museum.

end up with the same *De*. The story above also mentions that, of Huang Di's twenty-five children, only two took his surname, meaning only two had the same *De*.

One of the reasons given to explain why the Zhou were able to defeat the Shang was that the Shang king's armies were "divided in *Xin*, divided in *De*" (離心離德), whereas Zhou King Wu's men were "alike in *Xin* and *De*" (同心同德) or "united in *De* and *Xin*" (一 德 一心).[100] Although not all of King Wu's men had the surname Ji 姬, they acted *as though* they did. Likewise, the author of the "Horse's Hooves" (*Ma Ti* 馬蹄) chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子 imagined a time in ancient history when all people lived in harmony and shared the same *De*, symbolizing a shared character, values, and ethos, what psychologist/philosopher Erich Fromm once called "social character."[101] This social character and ethos is partly what is meant when we find references in Warring States' texts to the "*De* of the Zhou" (周之德), with an accompanying connotation of "legacy" or "prestige," (which by then was "in decline," *Shuai* 衰).

Since at least the Shang Dynasty, sacrifice was extremely important to the Chinese. The Shang kings divined about what the appropriate sacrifices might be and the time they should be carried out. The bronze vessels from both the Shang and Zhou periods were used in sacrificial ceremonies, and both sacrifice and warfare were deemed the "Great Services of the State" (國之大事) by Chunqiu thinkers.[102] But sometime in the Chunqiu period a number of moralistic literati began to argue that the sacrifice itself was less important than the reverent and filial attitude of the sacrificer. That is, the ancestral spirits in Heaven, (or simply Heaven itself), were more interested in the character — the *De* — of the sacrificer. A passage in *Zuoshi's Commentary*

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[100] Found in the *Documents*' *Taishi Zhong* 泰誓中, quoted in the *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* Duke Zhao (春秋左傳 • 昭公) 24.1. The *Taishi Shang* 泰誓上 also mentions King Wu's men being united in their *Xin* (一心), a passage quoted in the *Guanzi*: *Fa Jin* 管子 • 法禁.

[101] *On Disobedience and Other Essays*, Routledge, 1984, pp. 12–15. This social character "is reinforced by all the instruments of influence available to a society — its educational system, its religion, its literature, its songs, its jokes, its customs, and, most of all, its parents' methods of bringing up the children" (p. 13).

[102] *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*: Duke Cheng (春秋左傳 • 成公) 13.2: 國之大事在祀與戎. See Mark Edward Lewis' in-depth discussion of this in *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*.

on the Springs and Autumns Annals (春秋 • 左氏傳), henceforth, the *Zuo Commentary*, combines a number of sayings to this effect:

> The Duke said, "My exquisite sacrifices have been abundant and pure. The spirits will surely embrace me."
>
> (His minister) replied, "I have heard, that, in regards to the spirits, it is not the ruling class[103] they are truly close to, it is only *De* they rely on. Thus, the *Documents of Zhou* say: 'High Heaven lacks partiality, only those with *De* does it assist.' And again: 'It is not the sweet millet sacrifices that are fragrant: shining *De* is what is fragrant.' And again: 'The people do not change the things (used in sacrificial ritual, because) the only thing (of significance) is *De*.' If it is like this, then, if one has no *De*, the people will not live in harmony and the spirits will not be pleased. That which the spirits rely on is only to be found in *De*!"
>
> 公曰:「吾享祀豐絜，神必據我。」對曰:「臣聞之，鬼神非人實親，惟德是依。故《周書》曰:『皇天無親，惟德是輔。』又曰:『黍稷非馨，明德惟馨。』又曰:『民不易物，惟德緊物。』如是，則非德，民不和，神不享矣。神所馮依，將在德矣。[104]

Note that it is not just any type of *De* that impresses the spiritual powers: it is *good De*. It is *De* that has been made to "shine" and is "clearly apparent" (both: *Ming* 明), a *De* that the

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[103] "Ruling class" is my translation of *Ren* 人, following both the sense of the passage as well as Robert Gassmann's argument in his "Understanding Ancient Chinese Society: Approaches to *Rén* 人 and *Mín* 民" in the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 120, no. 3 (July-September 2000), pp. 348–359.

[104] *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, Duke Xi (春秋左傳 • 僖公) 5.8. The first and third of the quotes from the *Documents of Zhou* are now found in forged chapters of the *Shu*: "*Caizhong Zhi Ming*" (蔡仲之命) and the "Lü *Ao*" (旅獒). The middle quote is from the "*Jun* Shi" (君陳). The first passage quoted, (皇天無親，惟德是輔), seems to have been widely known, for in addition to being present here in the *Zuozhuan* and in the forged *Documents* chapter, it is found in the *Guoyu* and, in modified form, the *Chuci* 楚辭 • 離騷, *Laozi*, (and from there, in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子 and *Wenzi* 文子).

spirits above and the people below "cherish" (*Huai* 懷).[105] The "fragrance" of one's *De* speaks to prestige, a reputation for possessing good character, which seems to be intended by the binome *Deyin* 德音, literally, the "sound of *De*," (found in the *Odes* and other texts).[106] If Heaven is pleased with a ruler's *De*, he receives Heavenly blessings (*Tianlu* 天祿) and Heaven's Mandate (*Tianming* 天命) to rule. If the spirits are pleased with the "'nature' of his government" (*Zheng De* 政德), they send down good fortune (*Fu* 福). If they observe wickedness (*Te* 慝), decadence or tyranny, they send down misfortune (*Huo* 禍).[107] *De* thus was declared to be the "foundation of good fortune" (福之基),[108] no doubt to encourage people to develop good, praiseworthy *De*; that is, good character-and-conduct. This seems to be what Heraclitus, over in Greece, meant when he said "ethos/character is the power which determines a person's destiny" (*ēthos anthrōpōi daimōn*).[109]

Much like the metaphorical "fragrance" of *De* mentioned above, music was also understood to be a good indicator of the type of *De* possessed either by the rulers or the people as a whole. Ancient sage-kings were said to have made music to "extend their *De*" (申其德)[110] and Confucius was said to be a good judge of a state, for, "seeing its rites, he could discern its government, hearing its music, he could discern its *De* (見其禮而知其政聞其樂而知其德).[111] Variations of the theme of this passage exist which replace *De* in the phrase with "mores" (*Su* 俗)

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[105] (Good) *De*-character is cherished (*Huai* 懷) in the *Shijing*, ode #241, the *Documents* chapter *Luo Gao* 洛誥, and several other *Documents*' chapters that now exist only as forgeries.

[106] See Nylan (2001), pp. 91–92.

[107] *Guoyu* 1.12. A similar passage occurs in the *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, Duke Zhuang (春秋左傳 • 莊公) 32.3, where *De* is contrasted with *E* 惡: 國之將興，明神降之，監其德也；將亡，神又降之，觀其惡也。.

[108] *Guoyu* 4.73. This passage, and a couple of others in the *Guoyu,* mention that if one enjoys good fortune yet doesn't have good *De*, it is merely luck (*Xing* 幸), and misfortune is surely around the corner.

[109] Fragment 121.

[110] *Shangjunshu*: *Shang Xing* 商君書 • 賞刑. For the author, presumably Shang Yang 商鞅 (c. fourth century B.C.E.), the sage-kings Tang and Wu made music only *after* they defeated their foes on the battlefields.

[111] *Mengzi* 3.2 (2A2). The *Liji* chapter 19 (*Yueji* 樂記) likewise says one can know the *De* of the regional lords by the way they (and their subjects?) danced: 觀其舞，知其德.

and "customs" (*Feng* 風),[112] which help illuminate the semantic space *De* occupies. Mark Edward Lewis writes, "music not only expressed and influenced character and morals, but also preserved a record of their changes over time. The idea that music could transmit the moral character of its composer or his age hinged on the belief that it was uniquely able to reveal the state of a man's mind or temperament."[113]

Not only were the spirits and Heaven impressed and influenced by one's character, but it became increasingly important, and salient, that a ruler's *De* — his character, conduct, prestige — exerted influence over the people. Specifically, a ruler with good or ideal *De* had a *beneficial* influence on others, which in turn garnered their affection and support. Different thinkers had differing ideas of what "beneficial" entailed, but most commonly it manifested as a predilection to have goodwill towards others, to be generous and confer goods or kindness, to show forbearance and mercy, or to have a "nourishing" or empowering effect on others. Max Kaltenmark thus described *De* as "an inner potency that favorably influences those close to its possessor, a virtue that is beneficent and life-giving,"[114] and a few scholars have likewise chosen "virtuous potency" as an English gloss of *De*.[115] The most potent *De* was said to be that which can comfort (*Fu* 撫), pacify (*Sui* 綏), harmonize (*He* 和), calm (*An* 安), transform (*Hua* 化), nourish (*Yang* 養, *Xu* 畜, *Yu* 育), guide (*Dao* 導), and move (*Dong* 動) others.[116] It was through *De* (德: *tək) that one could "get/co-opt" (*De* 得: *tək) and "attract" (*Lai* 來: *rək) the people (*Min* 民, *Ren* 人, *Zhong* 眾), the regional lords (*Zhuhou* 諸侯), or even the whole world

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[112] See *Huainanzi* 9 and *Wenzi* 2.

[113] *Sanctioned Violence in Early China* p. 220, regarding a passage in the *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, Duke Xiang (春秋左傳・襄公) 29.8.

[114] *Lao Tzu and Taoism*, trans. to English by Robert Greaves (Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 28.

[115] Mark Edward Lewis, Randall P. Peerenboom, Rune Svarverud, etc.

[116] "Others" meaning people, although the *Laozi* often used "the myriad living things" (*Wanwu* 萬物) to perhaps signify a broader influence, and the *De* of the great king Tang was claimed to have extended to the wild animals (湯之德及禽獸矣) in the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 10.5, *Shiji* 3 and the newly-excavated *Yijing* commentary Muhe 繆和.

(*Tianxia* 天下).[117] The regional rulers and the people of the world, it was argued, will naturally turn to (*Gui* 歸) a ruler with *De* because people admire (*Hao* 好) and esteem (*Gui* 貴) *De*. These sentiments are found throughout the literature in early China.

This influential or "charismatic" nature of *De* became more pronounced in the Warring States era. For most, this "charisma" was moral in nature, that is, someone whose *De* was marked by moral or ethical excellence had an authoritative presence. Two famous passages in the *Analects* illustrate this. In 12.19, Confucius proclaimed that "The *De* of the *Junzi* (is like) the wind, the *De* of the *Xiaoren* (is like) the grass: when the wind passes over the grass it is sure to bend" (君子之德風小人之德草草上之風必偃).[118] Both the *Junzi*, Confucius' paragon of moral excellence, and the *Xiaoren*, the small or inferior person, have *De*. However, the strength of the *Junzi*'s character overwhelms the weaker character of the *Xiaoren*, who then tends to follow along.[119] The *Junzi* enjoys a kind of moral authority and prestige, which is pointed to in passage

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[117] In all likelihood, this was the origin of the connection between the two homophones, 德 and 得. Combined into a single concept of giving and receiving, of reciprocity: the more one "gives" (德) the more one will get (得), from both the living and the dead. Many texts and authors either define, explain or connect *De* 德 with *De* 得, such as the authors of the pre-Qin era texts *Zhuangzi*, *Guanzi*, *Hanfeizi*, *Liji*, *Heguanzi*; the *Xinshu* and the *Huainanzi* of the Western Han Dynasty; Xu Shen's *Shuowen Jiezi*, Yang Xiong's *Fayan* and Liu Xi's *Shiming* of the Eastern Han Dynasty; Wang Bi's commentary on the *Laozi* in the third century C.E.; and more. This connection is *not* found in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, where, although both 德 and 得 appear on the same bronzes, there is no apparent relationship. This is true also of the *Shi* and *Shu*. Note also that in early inscriptions and texts when a king is said to have received the Mandate of Heaven to rule, (presumably by having illustrious *De*), he does not "obtain" (得) it, but rather "receives" (*Shou* 受) it.

[118] There is the possibility that *Junzi* in this passage does *not* refer to a man of moral excellence, but rather to a member of the aristocracy or ruling family. Examples of this usage of *Junzi* can be found in a number of early texts, including *Lunyu* 17.4 and 17.22. See Chu-yun Hsu's *Ancient China in Transition* (Stanford University Press, 1985 [1965]), pp. 158–174. If this is the case in 12.19, then Confucius could be claiming that noble birth implies noble character. This saying is also attributed to Confucius in *Mengzi* 5.2 (3A2). *Lunyu* 9.14 similarly says, "Were a *Junzi* to live among them (the "uncivilized" Yi 夷 tribes), what crudeness could there be?" (君子居之，何陋之有?)

[119] In chapter 4 of the *Zhuangzi*, Jie Yu 接輿, the so-called "Madman of Chu," encourages Confucius to *stop* using his *De*-character to deal with others, seemingly because he felt that Confucius was trying to coerce or shame people into compliance by making a show of his own virtuousness and felt that this strategy would backfire.

2.1: "Governing by means of *De* is like (being) the North Star: it maintains its place and the countless stars join in honoring it" (為政以德譬如北辰居其所而眾星共之). This conception of *De* is that of a kind of power that fosters admiration, emulation and sometimes feelings of elevation. Having said this, however, Confucius and his followers did not believe that absolutely everyone exposed to one with *De* would be influenced. They understood that circumstances — the right time (*Shi* 時) — played a big role.[120]

Arthur Waley, in his translation of the *Analects*, often used "moral force" as a gloss of *De*, to contrast with physical force. The Confucian literati believed that using one's *De* in dealing with others would be more successful than using *Li* 力, "physical force," or rewards and punishments (*Shangfa* 賞罰),[121] an argument for soft power and moral suasion found in a number of Confucian texts. For example, Mengzi argued that people willingly submit (*Fu* 服) to those who demonstrate moral excellence or moral authority (*De* 德), but not to physical coercion or coercive authority (*Li* 力), which only makes people *reluctantly* capitulate or comply. Xunzi claimed that the *Junzi* uses *De*, but the *Xiaoren* uses *Li*. He also makes an argument for the virtue of using *De* rather than using *Li* or wealth (*Fu* 富),[122] which anticipates Joseph Nye's conception of "soft power."[123] Their mentor Confucius made a similar argument, but instead of using *Li* 力 to contrast with *De*, he used *Zheng* 政, which here means something like "coercive regulations."[124]

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[120] This is well explained in the Han Dynasty text *Hanshi Waizhuan* 韓詩外傳 7.6.

[121] Cf. *Lüshi Chunqiu* 19.3 (*Shangde* 上德), where governing by means of *De* and *Yi* 義, "duty, morality," makes rewards and punishments redundant and was the means the legendary Emperor Shun once used to make the San Miao tribe submit.

[122] *Mengzi* 3.3 (2A3), *Xunzi* 10 and *Xunzi* 15.

[123] Nye writes, "there are several different ways to affect the behaviour of others. You can coerce them with threats; you can induce them with payments; or you can attract and co-opt them to want what you want" (*Soft Power,* p. 2). In Xunzi's case, one can co-opt others through moral authority and the alleged attractiveness of the Confucian vision. Cf. notes 64 and 65.

[124] *Lunyu* 2.3. A nearly identical passage occurs in the *Ziyi* 緇衣, the 34th chapter of the *Liji*, but also found among the excavated texts from Guodian and one recently obtained by the museum in Shanghai. The *Wenzi* 文子 (c. third

Confucius *did* contrast *De* and *Li* in the *Analects* 14.33. As above, the main reason for comparing these terms is semantic, but it is also a trope, as they rhymed, (as did *Fu* 富: *pəkh, in the aforementioned *Xunzi* passage). In 14.33, Confucius said, "The *Ji*-horse is not praised for its *Li* (*rək), it is praised for its *De* (*tək)" (驥不稱其力稱其德也). As many translators have pointed out, *De* here is certainly not moral force or Virtue, but "character." More to the point, *De* is "inner strength" as compared to physical, or "outer" strength. The *Ji* horse was renowned for being able to run extremely long distances,[125] requiring stamina, endurance and fortitude, character traits not unlike those needed by the earlier warrior aristocracy. In attributing *De* to a horse, this passage is remarkable, particularly for Confucius (or his disciples). It's conceivable Confucius thought of the *Ji*-horse's *De* as the result of considerable discipline and training, not unlike that needed to attain moral (or martial) excellence in human beings; nevertheless, as we will see, *De* as an inner strength or power became accredited to an increasing number of non-human things in the Warring States, Qin (秦, 221–206 B.C.E.) and Han Dynasties.

Not all thinkers in ancient China interpreted the attractive or influential power of *De* as being based on moral excellence/authority or beneficence. Other types of excellence and other qualities can be attractive to others and influence them. In "Ample Signs of *De*" (*De Chong Fu* 德充符) (c. late fourth century B.C.E.?), the fifth chapter of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子, the unsightly Aitai Tuo 哀駘它 had an unexpected magnetism about him such that both men and women wanted to be around him. His word was trusted before he said anything; he lacked merit and accomplishments but was well-liked. He simply possessed an inviolable inner calm: the usual worries and concerns "were insufficient to disrupt his inner harmony" (不足以滑和). The text defines *De* as the condition of possessing "complete/perfect (inner) harmony" (*Chenghe* 成和).[126] A tranquil disposition and inner calm was a virtue for Zhuangzi which is best kept intact

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century C.E.?), chapter 4 also makes this point. Mozi, in chapter 7, similarly contrasts those who ruled with force (力) and those who ruled with righteousness (*Yi* 義), connecting the former to "Heaven's assailants" (*Tian Zei* 天賊) and the latter to "Heaven's benefactors" (*Tian De* 天德). "Coercive regulations" is Edward Slingerland's gloss in his translation of the *Analects*, p. 8.

[125] See the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋 21.6 and the *Shuowen Jiezi*.

[126] *Zhuangzi* 5: "*De* is maintenance/cultivation of complete (inner) harmony" (德者成和之脩也).

(*Quan* 全), therefore it is fitting that *De*, a word denoting excellence of some sort, would carry this meaning in the book bearing his name.[127]

This inner calm could not be discerned from looking at Aitai Tuo's physical form, hence, the text says his "*De* does not take (visible) shape" (*De Buxing* 德不形) and is similar to what the *Laozi* 老子 calls "subtle *De*" (*Xuan De* 玄德).[128] This and other similar stories in the *Zhuangzi* represent an "attack" on the common belief that "sageliness" is apparent in one's appearance.

Having actual effects in the outer world (e.g., Aitai Tuo's personal magnetism and presence), *De* could be understood as a kind of "Power," a translation adopted by Arthur Waley, Angus Graham and others in their translations of the *Zhuangzi* (and some other texts). This powerful presence seems to parallel the Tibetan concept *Dbang Thang*, literally "field of power," but which Chögyam Trungpa has called "authentic presence."[129] In addition, in the face of adversity, this inner calm or equanimity is tantamount to inner strength, the valued trait in both warriors and some animals, such as the *Ji*-horse mentioned in the *Analects* as well as a fighting cock in *Zhuangzi* 19.

Both inner calm and inner strength are underscored in a number of passages in the *Zhuangzi* that mention *De*:

> To succeed or not succeed and yet come away lacking anxiety, only one who has *De* can do this.
>
> 若成若不成而後无患者唯有德者能之。[130]

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[127] As far as I know, no one has identified or addressed this connection.

[128] *Laozi Daodejing* 老子道德經 10 and 51.

[129] *Shambhala: The Sacred Path of the Warrior*, edited by Carolyn Rose Gimian (Bantam Books, 1986 [1984]), p. 131. Trungpa writes it as *Wangthang*.

[130] *Zhuangzi* 4.

> In the affairs of one's own heart, when sorrow and joy do not easily come to the fore, to know that one cannot do anything but acquiesce to one's fate, this is the ultimate in *De*.
>
> 自事其心者哀樂不易施乎前知不可奈何而安之若命德之至也。[131]

And finally, chapter 15, "Ingrained Convictions" (*Keyi* 刻意), reveals that the *De* of a sage is characterized by the condition of serenity or equanimity (*Danran* 澹然) and kept intact when "anxieties cannot enter" (憂患不能入). Thus is it said:

> Sorrow and joy are defects of *De* … likes and dislikes are deficiencies of *De*. Therefore, the heart-mind lacking anxieties and indulgences represents the ultimate in *De*.
>
> 悲樂者德之邪 ... 好惡者德之失。故心不憂樂德之至也。[132]

The *Laozi* 老子 (c. mid-fourth to mid-third centuries B.C.E.), using its own distinctive symbolism, completely reverses (*Fan* 反) the traditional model of emulating one's ancestors, former kings and exemplary individuals when a person with *De* is compared to a newborn infant:

> One who harbors an abundance of *De* can be compared with a newborn infant.
> Wasps, scorpions and poisonous snakes do not sting or bite it,
> Fierce beasts do not seize it, nor do birds of prey pounce upon it.
>
> 含德之厚者比於赤子蜂蠆虺蛇不螫猛獸不據攫鳥不搏。[133]

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[131] *Zhuangzi* 4. The part about sorrow and joy is also found in *Zhuangzi* 3 and 6 (but without mentioning *De*). The part about remaining calm in accepting our fate is also found in *Zhuangzi* 5 (but finishes with "only one who has *De* can do that" (唯有德者能之).

[132] There are very close parallels to this passage in chapter 1 of both the *Huainanzi* and *Wenzi*. See pp. 111–113 of Lau and Ames' *Yuan Dao*: *Tracing Dao to Its Source*.

[133] *Laozi* 55. The 23rd chapter of the *Zhuangzi* refers to this connection as well.

Infants exhibit such a pacifying presence or charm that nothing is threatened by them nor bears malice towards them, (which should not to be taken too literally, since carnivores do indeed prey on the young and defenseless). This occurs similarly in a good ruler, who, by means of his *De* wins the support of the people. We have already seen that *De* is said to pacify or comfort (*Sui* 綏) the feudal lords and comfort (*Fu* 撫) and harmonize (*He* 和) the people. The infant does this, not by its beneficence or moral authority, but by its calm demeanor and innocent non-contentiousness.[134] Furthermore, infants have the natural power to influence adults. Their needs are attended to immediately and instinctively. Their smiling and crying can be understood to be the infant's way of "controlling" others, most notably their mothers, but this is not done in a conniving way. It is difficult to ignore or even bear malice to an infant. This ability is not practiced or cultivated; it is just naturally so (*Ziran* 自然). The author goes on to disclose that the newborn also contains a high level of potency (*Jing* 精) as well as (inner) harmony (*He* 和).

Authors of the *Laozi* speak often of the influence of an ideal ruler who can emulate/abide by/preserve (*Shou* 守) the *Dao*, whereby a myriad of living things naturally and automatically defer (*Zibin* 自賓) and transform or evolve of themselves (*Zihua* 自化).[135] Chapter 57, professing to be the words of a sage, says,

> I do nothing, yet the people transform themselves.
> I am disposed toward tranquility, yet the people are self-correcting.
> I lack involvement in affairs, yet the people enrich themselves.
> I desire to not be desirous, and the people are simple of themselves.

[134] Chapter 68 of the *Laozi* endorses the "virtue/disposition of non-contention" (*Buzheng Zhi De* 不爭之德), assuring us that "Those who are good at conquering their enemies do not (need to) engage them" (善勝敵者不與).

[135] *Laozi* 32 and 37 respectively. A passage in chapter 12 of the *Zhuangzi* says that all the myriad things follow (*Cong* 從) one with "regal *De*" (*Wangde* 王德).

我無為而民自化。我好靜而民自正。我無事而民自富。我欲不欲而民自樸。[136]

Although *De* is not mentioned in these passages, they correspond to the influential and transformative power associated with *De* in other texts.[137] The sage doesn't take any steps to change people but rather concentrates on his own person and conduct, something Confucians also emphasized.[138] This correlates with Han Dynasty terms like the "transforming power of *De*" (*Dehua* 德化) and the "spirit-like transforming power" (*Shenhua* 神化).[139] Moreover, being tranquil (*Jing* 靜) and not desirous (*Buyu* 不欲) compare to the inner calm associated with *De* in the *Zhuangzi*. As Philip Ivanhoe affirmed, "*De* is the 'power' or 'virtue' that accrues to those who attain a peaceful, tenuous, and still state of mind."[140]

One more thing worthy of note is that in the aforementioned passages of the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, *De* is *not* inherent in all things. That is, they can be lacking in *De* (*Wu De* 無德). When the *Zhuangzi* says "only one with *De* can do it," it is obvious that there are those who do not have *De* and cannot do it. One's *De* can be intact (*Quan* 全), or not. One with an "abundance

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[136] "Do nothing" is *Wuwei* 無為, with *Wei* 為 here denoting deliberate action intended to effect changes in others, perhaps best understood as "interference." The last line in the Wangbi received text begins with "I lack desire" (我無欲).

[137] Philip J. Ivanhoe goes into more detail in his "The Concept of *de* ("Virtue") in the *Laozi*."

[138] The *Analects* of Confucius contain similar statements about the effects a person's character, likes and dislikes and desires have on others. See *Lunyu* 8.2, 9.14, 12.17, 12.18, 12.19 and 13.6. See also *Mengzi* 7.20 (4A20) and 13.29 (7A19). The Confucian-Legalist *Fa Fa* 法法 chapter of the *Guanzi* (CHANT 6.1) explains this influential power a little differently: "When the people follow the sovereign, they never follow merely what his mouth says but what he really likes. If the sovereign likes bravery, the people will not be afraid of death. If the sovereign likes goodness (仁), the people will not be concerned with wealth. Therefore, what the sovereign likes the people are bound to like even more" (民從上也，不從口之所言，從情之所好者也。上好勇則民輕死，上好仁則民輕財，故上之所好，民必甚焉。) (Rickett, vol. I, p. 265). Stories similar to this are also found in the *Mozi* and *Hanfeizi*.

[139] *Dehua* appears in the *Hanfeizi*, *Shiji* 史記, *Yantie Lun* 鹽鐵論, and the *Lun Heng* 論衡; *Shenhua*, or near identical equivalents, appear in the *Huainanzi*, *Wenzi* and *Heguanzi* 鶡冠子.

[140] Ivanhoe (1999), p. 249. Harold Roth also describes *De* ("inner power") as "a highly concentrated and tranquil state of mind" (*Original Tao*, Columbia University Press, 1999, p. 104).

of *De*" can be contrasted with one *without* an abundance of *De*, and likewise, only rulers who can "abide by" the *Dao* — and exhibit *De* — have the profound influence mentioned. If they do not, this transformative power is absent. Nevertheless, we shall see later that there *are* uses of *De* in a number of texts that explicitly say that anything which is alive has *De*.

Whether the influential and attractive power of moral excellence or an inner calm, Shang Yang 商鞅 (or Wei Yang 衛鞅) (c. fourth century B.C.E.) had little use for it. For him, *De* referred to a general "good conduct," or perhaps more precisely, "law-abiding conduct." He believed that the only way to make the people "good," was by law (*Fa* 法), and a system of rewards and punishments (*Shang* 賞 and *Xing* 刑/*Fa* 罰). Observing the times, the Warring States era, during which the regional rulers seemingly all ruled by force and contended with one another, he felt the only way to survive and prosper was to turn the state into a massive military machine, where warfare and agriculture (to feed the army) dwarfed all other concerns. Anything that interfered with this was condemned. Teaching morality and the cultural arts were distractions to be avoided. One could not make the people "good" by ostentatious arguments or by being good to them.[141]

With regard to punishments, he preferred "severe punishments" (*Yanxing* 嚴刑), and that the number of punishments be far greater than the number of rewards. Additionally, only military merit was to be grounds for titles and rewards. He thus argued that "punishments create coercive force, coercive force creates strength, strength creates intimidation, intimidation creates *De*; (thus) *De* is created by punishment" (刑生力，力生彊，彊生威，威生德，德生於刑).[142] The idea is clearly to coerce, force and/or scare people into behaving. This idea was not particularly new, as the use of rewards and punishments to bring about acceptable behavior had been practiced for many centuries. What *was* noteworthy was that the prominent Chinese thinkers were trying to

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[141] For example, in *Shangjunshu* 商君書 18 we find, "The benevolent can be benevolent to people, but cannot cause people to be benevolent; the righteous can be loving toward the people, but cannot cause them to be loving. For this reason we know that benevolence and righteousness are insufficient as means to govern the world" (仁者能仁於人，而不能使人仁；義者能愛於人，而不能使人愛。是以知仁義之不足以治天下也。). A somewhat similar argument is made in chapter 9.

[142] *Shangjunshu* 5. Variants of this exist in other chapters.

move away from coercive measures, and Shang Yang's (extremely harsh) methods were contrary to this new trend. As the Han Dynasty's *Huainanzi* 淮南子 puts it, decreasing rewards (德) and increasing punishments (刑) is "no different than trying to attract a bird while grasping a slingshot or befriend a dog while waving a stick at it."[143]

His method worked, however, as his (adopted) state of Qin was the last state standing, but such tight and ruthless control not surprisingly generated much resentment and ill-will (*Yuan* 怨, as opposed to goodwill and gratitude: *De* 德). "Abandoning *De* and relying on *Li*" (廢德而任力),[144] he was able to change people's behavior, but as the Confucians predicted, not their hearts.[145] The Qin Dynasty was short-lived and, in fact, as the *Historical Records* tell it, the rebellion that led to the downfall of the Qin Dynasty was due to this fear of severe punishment.[146]

The relationship between *De* and "punishment" has a long history. A story of the early Shang king Pan Geng 盤庚 tells of his attempt to persuade the people to follow him to a new settlement, and contrasts "criminal conduct" (*Zui* 罪) and "good conduct" (德), saying the former will be punished by death, the latter will be praised. He also promises not to use "incorrect *De*" (*Fei De* 非德) or "incorrect punishments" (*Fei Fa* 非罰), where *De* seems to signify "benefaction." As was said (in many texts) about benefits (*Lize* 利澤), favors/kindness (*Hui* 惠) and rewards (*Shang* 賞), *De* can be "bestowed/distributed" (*Shi* 施) or "spread out" (*Bu* 布). Earlier in his speech, Pan Geng argued that if the regional leaders can "bestow tangible *De* upon the people" (施實德于民), they will "accumulate *De*" (*Ji De* 積德), meaning, they will accumulate merit, goodwill and gratitude from the people, all words that often underlie the notion of *De*.[147]

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[143] *Huainanzi* 9: 削薄其德，曾累其刑，而欲以為治，无以異於執彈而來鳥，揮棁而狎犬也，亂乃逾甚。.

[144] *Discourse on Salt and Iron* (*Yantie Lun* 鹽鐵論), chapter 7 (*Fei* Yang 非鞅).

[145] See *Lunyu* 2.3, *Mengzi* 3.3 (2A3), *Liji* 34.3 (*Ziyi*).

[146] *Shiji* 48. The history books are, of course, written by the victors, so the *Shiji*'s account is likely to be biased.

[147] "Pan Geng" 盤庚 chapter of the *Documents*, written perhaps in the *Chunqiu* period. See Nylan, p. 134 (as well as her note on this).

In the *Documents* chapter "Lü's Punishments" (*Lü Xing* 呂刑), punishment is portrayed as necessary but prone to abuse and excess. It is declared that punishments should be just and moderate (*Zhong* 中), thereby teaching "a respect for *De*" (祗德). In *Zuo*'s *Commentary*, it is suggested that *De* (beneficence, forbearance, moral authority) should be used to subdue the (civilized people of the) Central States, but *Xing* (刑) should be used to intimidate the uncivilized outsiders.[148] We also find, "*De* lies in bestowing favors, *Xing* lies in rectifying infractions" (德以施惠刑以正邪).[149] This latter example is one of the first places we find *De* and *Xing* contrasted, much as the more common pair of *Shang* 賞 and *Fa* 罰 were. Han Fei 韓非 (c. mid-third century B.C.E.), following Shang Yang (and others), saw rewards and punishments as the "Two Handles" of power (*Er Bing* 二柄) and sometimes used *De* and *Xing* as the terms for them.

> The Two Handles are *Xing* and *De*. What are *Xing* and *De*? To mutilate and execute is called *Xing*. To congratulate and reward is called *De*.
> 二柄者刑、德也何謂刑德曰殺戮之謂刑慶賞之謂德。[150]

Sometime around the beginning of the third century B.C.E. specialists well versed in astronomy-astrology, agriculture and meteorology began to recommend that many government activities should accord precisely with the seasons. These specialists seem to be what historian Sima Tan 司馬談 had in mind when describing a "school of thought" he called *Yinyangjia* 陰陽家.[151] In texts like the "Four Seasons" (*Sishi* 四時) chapter of the *Guanzi* 管子, *Xing* and *De* were to be exercised at particular times of the year. It states, "When *Xing* and *De* are united with the seasons, good fortune is generated; (when they are distributed) unpredictably and capriciously, misfortune is generated" (刑德合於時則生福詭則生禍). The text goes on to say,

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[148] *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, Duke Xi (春秋左傳 • 僖公) 25.2: 德以柔中國，刑以威四夷.

[149] *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*, Duke Cheng (春秋左傳 • 成公) 16.5.

[150] *Hanfeizi* 7: "Two Handles" (*Er Bing* 二柄).Cf. the *Shuoyuan*'s 說苑 "two devices" (*Er Ji* 二機).

[151] *Shiji* 史記 130.

> *De* begins in spring and continues into the summer. *Xing* begins in autumn and spreads into winter. (When this balance between) *Xing* and *De* is not lost, the four seasons are as one. (When this balance between) *Xing* and *De* depart from their places, the seasons will move contrary (to the norm).
>
> 德始於春長於夏；刑始於秋流於冬。刑德不失四時如一。刑德離鄉時乃逆行。[152]

Distributing rewards and favors (*De*) were to be among the things done in the spring and summer, as well as things that are generally supportive to life. These activities correspond to increasing warmth in spring and then the summer heat that is empowering, invigorating, vitalizing and beneficial to all living things. This was due to the sun (*Ri* 日), when the "life-enhancing" or "benefic" force/energy (*Shengqi* 生氣) manifests, corresponding to the *Yang* 陽 phase or force. As its complementary opposite, *Xing* corresponded to the period of dormancy, enervation, devitalization, or torpidity: a process which happens with the increasing cold of autumn and winter, the arising of the *Yin* 陰 force on Earth, when the "killing" or "malefic" force/energy (*Shaqi* 殺氣) began to increase in strength. This was believed to be due to the influence of the moon (*Yue* 月). Accordingly, autumn and winter were the time for punishments and executions. To do otherwise would be to "go counter to the Way of Nature" (*Ni Tiandao* 逆天道), and natural disasters would be sure to follow. The *Yellow Emperor's Four Canons* (*Huangdi Sijing* 黃帝四經),[153] the *Huainanzi* (淮南子), the *Luxuriant Dew of the Springs and Autumns* (*Chunqiu Fanlu* 春秋繁露), and the Grandee Secretary in the *Discourse on Salt and Iron* (*Yantielun* 鹽鐵論) from the first half of the Han Dynasty all affirmed this worldview.[154]

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[152] Cf. Rickett (1998), pp. 116–117.

[153] I use the name *Huangdi Sijing* for convenience: it is by no means proven that the four texts found at Mawangdui 馬王堆 are those called *Huangdi Sijing* in Ban Gu's 班固 bibliography section of the *Han Shu* 漢書.

[154] See, for example, *Huangdi Sijing*: *Jing* 經: *Guan* 觀 and *Xingzheng* 姓爭, *Huainanzi* 3: *Tianwen* 天文, the *Chunqiu Fanlu*'s *Wangdao Tongsan* 王道通三 (CHANT chapter 11.4), and the "Correspondences to the Four Seasons," *Sishi Zhi Fu* 四時之副 (CHANT chapter 13.1) as well as the *Yantielun*'s "Discourse on Calamities" (*Lunzai* 論菑), chapter 54.

Not only were *De* and *Xing* emblematic of government activities, but they came to be seen as forces of Nature or "cosmic powers"[155]: "Spring and summer are/produce *De*, autumn and winter are/produce *Xing* (春夏為德秋冬為刑)."[156] The *Guanzi*'s "Four Seasons," the *Huangdi Sijing*'s "Contending Surnames" (*Xingzheng* 姓爭), the *Huainanzi*'s "Celestial Patterns" (*Tianwen* 天文) and the *Chunqiu Fanlu*'s "The Kingly Way Penetrates Three" (*Wangdao Tongsan* 王道通三) all state that *Yang* is/produces *De* and *Yin* is/produces *Xing*. John S. Major has suggested "accretion" as an English definition of *De* in this context, signifying the gradual (biological) growth which occurs in the spring and summer months and "recision" for *Xing*, denoting the rescinding or retracting of flourishing life in the autumn and winter months.[157] Two rare but appropriate words — *benefic* and *malefic* — are probably better terms to translate *De* and *Xing* in these contexts. These are words, sometimes used in astrology, usually in regard to the effect certain planets have on living things, with benefic implying "beneficial" and malefic, "baneful" or "deleterious."[158] In "Contending Surnames" there is mention of Heaven's *De* (*Tiande* 天德) and Heaven's *Xing* (*Tianxing* 天刑), which are mutually supporting (*Xiangyang* 相養), and, later, the "The Kingly Way Penetrates Three" again connects these two with *Yang* and *Yin*, (in the process betraying a bias toward *Yang*):

> *Yang* is Heaven's benefic power (德), *Yin* is Heaven's malefic power (刑); the *Yang* force is warm and the *Yin* force is cold; the *Yang* force gives and the *Yin* force takes away; the *Yang* force is benevolent and the *Yin* force is malevolent;

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[155] Robin S. Yates, *Five Lost Classics* (Ballantine Books, 1997), p. 27.

[156] *Huangdi Sijing*: *Jing* 經: *Guan* 觀.

[157] "The Meaning of Hsing-te," p. 286. Cf. *Heaven and Earth in Early Han Thought* (SUNY Press, 1993), p. 88.

[158] "benefic" Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford University Press.
http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/benefic (accessed October 19, 2012).
"malefic" Oxford Dictionaries. April 2010. Oxford University Press.
http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/malefic (accessed October 19, 2012).
Merriam-Webster's Word of the Day: http://www.merriam-webster.com/cgi-bin/mwwodarch.pl?Feb.26.2008

> the *Yang* force is relaxed and the *Yin* force is tense; the *Yang* force is loved and the *Yin* force is despised; the *Yang* force gives life and the *Yin* force exterminates life.
>
> 陽，天之德，陰，天之刑也，陽氣暖而陰氣寒，陽氣予而陰氣奪，陽氣仁而陰氣戾，陽氣寬而陰氣急，陽氣愛而陰氣惡，陽氣生而陰氣殺。

The third century B.C.E. also saw the rise of *Xing* and *De* being used in hemerological divination. In the *Xingde* texts excavated from Mawangdui and dated no later than the early Han, Marc Kalinowski has explained that *Xing* and *De* "are among a multitude of calendrical spirits … whose functions are always to confer auspicious or inauspicious qualities on some division or another of space and time."[159] These "rest on arithmetic principles that underlie sexegenary [*Ganzhi* 干支] hemerology,"[160] unlike in "Celestial Patterns," the third chapter of the *Huainanzi*, which describes their cyclical movements in relation to the sun throughout the year, lodging in "seven dwellings" (*Qi She* 七舍), akin to the natural forces or powers *Yin* and *Yang*.

Also in these types of texts, *De* referred to an (or *the*) inherent power of certain things. For example, in the "Four Seasons" chapter of the *Guanzi* we learn about the inherent power of the stars (*Xing De* 星德) in spring, the inherent power of the sun (*Ri De* 日德) in the summer, the inherent power of the planets[161] (*Chen De* 辰德) in the autumn, the inherent power of the moon (*Yue De* 月德) in the winter, and the inherent power of the earth (*Tu De* 土德), which assists the four seasons. In chapter 19 of *Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Lüshi Chunqiu* 呂氏春秋), wind is the inherent power or characteristic of spring (春之德), heat is the inherent characteristic of summer (夏之德), rain is the inherent characteristic of autumn (秋之德), and cold is the inherent characteristic of winter (冬之德). The five stages of change (*Wuxing* 五行)

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[159] "The *Xingde* 刑德 Texts From Mawangdui" in *Early China* 23–24, The Society of the Study of Early China and the Institute of East Asian Studies, 1998–99, p. 157. Translated by Phyllis Brooks.

[160] Ibid. p. 157 n75.

[161] Following W. Allyn Rickett's interpretation, p. 114.

of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water (木, 火, 土, 金, 水) were sometimes referred to as "Powers" (德), or the "Five Powers" (*Wude* 五德).[162] Here again, *De* and the Latin *Virtus* cross paths, as *Virtus*'s meaning around the third century B.C.E. broadened, likely under the influence of the Greek concept of *Aretê*, to refer to the (inner) power, strength or potency of various "things" (including human beings).[163] And, finally, by the early Han Dynasty the *De* — virtue, inner power, nature, characteristics — of things such as milfoil (*Shi* 蓍), jade (*Yu* 玉), oxen/buffalo (*Niu* 牛), chickens/roosters (*Ji* 雞), ravenous wolves (*Chailang* 豺狼), and others were all mentioned in various texts.

The *Laozi* uses *De* in a number of ways. One way, which seems not to have been recognized by many, is that of a *benefic power*. Rather than associated with the seasons of spring and summer, it is the benefic power of *Dao* 道, the Way of Nature:

> *Dao* gives birth to things
> (Its) *De* rears them, develops them, nourishes them …
> It gives birth yet does not possess them,
> It acts yet does not cater to them,
> It fosters their growth yet does not rule them,
> This is called (its) subtle *De*.
>
> 道生之德畜之長之育之…生而不有也為而不恃也長而不宰也此之謂玄德。[164]

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[162] Cf. *Lüshi Chunqiu* chapters 1–10 and *Huainanzi* 5 (e.g., 盛德在木, 盛德在火, etc.), *Shiji* 28 (e.g., 土德, 木德, 金德, etc.), *Shiji* 6 and 74 (五德) (the theory of which was attributed to Zou Yan 騶衍, c. early third century B.C.E.). In the *Lüshi Chunqiu* 13.3 these "five stages of change" were identified as *Qi* 氣, "forces, energies," i.e., 土氣, 木氣, 金氣, 火氣 and 水氣.

[163] See Myles Anthony McDonnell's *Roman Manliness: "Virtus" and the Roman Republic*, esp. pp. 74–75. Another Greek word, *dunamis*, meaning inherent power, force, ability and capacity also overlaps with *De* in these contexts.

[164] *Laozi* 51. Cf. *Laozi* 10. Variations on the middle part are found in *Laozi* 2 and 77, *Zhuangzi* 19, *Huainanzi* 1 and *Wenzi* 1. An alternate reading of 為而不恃, following Heshang Gong's interpretation, would yield "it acts yet does not rely (on remuneration)." Speaking of the *Dao*, *Wenzi* 1 says: "It gives life to things, but does not possess them; it

De is a power of the *Dao*, a power supportive of life. Referred to elsewhere in the *Laozi* as the metaphorical "mother" (*Mu* 母) of the myriads of living things, the *Dao* has a supportive and nurturing role in the world.[165] Whether drawing on *De*'s earlier connotations of beneficence and rewards, or on the nurturance children receive from their parents (see below), the *Laozi*'s authors used *De* as the term to refer to what Harold Roth calls the "nurturing aspect" of the *Dao*.[166] "Subtle *De*" (*Xuande* 玄德) thus seems like an unpretentious and disinterested act of (cosmic) generosity or beneficial force. Although naturally admired/valued (*Gui* 貴) by all things, it goes largely unnoticed: it is unseen, dark, obscure (*Xuan* 玄).

Laozi 34 says of the *Dao*: "the myriad living things rely on it for life" (萬物恃之以生),[167] and chapter 39 contains "the myriad things obtain the One in order to live" (萬物得一以生).[168] The "One" is often regarded as a name or nickname for the *Dao*,[169] but in the Heshanggong 河上公 commentary to *Laozi* 51, the author says that "*De* is the One" (德一也), and this makes sense in this chapter, where it says that Heaven, Earth, spirits, valleys, the myriad living things and rulers all by attaining the One — the benefic power of the *Dao* (*De* 德) — realize their potential and manifest their character/excellences.

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completes and transforms them, but does not rule them. The myriad things rely on it and live, yet none know its *De*-beneficence, they rely on it and die, yet none can feel resentful" (生物而不有，成化而不宰，萬物恃之而生，莫知其德，恃之而死，莫之能怨) (a variation of this also occurs in *Huainanzi* 1).

[165] "Mother" is the metaphorical label for the *Dao* in chapters 1, 20, 25, and 52. The *Shijing*'s ode #202, "Thick Tarragon" (*Liao E* 蓼莪), is a lament of the misfortune the author suffers. He/she is ashamed that he/she cannot requite his/her parents' kindness/beneficence (德), who similarly reared (*Xu* 畜), developed (*Chang* 長) and nourished (*Yu* 育) him/her.

[166] *Original Tao* (1999), p. 145.

[167] This passage is missing from some versions, such as both Mawangdui texts. See note 164 for this passage in the *Wenzi*.

[168] This passage is missing from some versions, such as both Mawangdui texts. Rudolf G. Wagner argues it wasn't in the *Laozi* text that Wang Bi 王弼 commented on either (*A Chinese Reading of the Daodejing*, SUNY Press, 2003, p. 466).

[169] For example, the *Huangdi Sijing*: *Daoyuan* (黃帝四經 · 道原) says that "the myriad things obtain it (*Dao*) in order to live" (萬物得之以生) and later says that "One" is its (*Dao*'s) nickname (*Hao* 號).

In the first quarter of the Han Dynasty, Jia Yi 賈誼 wrote: "that which is obtained in order to live, (we) call *De*" (所得以生謂之德), that "*De* is the beneficence of the *Dao*" (德者道之澤也) and also that the loftiness of *De* is apparent in that of things, "there are none who do not rely on *De*" (莫不仰恃德).[170] The twelfth chapter of the *Zhuangzi*, "Heaven and Earth" (*Tiandi* 天地), makes a similar point:

> In the Great Beginning there was nothing; nothing existed, nothing (that could be) named. The One arose; there was the One yet it had not yet taken shape. Things obtained it in order to live, (we) call it *De*.
> 泰初有无无有无名一之所起有一而未形物得以生謂之德。

Finally, another early Han (?) text, the "Techniques of the Mind I" (*Xinshu Shang* 心術上) chapter of the *Guanzi*, tries to explain the function of *De* and its relation to *Dao*:

> Statement 7: "What is vacuous and formless, (we) call *Dao*. What transforms and nourishes the myriad things, (we) call *De*." (虛而無形謂之道化育萬物謂之德。)
>
> Explanation 7: "*De* is the lodging place of the *Dao*; things obtain it in order to live … Thus, *De* is an obtainment. As an obtainment, it refers to that which is obtained in order for (things) to be what they are." (德者道之舍物得以生 … 故德者得也得也者其謂所得以然也。)[171]

As is plain to see in these passages, *De* does not refer to personal character or ethos, (virtuous or not), nor does it refer to moral force or an inner state of calm and tranquility. As something which is a salutary, pro-life potency or power, it relates mostly to the use of *De* as a

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[170] *Xinshu*: *Daode Shuo* (新書 · 道德說) (CHANT chapter 8.5).

[171] Following the translation by W. Allyn Rickett (1998) pp. 72 and 77. The related "Inner Workings" (*Neiye* 內業) chapter of the *Guanzi* likewise says of the *Dao*, that for people, it is "that by which if lost results in death (and) that by which if obtained results in life" (所失以死，所得以生也) (CHANT 16). These examples, especially the *Zhuangzi* 12 passage, are what inspired Richard Wilhelm to translate *De* as "*leben*" (life) in his translation of the *Laozi* (1910).

benefic power of Nature (the *Dao*), seen earlier in contexts occurring only in spring and summer months. The language used also develops the relationship between the two homophones 德 and 得, both pronounced *tək in Old Chinese. Moreover, as something necessary for life, it exists within the same semantic field as *Qi* 氣, "life-force" or "pneuma" and *Jing* 精, "essence" or "essential *Qi*."[172]

Following the *Laozi*'s esteem for the virtues of water (*Shui* 水), the *Huainanzi* speaks also of these virtues, which is symbolic of the ultimate of *De* (*Zhide* 至德) for the authors. In light of the fact that natural phenomena provide the foremost inspiration in the Daoist tradition,[173] the following passage is quite representational of their view of the perfect expression of *De*:

> Of the things under the heavens, nothing is as soft and weak (i.e., flexible and yielding) as water, and so, its greatness cannot be fathomed, its depths cannot be surveyed. … Up in the sky it takes the form of rain and fog and below on land it moistens and enriches. The myriad living things do not come to life without it and the hundreds of affairs are not completed without it. Its greatness is such that it embraces all life without partiality. Its beneficence reaches to the tiny insects, but does not seek to be repaid. Its richness sustains all beneath the heavens and never ceases. Its bounty (德) extends to the people, and yet there is no wastage or depletion … It gives to the myriad living things, and yet places none first or last,

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[172] See especially the "Inner Workings" (*Neiye* 內業) chapter of the *Guanzi* and *Hanfeizi* 20.

[173] "Daoism" and "Daoist" are problematic terms; however, I will use the terms to refer to practitioners/thinkers who contributed to the *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi*, and some of the *Guanzi*, *Huainanzi* (and *Wenzi*), *Lüshi Chunqiu* and the so-called *Huangdi Sijing*. Although not a homogenous group, these practitioners/thinkers took a significantly different approach and used significantly different vocabulary than that found in Confucian and Mohist texts. Although Sarah Allan has shown in her *The Way of Water and Sprouts of Virtue* (SUNY Press, 1997) that many thinkers in ancient China used natural metaphors, modeled and drew inspiration from Nature, the Daoists took it farther than all the others, steering away from human-created activities and human consciousness. Again, it was not a homogenous group, especially for those who were inspired by Daoists or their writings but whose writings were quite political.

> thus it is without considerations of private or public interest … This is called the highest *De*.
>
> 天下之物，莫柔弱於水，然而大不可極，深不可測…上天則為雨露，下地則為潤澤，萬物弗得不生，百事不得不成，大包群生而無私好，澤及蚑蟜而不求報，富贍天下而不既，德施百姓而不費…授萬物而無所前後，是故無所私而無所公 … 是謂至德。[174]

Why is water the best symbol or metaphor of the most perfect *De*? Because (1) there is nothing it cannot do, which attests to its efficacy and power; (2) it has a positive (beneficial) effect on all living things: no water = no life (unless one drowns in it), which proves it is life-affirming, nourishing and beneficial; (3) it lacks awareness of any benefit it gives and asks nothing in return from living things, which, being different from reciprocity in human societies, is chiefly "altruistic" and demonstrates a lack of self-consciousness or ulterior motives; (4) it is inexhaustible, which implies potency and reliability; and (5) it is impartial, which means it gives to all things without judgment or preference. Chapter 8 of the *Laozi* says water is great because it benefits (*Li* 利) the myriad things and does not contend (*Buzheng* 不爭), and non-contention is identified as an "efficacious disposition" or "virtue" (德) in chapter 68.

Talk of conventional human virtues was rare in texts such as the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, but when they do appear, they are usually criticized. *Zuo*'s *Commentary*, the *Guoyu*, the *Documents* and a few other texts of the Warring States era employ *De* as a category label for various virtues, character strengths or desired behavior traits. We thus find lists of the Three *De* (三德), the Four *De* (四德), the Five *De* (五德), the Six *De* (六德), and so on. These virtues varied, but the most common were, roughly translated: benevolence or humaneness (*Ren* 仁), righteousness or duty (*Yi* 義), ritual propriety or etiquette (*Li* 禮), wisdom (*Zhi* 智), sageliness (*Sheng* 聖), courage (*Yong* 勇), loyalty (*Zhong* 忠), and trustworthiness (*Xin* 信). *Xiao* 孝, "filial piety," was also a

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[174] *Huainanzi* 1: *Yuan Dao* 原道. The Confucian tradition also drew a comparison between water and *De* (among other things), pointing out that water "everywhere gives" (*Bianyu* 徧與) to the multitude of living things: see *Xunzi* 28, *Da Dai Liji* 大戴禮記 7.3, *Kongzi Jiayu* 孔子家語 9.5 and the *Shuoyuan* 說苑 17.46.

highly admired virtue and was considered by some the "root of *De*" (德之本), or perhaps, "the basis of all virtues."[175]

Confucius, his disciples, followers such as Mengzi and Xunzi and others with similar views all esteemed and preached these character traits/strengths/virtues. These were qualities they deemed necessary for a person to possess or develop good character, or *De*, which they saw as lacking in their dissolute and chaotic society. An important aspect of the early Daoist ethos was that the advocation of these virtues was viewed as unnecessary moralizing, a moralizing that only made the situation worse. Chapter 19 of the *Laozi* enjoins rulers to abandon this virtue-talk, arguing that people will *return to* (*Fu* 復) more natural dispositions:

> Cut off sageliness and abandon wisdom and the people will benefit a hundredfold;
> cut off benevolence and abandon duty and the people will return to filial piety and parental love.
> 絕聖棄智民利百倍；絕仁棄義民復孝慈[176]

The *Laozi* was divided into two sections, *Dao* and *De*, no later than the beginning of the Han Dynasty. Both manuscripts from Mawangdui begin with the *De* section, so named because the chapter begins by discussing *De*. It begins with two lines which could be translated as:

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[175] *Xiaojing* 1 孝經, (c. mid third century B.C.E.). Cf. the *Lunyu* 1.2 and *Mengzi* 12.2 (6B2). It is interesting that *Xiao* is almost entirely absent from lists of *De*. I have only found it once: in the *Yi Zhoushu's* "*Bao Dian*" 逸周書 • 寶典 chapter (e.g., 九德：一孝，子畏哉，乃不亂謀；二悌 ... 三慈惠 ... 四忠恕 ...).

[176] The version of these lines in the Guodian *Laozi* parallels (c. 300 B.C.E.) does not enjoin us to abandon the "Confucian" virtues; i.e., it reads 絕智棄辯，民利百倍 … 絕 [illegible](僞/化)棄慮，民復孝子(慈). Whether this indicates that this passage was originally not anti-Confucian cannot be determined, since this may simply show there were different versions in existence. A section of chapter 10 of the *Zhuangzi* quotes and builds on this chapter. What is meant by "wisdom" is likely to be discursive knowledge and not prudential knowledge (*Phronesis*).

> "One with superior *De* is not conscious of one's *De* and for this reason truly possesses *De*. One with inferior *De* does not lose this consciousness of one's *De* and for this reason lacks *De.*"

Or

> One with superior *De* does not appear to have *De* and for this reason truly possesses *De*. One with inferior *De* does not lose the appearance of *De* and for this reason lacks *De.*
> 上德不德是以有德。下德不失德是以無德。[177]

Both interpretations have their merits. The second reminds us of "subtle *De*" (*Xuande* 玄德), the invisible or inconspicuous benefic power of the *Dao* mentioned in chapter 51 of the *Laozi* and again in chapter 10 in relation to the Daoist sage. Similarly, chapter 41 utilizes paradox to promote the idea that appearances can be deceiving: "The highest *De* is like a (low-lying) valley … abundant *De* seems to be inadequate; well-established *De* seems diffident and slight" (上德如浴 … 廣德如不足，建德如偷).[178] The first has support in the following few lines and chapter 34, where the *Dao*, because it doesn't consider itself great (不自為大) is truly great, a view also found in the *Zhuangzi*.

The text continues: "One with Superior *De* does not act/interfere and lacks reasons to act/interfere. One with Inferior *De* acts/interferes and possesses a reason for acting/interfering" (上德無為而無以為。下德為之而有以為。). The author recognized that *De*, (virtue? goodwill? influential benign power?), can manifest in two ways. The more highly-regarded way is manifested in one who does not act or interfere (*Wuwei* 無為) with others as well as having no ulterior motive to act or interfere (*Wuyiwei* 無以為). Such a person does not strive, does not deliberately try to act in a "virtuous" way. Any merit that accrues to such a person is inadvertent;

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[177] *Laozi* 38. Rather than talking about *De* per se, it is commonly assumed that "one with, one who has" (*Zhe* 者) is implied, and the verb that we would expect to follow the first negative *Bu* 不 has been left out, meaning we have to supply the notion of self-consciousness or, alternatively, appearances.

[178] Variations of the second of these three are found in *Zhuangzi* 27, *Huainanzi* 17, *Wenzi* 6 and *Liezi* 列子 2.

as Liu Xiaogan 劉笑敢 says, "Those with the highest virtue … are not dazzled by their own virtuousness, and feel it is merely happenstance that others credit them with possessing virtue."[179] The inferior or less genuine manifestation of *De* is seen in one who does act/interfere (*Wei* 為) and does so because one has reasons or ulterior motives (*Youyiwei* 有以為). Such a person strives deliberately and self-consciously to act in a "virtuous" way, with preconceptions of what this entails.[180]

The text then deals with three traditional virtues — benevolence (*Ren* 仁), duty (*Yi* 義) and ritual propriety (*Li* 禮) — that Confucians championed. Benevolence is viewed somewhat favorably (at least its highest expression: *Shangren* 上仁), in that although it acts/interferes, it does not do so for predetermined reasons, that is, it seems to come naturally.[181] Duty, (or, conventional morality), is fully inferior to (Superior) *De*, as far as the author is concerned, since it is characterized by both activity/interference and predetermined, inculcated reasons. Ritual propriety is both forced and coercive and is but a superficial representation of the integrity (*Zhongxin* 忠信)[182] considered necessary, and further leading towards social chaos (e.g., duplicity, distrust).

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[179] "An Inquiry into the Core Value of Laozi's Philosophy" in Mark Csikszentmihalyi and Philip J. Ivanhoe (eds.) *Religious and Philosophical Aspects of the Laozi* (SUNY Press, 1999), p. 225.

[180] This latter view was supported by Kant. See Edward Slingerland's essay "Toward an Empirically Responsible Ethics: Cognitive Science, Virtue Ethics, and Effortless Attention in Early Chinese Thought" in *Effortless Attention: A New Perspective in the Cognitive Science of Attention and Action*, ed. Brian Bruya (MIT Press, 2010), pp. 274–275.

[181] Perhaps originating in what Mengzi called one's "heart of compassion/commiseration" or "compassionate predisposition" (*Ceyin Zhi Xin* 惻隱之心) (*Mengzi* 3.6 [2A6] and 11.6 [6A6]).

[182] *Zhongxin* (忠信), or *Zhong* and *Xin* are two other "Confucian" virtues which here are *not* evaluated. They are often translated as "loyalty" and "trustworthiness." The *Shuowen Jiezi* defines *Zhong* as "respect(fullness)" (*Jing* 敬) and *Xin* as "sincerity, integrity" (*Cheng* 誠). Paul Goldin has suggested "being honest with oneself in dealing with others" as an appropriate gloss of *Zhong* in some pre-Qin texts ("When *Zhong* 忠 Does Not Mean 'Loyalty'" in the journal *Dao*, vol. 7, no. 2 (2008), p. 169), whereas Axel Schuessler suggests "sincere, loyal, integrity" (*ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese,* p. 621). Compare the *Laozi*'s view that ritual propriety is the thin edge of integrity (禮者忠信之薄) to the *Liji*'s "Integrity is the root of ritual propriety" (忠信禮之本也).

Finally, the downward scale is made more explicit: "When *Dao* is lost then afterwards comes *De*; when *De* is lost then afterwards comes benevolence; when benevolence is lost then afterwards comes duty; when duty is lost then afterwards comes ritual propriety" (失道而後德。失德而後仁。失仁而後義。失義而後禮。). *De* is clearly something which is deemed superior to the three Confucian virtues, but is itself a step down from embodying the *Dao*.[183] The fact that true *De* does not act/interfere and that it lies above all human-conceived virtues and their expression in conduct suggests that *De* here is a benignant power or influence, rather than some kind of highly-regarded type of conduct or collection of character traits. The passage concludes with saying that the wise dwell in the "fruit" (*Shi* 實), what is substantial and real, and not the "flower" (*Hua* 華), what is superficial (i.e., a thin veneer). The nineteenth-century American writer Henry David Thoreau expressed his view in exactly the same way in *Walden*:

> I do not value chiefly a man's uprightness and benevolence, which are, as it were, his stem and leaves. Those plants of whose greenness withered we make herb tea for the sick serve but a humble use, and are most employed by quacks. I want the flower and fruit of a man; that some fragrance be wafted over from him to me, and some ripeness flavor our intercourse. His goodness must not be a partial and transitory act, but a constant superfluity, which costs him nothing and *of which he is unconscious*.[184]

The Daoists saw striving to embody prescribed and delineated virtues or a preconceived notion of what good character consists of as an exercise in inauthenticity (*Wei* 偽). It means we are not acting from genuine caring, feelings of fairness or natural character but rather from

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[183] Both the "Explaining Lao(zi)" (*Jielao* 解老) chapter of the *Hanfeizi* (chap. 20) and the *Wenzi* do *not* interpret benevolence, duty and ritual propriety negatively, and are influenced by Confucianism (See Hagop Sarkissian's M.A. diss. "*Laozi*: Re-visiting Two Early Commentaries in the *Hanfeizi*," 2001, pp. 66–69, and Paul van Els' Ph.D. Diss. "The *Wenzi*: Creation and Manipulation of a Chinese Philosophical Text," 2006, pp. 74–80). This is true also of *Huainanzi* 10.5, which paraphrases *Laozi* 38.

[184] *Walden and Resistance to Civil Government* (W.W. Norton and Company Publishers, 1992), p. 52; emphasis mine. Note also he speaks of the "fragrance" of good character, as we saw earlier in the *Zuo Commentary*.

contrived, unnatural and affected dispositions and values. Contrary to the Confucians and Mohists, the Daoists believed that we will *not* degenerate into (*their* conception of) animals without moral education. This moral education results in a reduction of our flexibility and potential to make "good" decisions and, as Roger Ames and Richard Gotshalk say, are dehumanizing.[185] Ames writes, "For the Daoist, the more that conduct is choreographed in the burlesque of Confucian ritualized living, the thinner and more diluted spontaneous moral sentiments become … artificial moral precepts will overwhelm the unmediated expression of natural feelings."[186] The "Purified Heart-mind" (*Baixin* 白心) chapter of the *Guanzi* put it this way: "In one who cultivates (i.e., "engineers") virtuous conduct, the Kingly Way is constricted and attenuated" (德行脩者王道狹), and the *Laozi* commentary in the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子, says Superior *De* "lacks any restrictions" (無所制).[187] Rigid moral codes, dogmatic duties, privileged virtues and even moral beliefs themselves hinder the resolution of conflict, partly by reducing the ability to entertain compromises and partly because many moral disputes simply cannot be settled. Moreover, they are not very responsive (*Ying* 應) to changing circumstances, thus the Daoists advocated forgetting about moral virtues, consequently fostering a comprehensive awareness and an open-mindedness that was capable of taking different, and sometimes counter-intuitive, perspectives into account.

Daoists also found motivation suspect, as many people simply try to make sure they display good character or appear virtuous to obtain social approval and maintain their "face" (*Lian* 臉). This encourages and abets falsity and dishonesty as people merely put on sanctimonious shows, pretenses and affectations of benevolence or virtue. Confucius called such a person a "thief of *De*" (德之賊).[188] When people see through this, their responses are usually

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[185] Ames (2003) p. 136; Gotshalk: *The Classic of Way and Her Power*: *A Miscellany*? (University Press of America, 2007), p. 113.

[186] Ames (2003), p. 137.

[187] *Hanfeizi* 20, "*Jie Lao*(*zi*)" (解老). The author of this chapter gives an abstruse explanation of *Laozi* 38, but appears to support the conviction that deliberately striving to possess *De* will have poor results. See Liao, p. 170, or Slingerland (*Effortless Action*), p. 106.

[188] *Lunyu* 17.13.

the opposite of what was desired.[189] In addition, this desire to be virtuous often leads to vanity (or stems from it) and feelings of moral superiority, which produces arrogance and ignorance and breeds mistrust and resentment. The author of *Zhuangzi* 32 addressed this when he wrote that there were five *Xiong De* 凶德, probably best translated as "ignoble character traits," the worst being *Zhong De* 中德, which is explained as the trait of egotism or bigotry.[190] This occurs when one's *De* "has a heart/mind" (*You Xin* 有心), that is, has a motive.[191]

Striving for virtue might also reflect that one expects a reward or recompense (*Bao* 報), or at least gratitude and recognition, which was understood as spoiling or contaminating the results. Doing "good deeds" inconspicuously, in secret (*Yin* 陰), was sometimes suggested as a response to this concern with self-aggrandizement; nevertheless, it was still assumed that *Yinde* (陰德) was always repaid.[192] It might be added that, in the Western Zhou period, and to some extent throughout the Springs and Autumns and Warring States eras, it was prudent and expedient for rulers to make their *De* (character and/or beneficence) bright and conspicuous (*Ming* 明, *Zhao* 昭, *Xian* 顯) to ingratiate themselves with the people they had sovereignty over, maintain alliances and combat slander from their rivals. Although such ingratiation or PR may have been designed to foster a good relationship with the people and allies, the transparency of such calculated behavior and the seductiveness of falsification was something the early Daoists

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[189] See *Laozi* 24.

[190] As James Legge translates, "It is that which appears in a man's loving only his own views and reviling whatever he does not do himself" (有以自好也，而吡其所不為者也); *Chuang Tzu*: *Genius of the Absurd*, arranged by Clae Waltham (ACE Books, 1971, [1891]), p. 365. Cf. Burton Watson (1968), p. 359.

[191] Cf. *Huainanzi* 9: "Where good deeds are accompanied by a motive, there is treachery" (德有心則險), trans. by Roger T. Ames (1994), p. 174. *Xian* 險, "treachery," should perhaps be read as *Xianzha* 險詐, "dishonesty."

[192] This was a well-known proverb: "I have heard that one who has (performed) hidden *De* Heaven repays with good fortune" (吾聞之有陰德者天報以福。) *Xinshu* 新書 6.3. Cf. *Huainanzi* 18, *Shuoyuan* 5.3 and 6.7, *Lunheng* 論衡 20. In the *Laozi Xiang'er* Commentary 《老子》想爾注, it is argued that one should keep one's good deeds secret because if one goes unrewarded by humans, one will receive the more desirable "Heavenly Blessings" (*Tianfu* 天福). See also the *Bible*: Matthew 6.1–4. *Yin De* may also be interpreted, in some places, as "unseen blessings" inherited or passed on by one's ancestors; see Li Jianmin's "They Shall Expel Demons" in *Early Chinese Religion*, ed. Rod Lagerwey and Marc Kalinowski (Brill Publishing, 2009), pp. 1129, 1134–1135.

disparaged. Too much attention was paid by aristocrats and literati to making everyone know they had *De*, were virtuous, or were wise. Real *De* was present only in those who were unconcerned or unaware that their behavior expressed *De*. Daoists were not concerned with displaying their worthiness (*Xian Xian* 見賢)[193] or procuring a prestigious name (*Ming* 名) for themselves: the *Dao* wasn't, so why should they? They would rather be in the dark (*Ming* 冥 or *Xuan* 玄).[194]

This concern with mere appearances and the issue of inauthenticity was shared by more than a few in the late Warring States period. The *Guanzi*'s "Cardinal Sayings" (*Shuyan* 樞言) states: "One who (merely) acts good is not good" (為善者非善也) and two texts discovered at Guodian affirm "(merely) acting filial is not filial piety; (merely) acting brotherly is not brotherliness" (為孝此非孝也；為弟此非弟也) and "being filial to one's father and loving one's son, these are not (mere) acts" (父孝子愛非有為也).[195] Although Confucius and a number of his followers did not advocate merely putting on a show of possessing virtuous character and conduct, this was nonetheless how it often played out. Because they were the most vocal preachers of morality, they, and their culture heroes, were usually targeted by Daoists as a significant source of the loss of guilelessness and harmony in society.

Another increasingly famous text reflects these concerns as well. The text *Five Aspects of Conduct* (*Wuxing* 五行), recently discovered in 1973 and again in 1993,[196] could also be titled the *Five Aspects of Virtuous Conduct*, because of the fact that that these five conducts are the virtues 仁、義、禮、智、聖. The text, perhaps written in response to the aforementioned Daoist criticism, begins, "Benevolence that takes shape within (one's heart) is called virtuous conduct (德之行), (when) not taking shape within (one's heart) it is called (simply proper)

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[193] *Laozi* 77.

[194] Zhuangzi actually says that *De* is harmed by fame/reputation in chapters 3 and 4.

[195] Rickett translates the *Guanzi* phrase as "Contrived goodness is not goodness." (*Guanzi*, vol. 1, p. 220) The Guodian texts are named "Thicket of Sayings" (*Yucong* 語叢) 1 and 3.

[196] The two nearly identical texts were found at Mawangdui and Guodian, respectively.

conduct" (仁形於內謂之德之行不形於內謂之行。).[197] It proceeds through all five virtues mentioned above and concludes, "When all five of these virtuous conducts (operate) in harmony we call this *De*; when four operate in harmony we call it *Shan* ('goodness'). *Shan* is the Human Way; *De* is the Heavenly Way" (德之行五和謂之德；四行和謂之善。善人道也。德天道也。).[198] *De* is the highest accomplishment, whereas *Shan* is a more attainable accomplishment of (regular) humans. The argument is presumably that unless these various virtues are deep-seated within us, they are merely superficial expressions of them.

Despite this attempt, and that of Mengzi, who argued that these virtues were inherent in humankind,[199] the Daoists still argued that all of these so-called virtues were at best secondary and superfluous (*Zhui* 贅)[200] and mere ornamentation (*Shi* 飾).[201] At worst, they were subversive to natural (moral) sentiments, inflexible, and fostered vanity and moral disputes:

> It is when the Great *Dao* is cast aside that we then have 'benevolence' and 'duty.'
>
> 大道廢案有仁義 ; *Laozi* 18[202]

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[197] Zheng Xuan 鄭玄 (127–200 C.E.) similarly wrote, in his commentary to the *Zhouli* 周禮: "*Dexing* is the matching of the inner and outer: what exists within one's heart is *De* (character), when put into practice it is *Xing* (conduct)" (德行，內外之稱，在心爲德，施之爲行。).

[198] My own translation, with reference to those by Roger Ames (2003), Dirk Meyer ("Meaning-Construction in Warring States Philosophical Discourse: A Discussion of the Palaeographic Materials from Tomb Guōdiàn One," Leiden, Ph.D. Diss. 2008), Mark Csikszentmihalyi (2004) and Kenneth William Holloway ("The Recently Discovered Confucian Classic the 'Five Aspects of Conduct,'" University of Pennsylvania, Ph.D. Diss. 2002). *De* is actually written as 悳.

[199] See *Mengzi* 13.21 (7A21) and 11.6 (6A6).

[200] *Laozi* 24 uses the expression "surplus fodder and superfluous behavior" (*Yushi Zhuixing* 餘食贅行) to describe the practice of self-righteousness and self-promotion.

[201] This term is used in the *Huainanzi* chapters 1 and 2 as well as in the second chapter of the *Wenzi*, quoted below.

[202] Similar expressions are found in *Zhuangzi* 9 (e.g., 道德不廢，安取仁義), *Huainanzi* 2 and *Wenzi* 2 (e.g., 仁義立而道德廢); *Huainanzi* 11 (e.g., 仁義立而道德遷矣，禮樂飾則純樸散).

> "To eliminate *Dao* and *De* in order to make benevolence and duty was the transgression of the (so-called) sages." (毀道德以爲仁義聖人之過也) *Zhuangzi* 9
>
> "(True) Sages internally maintain the *Dao* and *De* and do not externally adorn themselves with benevolence and duty." (聖人內修道德而不外飾仁義) *Wenzi* 2[203]
>
> In the age of perfect *De* … (the people) were upright with each other, but did not know this as being "righteous"; they loved each other, but did not know this as being "benevolent"; they were honest with each other, but did not know this as being "loyal"; they were responsible, but did not know this was being "trustworthy"; they sauntered about, making use of each other, but did not consider this a blessing.
> 至德之世…端正而不知以爲義，相愛而不知以爲仁，實而不知以爲忠，當而不知以爲信，蠢動而相使不以爲賜。 *Zhuangzi* 12[204]

With regards to whether people's *De* was in need of any attention, be that actuation, maintenance, refinement or rejuvenation, the Daoist texts such as the *Laozi*, *Zhuangzi* and *Neiye* have no clear-cut answer. One of Confucius' chief concerns was whether he kept his *De* in good repair,[205] which was a concern already seen in Western Zhou bronze inscriptions, the *Odes* and the *Documents*. The word *Xiu* 修 (alt. 脩), which means to repair, mend, maintain, refine, cultivate or adorn, is rare in Daoist texts. Following from what we have just seen in chapter 38 of the *Laozi*, a parable in chapter 21 of the *Zhuangzi* has Laozi telling Confucius:

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[203] Probably based on similar passages in the first and second chapters of the *Huainanzi*.

[204] *Zhuangzi* 20, quoting parts of the *Laozi*, describes the "land of well-established *De*" (建德之國) in much the same way.

[205] *Lunyu* 7.3.

> As for a stream's relation towards its trickling sound: it does nothing (*Wuwei*), as this attribute manifests of itself. As for the Perfected Person's attitude towards his/her *De*: it is not ministered to or refined (不脩) and yet living things are unable to stay away from him/her. Like how the Heavens are naturally high, the Earth is naturally abundant, the sun and moon naturally bright. What is there to be refined?
>
> 夫水之於汋也無為而才自然矣。至人之於德也不脩而物不能離焉。若天之自高地之自厚日月之自明夫何脩焉。

Like Laozi's infant in chapter 55, the sage's *De* is naturally sufficient. However, the *Laozi* doesn't affirm that an infant has *De*, but that "one who has an abundance of *De*" can be *compared to* an infant. There is the possibility in both of these examples that there may be some "work" to do to arrive at such a perfect or optimal *De*. The *Laozi* suggests lessening desires, becoming simpler and more natural and returning to (*Fugui* 復歸) an unsophisticated and unadulterated infant-like condition.[206] Likewise, chapter 48 discloses that the method of reaching the *Wuwei* mode of being is by "daily decreasing" (*Ri Sun* 日損). The middle section of chapter 54 of the *Laozi* reads:

> Foster it in one's person: one's *De* will be authentic.
> Foster it in one's family: its *De* will be plentiful.
> Foster it in one's village: its *De* will be extensive.
> Foster it in one's state: its *De* will be abundant.
> Foster it in the entire world: its *De* will be boundless.
>
> 修之身其德乃真
> 修之家其德乃餘

[206] *Laozi* 19 and 28. There are numerous other chapters which hint at things we could do to make life less stressful and activities more efficacious. The *Zhuangzi* also contains practices one can engage in such as "sitting forgetting" (*Zuowang* 坐忘) and "heart-mind fasting" (*Xinzhai* 心齋) that are regarded as boons (chapters 6 and 4 respectively).

修之鄉其德乃長
修之邦其德乃豐
修之天下其德乃普

This is the only place in the *Laozi* where *Xiu* 修 appears. As some have pointed out,[207] this sounds more Confucian than Daoist, inasmuch as such purposeful refinement or cultivation was usually viewed as unnecessary or detrimental. One's *De* would start out as authentic and genuine and would ostensibly be in no need of refining or cultivation. Yet in light of the above comments, fostering and maintaining *De* was felt to be beneficial to oneself and ultimately the whole world. What is not clear, however, is what *De* denotes. It might be a potent inner calm, as the *Zhuangzi* indicates in chapter 5.[208] It might be the "moral" force or benignant and nourishing influence seen elsewhere in the *Laozi*, stemming from and mirroring the *De* of the *Dao*. Or it could be referring to prestige, specifically the kind of prestige that accrues to one who maintains his or her original simplicity, guilelessness, open-mindedness and goodwill. The *Neiye* is undoubtedly a text of self-cultivation and yet *Xiu* only appears a couple of times, so the absence of this one word might not be indicative of an overall rejection of conscious and purposeful refinement.

One final area where *De* plays an important role is that of reciprocity, which we have touched upon occasionally in this paper. Let us recall that since the earliest times *De* was sometimes used in reference to beneficence and favor. In Shi Yu's tripod and wine vessel we found Yu praising his king's *De*-beneficence/generosity (*Yang Jue De* 揚厥德), with *De* replacing the usual *Xiu* 休, "beneficence" in this generic phrase. Throughout the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods the *De* (as character-conduct) that was esteemed was characterized as benevolent and *De* (as beneficence, kindness) was also something which could be "spread" (*Bu* 布) or "bestowed" (*Shi* 施),[209] as well as contrasted with *Xing* 刑,

[207] For example, Henricks 2000, p. 108.

[208] "*De* is maintenance/cultivation of complete (inner) harmony" (德者，成和之脩也).

[209] E.g., *Shangshu* "Pan Geng" 尚書・盤庚, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 春秋左傳・成公 16.5.

"punishment."[210] In the Han Dynasty, new disyllabic words appear in texts, such as *Dehui* (德惠), *Deze* (德澤) and the rarer *Ende* (恩德), each strengthening the notion of beneficence or kindness. A close counterpart in ancient Greek was *Kharis* or *Kharin*, meaning grace, favor, kindness and goodwill.[211]

As a benevolent disposition or character, or as kind/beneficial acts or concrete rewards, *De* had the natural effect of causing the beneficiaries to express goodwill and gratitude (*De* 德 as well; see below) as well as foster a desire or feeling of obligation to return the favor to their benefactor(s). This perhaps began with children's natural response to parents, and manifested as the feeling and practice of filial piety (*Xiao* 孝) towards one's living parents, as well as one's deceased ancestors, who were diligently "rewarded" with regular sacrifices. The ode "Thick Tarragon" (*Lu E* 蓼莪, #303) tells of a son who desperately wants to repay (*Bao* 報) his parents for their care and nurturance (*De* 德).[212] Mozi, in defense of his controversial doctrine of All-inclusive Caring (*Jianai* 兼愛), spoke to the challenge of filial piety, championed by Confucians. Addressing the best way to care for and benefit one's parents, Mozi argued that one will certainly provide care for and benefit them by extending this to other people's parents also, because they will surely return (*Bao* 報) the favor.[213] He supports this with a much-quoted stanza from the *Odes*:

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[210] E.g., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan* 春秋左傳 • 成公 16.5, *Hanfeizi* 7.

[211] *A Greek-English Lexicon* by Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, revised and augmented by Sir Henry Stuart Jones with the assistance of Roderick McKenzie (Oxford Clarendon Press, 1940). http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.04.0057%3Aentry%3Dxa%2Fris

[212] Many of the various words the poet used to denote this parental nurturance, such as 畜, 長, 育 and 復(覆) were used in the previously mentioned chapter 51 of the *Laozi* to characterize the *De*-power of the *Dao*. The *Laozi*, as is well known, symbolically refers to the *Dao* as a mother (*Mu* 母) to all things, so we should not be surprised to find it portraying the *Dao*'s *De* in ways fitting of a parent. Yet, although the *Laozi* acknowledges that people value (*Gui* 貴) the benefits Nature provides, it does not mention any desire to repay it, possibly because *Dao*, being an unconscious and immaterial *process*, is not an 'it' that could receive any return favor.

[213] *Mozi* 4.3, *Jianai Xia* 兼愛下.

No words go unanswered, no favor (德) goes unrequited.
(If you) throw me a peach, (I'll) requite you a plum.

無言而不讎，無德而不報。
投我以桃，報之以李。[214]

This is the "characteristic expression" of gratitude and goodwill and is often expressed in Modern Chinese as *Renqing* 人情, literally, "human feeling." This concept of reciprocity stems from the word *Bao* 報, meaning "to return, remunerate, recompense, requite" or "repay." Homer, Thucydides, Sophocles, Aristotle and others in ancient Greece similarly talked about *Kharis* and the obligation to repay it.

David S. Nivison largely focused on this particular semantic field of *De* in his writings on the subject. Although sometimes glossing *De* as "character," "virtue" and "generosity," he understood *De* to be a kind of "psychic energy" or force that is *generated by* generosity (or similar "virtuous conduct") and *projected* back onto the benefactor. For Nivison, when we are the recipients of someone's kindness or generosity we feel both gratitude and an obligation to repay them. We see this as a "bank of credit" they possess and call this their "*De*."[215] In a recent lecture, professor emeritus Robert H. Gassmann similarly focuses on this feeling of obligation one feels to having received some benefit. Beginning with the *Hanfeizi*, he comes to the conclusion that for this text, and most late Warring States texts, the root meaning of *De* is the verb "to obligate" or "to feel obligated" and from which the noun "the power to obligate" or "the

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[214] Ode #256, "Solemn" (*Yi* 抑). Xunzi also quoted this stanza to support his view that teachers should be repaid by their (successful) students (*Xunzi* 14 "Attracting Scholars" *Zhi Shi* 致士).

[215] See References. Nivison believed that the notion of receiving favorable treatment after providing favorable treatment could be found on Shang OBI containing the graph  , which he read as 德. Yet his supporting evidence from *many* centuries later and the rarity of OBI that resemble his example seriously hurt his argument's persuasiveness, especially when alternative readings seem more plausible (see Kryukov, Munro and note 16). His understanding and explication on this particular aspect of *De* however is quite insightful. Among those who adopt or follow his viewpoint are Philip Ivanhoe, Bryan van Norden, Edward Slingerland, John Knoblock and Kwong-Loi Shun.

state of being obligated" is derived.[216] How this relates to different meanings found in other (incl. earlier) texts he leaves to others to pursue. Applying his theory to the *Daodejing* 道德經, which he translates as "The Canonical Text of Leading and Obligating," results in some very dubious translations.[217]

A story told in *Zuo*'s *Commentary* (Xi *Gong* 僖公 24) and the *Guoyu* (1.15) purports to contain a dialogue between the Zhou king and his minister Fu Chen 富辰 in the seventh century B.C.E. The king was upset with (the ruler of) Zheng 鄭 and proposed to get the Di 狄 tribes to attack it. Fu Chen remonstrated, saying that the ruling family of Zheng were relatives and should not be cast aside over a trivial matter, especially since previous Zhou kings had received their support and aid. "Treating relatives as relatives" (*Qinqin* 親親) was among the "Four Virtues" (*Si De* 四德), yet if the king teamed up with the Di he would be displaying the "Four Vices" (*Si Jian* 四姦). The king didn't listen and the Di attacked Zheng; whereby, "the King felt grateful/obligated to the Di" (*Wang De Diren* 王德狄人)[218] and considered taking one of their young women as his queen. That is, the king wanted to return (報) the favor he felt he owed the Di and so accepted one of their young women as his bride. He was warned again by Fu Chen that "the requiter tires, the beneficiary will never be satisfied (報者倦矣施者未厭) and alternately that "a young woman's gratitude (and obligation) is limitless, a wife's resentment never-ending" (女德無極婦怨無終),[219] with the young woman representing the Di people and the wife the

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[216] "Coming to Terms with 德: The Deconstruction of 'Virtue' and an Exercise in Scientific Morality" in *How Should One Live?: Comparing Ethics in Ancient China and Greco-Roman Antiquity*, ed. Richard A.H. King and Dennis Schilling (Walter de Gruyter, 2011), pp. 92–125.

[217] Ibid., pp. 28–32.

[218] The *Hanyu Dacidian* gives this passage (in the *Guoyu*) as an example of *De* meaning "grateful," modern: *Ganen* 感恩. The *Zhanguoce* 戰國策 has many examples where *De* means gratitude, e.g., chapter 29: "When the Chu king is released he certainly will be grateful (or indebted) to Qi" (楚王出，必德齊).

[219] John Knoblock and Philip Ivanhoe follow David Nivison in thinking *De* here refers to *sexual potency*, but, it is here opposed to *Yuan*-resentment/ill-will, and so one would expect it to mean gratitude/goodwill, especially since the passage starts with using it with this meaning. *De* occurs several more times in the complete passage, in none of which it means anything like 'potency.' Legge (*The Chinese Classics Vol. V: The Ch'un Ts'ew, with the Tso Chuen*

king's extended family in Zheng. The king of course didn't listen and things deteriorated. Fu Chen, in the *Guoyu*'s account of the same event, further criticized the king, saying he was "using a slight grievance to displace the greater goodwill" (以小怨置大德也) and therefore was "returning ill will for goodwill" (*Yi Yuan Bao De* 以怨報德).

Yuan 怨 and *De* were the two primary terms used in the context of *Bao*-reciprocity. As already explained, *De* was the word used to indicate favorable or benevolent treatment of someone. *Yuan* indicated unfavorable or malevolent treatment. Although the (felt) indebtedness and obligation to return favors was inherent in the notion of *De* (i.e., in the relevant contexts), *De* more basically is the favor itself, and, *pāce* Nivison and Gassmann, not the obligation. The semantic sphere can be filled out with synonyms such as "generosity, kindness and beneficence" for *De*, with "goodwill," perhaps the best word where *De* is primarily used to describe a person's disposition. "Gratitude," as we have just seen, is also sometimes the best gloss of *De*, which is usually coupled with "goodwill" as a response to someone's generosity or favorable treatment. "The opposite of *De* is *Yuan*" (*Fan De Wei Yuan* 反德為怨)," Jia Yi once explained,[220] and represents "animosity, harm and malificence," with "ill will" being a good complement to *De*'s "goodwill," and with "resentment" complementing "gratitude."

The general norm one can observe is that people tend to respond favorably to those who treat them favorably and unfavorably to those who treat them unfavorably. (This is a general norm for many species, not only human beings.) This observation — we reap what we sow — can be found expressed in an ancient maxim now found in the *Huainanzi*: "One who plants proso millet does not harvest foxtail millet; one who plants *Yuan* (resentment, ill will) is not repaid with *De* (gratitude, goodwill)" (樹黍者不穫稷樹怨者無報德。).[221]

Confucius is recorded as addressing this issue in a couple of texts. In the "Record on (serving as an) Example" (*Biaoji* 表記), the 33rd chapter of the Han Dynasty compendium *Ritual Records* (*Liji* 禮記), he assumes the perspective of a ruler: "Returning *De* with *De*, the

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[Lane, Crawford and Co., 1872], p. 192) translated "女德無極，婦怨無終" as: "It is the nature of women to be limitless in their desires, and their resentment is undying," which doesn't seem right either.

[220] In the "Methods of the Way" (*Daoshu* 道術) chapter of Jia Yi's *Xinshu* 新書.

[221] "Governing Arts" (*Zhushu* 主術), chapter 9 of the *Huainanzi*.

people are motivated (to *De*); returning *Yuan* with *Yuan*, the people are warned (about the consequences of *Yuan*)" (以德報德，則民有所勸；以怨報怨，則民有所懲。).[222] Here, Confucius is recorded as presenting *Yuan* as an appropriate response to *Yuan* because it warns people of the consequences and (hopefully) motivates them to refrain from further *Yuan*. This is a view supported by evolutionary considerations. Psychologist Michael McCullough, for example, defines revenge (i.e., returning *Yuan* with *Yuan*), as "a deterrence system designed to change others' incentives regarding their behavioral options to protect oneself and one's kin or allies."[223] This position fits well with the ancient notion that Shangdi 上帝, Heaven (*Tian* 天) and/or the ancestral and Nature spirits (*Shen* 神) commonly showed their favor or grace by "sending down" blessings of good fortune (*Fu* 福, *Lu* 祿, *De* 德), but also showed their disfavor and disapproval by sending down misfortune or disaster (*Huo* 禍, *Zai* 災, *Wei* 威). This was in response to the conduct of human beings, primarily rulers, and served to motivate people to conform to the norms. Proper rulers, therefore, were expected to follow this model, rewarding those with meritorious service or achievements and punishing those who were wicked, unruly or disobedient. (Confucians tried to convince their audience that the legendary sage-kings rarely, if ever, used punishments.) It fits well also with the basic principles of law.

Another story in *Zuo*'s *Commentary* illustrates the relation of *De* and *Yuan* as well as when they were called for. Zhi Ying 知罃 was an official from the state of Jin who was imprisoned in Chu while the two states were preparing for war. After negotiations, Chu agreed to return him to his own people. As he was preparing to leave, the Chu king asked, "Do you feel resentment/ill will towards us" (子其怨我乎)? Zhi Ying's answer was that first, because the

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[222] Confucius continued to say, "以德報怨，則寬身之仁也；以怨報德，則刑戮之民也。," which presents problems for interpretation and translation. James Legge translated it as "They who return kindness for injury are such as have a regard for their own persons. They who return injury for kindness are men to be punished and put to death" (*The Texts of Confucianism, Part IV: The Lî Kî*, XI-XLVI [Oxford Press, 1885], p. 332). Cf. Lin Yutang, *The Wisdom of Confucius* (Random House, 1943 [1938]), p. 125.

[223] "Evolved Mechanisms for Revenge and Forgiveness" by Michael E. McCullough, Robert Kurzban and Benjamin A. Tabak in *Understanding and Reducing Aggression, Violence, and Their Consequences*, P.R. Shaver & M. Mikulincer eds., (in press; American Psychological Association), p. 5.

states were engaging in war, second, because he was captured through his own incompetence, and third, because he wasn't immediately executed, he had no reason to feel resentment/ill will (*Yuan* 怨). The king then said, "That being so, do you feel gratitude/goodwill towards us" (然則德我乎)? Zhi Ying again said he could see no reason to feel grateful/goodwill (*De* 德), as the two states were reconciling their differences and trying to make their respective states secure: the decision had nothing to do with him personally and thus was no act of kindness. So the king asked, "Upon your return, how will you requite us" (子歸何以報我)? He replied, "I have received nothing deserving of resentment/ill will and your lordship also has done nothing to deserve gratitude/goodwill. Without resentment and without gratitude, I don't know what needs to be requited" (臣不任受怨君亦不任受德，無怨無德不知所報。).[224]

David Schaberg confirms that, "in the context of *Bao* exchanges, *De* refers specifically to generosity and the emotions generosity inspires in its beneficiaries [i.e., gratitude]. One who gives a gift or favor has a *De* that the recipient must recognize and repay, just as one who has suffered an injury must bear a grudge (*Yuan*) and seek revenge."[225] Retaliation or revenge was included in the concept of *Bao* 報, often written with the binome *Baochou* 報仇. In *Zuo*'s *Commentary* there are numerous stories explaining the reason for some offensive attack as being revenge for some prior insult or injury, or as a favor to a third party.[226] In the *Shiji* there is an account of a certain retainer Yu Rang 豫讓 who became famous for devoting himself to avenging his lord Zhi Bo 智伯. When asked why he didn't avenge earlier masters, he replied, "When I served the Fan and Zhonghang lineages they treated me as one of the mass, so I repaid them as befitted one of the mass. But Zhi Bo treated me as a noble man of the state, so I repaid

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[224] Cheng *Gong* 成公, 3.4. Cf. James Legge's *The Chinese Classics Vol. V: The Ch'un Ts'ew, with the Tso Chuen* [*Lane*, Crawford and Co., 1872], p. 352. Likewise, *Huainanzi* 9, *Huangdi Sijing*, *Guanzi* 15.4 (45) and 21.3 (67) and *Hanfeizi* 33 all talk about a well-run state where people don't feel *De* or *Yuan* when receiving rewards or punishments because they understand that these are appropriate (because the ruler has made everything clear and is unbiased).

[225] *A Patterned Past*: *Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography*, Harvard East Asian Monographs, 2001, p. 214.

[226] E.g., *Chunqiu Zuozhuan*: Yin *Gong* 隱公 5.4, Wen *Gong* 文公 6.8, Ai *Gong* 哀公 2.3.

him as befits a noble man of the state."[227] This example broadens the possible responses to those we are indebted to, not only with regards to vengeance, but how to repay favors (*De* 德). If we are treated as an insignificant nobody, we are entitled to repay them in similar fashion; i.e., not at all. Likewise, a passage in the *Guanzi* says, "(One who) parades the giving of favors will hardly be requited" (見施之德幾於不報), meaning that ostentatious favors win small returns. Such a person, and his or her act as well, is lacking in (genuine) *De* (*Wu De* 無德), and as such deserves no favorable recompense.[228]

Chapter 63 of the *Laozi* famously offers a radical answer on how to respond to *Yuan* — ill will: "requite ill will with goodwill" (*Bao Yuan Yi De* 報怨以德).[229] This text suggests that we respond favorably to those who don't treat us favorably, that we should still extend our generosity and goodwill (and possibly forgiveness) to those who, for whatever reason, only despise and wish ill upon us. At first glance, this seems to amount to advocating rewarding people for maltreating us, which might only encourage them to exploit us and, as such, is a bad bit of wisdom. This might be considered raising moral virtue (e.g., tolerance, forgiveness, clemency) to the point of it being a vice. But there is more to it than that. For one, the *Laozi* text does not contain the word "always" or "certainly" (e.g. *Chang* 常 or *Bi* 必), although obviously, even from ancient times, people have assumed the maxim implies that we always or consistently follow this advice. Confucius was one such person (see below). But Michael LaFargue has convincingly argued that aphorisms such as this should not be understood as universal principles; that they are corrective advice, intended to prompt us to entertain alternative attitudes and courses of action, and finally that they generally have a specific "target," which should not be universalized.[230]

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[227]臣事范、中行氏，范、中行氏皆眾人遇我，我故眾人報之。至於智伯，國士遇我，我故國士報之。, Mark Edward Lewis, *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, p. 77.

[228] "Conditions and Circumstances" (*Xingjie* 形勢), chapter 1.2.

[229] In the Guodian version of this chapter (A8), 報怨以德 is missing, suggesting it was added later on. However, it appears the maxim is very old, preceding Confucius (see *Lunyu* 14:34, discussed below).

[230] *The Tao of the Tao Te Ching*, pp. 201–204.

From this understanding, 報怨以德 need mean nothing more, or less, than suggesting that there may be circumstances where maintaining a sense of goodwill or benevolence towards someone who resents or who exhibits animosity towards us is a reasonable (and beneficial) thing to do. The situation might be such that a costly war between two groups is likely to break out unless someone tries to end the conflict, by "turning the other cheek" and abstaining from avenging some wrong. Philosophers and religious thinkers from many traditions across the world have expressed such a vision.[231] Such forbearance or goodwill is often, but not *always*, appreciated, and generates goodwill (and possibly reconciliation) in return. Rather than fight fire with fire, so to speak, one should fight fire with water. To turn again to McCullough for a practical, evolutionary explanation: "When the costs of revenge are too high relative to its expected deterrence benefits, an organism might pursue an alternative course of behavior — forgiveness being one of the more likely ones."[232] Naturally, transgressors of laws (and some moral norms) would likely not go unpunished, lest the social order be undermined.

Confucius seems to have disagreed with the *Laozi*'s "precept." He is asked in the *Analects* 14.34 what he thinks of this advice to requite *Yuan* with *De* and replies, "And how would we repay *De*? (We should rather) use *Zhi* (直) to repay *Yuan* and use *De* to repay *De*." (何以報德以直報怨以德報德). For Confucius, it seems, it is inconceivable and inappropriate to respond in identical ways to both *De* and *Yuan*. Our responses must be different. He asserts that we should respond to *Yuan* in a "straightforward" or "just" (*Zhi* 直) manner. But what this entails is far from clear. We may recall that 直 is part of the character 德, and rhymes with it, but Confucius clearly distinguished them. Edward Slingerland writes, "the point of 14.34 seems to be that order is brought about through proper discrimination. Each type of behavior has a response that is proper to it: injury should be met with sternness, whereas kindness is to be rewarded with kindness. Failure to discriminate in this way is an invitation to chaos as Huang Kan notes, 'The reason that one does not repay injury with kindness is that, were one to do so, then everyone in the world would begin behaving in an injurious fashion, expecting to be

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[231] For examples, see the *New Testament*; Matthew 5:38–48, Peter 3:9, Romans 12.14, 12.17 and 12.21.

[232] "Evolved Mechanisms for Revenge and Forgiveness," p. 13.

rewarded with kindness. This is the Way of inviting injury.'"[233] Huang Kan's criticism, (and Confucius'), is only convincing if one thinks the *Laozi*'s advice is intended to serve as an inflexible, unconditional, universal principle or rule.

Later literati clarify that the *Laozi*'s suggested course of action is "contrary to ritual propriety" (*Fei Li* 非禮); reciprocity was a 'rite.' The *Ritual Records* states: "(For a favor) to go out (from you) and not come back is contrary to ritual propriety; (for a favor) to come (to you) and nothing is sent back out is also contrary to ritual propriety" (往而不來非禮也來而不往亦非禮也).[234] Even horses and oxen were repaid for their service and *De* (favors) by receiving thoughtful burials.[235] Yet Confucius doesn't advocate returning *Yuan* with *Yuan*, even though this could plausibly be considered "just" (*Zhi* 直). In *Lunyu* 12.2 and 15.24 Confucius says "What you yourself do not desire, do not give to/inflict upon others" (己所不欲勿施於人), which, it is safe to say, would include *Yuan*. In 12.2 he says that if you follow this, you will incur no *Yuan* within the family or state. It seems clear, however, that responding with *Yuan* may be understandable and forgivable, for Confucians implore us to take a look at ourselves when we are treated poorly to see if the blame lies with us, that is, perhaps we deserve to be treated/responded to with *Yuan*.

An example of how the *Laozi*'s advice works can be found in "Yielding" (*Tuirang* 退讓), chapter 7.4 of Jia Yi's *Xinshu* 新書, from the early Han Dynasty.[236] In brief, farmers from Chu wrecked a crop of melons in the neighboring state of Liang due to jealousy. The Liang farmers wanted to return (報) the favor by destroying Chu's crop, (i.e., 報怨以怨), but Liang's magnate Song Jiu 宋就 rejected the idea saying it would only enhance the animosity. Instead, he told them to secretly help/revive Chu's crop at night, which they did. Song's counterpart in Chu was

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[233] *Confucius Analects*, p. 168.

[234] *Qu Li Shang* 曲禮上. My addition of "favor" in parentheses is an interpretation, which I think is warranted. It is perhaps possible that ill will or harm should be returned as well, as is the case with some codes of honor. See Lewis's *Sanctioned Violence in Early China*, esp. pp. 80–94.

[235] "Far-Reaching Discussions" (*Fanlun* 氾論), chapter 13 of the *Huainanzi*.

[236] An alternative interpretation of this passage can be found in Charles T. Sanft's 2005 dissertation "Rule: A Study of Jia Yi's *Xin Shu*," pp. 54–55.

pleased, but the Chu king was angry and ashamed (*Chou* 醜). So the Chu king gave his thanks by giving expensive gifts and opening up a dialog with the estranged Liang king. Jia Yi commends Song Jiu and affirms the *Laozi*'s advice of "requiting ill-will with goodwill" (報怨以德). Song Jiu had defused a potentially disastrous situation, put his "rival" in his debt and improved an inter-state relationship. This application also coincides with the rest of *Laozi* 63 (and part of 64) where the advice is to deal with things (problems) while they are small and easy to deal with.

The "Illustrating Lao(zi)" (*Yu Lao* 喻老, #21) chapter of the *Hanfeizi* uses a number of semi-historical episodes to illustrate this.[237] For example, the exiled ducal son of Jin, Chong'er 重耳, passed through Zheng, but was not treated with any courtesy (*Bu Li* 不禮) by Zheng's ruler. Minister Shu Zhan 叔瞻 remonstrated, telling Zheng's ruler that Chong'er was a worthy man and, if treated kindly, the Zheng ruler would "accumulate *De*-goodwill" (*Ji De* 積德), or as W.K. Liao put it, would "place him under an obligation."[238] His ruler refused, so Shu Zhan suggested he had better kill Chong'er to avoid retribution for his malfeasance/impropriety. Again he refused, and so, as one would expect, Chong'er led an army into Zheng and routed them. Shu Zhan's advice to "accumulate *De*" seems to be an example of shrewd manipulation of the *Bao* system for personal gain, and he clearly understood that, in terms of *De* and *Yuan*, people will generally return *Yuan* for *Yuan*. Both parties would benefit in the end if Zheng had treated Chong'er more favorably. Interestingly, Chong'er himself passed up an opportunity to follow the *Laozi*'s advice to "use *De* to requite *Yuan*." If he had, Zheng would be indebted and *he* would have "accumulated *De*." We may recall the earlier discussion of the Pan Geng 盤庚 chapter of the *Documents* where "accumulating *De*-goodwill/gratitude/merit" occurred when one treated the people favorably (德). The *Huainanzi* also says, "Always by means of accumulated *De* one can combat accumulated *Yuan*" (常以積德擊積怨).[239] *De* and *Yuan* not only define each other but they have a persistent interplay in human lives.

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[237] See Liao (1959), pp. 212–217.

[238] Ibid., p. 216.

[239] Chapter 15: "Overview of the Military" (*Bing Lüe* 兵略). Recall Nivison's "bank of credit" explanation above.

The mention of shame (*Chou* 醜) in the story of Song Jiu warrants further discussion. Although the *Laozi* does not say so, this likely played a part in the motivation and effectiveness of the recommendation to "requite ill will with goodwill" (報怨以德). In a "shame society" like China, where people are generally more uncomfortable being in debt to others and losing "face," the *Laozi*'s advice may be more effective than in others, although if too blatant, one could provoke a violent response.[240] This would be distinct from *purposely* trying to shame someone, which would consist of coercion and thus very much *Youwei* 有為, which runs contrary to the *Laozi*'s *Wuwei* 無為 ethos.[241] The Indian classic *Dhammapada*, chapter 10, similarly advises "Win over an angry person with poise. Win over a mean one with kindness. Win over a greedy person with generosity and one who speaks falsely with honesty."[242] This undoubtedly relies on both feelings of shame and what leading psychologist Jonathan Haidt calls "elevation": "Elevation is elicited by acts of charity, gratitude, fidelity, generosity, or any other strong display of virtue … it gives rise to a specific motivation or action tendency: emulation…"[243] This is firmly consistent with the influential or charismatic aspects of *De* discussed earlier. This being the case, it is somewhat surprising that Confucius did not share the *Laozi*'s outlook. In *Lunyu* 12.22, Confucius believes that one who is "straight/just" (*Zhi* 直) "can cause the crooked to be straight/just" (能使枉者直), which sounds like the effect *De* was believed to have. *Zhi* thus seems to be some middle ground between *De* and *Yuan*, but it is left unexplained in the text.

Reciprocity was a moral norm: one *should* return favors and one *should not* injure or feel enmity to those who have helped us. As with much of the moralistic talk in ancient China (and elsewhere), reasons were usually given as to *why* we should follow these norms, and these reasons are always founded on self-interest: one should return favors because it is beneficial to do so. For a ruler, this meant that getting the support of (*De* 得) the people and getting the most

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[240] Cf. Lewis (1990), pp. 37–42.

[241] See earlier discussion of *Laozi* 38.

[242] *The Dhammapada: Verses on the Way* by Glenn Wallis (Random House Modern Library, 2004), p. 48.

[243] "Witnessing Excellence in Action: The 'Other-praising' Emotions of Elevation, Gratitude, and Admiration" in *The Journal of Positive Psychology*, vol. 4, no. 2 (March 2009), p. 106.

out of them was greatly enhanced by treating them well, by giving something back for their service and hard work. If one didn't, resentment and ill will would accumulate and the ruler would find himself in trouble.[244] On the subject of the "advantage of reciprocity" (*Xiangbao Zhi Shi* 相報之勢), a passage in the *Huainanzi* says that it would be futile to expect anything from one's subjects if the ruler's "*De* did not flow down to the people" (德不下流於民).[245] One must give in order to get. Likewise, Liu Xiang 劉向, in a chapter entitled "Returning Kindness" (*Fu En* 復恩), "dispensing *De*" (施德) is connected to "receiving kindness" (*Shou En* 受恩), "rewards" (Shang 賞) and even "salary" (*Lu* 祿). *Bao* 報 and *Fu* 復, are used throughout to describe the act of "returning" kindness or beneficence and service. And while reciprocity is being advanced as a good political or social practice, "not seeking rewards" (*Bu Qiu Qi Shang* 不求其賞) and "not (considering oneself) virtuous/beneficent" (*Bu De* 不德) are added to put forward a moral message.[246] This moral attitude is found in a great many early Chinese texts, especially during the Han Dynasty.

As seen on the oracle-bone inscriptions of the Shang, the bronze inscriptions of the Zhou and numerous poems/songs in the *Odes*, nobles *did* seek blessings from the heavenly spirits by means of proper sacrifices and deeds thought to accord with their wishes. In the "Thorny Caltrop" (*Chuci* 楚茨, Ode #202), for example, the ancestral spirits responded to (*Bao* 報) perfect sacrifices and ceremonies with the desired "great blessings" (*Jie Fu* 介福).[247] The reasons for the sacrifices and ceremonies may have included sincere filial piety and gratitude, a desire for gain/blessings (i.e., *do ut des*), and/or as a way to "coerce" capricious spirits into cooperating. However, as society became more moralized, disdain was felt for seeking rewards and blessings for good deeds. One should be "virtuous" — courageous, loyal, filial, moral, kind, etc. — on

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[244] In chapter 10, "Enriching the State" (*Fu Guo* 富國), Xunzi quotes again the aforementioned stanza in "Solemn" (*Yi* 抑) to support his conviction that rulers who are overthrown bring it upon themselves.

[245] Chapter 9: "Governing Arts" (*Zhushu* 主術).

[246] "Garden of Sayings" (*Shuoyuan* 說苑), chapter 6.1. *Bu De* 不德 could also mean "do(es) not obligate"; See Gassmann.

[247] Cf. odes #210 and 211, the *Liji Yueling* 禮記 • 月令, or the *Mozi Tianzhi* 墨子 • 天志 chapters, which repeatedly mention "pray for good fortune from Heaven" (*Qi Fu Yu Tian* 祈福於天).

principle (or genuine caring, respect), not because of any kind of reward or reputation that may come. Although this attitude began long before the Han Dynasty, it is largely in texts from this era where we find explicit praise for "not seeking (re)compensation" (*Bu Qiu Bao* 不求報). A passage in *Huainanzi*'s chapter 9 spells this out clearly:

> When the sage-kings spread their favor and distributed their kindness, it was not because they sought compensation from the people; when the *Jiao*, *Wang*, *Di* and *Chang* sacrifices were performed, it was not because they sought to be repaid by the spirits with good fortune. [It is simply a natural, automatic effect, for] When mountains reach their heights, clouds and rain arise there; when water reaches great depths, serpents and dragons are generated; when *Junzi* reach their Way, good fortune and emoluments find their way to them.
>
> 聖王布德施惠，非求其報於百姓也；郊望禘嘗，非求福於鬼神也。山致其高而雲雨起焉，水致其深而蛟龍生焉，君子致其道而福祿歸焉。[248]

This is descriptive, but has prescriptive force through analogy. One *should* banish any thoughts of reward or recognition in order to follow either the (moral) Will of Heaven or the models found in Nature. Influenced by the *Laozi*'s vision, the author of *Zhuangzi* 20 also made this point in a descriptive way, describing a state of affairs in an idealized legendary past. In this "Land of established *De*" (*Jian De Zhi Guo* 建德之國), people are described as simple folk, unlearned in the social virtues of duty (*Yi* 義) and ritual etiquette (*Li* 禮), yet their lives are rewarding. They "give and yet do not seek compensation" (與而不求其報). This expectation of compensation perhaps derived from the ritual code of conduct, which, we have seen, demands every favor be returned. The Daoists argued that the *Li* were superfluous, for the "*Bao* system" can operate naturally and spontaneously. People not indoctrinated in the social virtues *can* naturally realize the desired goal of social reciprocity and selfless generosity. In the *Laozi*, this scenario obtains when society, and the sages who might lead it, model the Heavens and Earth

[248] Also found in *Wenzi* 6 and *Shuoyuan* 5.3.

and/or the *Dao*, all of which "do" as they do without any expectations of recompense.[249] In these Daoist texts, not seeking rewards or recognition for helping others is, for the most part, less a moralistic teaching as it is guidance aimed at efficacy and the achievement of one's broader interests.

Commenting on *Laozi* 7, the Heshang Gong commentary observed that the efficacy of Heaven and Earth are due in part to the fact that they "give and do not seek to be repaid" (施不求報). Alan Chan has pointed out that the "idea of not expecting any reward in return is a recurring theme in the Heshang Gong commentary, applied to both the action of *Dao* (chaps. 2, 10, 51) and to that of the sage (chaps. 49, 77). In commentary to chapter 49, for example, Heshang Gong writes: 'The sage loves and thinks of the people as infants and newborn babes. He brings them up and nurtures them, but does not expect or hope for any reward from them' (聖人愛念百姓如嬰孩赤子長養之而不責望其報)."[250] Sages are likened to parents who do not expect anything in return from their children. Nevertheless, traditionally children *are* expected to return the favor.

Additionally, not keeping track of who is indebted to us was also considered morally laudable. As a result, a common moral sentiment was "If someone has done a favor for me, I cannot forget this; if I have done a favor for someone, I ought not remember it" (人之有德於我也不可忘也；吾有德於人也不可不忘也).[251] In *Laozi* 79, one with *De* forgets who is indebted whereas one without *De* does not. Thus, one can be said to have *De* (good character) if one does not keep track of the debts owed. In *Laozi* 81, sages are those who do not selfishly store up (*Ji* 積)

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[249] See *Laozi* 2, 10, 34, 49, 51, and 77. The *Zhuangzi*, *Huainanzi* and *Wenzi* all quote or paraphrase the relevant passages in chapters 2, 10, 51.

[250] Alan K.L. Chan, *Two Visions of the Way* (SUNY Press, 1991), pp. 155–156.

[251] *Zhanguoce* 367: *Xinlingjun Sha Jinbi* 信陵君殺晉鄙. The *Shiji* 77 similarly has: 夫人有德於公子，公子不可忘也；公子有德於人，願公子忘之也。The idiom "有德於" is found in texts such as the *Zuozhuan*, *Guanzi*, *Zhanguoce*, *Hanfeizi*, *Huainanzi* and *Shiji*. Nivison interprets this idiom differently, that is, "A has *De* with/from B," where *De* means "credit for giving" (*Early China* no. 4, 1978–9, p. 53) and "gratitude credit" (*Early China* no. 20, 1995, p. 189). As such, he thinks it is synonymous with *You Zhong Yu* 有寵於, "had favor with," as seen in *Zuozhuan*, *Hanfeizi* and *Shiji* (See *Ways of Confucianism,* pp. 154–155).

anything and both act (on behalf of: *Wei* 為) and give (*Yu* 與) to others. As a consequence, due to gratitude and the "*Bao* system," they still have plenty (*Duo* 多). Rather than prescribing a calculating and manipulative method to realize one's self-interest, the author is merely pointing out to those who are resistant to helping others that there is something to gain by giving and helping others. Nothing one does for others is a waste. The fact that the good consequences of most behavior we would call moral were made explicit speaks to the unconvincing arguments in favor of morality for its own sake.

When it comes to forgetting the favors we have done for others and their obligation to return them, the authors of the *Zhuangzi* suggest we might be better off "mutually forgetting" (*Xiangwang* 相忘) each other, like fish in rivers and seas, rather than trying (in vain) to help each other.[252] Likewise, the *Deren* 德人 described in chapter 12 has everything he needs but doesn't know (i.e., has forgotten) how he got it. Why this should be encouraged stems from the *Zhuangzi*'s concern about problematic human "entanglements" (*Lei* 累), although some places in the text affirmed that sometimes they are unavoidable.[253] A famous fable in chapter 7, "Responses to Rulers" (*Ying Diwang* 應帝王), tells of "Hasty" (Shu 儵) and "Abrupt" (Hu 忽) who regularly meet in the territory of Hundun 渾沌, a name suggesting some sort of murky, undifferentiated mass, lacking eyes, ears or any sense organs, who "treats them very well" (*Dai Zhi Shen Shan* 待之甚善). One day they plan to "requite Hundun's *De*-kindness" (報渾沌之德)[254] and decide to drill some holes in "him" so "he" can enjoy the benefits of the senses. However, this well-intentioned violence kills Hundun. Among other things, this fable illustrates the dangers of obligations engendered by the "institution" of *Bao*. If Shu and Hu had been Zhuangist "forgetters," this would not have happened. In a similar way, a notable passage in chapter 5 declares that the giving and receiving of favors (德) creates a situation of obligation and entanglement (*Jie* 接), which Zhuangzi finds unappealing. (The word "oblige" in fact means "to bind.") Zhuangzi's sage needs very little from people, instead "receiving 'food' from *Tian*"

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[252] *Zhuangzi* 6 and 14.

[253] E.g., chapter 20.

[254] I.e., fulfill their obligations.

(*Shou Shi Yu Tian* 受食於天) and so lacks any compelling reason to commit himself or herself to this entangling system of *Bao*-reciprocity.[255] This predilection for independence and a distancing from the rest of humanity was likely motivated by the precarious situation many people found themselves in during the Warring States Era, where ties to certain people could bring about one's ruin. Naturally, this attitude was not shared by all.

Conclusion

We have seen that in the earliest materials, the Western Zhou inscribed bronze vessels and bells, *De* seems to denote the admirable character, ethos, and probably conduct of revered ancestors. Their descendants (ritually) pledged to grasp, follow and model both them and their *De*. However, even when "(admirable) character" is deemed the most appropriate translation, what these ancient thinkers considered admirable should not be taken for granted. In early China, as is true anywhere, a shared vocabulary does not mean thinkers shared the same values or endowed the terms with the same exact meanings, especially when separated by centuries. The ethos and admired character traits or virtues in the early period undoubtedly included courage, inner strength, prowess and loyalty in addition to favor, generosity or beneficence. As the semantic field of *De* broadened, it also became more neutral, in that flawed, bad and erratic *De* could be discussed in opposition to exemplary, good and consistent *De*. Those rulers who possessed good, admirable *De* (character), Heaven blessed and the people supported and emulated. "Prestige" also formed an important part of *De*, where filial sons and daughters sought to maintain the family's prestige and reputation in their lifetimes. To the extent that they succeeded in maintaining and building their family's *De* (prestige) their sphere of influence grew as well, thereby becoming a useful "tool" for politics and government.

In the Western Zhou, a fearsome demeanor or *gravitas* (*Weiyi* 威儀) was closely connected to *De*, and, historically, the Zhou were conquerors, and made ample use of force. Over time, however, through much reflection and a disdain for costly wars and needless violence, *De* came more to embody gentler virtues such as kindness, benevolence and righteousness. It also

[255] *Zhuangzi* 5, "Ample Signs of *De*" (*De Chong Fu* 德充符).

became more associated with a life-affirming and empowering force in Nature, often considered the essential requirement for life. Gentler still, in texts like the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, *De* (as an "excellence") was more connected to a serene or tranquil heart and mind and demonstrated in non-contentious, forbearing and non-interfering dispositions as well as a "channeling" of Nature's benefic potency. The more fearsome demeanor was replaced by either a more moralized ethos (Confucians and Mohists) or a more disarming and subtle one (Daoists).

For those who saw *De* more as a political tool, it was often paired with *Xing* 刑, "punishment," as one of the two "handles" of power to be controlled by a ruler. In these contexts, *De* was naturally linked with the distribution of benefits or rewards, opposed, but often complementary to force or punishment.

The "philosophers" of the Warring States era made no recommendations to model oneself on one's ancestors.[256] Instead, they conceived of numerous individual virtues, such as *Ren* 仁, *Yi* 義, *Li* 禮, *Zhi* 智, and *Sheng* 聖 that people should seek to embody, or principles one should align oneself with, often subsumed under the rubric of *De*. In addition, Confucians and Mohists tended to use the word *De* to signify a learned, ethical excellence; Confucians stressing the power this excellence had over others and its superiority to using force and coercion. While Daoists also stressed the influential nature of *De*, they had issues with what was conventionally regarded as right and wrong, good and bad, noble and base. They did not have the same set of values as the Confucians and Mohists and considered virtue-talk unnecessary and detrimental. Their conception of true virtue seems to transcend normative human conventions and morality while still inclining towards a benign state of inner peace that fosters social harmony. For these thinkers, *De*'s influential benign power is not showy, is optimal when it lacks ulterior motives and preconceptions, and is spontaneous and unsought-for.

Finally, in certain contexts, *De* as generosity, goodwill and gratitude was contrasted with *Yuan* 怨 (ill will, resentment) in social interactions, often involving reciprocity. Not keeping track of and not seeking recompense for favors was advanced as both morally laudable and,

[256] Mozi explicitly disapproves of such a practice because one's parents might not be worth modeling, in (CHANT) chapter 1.4: *Fayi* 法儀.

lacking any moral discriminations, as having higher efficacy. *De* (or, a reputation for *De*) could be accumulated, creating a sense of indebtedness or obligation in the other party as well as fostering reconciliation of disputes.

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