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APPEALS TO HISTORY IN EARLY CHINESE PHILOSOPHY AND RHETORIC

In a celebrated article,¹ Antonio S. Cua rescued Xunzi's (荀子) frequent appeals to history from disparagement at the hands of critics who see them either as crude manifestations of *argumentum ad verecundiam* or as mere ornaments draped upon arguments whose persuasive force must lie elsewhere. By revealing their potential pedagogical, rhetorical, elucidative, and evaluative functions, Cua demonstrates that Xunzi's uses of the past are neither fallacious nor supernumerary, but essential to his argumentation.

Cua's thesis must be basically correct even if the particulars leave room for disagreement. Western readers since Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832), who derided the appeal to history as the “Chinese argument” in his celebrated catalogue of fallacies,² may be apt to discount any reference to the past in Chinese philosophical literature as yet another tiresome example of unenlightened disputation, but it would be strange for a writer such as Xunzi, who otherwise avoids obvious fallacies, to resort on almost every page to what might be the worst fallacy of all. Either Xunzi was peculiarly blind to the limitations of this argumentative device, or his numerous references to history conveyed something to his audience that eludes most modern readers. Surely the second alternative is a better point of departure for serious interpretation.

However, while concurring with Cua that appeals to the past can only have served hitherto underappreciated purposes in Xunzi's writing, I would like to suggest a few ways to extend this insight by considering the use of history in Xunzi's culture more generally. Most importantly, our concern today with the historicity or objectivity of such references does not appear to have been shared by members of Xunzi's world.³ Readers today usually react to appeals to history by asking whether they accurately represent the facts, and immediately rejecting the entire argument if distortions or inaccuracies are discovered in the presentation of historical material. Although, as I shall argue below, ancient Chinese readers cannot generally have

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responded to historical references in this fashion, it is clear that Cua implicitly accepts this anachronistic modern attitude. After citing a passage from Xunzi with several historical references, Cua notes:

As I understand it, the historical explanations proffered are essentially ethical judgments or verdicts about historical events rather than attempts at objective historical explanations. Although I am in no position to decide the truth of Xunzi's historical accounts, I assume that given his own requirement of accord with evidence, Xunzi must have had some factual basis for his claims. At issue is the question of historical objectivity when ethical or value judgments enter into the historian's causal explanation or characterization of action. . . . Given his requirement of accord with evidence, it is not likely that he would have allowed himself to distort evidence to support his ethical theses.⁴

I have two objections to this statement. First, I question Xunzi's supposed commitment to "evidence," and believe Cua has misconstrued a crucial term. (In fact, I am not certain that Xunzi *had* a concept of "evidence," at least not as that word is used by modern empiricists.) Second, there is not much support for the inference that Xunzi would have taken care not to "distort" history in order to buttress his ethical theories. On the contrary, I shall argue that our notion of illegitimately "distorting" the past would have been quite alien to the early Chinese intellectual world.

The term that Cua translates as "evidence" is *yan* (驗),⁵ for which "experience" would be preferable on both philological and epistemological grounds. The crucial (and difficult) passage appears in the midst of Xunzi's attempted refutation of Mencius:

Thus those who are adept at speaking about the past must have [arguments] that are relevant to today; those who are adept at speaking about Heaven must have [arguments] that can be verified by human beings. In all cases of discourse, one values the manner in which they make disparate things⁶ cohere and the manner in which they tally with experience. Thus one can be seated and speak [the argument]; one can rise up and [show that] it can be instituted; one can stretch and [show that] it can be put into practice. When Mencius says, "human nature is good," this does not make disparate things cohere or tally with experience. One can be seated and speak it, but one cannot rise up and [show that] it can be instituted or stretch and [show that] it can be put into practice. Is it not a grave error?⁷

The details of this paragraph are far from clear. I gather that the contrast between being seated on the one hand, and rising up and stretching on the other hand, is supposed to imply that Mencius's theory may sound appealing if one is merely sitting around and chatting, but the minute one tries to apply it to reality, one discovers that the Mencian position simply does not work in practice. But, for the

purposes of this essay, the main interpretive question involves the phrase *fuyan* (符驗): Does this mean “tally with experience,” as I have translated it, or “tally with evidence,” as Cua would understand it?

It may not appear at first that much is at stake (since we cannot perceive evidence except by experience), but the difference is consequential. For a standard of “evidence” necessarily involves a concept of fact, while a standard of “experience” does not. If the experience of most ordinary people is that certain things regularly happen in the world, then statements about history that tally with this experience may be favorably received even if they are in fact false. In our culture, conspiracy theories illustrate this point: Many, if not most, Americans have the vague (and not totally unwarranted) sense that our government hides important information from us, and, accordingly, often believe—or at least take seriously—theories about extraterrestrial visitations, covert experiments, and so on, even if these theories are not supported by anything resembling empirical evidence.

By having Xunzi say that prized discourse must tally with evidence, then, one fastens him to a stringent, and, I believe, anachronistic concept of fact; by having him say merely that prized discourse tallies with experience, one preserves the possibility of a conception of history that does not take fact as its primary criterion. For it is evident that ancient Chinese thinkers, at least until Sima Qian (司馬遷) (145?–86? BCE)—and possibly even later—did not approve or disapprove of statements about history according to how well they fit what we would call facts. Rather, they valued statements about the past that embodied what *should have been* true, regardless of whether they embodied what *was* true. History was expected to be edifying, not necessarily factual. Modern readers may find this contention troubling and distasteful, precisely because we are conditioned to think of people who do not adhere to facts as irrational. But understanding a culture from a very different time and place demands the recognition that other human beings may not have cherished the same principles that we do.

Even scholars who sense that there is something fundamentally wrong with the way most modern readers approach references to history in early Chinese texts still often assume that Chinese writers would have looked down on deliberate distortions of history. For example, Michael Nylan, who argues that Sima Qian was neither completely subjective nor completely objective but fulfilling a religious obligation that made his project incomparable to anything conventionally classified as “history” today, writes:

By my reading, Sima Qian would wish a faithful recreation of the past for religious reasons. Distortion, let alone outright invention of the past, was not the way to accrue merit and charismatic power

(*de*) (德). Pious offspring were to make the dead appear exactly as they had lived, each with his or her own distinctive character.⁸

This thesis flies in the face of almost everything we know about ancient Chinese mortuary custom. Pious offspring were concerned with making the dead appear as they *should have* lived, not, as Nylan would have it, “exactly as they had lived.”⁹ But my objection to the statement that an ancient Chinese historian would have felt bound to refrain from “distorting” the past is not so much that it is untrue as that it is essentially meaningless. One can speak of “distortion” only in the context of a conception of the past that regards fact as paramount. Participants in a culture that routinely distorted the past must not have shared our very idea of distorting the past. Asking whether Chinese historians had qualms about distorting the past reflects the same kind of category mistake, therefore, as asking whether they thought the persons of the Trinity were consubstantial.

Consider the inscription on the so-called *Shi Qiang Pan* (史牆盤) (Scribe Qiang’s Basin), a remarkable Bronze-Age document that blasts most theories about early Chinese historiography. The inscription, comprising 276 graphs and dating to ca. 900 BCE, is arranged in two columns, the first recounting the generations of the Zhou kings, while the second recounting, in parallel fashion, the generations of Scribe Qiang’s family.¹⁰ The rhetorical purpose of this juxtaposition is to assert for the Qiang lineage the ancestral privilege of recording history for the Zhou dynasty. It was a way of claiming prestige for one’s own house by riding the coattails of the Zhou kings, whose authority was at this stage still uncontested.

The column discussing the Zhou kings contains a blatant historical error:

Great and excellent was King Zhao (昭王) [r. 977/5–957 B.C.]. He broadly overpowered Chu (楚) and Jing (荆); it was in order to open the southern route.

We know from other sources that, despite these glowing sentences, King Zhao’s southern expedition ended in disaster. The army was destroyed; the king died; and the dynasty never truly recovered.¹¹ This defeat, moreover, occurred just two generations before Scribe Qiang’s inscription; some of his coevals were probably alive in 957 BCE and thus knew firsthand what really happened.¹²

The reaction of Scribe Qiang’s contemporaries is not likely to have been “How foolish! Does he not know that King Zhao died ignominiously in the south?” nor even “Does he really expect us to believe that King Zhao’s expedition was anything other than an absolute failure?” Rather, they may have thought something more like “How cleverly he has put the best possible face on that humiliating affair!” or, it is not

too far-fetched to suppose, “Yes, this is how King Zhao’s expedition *should have ended!*” At any rate, no such overt contradiction of fact could have been considered at all persuasive if audiences were accustomed to judging such historical references by their factual accuracy.¹³

Moreover, the freedom with which the text prettifies the King Zhao episode highlights a major impediment to its use as a historical source. It is a unique expression of one author’s yearnings and frustrations, but not a very reliable account of Zhou history—nor, by the same token, of the private history of Scribe Qiang’s family. This judgment has consequences for both historians and philosophers. For historians, the *Shi Qiang Pan* shows that one cannot naïvely interpret ancient Chinese statements about history as accurate representations of fact, and, at the same time, invalidates the hypothesis (currently all too popular) that excavated materials can be used to correct the alleged distortions and fabrications of the received literature.¹⁴ By placing stock in texts like bronze inscriptions instead of texts like the canonical *Exalted Documents (Shangshu)* (尚書), we merely trade one set of biases for another. For philosophers, similarly, the *Shi Qiang Pan* shows that we cannot assume a post-Rankean philosophy of history when we read ancient Chinese writers. If we are to come to appreciate how *they* may have regarded appeals to history, we must shed any presumption that Chinese historians (and their audiences) felt constrained by objectivist concerns.

If this example seems too archaic to be relevant to Xunzi and the classic philosophers, consider the historical references in the “Refuting the Confucians” (“*Fei Ru*”) (非儒) chapter of the *Mozi* (墨子), where Confucius and his followers are accused, in a barrage of specific historical examples, of disloyalty and machination. Western scholars have not handled these passages very adroitly. For example, in the notes to his translation of this chapter, Burton Watson considers each charge in its turn, and repeatedly concludes that there is “no evidence”¹⁵ to support Mozi’s recriminations. Unless one is prepared to dismiss the entire chapter as a half-baked pasticcio of slander and defamation, a different approach is required.¹⁶

A look at one of the most elaborate accusations is instructive. We are told that when Confucius took up residence in Qi (齊), the ruler, Lord Jing (景公) (r. 547–489 BCE), was initially disposed to enfeoff him, but was dissuaded by his renowned minister, Yan Ying (晏嬰) (d. 500 BCE?), who argued that Confucians (*ru*)—that is, not just Confucius himself—were unworthy.¹⁷ Then we read:

Confucius was enraged by Lord Jing and Master Yan, so he planted Chiyi Zipi (鴟夷子皮) [i.e., Fan Li (范蠡), Prime Minister of Yue (越)]¹⁸ at the gate of Tian Chang (田常) [a minister in Qi who assassinated one of Lord Jing’s successors and whose family went on to

usurp the throne], informed Nanguo Huizi (南郭惠子) of what he wanted done, and went back home to Lu (魯). After a while, he learned by reconnaissance¹⁹ that Qi was about to attack Lu, and announced to Zigong (子貢) [i.e., Duanmu Si (端木賜), 520–450 BCE]: “Si! Now is the time to undertake the great affair.” Thereupon he dispatched Zigong to Qi, where he relied on Nanguo Huizi to secure an audience with Tian Chang. He urged [Tian Chang] to attack Wu (吳) instead, and instructed Gao, Guo, Bao, and Yan [four ministerial clans in Qi] not to disrupt Tian Chang’s revolt. He urged Yue to attack Wu too. Within a few years, the states of Qi and Wu were destroyed, with prone corpses in the tens of thousands²⁰—this was all the crime of Confucius.²¹

The confusing references to historical personages make these allegations difficult to unravel. We are told that Confucius, angling for a benefice in Qi, was furious at Lord Jing of Qi for following Yan Ying’s advice and refusing to enfeoff him. In retaliation, Confucius arranged a clandestine meeting between Fan Li, the Prime Minister of Yue, and Tian Chang, a minister in Qi with ambitions for greater honors. (This is how I construe the clause “he planted Chiyi Zipi at the gate of Tian Chang.”)²² Then Confucius went back to Lu, but apparently left behind a network of spies, who soon informed him that Qi was planning to attack Lu. He immediately sent Zigong, one of his most famous disciples, to Qi, where Zigong was granted an audience with Tian Chang through the intercession of Nanguo Huizi, whom Confucius had earlier suborned. Zigong persuaded Tian Chang to take control of Qi’s troops and attack Wu instead, and someone—either Confucius or Zigong—bought off the other powerful families in Qi, so that no one would interfere with the plan. At the same time, Fan Li, who was in league with Tian Chang, attacked Wu with the troops of Yue as well. With two coordinated enemies, Wu soon fell; a few years later, Tian Chang murdered Lord Jian of Qi (齊簡公) (r. 484–81 BCE) and installed Lord Ping (平公) (r. 480–46 BCE) as his puppet. Confucius was thus responsible for the destruction of two venerable states.

Here is Watson’s comment:

The Tians, who had originally been rulers of the state of Chen and are therefore often referred to by the surname Chen, were a powerful ministerial family of Qi who eventually overthrew the ducal house of Qi and assumed rulership of the state. In 481 B.C., two years before Confucius died, Tian Chang assassinated Duke Jian of Qi, and this is the “revolt” referred to later on. As in the previous anecdote, the Mohists are attempting to show that Confucius and his disciples were at the bottom of all this dirty work, though there is no evidence in other sources to support this. On the contrary, *Analects* XIV, 22, and *Zuo zhuan*, Duke Ai 14, tell us that, when Tian Chang assassinated Duke Jian, Confucius personally urged the duke of Lu to undertake an expedition to punish him.²³

These references to the *Analects* and *Zuozhuan* (左傳) are correct, but Watson has neglected to report the testimony of other relevant documents (and, furthermore, appears to have missed the important detail that the name Chiyi Zipi refers to the Prime Minister of Yue).

Most strikingly, Sima Qian's biography of Zigong in his *Records of the Historian* (*Shiji* [史記]) bears out many of Mozi's accusations. A full translation and analysis of this fascinating text is beyond the scope of this article,²⁴ but the essence is as follows. Tian Chang wished to rebel in Qi, but was afraid of the Gao, Guo, Bao, and Yan families, and thus mobilized their troops for an attack on Lu. Although Tian's primary purpose was to eliminate these troops, and not to conquer Lu, Confucius, as a native of Lu, was still concerned, and sent Zigong to Qi in order to persuade Tian Chang to attack Wu instead. Tian was amenable in principle, but raised the objection that the other families in Qi would have doubts about his true intentions if he suddenly attacked Wu instead of Lu. Zigong thus arranged for the King of Wu to attack Qi first, so that Tian would be able to meet Wu on the battlefield without incurring suspicion at home. From the beginning, the plan was for the armies of Qi and Wu to fight to a stalemate, whereupon Tian, with no armed opposition in Qi, could take control of the state for himself. There is no question but that Zigong encouraged Tian Chang to betray his lord and seize power in Qi: "You, my lord, will be the one who rules alone and controls Qi," he tells Tian.²⁵ Moreover, knowing that the armies of Wu would be engaged with Qi, Zigong went on to advise the King of Yue to attack Wu from the south, and even orchestrated a fraudulent embassy from Yue assuring Wu that Yue was in no position to invade. The King of Yue was only too happy to play along. Wu was crushed.

The same story, with minor variations that by no means exonerate Confucius or Zigong, is found in three other ancient texts (and there are longstanding doubts about the story's authenticity for precisely this reason):²⁶ *Yue Jue Shu* (越絕書) (Documents on the Excellence of Yue),²⁷ *Kongzi Jiayu* (孔子家語) (School Sayings of Confucius),²⁸ and *Wu Yue Chunqiu* (吳越春秋) (Springs and Autumns of Wu and Yue).²⁹ Although it is more than a little surprising that the affair should be recounted in a Confucian text such as the *Jiayu*, this probably still does not constitute sufficient "evidence" to "support" the charge in the *Mozi* that Confucius was behind all the skullduggery in Wu and Qi, and as long as one operates according to the principle that defendants are innocent until proven guilty, Confucius and Zigong must be declared innocent. But to readers of "Refuting the Confucians," the burden of proof was not necessarily on the Mohist side, nor would "evidence" necessarily have been required for readers to tolerate interpretations of history that paint Confucius and Zigong as unscrupulous.

pulous conspirators. They would have been savored by anyone who was already inclined to believe that Confucius was a vengeful careerist who would not hesitate to contrive the destruction of his neighbors.

One cannot fail to notice that Confucius's behavior in this passage from "Refuting the Confucians" exemplifies the main Mohist criticism of his philosophy: By stipulating higher obligations to one's lineage and state, Confucianism in effect promotes injustices against people to whom one is unrelated. As a historical example, then, it would have transmitted (at least for readers partial to Mohism) a certain fundamental truth: A truthful portrayal of Confucius's character and why it is morally disconcerting. If it did not accurately record how Confucius *did behave* in this moment of crisis, it recorded how Confucius—again, from a Mohist perspective—*would have behaved*.

The difference between our attitude toward history and that of such readers is not that they did not care about accuracy, but that they esteemed other kinds of accuracy more highly than factual accuracy. They would probably have considered an account of Zigong's dealings with Wu that cleaved to the facts but failed to indicate his character as *less* veracious than one that cast the facts in a morally compelling fashion. Of course, a modern historian might berate this sort of historiography as tendentious, but that merely underscores how distant ancient Chinese historiographical sensibilities were from our own. Appeals to history were subject to the same aesthetic priorities as references to canonical texts like the *Odes* (*Shijing*) (詩經): An interpretation of an ode was judged not by its literal correctness, but by the value of the moral meaning it was able to extract from the words of the text.³⁰ Even interpretations that emphasize attention to detail (e.g., in settling ritual protocols) do so for a moral purpose; the goal is not attention to detail for its own sake.³¹

Ancient discussions of the choices that historians had to make when recording weighty events confirm the sense that moral truth prevailed, even to the extent that factual truth could be sacrificed in its behalf. Two similar stories about historians' responses to assassinations³² illuminate this theme. In the *Chunqiu* (春秋) (Springs and Autumns), the famed chronicle of Lu, the fourth item for the year 607 BCE reads: "In the autumn, in the ninth month, on *yichou* day, Zhao Dun (趙盾) of Jin murdered his lord, Yigao (夷皋)." The traditional commentaries explain how this came to pass; the fullest account is in *Zuozhuan*. Yigao, better known as Lord Ling of Jin (晉靈公) (r. 620–07 BCE), was a debauched ruler who grew weary of Zhao Dun's repeated remonstrances and unleashed a plot to kill him. Zhao escaped, however, with the help of a soldier whom he had earlier

treated kindly; unbeknownst to Zhao, this man was present among the guard sent by Lord Ling to slay him. Zhao Dun was on his way out of Jin, but had not yet reached the border, when his cousin, Zhao Chuan (趙穿), killed Lord Ling in a peach garden. Zhao Dun, hearing the news, returned to the capital, and before long installed a new (and more worthy) ruler. At this juncture, we read:

The Grand Historian wrote: “Zhao Dun assassinated his lord,” and displayed it in the court.

Xuanzi (宣子) [i.e., Zhao Dun] said: “It is not so.”

He replied: “Sir, you are the chief minister. You fled but did not cross the border; when you returned, you did not punish the criminal. If it was not you, who was it?”

Xuanzi said: “Alas! It is said in the *Odes*: ‘My yearnings have brought this grief upon me.’³³ Oh, how this refers to me!”

Confucius said: “Dong Hu (董狐) was a fine historian of old; in writing history, his principle was not to conceal.³⁴ Zhao Xuanzi was a fine grandee of old; he accepted this disgrace for the sake of principle. The pity is that if he had crossed the border, he would have avoided [the plot].”³⁵

Confucius’s final comment explains that by recording the event as he did, the historian Dong Hu achieved two things that were much more important than settling the pedestrian question of who in fact stabbed Lord Ling in the peach garden. First, he emphasized the principle that a chief minister cannot condone the assassination of the sovereign, even if the sovereign is wicked and deserves to be killed. Second, he afforded Zhao Dun the chance to forbear and let the comment stand, and thereby exhibit his own commitment to such high-minded principles. Though he goes down in history as a regicide, sensitive readers can discern that Zhao Dun must have been a deeply ethical man.³⁶

A vastly less ethical man, Cui Zhu (崔杼), occasioned a similar historiographical dilemma. Ignoring wise counsel, Cui insisted on marrying a widowed cousin, who immediately landed him in trouble by having an adulterous affair with Lord Zhuang of Qi (齊莊公) (r. 553–48 BCE). Cui, indignant, feigned illness; when Lord Zhuang made a ceremonial visit to inquire after his health, Cui trapped him in his palace and withdrew, permitting his guards to bring the matter to a close. In the end, Lord Zhuang succumbed to a shot in the groin (a deft allusion to the vice that proved his undoing, namely, cuckolding his minions). The narrative concludes:

The Grand Historian wrote: “Cui Zhu assassinated his lord.” Master Cui killed him. [The Grand Historian’s] younger brothers succeeded him and wrote the same thing, and both men died for it. Their younger brother wrote the same thing yet again; this time [Cui] let the matter be. When the Historian of the South heard that the Grand

Historians had all been put to death, he took up his bamboo manuscripts and left; only when he heard that [the affair] had been set in writing did he return.³⁷

Presumably, Cui Zhu was hoping that because he had not in fact killed Lord Zhuang—the fatal arrow was loosed by an unidentified henchman—he could escape the verdict of the historians. In a world where moral correctness counted for more than factual correctness, he was soon to be disabused. Even Confucius is said more than once to have declined to correct historical records that he knew were factually incorrect if he could thereby teach readers a more important lesson.³⁸

All the characteristics of the general approach to history discussed above are evident in the various manipulations of the legend of Yao (堯) and Shun (舜) by Warring States philosophers. This subject has been treated thoroughly in a recent article by Yuri Pines,³⁹ and only a review of the salient aspects is necessary here. The earliest references to the paradigmatic story of Yao's abdication in favor of Shun appear in the *Mozi*, where they are used to support the larger argument that rulers should elevate only the most worthy subjects, and not, as was apparently their habit, relatives and comates.⁴⁰ Yao and Shun were both revered figures by this time, but no earlier text relates or even alludes to the idea that Yao abdicated (excluding chapter 20 of the *Analects*, which is almost universally taken to be spurious).⁴¹

Later philosophers, such as Mencius and Xunzi, wished to combat the view that abdication was a viable method of succession—a view that had become popular in the interim—but could not deny that Shun had succeeded Yao. Mencius's tactic was thus to argue that Yao did not choose his successor; Heaven did so, and at that only after the people had clearly indicated their preference for Shun over Yao's son. This theoretical nuance allowed Mencius to retain the shell of what must have been a highly influential legend, but to oppose, on philosophical grounds, the argument that abdication might be instituted as the standard method of succession in his own day. Only Heaven, he contended, could determine the Son of Heaven; for whatever inscrutable reason, for our epoch Heaven has sanctioned hereditary rule.⁴²

Xunzi, who did not grant Heaven an active role in the establishment of dynasties, was forced to go even further. In a complicated argument, he asserted that sage-kings could not possibly abdicate while they are still alive, because the world would already be perfectly ordered under their governance and there would be no need for any change. Sage-kings could not even pass on the throne posthumously, he continued, because if there were another sage alive somewhere in the realm, the people would spontaneously submit to the new sage whether the dying sage-king willed this or not. (Xunzi did not envis-

age a true sage whom the people would not yearn to install as their ruler.) Most often, there is no sage in the world, in which case there would naturally be no reason to yield the throne to anyone. By process of elimination, then, Xunzi ruled out abdication as a valid procedure of transferring sovereignty in all possible situations.⁴³

These vibrant disputes paved the way for one of the most shocking remarks ever made about Shun. It comes from Han Fei (韓非) (d. 233 BCE), Xunzi's student: After taking over the throne, Shun took his mother as his concubine (*qie*) (妾).⁴⁴ Commentators rush to explain that *qie* need not connote a sexual relationship, and can refer generally to a female servant.⁴⁵ Such glosses reduce Han Fei's statement to little more than a startlingly worded tautology: As Son of Heaven, Shun would have regarded *all* women in the world as his subjects, his *qie*. Western scholars are divided on the matter,⁴⁶ but it seems obvious that ancient readers would have had to entertain the possibility that Han Fei might be accusing Shun of illicit congress with his mother. Han Fei was one of the most colorful writers of his period, and was especially fond of witticisms involving sex.⁴⁷ Moreover, it should be borne in mind that The Son Who Took His Father's Concubine as His Own—the wretch who could not even subordinate his lust to the duties of filial piety—was a stock villain in early Chinese writing.⁴⁸ Considering that the charge appears in a chapter entitled “Loyalty and Filial Piety” (“*Zhongxiao*”) (忠孝), it must be taken as a bitter attack on Confucian moralists, many of whom were not yet convinced of the virtues of imperial rule. They may prate about loyalty and filial piety, but they are hypocrites; their patron saint turned his own mother into his whore.

None of these writers, it should be evident, were concerned with the “facts” or “reality” of Yao and Shun; still less were they concerned that readers would take them to task for “distorting” history. Indeed, since it was hardly possible, even in olden times, to verify that Yao and Shun ever existed, let alone corroborate all the tales about their choice to abdicate instead of passing the throne to their sons, the whole story could never have had any value *except* as a didactic example. It would be quite absurd for a reader, ancient or modern, to respond to Han Fei's innuendo by exclaiming, “No—Shun did *not* copulate with his mother!” That would be an outstanding case of missing the point.

China has awed many foreign writers as one of the most historiographically sophisticated of all the world's civilizations—“No other ancient nation possesses records of its whole past so voluminous, so continuous, or so accurate,” wrote Charles S. Gardner⁴⁹ as early as 1938—but this evaluation would not have gained much currency in a positivistic West if the conventional Chinese approach to history had

not at some point moved away from the principle that didactic narratives were welcome even at the expense of misrepresenting facts. A survey of historical literature through the centuries confirms that eventually some (if still not all) Chinese historians viewed the detailed accumulation of facts as indispensable to their work. This attention to detail is especially characteristic of the massive productions of the imperial historiographical bureaux. While medieval Europe was commemorating events in fables and epics (and occasionally some written chronicles), China was compiling monuments like the dynastic histories and official digests of administrative law (*huiyao*) (會要) for one dynasty after another. The titles of some of these masterworks—such as *Zizhi Tongjian* (資治通鑑) (Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government), by Sima Guang (司馬光) (1019–86)—show that the moral and practical value of learning from the past was, as ever, foremost in historians' minds.⁵⁰ But Sima Guang would still have agreed with the proposition that willfully miscoloring facts makes the mirror less useful.⁵¹ What changed?

The answer must lie at least in part with *Records of the Historian* and Sima Qian's methods of historical investigation. The subject has been studied intensively for centuries, and a full consideration of Sima Qian's influence is not possible here, but I would like to close with some thoughts about what made Sima Qian different—as a way of both recapitulating the point that appeals to history would not have been held to a standard of factual accuracy before Sima Qian, and suggesting that, even for Sima Qian, facts did not bear exactly the same significance as for us.

As far as one can tell from extant documents, Sima Qian was the first historian in China to engage in a sustained consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of different sources. There had been scattered earlier comments about whether this or that book was to be trusted—for example, Mencius's famous statement (7B.3) about how little he relies on the *Documents*. But such discrete opinions were never developed into a synthetic methodology of inquiry, and, crucially, were not predicated on the conviction that sources must relate facts to be credible. Mencius's objection to the *Documents* (in line with everything we have seen about historical criticism in Warring States times) was that it does not say what it should say, not that he knew of documentary evidence contradicting its testimony.

Sima Qian thus represents something of a watershed. On the one hand, he has been criticized by many later historians for inserting his emotions into his exposition and failing to maintain a judicious reserve. Moreover, it is obvious from the very opening of *Records of the Historian*, which recounts the Yellow Thearch and his exploits, that Sima Qian was willing to treat subjects which modern readers would

consider the province of myth. On the other hand, there is no denying that Sima Qian introduced a new historical consciousness by observing that sources must be handled critically when they are contradicted by other sources. Sima Qian's protocols for judging sources, though not wholly amoral, are nevertheless substantially less moralistic than those of previous ages. In Sima Qian's view, when one considers the value of testimony, one must take into account the authority of the speaker and the extent to which the details fit with other testimony.⁵²

It is worth asking why Sima Qian should have had such novel ideas about the importance of establishing the accuracy of historical sources, and his traumatic castration is a promising place to begin. One might object that too much has been of that affair already, but we know from his letter to Ren An (任安) (d. 91 BCE?),⁵³ a convict who had turned to him for encouragement, that his punishment was constantly on his mind, and only redoubled his commitment to writing the masterpiece that we know today as *Records of the Historian*.⁵⁴ His explicit purpose was to finish his work and thereby demonstrate for posterity both his literary brilliance and his unjust plight.⁵⁵ Sima Qian thus had a peculiar motivation to let the facts speak for themselves. He was convinced that his emperor and contemporaries would never be able to understand him, but held out the hope that posterity might rediscover the truth and enshrine his work. There were still momentous moral lessons to be derived: Literati who are willing to suffer disgrace in order to achieve great literary works should be reckoned among the most treasured members of their culture; emperors who torture their subjects out of frustration are contemptible; and, most provocatively, perhaps there is something inherent in the imperial system that inevitably leads to this sort of abuse.⁵⁶ Sima Qian was not, therefore, a historian in anything like the Rankean mold. But he may have been, for singular reasons, the first Chinese historian to believe that moral truths are conveyed most persuasively if they are couched in factually accurate discourse. The enormous acclaim that he has received in the centuries after his death is a testament to the widespread and lasting sympathy for this ideal.

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ENDNOTES

1. First published as "Ethical Uses of the Past in Early Confucianism: The Case of Hsün Tzu," *Philosophy East and West* 35, no. 2 (1985): 133–56, and reprinted in *Virtue, Nature, and Moral Agency in the Xunzi*, ed. T. C. Kline, III and Philip J. Ivanhoe (Indianapolis and Cambridge: Hackett, 2000), 39–68, and again in Antonio S. Cua's

- Human Nature, Ritual, and History: Studies in Xunzi and Chinese Philosophy*, Studies in Philosophy and the History of Philosophy 43 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 73–98.
2. Jeremy Bentham, *Bentham's Handbook of Political Fallacies*, ed. Harold A. Larrabee (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1952), 43–53.
 3. One of the best studies to date is Kai Vogelsang, “Some Notions of Historical Judgment in China and the West,” in *Historical Truth, Historical Criticism, and Ideology: Chinese Historiography and Historical Culture from a New Comparative Perspective*, ed. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, et al., Leiden Studies in Comparative Historiography 1 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 143–75.
 4. Cua, *Human Nature, Ritual, and History*, 96.
 5. Antonio S. Cua adopts the same translation of *yan* in “Philosophy of Human Nature,” in *Human Nature, Ritual, and History: Studies in Xunzi and Chinese Philosophy* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 5f.
 6. Following the commentary of Yang Liang (楊儵) (fl. CE 818), though I am not completely convinced by it.
 7. All translations in this article are my own. For the original text, see “Xing’e,” in Wang Xianqian (1842–1918), *Xunzi Jijie*, ed. Shen Xiaohuan and Wang Xingxian, *Xinbian Zhuzi Jicheng* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1988), 17.23.440f. Compare the (very different) translation in John Knoblock, *Xunzi: A Translation and Study of the Complete Works* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988–94), III, 156.
 8. Michael Nylan, “Sima Qian: A True Historian?” *Early China* 23–24 (1998–99): 230f.
 9. Martin J. Powers, *Art and Political Expression in Early China* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1991), 282–333, discusses seven tombs exemplifying what he calls a “descriptive tradition” of funerary art (“what these monuments offer instead is a frank and accurate documentation of a highly affluent style of living”), but these tombs all date to a time long after Sima Qian; moreover, this “descriptive tradition” emerged, in Powers’ view, as an alternative to other modes of ornamentation that did not emphasize accurate representation.
 10. For the text, see *Yin Zhou Jinwen Jicheng Shiwen*, Kaoguxue Tekan (Hong Kong: Chinese University of Hong Kong, 2001), VI, 132–33 (i.e., inscription 10175); and, for commentary, Shirakawa Shizuka, *Kim bun Tsūshaku*, in *Hakutsuru Bijutsukan Shi*, fascicle 50, 335–97. For an annotated English translation, see Edward L. Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History: Inscribed Bronze Vessels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 185–92.
 11. Cf. Edward L. Shaughnessy, “Western Zhou History,” in *The Cambridge History of Ancient China: From the Origins of Civilization to 221 B.C.*, ed. Michael Loewe and Edward L. Shaughnessy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 322–23; and Shaughnessy, *Sources of Western Zhou History*, 181f.
 12. Cf. Li Xueqin, “Lun Shi Qiang Pan Jiqi Yiyi,” *Kaogu Xuebao* 156, no. 2 (1978): 149–58.
 13. Cf. Martin Kern, “Poetry and Religion: The Representation of ‘Truth’ in Early Chinese Historiography,” in *Historical Truth, Historical Criticism, and Ideology: Chinese Historiography and Historical Culture from a New Comparative Perspective*, ed. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, et al. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 57ff. On the historical value of bronze inscriptions generally, see Lothar von Falkenhausen, “Issues in Western Zhou Studies: A Review Article,” *Early China* 18 (1993): 139–226, esp. 167–71. Consider also the recently excavated *Qiu Pan* (逯盤), whose inscription, as von Falkenhausen has demonstrated in “The Inscribed Bronzes from Yangjiacun: New Evidence on Social Structure and Historical Consciousness in Late Western Zhou China (c. 800 BCE),” *Proceedings of the British Academy* 139 (2006): 239–96, esp. 258–67, contains demonstrable inaccuracies in its genealogical proem.
 14. Noel Barnard, “Chou China: A Review of the Third Volume of Cheng Te-k’un’s *Archaeology in China*,” *Monumenta Serica* 24 (1965): 307–442, is an old but influential example of this point of view.
 15. Burton Watson, *Mozzi: Basic Writings*, translations from the Asian Classics (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 136n.8, 138n.9, 139n.10, and 140n.12 and n.14.
 16. Cf. Guo Moruo (1892–1978), *Shi Pipan Shu* (Beijing: Dongfang, 1996), 76f. In fairness to Watson, it should be observed that the same tack was taken even in ancient times:

- in chapter 18 of the *Kongcongzi* (孔叢子), entitled “Cross-Examining Mozi” (“Jie Mo”), the figure of Ziyu (子魚) (i.e., Kong Fu [孔鮒], 264–08 BCE) rebuts a series of such accusations by showing that they do not accord with documentary evidence. See *Kongcongzi* (*Sibu Congkan*), B.24a–30b; and the full translation in Yoav Ariel, K’ung-ts’ung-tzu: *A Study and Translation of Chapters 15–23 with a Reconstruction of the Hsiao Erh-ya Dictionary*, Sinica Leidensia 35 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 64–75.
17. Incidentally, the focus in this chapter on Confucius and his disciples suggests that the term *ru* (儒), at least in this context, is to be understood in the old-fashioned sense of “Confucians,” and not, as has recently been suggested, in the less committal sense of “classicists.” Cf. Michael Nylan, *The Five “Confucian” Classics* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001), 2n.: “Ru, conventionally translated as ‘Confucian,’ means ‘classicist.’” (Nylan calls *rujia* [儒家] the “classicist affiliation.”) This interpretation not only fails for “Fei ru,” but would also seem to force Mozi into the Ruist camp, inasmuch as Mozi and his followers were no less devoted to the classics than the Confucians. “Traditionalists,” proposed by Graham Sanders in *Words Well Put: Visions of Poetic Competence in the Chinese Tradition*, Harvard-Yenching Monograph Series 60 (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 15n.1, is vulnerable to the same objection. For an evenhanded consideration of the *ru* controversy, see Nicolas Zufferey, *To the Origins of Confucianism: The Ru in Pre-Qin Times and during the Early Han Dynasty*, Schweizer Asiatische Studien: Monographien 43 (Bern: Peter Lang, 2003). My own view is that although it is sometimes inappropriate to restrict the sense of *ru* to “Confucians” (especially in later imperial contexts), the term nevertheless frequently refers to Confucius and people who explicitly identified themselves as followers of his teachings.
 18. For more on Fan Li, see Meng Xiangcai, *Xian-Qin Qin Han Shilun* (Jinan: Shandong Daxue, 2001), 67–82; Robert Eno, “Selling Sagehood: The Philosophical Marketplace in Early China,” in *Constructing China: The Interaction of Culture and Economics*, ed. Kenneth G. Lieberthal, et al., Michigan Monographs in Chinese Studies 78 (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 69f.; and Wei Qipeng, “Fan Li Jiqi Tiandao Guan,” *Daojia Wenhua Yanjiu* 6 (1995): 86–101. Recently, several East Asian scholars have, on questionable historical footing, identified the shadowy figure of Fan Li as a central figure in the development of Chinese philosophy. For example, Asano Yūichi, *Kō-Rō Dō no Seiritsu to Tenkai*, Tōyōgaku Sōsho 40 (Tokyo: Sōbunsha, 1992), 18–48 and 119–82, regards what he calls “thought of the Fan Li type” as a primary component of Huang-Lao philosophy. See also Li Xueqin, *Jianbo Yiji Yu Xueshu Shi*, Ehu Xueshu Congshu (Nanchang: Guangxi Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2001), 307–15.
 19. Following the commentary of Wu Yujiang, *Mozi Jiaozhu*, ed. Sun Qizhi, Xibian Zhuzi Jicheng (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1993), 9.39.460n.145.
 20. The phrase *yi yan shu shu* (以言術數) is unclear; see the commentary of Sun Yirang (孫詒讓) (1848–1908) in *Mozi Jiaozhu*, 9.39.461n.147.
 21. Wu Yujiang, *Mozi Jiaozhu*, 9.39.440. Compare the translations in Watson, *Mozi*, 138f.; and Yi-pao Mei, *The Ethical and Political Works of Motse*, Probsthain’s Oriental Series 19 (London: Arthur Probsthain, 1929), 208f. Both misconstrue Gao, Guo, Bao, and Yan as the name of a single person.
 22. Fan Li’s biography in *Shiji* records that after the great victory over Wu, he anticipated, correctly, that the King of Yue would have no further use for him; thus he fled incognito to Qi, where he lived as a private citizen—and it is there that he first assumed the name Chiyi Zipi. See “Yuewang Goujian Shijia,” in *Shiji* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1959), 41.1752. But it does not seem likely that the *Mozi* is referring to these specific events, since they did not occur until after Yue had conquered Wu and Fan Li had relinquished his title.
 23. Watson, *Mozi*, 138n.9.
 24. See the fine translation in William H. Nienhauser, Jr., ed., *The Grand Scribe’s Records* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994), VII, 70–74.
 25. “Zhongni Dizi Liezhuan,” in *Shiji*, 67.2197.
 26. See, e.g., Liang Yusheng (1744–1819), *Shiji Zhiyi*, in *Ershisi Shi Yanjiu Ziliao Congkan*, ed. He Cijun (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1981), 28.1214f.

27. “Yue Jue Neizhuan Chen Chengheng”; text in Liu Jianguo, *Xinyi Yue Jue Shu*, ed. Huang Junlang (Taipei: Sanmin, 1997), 7.9.161–79. For an overview of the theories regarding the meaning of the title *Yue Jue Shu*, see Li Bujia, *Yue Jue Shu Yanjiu*, in *Zhongguo Dianji Yu Wenhua Yanjiu Congshu* (Shanghai: Guji, 2003), 1–23.
28. “Qujie”; text in Yang Zhaoming, *Kongzi Jiayu Tongjie Fu Chutu Ziliao Yu Xiangguan Yanjiu*, in *Chutu Wenxian Yizhu Yanxi Congshu* P019 (Taipei: Wanjuanlou, 2005), 8.37.420–22.
29. “Fuchai Neizhuan”; text in Zhou Shengchun, *Wu Yue Chunqiu Jijiao Huikao* (Shanghai: Guji, 1997), 5.73ff. The pronunciation of Fuchai’s name is uncertain, and it probably is not Chinese. I follow the reading adopted in Donald B. Wagner, *Iron and Steel in Ancient China*, Handbuch der Orientalistik IV.9 (Leiden: Brill, 1993), 78 *et passim*.
30. See Paul R. Goldin, *After Confucius: Studies in Early Chinese Philosophy* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 19–35.
31. Consider the long speech by Invocator Tuo in the *Zuozhuan*; text in Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhu*, 2nd ed., in *Zhongguo Gudian Mingzhu Yizhu Congshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990), IV, 1535–42 (Ding 4 = 506 BCE). Ostensibly, the speaker’s purpose is to sift through the relevant precedents impinging on the question of ritual order at an upcoming summit, but the underlying reason becomes clear at the end (1542): by following the rituals scrupulously, the addressee can fulfill his wish to return to the righteous path of Kings Wen and Wu. I am indebted to Yuri Pines for this example.
32. Discussed together in both David Schaberg, *A Patterned Past: Form and Thought in Early Chinese Historiography*, Harvard East Asian Monographs 205 (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2001), 262ff.; and Q. Edward Wang, “Objectivity, Truth, and Hermeneutics: Re-Reading the *Chunqiu*,” in *Classics and Interpretations: The Hermeneutic Traditions in Chinese Culture*, ed. Ching-I Tu (New Brunswick and London: Transaction, 2000), 162f.
33. See Yang Bojun’s note *ad loc* for the debates surrounding the identification of this poem.
34. For a different understanding of *shufa* (書法), see Vogelsang, 151n.36.
35. Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhu*, II, 662f. (Xuan 2 = 607 BCE). Compare the parallels in *Chunqiu Gongyang Zhuan Zhushu* (*Shisan Jing Zhushu*) (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1990), 15.2279b; and *Chunqiu Guliang Zhuan Zhushu* (*Shisan Jing Zhushu*), 12.2412b. Cf. further Joachim Gentz, “The Past as a Messianic Vision: Historical Thought and Strategies of Sacralization in the Early *Gongyang* Tradition,” in *Historical Truth, Historical Criticism, and Ideology: Chinese Historiography and Historical Culture from a New Comparative Perspective*, ed. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, et al. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 233f. Compare the translations in Burton Watson, *The Tso Chuan: Selections from China’s Oldest Narrative History*, translations from the Oriental Classics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 78f.; and James Legge (1815–97), *The Chinese Classics*, n.d., rpt. (Taipei: SMC Publishing, 1991), V, 290f.
36. Cf. On-cho Ng and Q. Edward Wang, *Mirroring the Past: The Writing and Use of History in Imperial China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005), 27f.
37. Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhu*, III, 1099 (Xiang 25 = 548 BCE). Compare the translations in Watson, *Tso chuan*, 147; and Legge, *Chinese Classics*, V, 514f.
38. Yang Bojun, *Chunqiu Zuozhuan Zhu*, I, 473 (Xi 28 = 632 BCE); and *Chunqiu Gongyang Zhuan Zhushu* 22.2320b (Zhao 12 = 530 BCE). On the latter, see Joachim Gentz, *Das Gongyang Zhuan: Auslegung und Kanonisierung der Frühlings- und Herbstannalen* (*Chunqiu*), Opera Sinologica 12 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), 96ff.
39. Yuri Pines, “Disputers of Abdication: Zhanguo Egalitarianism and the Sovereign’s Power,” *T’oung Pao* 91, nos. 4–5 (2005): 243–300.
40. “Shangxian zhong,” in *Mozi Jiaozhu*, 2.9.77, and “Shangxian Xia,” in *Mozi Jiaozhu*, 2.10.97. The corresponding passage in “Shangxian shang,” *Mozi Jiaozhu*, 2.8.67, states only that Yao entrusted the government to Shun, not that he made Shun the Son of Heaven. Cf. Gu Jiegang (1893–1980), “Shanrang Chuanshuo Qi Yu Mojia Kao,” *Gushi Bian*, ed. Gu Jiegang, et al., rpt. (Shanghai: Guji, 1982), 7C:30–107.

41. See the discussion in Gu Jiegang, "Shanrang Chuanshuo Qi Yu Mojia Kao," 58–62.
42. The key section is *Mencius* 5A.5–6; text in Jiao Xun (1763–1820), *Mengzi Zhengyi*, ed. Shen Wenzhuo, Xinbian Zhuzi Jicheng (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1987), 19.643–52. Cf. Pines, "Disputers of Abdication," 275ff.
43. "Zhenglun," *Xunzi Jijie*, 12.19.331f. My understanding of this passage differs slightly from that of Pines, "Disputers of Abdication," 289ff. Cf. also Luo Genze, *Zhuzi Kaosuo* (Beijing: Renmin, 1958), 72ff.
44. "Zhongxiao"; text in Chen Qiyu, *Han Feizi Xin Jiaozhu* (Shanghai: Guji, 2000), 20.51.1154. Although Han Fei writes merely "mother," readers would probably have understood this as a reference to Shun's stepmother, since, according to legend, Shun's birth mother was already dead by the time he came to the throne. See "Wudi Benji," *Shiji* 1.32.
45. See the opinions in *Han Feizi Xin Jiaozhu*, 20.51.1156n.14.
46. See the references in Paul R. Goldin, *The Culture of Sex in Ancient China* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2002), 169n.66.
47. Consider "Nei Chushuo Xia," *Han Feizi Xin Jiaozhu*, 10.31.624f., where an adulterous wife hoodwinks her credulous husband, and, for good measure, persuades him to bathe in excrement. The story is discussed in Donald Harper, "Warring States, Qin, and Han Manuscripts Related to Natural Philosophy and the Occult," in *New Sources of Early Chinese History: An Introduction to the Reading of Inscriptions and Manuscripts*, Early China Special Monograph Series 3 (Berkeley: Society for the Study of Early China, 1997), 246.
48. Cf. Goldin, *Culture of Sex in Ancient China*, 88ff.
49. Charles S. Gardner, *Chinese Traditional Historiography*, Harvard Historical Monographs 11 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1938), 105. For similar opinions, see, e.g., Charles O. Hucker, *China's Imperial Past: An Introduction to Chinese History and Culture* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), 223–28; Earl H. Pritchard, "Traditional Chinese Historiography and Local Histories," in *The Uses of History: Essays in Intellectual and Social History Presented to William J. Bossenbrook*, ed. Hayden V. White (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), 198; E. G. Pulleyblank, "The Historiographical Tradition," in *The Legacy of China*, ed. Raymond Dawson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1964; rpt., Boston: Cheng & Tsui, 1990), 143; and Homer H. Dubs (1892–1969), "The Reliability of Chinese Histories," *Far Eastern Quarterly* 6, no. 1 (1946): 23–43.
50. Cf. Chen Jinzhong, "Zhongguo Chuantong Shixue Gongzuo de Neihan Yu Tezhi Qianshuo," *Donghai Daxue lishi xuebao* 5 (1982): 62ff.
51. Cf. Ng and Wang, *Mirroring the Past*, xiiff. Several Chinese scholars stress this point in response to what they regard as chauvinistic Western remarks about the lack of objectivity in Chinese historiography. See Wang Rongzu (i.e., Young-tsu Wong), *Shixue Jiuzhang*, in *Lishi Yu Wenhua Congshu* 22 (Taipei: Maitian, 2002), 135–61 (it is a pity that Wong did not publish this in English); and Hsu Kwan-san, "The Chinese Critical Tradition," *The Historical Journal* 26, no. 2 (1983): 431–46; more even-handed is Du Weiyun, *Yu Xifang Shijia Lun Zhongguo Shixue*, in *Canghai Congkan* (Taipei: Dongda, 1981). This nasty controversy would be defused by the recognition on both sides that "objectivity" is not the sole legitimate criterion by which historiographical endeavors can be judged. It is not necessary to rehearse here the many titles by Hayden White, Dominick LaCapra, and others who have established alternatives to objectivism in historical study. See, e.g., Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession*, Ideas in Context (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 599ff.
52. The most informed discussion is now Stephen Durrant, "Truth Claims in *Shiji*," in *Historical Truth, Historical Criticism, and Ideology: Chinese Historiography and Historical Culture from a New Comparative Perspective*, ed. Helwig Schmidt-Glintzer, et al. (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005), 93–113; see also Dorothee Schaab-Hanke, "Die vielen Stimmen aus der Vergangenheit: Sima Qians Eintreten für Meinungsvielfalt," in *Einheit und Vielfalt in China: Beiträge zum Pluralismus in der chinesischen Geistes- und Sozialgeschichte*, ed. Martina Maria Eglauer and Clemens Treter, *Jahrbuch der*

- Deutschen Vereinigung für Chinastudien 1 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2005), esp. 44–46.
53. In “Sima Qian Zhuan,” *Hanshu* (Beijing: Zhonghua, 1962), 62.2725ff. For a recent reconsideration of the authenticity of document, see Dorothee Schaab-Hanke, “Anfechtungen eines Ehrenmannes: Argumente für die Authentizität des Briefes an Ren An,” in *Han-Zeit: Festschrift für Hans Stumpfeldt aus Anlaß seines 65. Geburtstages*, ed. Michael Friedrich, et al., in *Lun Wen: Studien zur Geistesgeschichte und Literatur in China* 8 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006), 283–98.
 54. Cf. Zhang Qiang, *Sima Qian Xueshu Sixiang Tanyuan* (Beijing: Renmin, 2004), 135–41; and Dai Junren, *Dai Jingshan Xiansheng Quanjì* (Taipei: Dai Gu Zhiyuan, 1980), III, 1573–78.
 55. Cf. Stephen W. Durrant, *The Cloudy Mirror: Tension and Conflict in the Writings of Sima Qian*, SUNY Series in Chinese Philosophy and Culture (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), 8ff.
 56. To date, the most extensive study of Sima Qian’s view of the empire is Zhang Qiang, 410–82. Cf. also Michael J. Puett, *The Ambivalence of Creation: Debates Concerning Innovation and Artifice in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 182–209; Grant Hardy, *Worlds of Bronze and Bamboo: Sima Qian’s Conquest of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 184–93; and Jean Lévi, “Sima Qian, Han Wudi et l’éternité,” in *Hommage à Kwong Hing Foon: Études d’histoire culturelle de la Chine*, ed. Jean-Pierre Diény (Paris: Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 1995), 43–57.