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Epistemic detachment from distinctions and debates: an investigation of *yiming* in the ‘*qiwulun*’ of the *Zhuangzi*

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates a central yet perplexing term *yiming* in the ‘*Qiwulun*’ chapter of the *Zhuangzi*. *Yiming* describes a crucial way to detach from epistemic distinctions and debates. This term is often explained as ‘using *ming*’ or contradictorily as ‘stopping *ming*’. Yet neither of the two explanations can provide a full understanding of how *yiming* is adopted. I take three steps to explain *yiming*. First, taking an etymological approach, I argue that *ming* can be formulated as ‘X shining on Y’. Second, I use the formula of ‘X shining on Y’ to account for *yiming* and argue that this term refers specifically to ‘using *tian* to shine on everything’. Third, I unpack a cluster of *tian*-associated metaphors, which provides a deep understanding of *yiming* as an ideal way to mental tranquility.

KEYWORDS

Yiming; *Zhuangzi*; debate; *tian*; metaphor

1. Introduction

Yiming 以明 is a central yet perplexing term in the ‘*Qiwulun*’ 齊物論 (Discussion on Making All Things Equal; hereafter, QWL) of the *Zhuangzi* 莊子.¹ This term describes a crucial way to epistemically detach from distinctions and debates, which further leads to mental tranquility. Yet there are two opposing interpretations of *yiming*. One interprets it as ‘using *ming*’, while the other as ‘stopping *ming*’. The difficult interpretation of this term is mainly because there are various translations of the graph *ming*, such as clarification, illumination, and enlightenment.²

The interpretation of *yiming* thus depends on how *ming* is translated.³ Although all previous interpretations of *yiming* can gain some textual evidence from the QWL, they fail to provide a full understanding of *yiming* as an ideal way to detach from epistemic distinctions and debates. In this article, I avoid the common translations of *ming* as clarification or illumination but take an etymological approach and suggest that *ming* can be formulated as ‘X shining on Y’.⁴ According to the definition provided in the QWL, this formula can be used to account for *yiming*, which means using *tian* 天 (the sky) to shine on everything. Thus, to provide a deep understanding of how *yiming* is adopted, I turn to *tian*-associated metaphors in the QWL.⁵

I limit my scope to the QWL rather than the whole Inner Chapters of the *Zhuangzi*, which is due to a tricky issue on the nature of the Inner Chapters. There are two

opposing views on the coherence of these chapters. One contends that the Inner Chapters can be considered coherent and represent Zhuangzi's central philosophy (Liu, 2014). The other suspects the existence of coherence between these chapters and further questions their central status in the *Zhuangzi* (Klein, 2011).⁶ I take the middle ground over this issue. I am not going so far as to assume that the Inner Chapters represent a coherent philosophy of a person named 'Zhuangzi'. I can nonetheless make a minimal assumption that, although the Inner Chapters may have resulted from accretion and compilation through different hands, compilers would seek consistency in these chapters through editing. We can still read the Inner Chapters coherently; they at least represent compilers' view on them. In addition, although the Inner Chapters may be coherent, incoherence can be easier found from the Inner Chapters as a whole than from individual chapters. To reduce the possibility of incoherence, I focus solely on one chapter, namely the QWL.⁷

The investigation is divided into three parts. In the first part, I provide an etymological account of the graph *ming*. In the second, I apply the formula of *ming*, namely 'X shining on Y', to account for the term *yiming*. In the third part, to elaborate on *yiming* as an ideal way to mental tranquility, I unpack a cluster of metaphors.

2. An etymological account of *ming*

The graph *ming* can be identified from the oracle bones and bronze inscriptions that existed in the Shang 商 and Zhou 周 dynasties (P. Li, 2003, pp. 509–511). According to these early materials, there are two writings of *ming*. The first writing, which is obsolete and almost neglected, is 𠄎. The second is 明, which appears in all the received texts and dominates the present writing.⁸

Why did the two writings exist in these early materials? Dong Zuobing, an authority on oracle bones studies, explains that the first writing appeared earlier than the second; but over the writing process, the left part of the graph, namely 𠄎, was simplified or distorted as 日 (Z. B. Dong, 1978, pp. 30–31). The second writing 明, in other words, may be a result of the simplification or distortion of the first writing 𠄎. Yet the second writing did not replace the first immediately. Both writings can still be identified from the Warring States 戰國 materials. Even in the Qin-Han 秦漢 bamboo slips, the first writing is still more employed than the latter (Qiu, 1988, pp. 55, 71). For example, Xu Shen, an lexicographer of the Eastern Han 東漢, based his definition of *ming* not on the second but rather the first writing (Duan, 1981, p. 314). Thus, we have sufficient evidence to contend that the graph *ming* was originally written as 𠄎, and the present dominant writing, namely 明, is a result of the simplification or distortion of the former.

What then does the original writing 𠄎 reveal to us? This writing consists of two parts. The left part 𠄎 *jiong* symbolizes window; the right part 月 *yue* refers to moon. As a combination of the two parts, the graph 𠄎 depicts a scene of 'moon is shining on the window' (Qiu, 1988, p. 129).⁹ This pictorial image suggests that the meaning of *ming* can be described by the formula 'X shining on Y'. Accordingly, we can identify three elements from this formula: light, which constitutes the act of shining; the light source, X; and Y, the receiver of light. Explaining *ming* as 'X shining on Y' can be further supported by the authoritative lexicon, the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字. In one place, this lexicon uses the writing 𠄎 to define the graph *zhao* 照; in another, it uses *zhao* to define 𠄎 (Duan,

1981, pp. 485, 314). Hence, according to the *Shuowen jiezi*, *ming* is synonymous with *zhao*, a graph also meaning ‘X shining on Y’.

Thus, we can observe how *ming*’s various translations such as ‘illuminate’, ‘brightness’ and ‘clarity’ are associated with its pictorial meaning. For the translation ‘illuminate’, it refers to the act of illumination. For the translations of ‘brightness’ and ‘clarity’, both describe a state in which Y becomes bright or clear. Despite their intimate relations with the pictorial meaning, these translations only capture one or two parts of the tripartite elements mentioned above.¹⁰ To preserve the tripartite, I will adopt the pictorial meaning, namely ‘X shining on Y’, rather than those usual translations in the following discussion.

As *ming* is a common graph in early texts, I do not intend to do a thorough survey of its uses across early literature, which is beyond the scope of this article. In the following, I will illustrate that for the phrases that consist of *ming*, we can use the formula ‘X shining on Y’ to make X and Y (which may be implicit in these phrases) explicit, and thereby understand these phrases better.

Let us examine a phrase in the *Shijing* 詩經, which says, ‘[it is] not the *ming* of the east [where the sun arises], [but the *ming* related to] the light of the moon (匪東方則明, 月出之光)’ (Cheng & Jiang, 1999, p. 265). In light of ‘X shining on Y’, *ming* in this phrase reveals that it is not the sun but the moon (X) that shines on the world (Y), which therefore becomes bright. ‘X shining on Y’ also facilitates our understanding of a phrase in the *Shangshu* 尚書, which says, ‘prince [Duke Zhou], your virtue being *ming*, shining on [people] high and low (惟公德明, 光于上下)’ (X. Y. Sun, 1986, p. 411). In this phrase, *ming* vividly depicts how the prince’s virtue shines: as the prince’s virtue being *ming*, his virtue (X) shines on the people (Y) high and low and people are enlightened to become virtuous.

Furthermore, we can identify the two elements X and Y in the following phrases: ‘[something (X)] shining in four directions (Y) is called *ming* (照臨四方曰明)’ of the *Zuozhuan* 左傳 (Yang, 2009, p. 1495); ‘the sun and moon (X) have *ming*, [they] can shine on each and every tiny crevice (Y) (日月有明, 容光必照焉)’ (Jiao, 1987, p. 914); and ‘shining on things (Y) by the sun and moon (X)’s *ming* (燭之以日月之明)’ (Q. F. Guo, 1961, p. 504).¹¹

More relevantly, ‘X shining on Y’ can provide an insight into a phrase in the *Mozi* 墨子, ‘the debate is that which is to *ming* the distinction of right and wrong (辯者將以明是非之分)’ (Y. R. Sun, 2001, p. 415). The common translation of *ming* as ‘clarify’ only reveals to us partial function of debate, namely clarification. By contrast, if adopting the formula ‘X shining on Y’, we can obtain a detailed, full understanding of the nature of debate: [debaters on each side] take their perspectives (X) to shine on the distinctions (Y) between right and wrong, and the distinctions that are in unclarity become clear.

Therefore, according to the above examples, the formula ‘X shining on Y’ can give us better understandings of the phrases in which *ming* takes a central place. More importantly, ‘X shining on Y’ can facilitate our understanding of the term *yiming* in the QWL.

3. *Yiming* in the QWL

3.1 A common yet problematic understanding of *ming*

Before investigating *yiming* as an ideal way, I shall clarify a common understanding of *ming*, which involves a problematic approach that prevailed in the *Zhuangzi*’s time:

Zhao Wen's zither playing, Master Kuang's baton waving, Huizi's desk slumping—the understanding these three had of their arts flourished richly. This was what they flourished in, and thus they pursued these arts to the end of their days. They delighted in them, and observing that this delight of theirs was not shared, they 'wanted to use their arts to shine on others. [They use their arts] to shine on those whom should not be shined, therefore [they] would end in the vagueness of hardness and whiteness (欲以明之彼,非所明而明之,故以堅白之昧終).¹² (Q. F. Guo, 1961, pp. 74–75; Ziporyn, 2009, p. 15)

The three men who master their arts are Zhao Wen (playing zither), Master Kuang (waving baton) and Huizi (slumping on desk). As they are excellent in their arts, they delight in and therefore want to use them to 'shine on' (*ming*) others. This way of *ming*, however, would lead the three men to ending in *jianbai zhimei* 堅白之昧. The term *jianbai* 堅白 is usually related to Gongsun Long, who is known for his tenet to clarify distinctions between hardness and whiteness; but to his contemporaries, the distinction between the two attributes can never be clarified and his efforts is in vain. The word *mei* 昧 is defined in the *Shuowen jiezi* as unclarity (Duan, 1981, p. 302). The phrase *jianbai zhimei* 堅白之昧 thus suggests that the arts—that people like Zhao Wen, Master Kuang and Huizi want to make clear to others—is still unclear.

These futile efforts are thus described by the phrase *fei suoming er mingzhi* 非所明而明之. It consists of two parts: *fei suoming* and *mingzhi*. According to the formula 'X shining on Y', *mingzhi* refers specifically to a problematic way of *ming* in which Zhao Wen, Master Kuang and Huizi use their own likes (X) to shine on others (Y). This problematic way is echoed in another place of the QWL, which says that between Confucians and Mohists, to persuade the other side, each use their own perspectives (X) to shine light on the other's arguments (Y); and so, both are trapped in endless debates (Q. F. Guo, 1961, p. 63).¹³ Thus, in the *Zhuangzi*'s time, *ming* is commonly employed in a problematic way, which leads to distinctions and debates.

Nonetheless, the QWL does not imply that *ming* should be disparaged completely as a concept with negative connotations. As the expression *fei suoming* reveals, it is not that we should never use X to shine on Y, but that using fixed perspectives (such as those of Confucians and Mohists) to shine on Y is problematic. In other words, a feasible way of *ming* boils down to X: which perspective we should take to shine on things.

3.2 An alternative to the problematic understanding: *yiming*

As the term *yiming* is perplexing, I shall review previous interpretations of it and then give mine. *Yiming* appears in three passages of the QWL. In the first passage, it refers to a way to disengage from the incessant *shifei* 是非 (right and wrong) debates between Confucians and Mohists (Q. F. Guo, 1961, p. 63). As in the first passage, *yiming* in the second concerns a way upon which one relies to respond to the endless *shifei* (Q. F. Guo, 1961, p. 66). In the third passage, *yiming* refers to 'makes no definition of what is right but instead entrusts it to the everyday function of each thing' (Q. F. Guo, 1961, p. 75; Ziporyn, 2009, p. 15). According to the three passages, *yiming* is proposed to disentangle people from epistemic distinctions and debates. Among various accounts of this term, there are two opposing interpretations.

One interprets *yiming* by connecting *ming* to the problematic way (namely using fixed perspectives to shine on distinctions) and explaining the graph *yi* 以 as 'stop'. According

to this interpretation, *yiming* literally means ‘stopping *ming*’, or more specifically, ‘stop clarifying distinctions’. Scholars such as Xu Renfu, Lou Yulie and Lo Yuetkeung propose this interpretation. They argue that the graph *yi* 以 can be used interchangeably with the graph *yi* 已 (stop) in early texts and the two graphs therefore may be homonymous (Xu, 2014, p. 57; Lou, 2004, p. 72; Lo, 1999, p. 167). However, three problems lie in their argument. First, the interchangeability principle (*tongjia* 通假) should only be employed as a last resort in reading early texts. As Dong Tonghe puts it, this principle relies on conjecture and is often abused in reading ancient words; if there is another viable and, in fact, common reading, *tongjia* should not be applied.¹⁴ Second, we can identify in the Outer and Miscellaneous Chapters of the *Zhuangzi* some interchangeable uses between 已 and 以.¹⁵ Nonetheless, out of all such uses of *yi* 以, none can be found in the QWL (except the assumed instance in question) or in other Inner Chapters. Hence, instances from the Outer and Miscellaneous chapters cannot justify reading 以 as 已 in the QWL. Third, the graph 以 may be interchangeable with 已 in some texts. Yet 已 functions as an adverb (translated as ‘too’ or ‘already’) in all these instances, and we cannot identify any instances in which 已 functions as a verb (explained as ‘stop’) (Yang, 2000, pp. 251–262). Given these problems, explaining *yi* 以 as *yi* 已 (stop) is a tenuous interpretation at best. We should follow the common way: explaining *yi* 以 as ‘use’.

The other interpretation of *yiming* explains *yi* 以 as ‘use’ and views *ming* as a feasible rather than problematic way. In this interpretation, *yiming* means ‘using *ming*’. Scholars such as Thomas Radice, Karyn Lai and Waiwai Chiu subscribe to this interpretation. Radice observes that *ming* is not used to ‘express a rival distinction of “right” and “wrong”’, but rather is related to the sage who ‘acknowledges [original] unity [of things] through the light of clarity, he is free of preferences and makes no distinctions’ (Radice, 2001, pp. 33, 35). Radice stops short of explaining how the ‘light of clarity’ is used. Lai and Chiu fill this gap by taking light as a metaphor to account for *ming*. They argue that ‘to illuminate something is not to add an additional “thing” to it . . . Light enables us to see differently, to see clearly, what is already “there”’ (Lai & Chiu, 2013, p. 536); analogically, *yiming* does not mean that we should add our *shifei* views to illuminate *shifei* disputes, but rather that we understand the nature of *shifei* disputes and never let them constrain our life.

I concur with Radice, Lai and Chiu’s interpretations of *yiming* as ‘using *ming*’. Yet their metaphor of light is still not sufficient to account for *ming*. To adopt the formula ‘X shining on Y’, I suggest *yiming* should be explained as ‘using X to shine on Y’. The light metaphor can account for the act of shining, but neglects the light source (X), namely what is used to shine. Rather than focusing on the light metaphor, I intend to use a term, *zhaozhi yutian* 照之於天, to account for *yiming*. The two terms are intimately related in this passage:

There is no being that is not ‘that’. There is no being that is not ‘this’ . . . ‘That’ emerges from ‘this’, and ‘this’ follows from ‘that’. This is the theory of the simultaneous generation of ‘this’ and ‘that’. But by the same token, their simultaneous generation is their simultaneous destruction, and vice versa. Simultaneous affirmability is simultaneous negatability, and vice versa. What is circumstantially right is also circumstantially wrong, and vice versa. Thus, the sage does not proceed from any one of them alone but instead *zhaozhi yutian*. ‘This’ is also a ‘that’. ‘That’ is also a ‘this’. ‘That’ posits a ‘this’ and a ‘that’ – a right and a wrong – of its own. But ‘This’ also posits a ‘this’ and a ‘that’ – a right and a wrong – of its own. So is there really any ‘that’ versus ‘this’, any right versus wrong? . . . Thus, I say, nothing compares to *yiming*. (Q. F. Guo, 1961, p. 66; Ziporyn, 2009, p. 12)

The intimate relation between *zhaozhi yutian* and *yiming* can be captured from the two graphs, *ming* 明 and *zhao* 照, which are considered synonymous in the *Shuowen jiezi*. Hence, the phrase *zhaozhi yutian* can be paraphrased as *mingzhi yutian*.¹⁶ Using 'X shining on Y', *zhaozhi yutian* means using *tian* (X) to shine on Y, which points out a specific way of *ming*, a way associated with the perspective of *tian*.¹⁷ Rather than any fixed perspectives, this perspective enables us to detach from distinctions such as 'this' and 'that', 'right' and 'wrong', and 'generation' and 'destruction', which further leads us to disengage from debates.¹⁸

How then should we take this perspective of *tian* to detach from epistemic distinctions and debates? The QWL provides a cluster of *tian*-associated metaphors, which reveal to us an ideal method to deal with this issue: first, to question the nature of debate; and then, more essentially, to give specific methods to detach from epistemic distinctions.

The *tian*-associated metaphors are *tianjun* 天鈞, *tianlai* 天籟, *tianni* 天倪 and *tianfu* 天府. They bear an identical structure: the first word *tian*, followed by a concrete noun. More specifically, *tianlai* consists of the word *tian* and the concrete noun *lai* (which refers to the pipe); *tianni* consists of *tian* and the concrete noun *ni* (which refers to the wall); *tianjun* consists of *tian* and the concrete noun *jun* (which refers to the equalizer); *tianfu* consists of *tian* and the concrete noun *fu* (which refers to the store).¹⁹ These concrete nouns (namely *lai*, *ni*, *jun* and *fu*) denote the objects used in real life. In contrast, the corresponding metaphors (namely *tianlai*, *tianni*, *tianjun* and *tianfu*) represent imagined objects, and each can only be comprehended through their respective real objects, namely *lai*, *ni*, *jun* and *fu*. Furthermore, the metaphor *daoshu* 道樞 shares a similar structure with these *tian*-associated metaphors, composed of the word *dao* and the concrete noun *shu* (which refers to the hinge). Thus, the *tian*-associated metaphors' structure is '*tian* + concrete noun', while *daoshu*'s is '*dao* + concrete noun'.²⁰ Hence, *daoshu* can be a useful addition to our understanding of the perspective of *tian*.

In the following, I will unpack these metaphors, elaborating on how the perspective of *tian* facilitates our epistemic detachment from distinctions and debates. These metaphors can be divided into two groups. One group question the nature of debate, including *tianni* and *tianfu*. The other provide methods for us to detach from epistemic distinctions, which include *tianlai*, *tianjun* and *daoshu*.²¹

4. *Yiming*: an ideal way to detach from distinctions and debates

4.1 Questioning the nature of debate: fixed perspectives and limited use of language

Let us first examine the metaphor *tianni*, which questions the epistemic distinctions between 'win' and 'lose', 'right' and 'wrong' that are involved in a debate:

Suppose you and I get into a debate. If you win and I lose, does that really mean you are right and I am wrong? If I win and you lose, does that really mean I'm right you're wrong? Must one of us be right and the other wrong? Or could both of us be right, or both of us wrong? If neither you nor I can know, a third person would be even more benighted. Whom should we have straighten out the matter? (Q. F. Guo, 1961, p. 107; Ziporyn, 2009, pp. 19–20)

To win a debate, each of two sides must search and identify faults in the opponents' argument and at the same time, watch and defend against possible counterattacks. The

sense of defending and attacking involved in a debate can be captured by the metaphor *ni*. *Ni* refers to a parapet wall related to military use in ancient China, by which defenders can monitor dangers outside. This wall is not only a defense against possible attacks but also provides advantage for defenders to launch counterattacks.²² Moreover, a debate often entails different fixed perspectives on the same thing, which lead to definite distinctions between ‘right’ and ‘wrong’, ‘win’ and ‘lose’. Such relation between fixed perspectives and definite distinctions is also reflected by *ni*: from the perspective of those in *ni*, exist definite distinctions between defender and attacker, insider and outsider. Fixed perspectives and definite distinctions are questionable. To avoid debates, the text suggests the use of *tianni*:

What is meant by harmonizing with them by means of their *tianni*? It means ‘right’ is also ‘not right’, and ‘so’ is also ‘not so’. If right were ultimately right, its differentiation from not-right would require no debate. If so were ultimately so, its differentiation from not so would require no debate Forget what year it is, forget what should or should not be. Let yourself be jostled and shaken by the boundlessness – for that is how to be lodged securely in the boundlessness! (Q. F. Guo, 1961, p. 108; Ziporyn, 2009, p. 20)

Tianni is a paradoxical expression: *ni* refers to a wall by which a space is demarcated, whereas *tianni* refers not to a particular place (such as *ni*, which represents a limited space) but to *tian* (a boundless space, namely the sky). Unlike *ni*, the sky can never be used to demarcate any spaces. Therefore, *tianni* conveys a sense that lodged in the boundless, we would view the world beyond any fixed or narrow perspectives and eventually detach from distinctions and debates. The metaphor *tianfu* discloses words’ limit in debate:

For wherever a division is made, something is left undivided. Wherever debate shows one of two alternatives to be right, something remains undistinguished and unshown. What is it? The sage hides it in his embrace, while the masses of people debate it, trying to demonstrate it to one another. Thus I say that demonstration by debate always leaves something unseen Hence, when the understanding consciousness comes to rest in what it does not know, it has reached the utmost. The demonstration that uses no words, the Courses that is not a course – who ‘understands’ these things? If there is something able to ‘understand’ them [in this sense], it can be called the *tianfu* – poured into without ever getting full, ladled out of without ever running out, ever not-knowing its own source. (Q. F. Guo, 1961, p. 83; Ziporyn, 2009, pp. 16–17)

Every narrow perspective leads us just to see a part of the world. There are always huge areas that remain unseen, even if we exhaust all the words available to distinguish them. The sense of words’ exhaustion in debate is carried by the metaphor *fu* (namely store). Owing to its fixed size and shape, every *fu* can be easily filled by things: the exhaustion of its limited space. The sense of exhaustion that both *fu* and words connote, therefore, is ascribed to their nature of limitedness (that is, the limited space and limited use of language). To avert such exhaustion then boils down to avoiding the nature of limitedness, which can be reached by, for example, the demonstration that depends not on any specific uses of languages (*buyan zhibian* 不言之辯). The phrase *buyan zhibian* means that if understanding the nature of demonstration (namely without fixation on distinctions), we would be extricated from debates and never feel a sense of the exhaustion of language. In other words, we are free from any specific uses of language. This inexhaustible sense is in accordance with an ideal mental state that is described by *tianfu*: without ever getting full or running out.

Thus, we can elicit two senses from *tianfu* and *tianni*: inexhaustibility and boundlessness. Both senses are associated with the feature of *tian* (the sky), namely infiniteness. According to the two metaphors, all debates are futile and exhausting, because they are based on fixed perspectives and rely on specific uses of language. Only from the perspective of the sky, can our views get rid of partiality, and we never feel constraint in the use of language.

4.2 Methods for the epistemic detachment: *shiqi ziyi* and *yinshi*

How should we take the perspective of *tian* to detach from distinctions? We can identify two closely related methods: *shiqi ziyi* 使其自己 (which is depicted in *tianlai*) and *yinshi* 因是 (*daoshu* and *tianfu*). Let us examine the method *shiqi ziyi*:

Ziyou said, 'So the piping of the earth (*dilai*) means just the sound of these hollows [of earth]. And the piping of man (*renlai*) would be the sound of bamboo panpipes. What, then, is the pipe of *tian* (*tianlai*)?' Ziqi said, 'It gusts through all the ten thousand differences, allowing each to go its own way (*shiqi ziyi*). But since each one selects out its own, what identity can there be for their rouser?' (Q. F. Guo, 1961, pp. 49–50; Ziporyn, 2009, p. 9)

Shiqi ziyi is involved in the metaphor *tianlai*, which the text contrasts with *renlai* and *dilai*. *Renlai* refers to bamboo panpipes; *dilai* to the earth's hollows. As every bamboo panpipe has its specific structure, the sounds of *renlai* depend on how men play the bamboo panpipes. Likewise, as every hollow has its specific shape, the sounds of *dilai* depend on how winds blow into hollows. In contrast, *tianlai* refers not to any particular things (such as bamboo panpipes or hollows), but rather, to all the ten thousand things. Its sounds do not depend on the playing by any particular agents (such as winds or men) but exist in allowing each of all the ten thousand things to go its own way, namely *shiqi ziyi*. *Shiqi ziyi* thus reveals to us an ideal method to live with the world: we should not impose any fixed perspectives on the ten thousand things but just let each thing to go by its own way; consequently, we would be free from external influences and in harmony with the world. Intimately related to *shiqi ziyi* is the other method *yinshi*, which is articulated in this passage:

Simultaneous affirmability is simultaneous negatability, and vice versa. What is circumstantially right is also circumstantially wrong, and vice versa. Thus, the Sage does not proceed from any one of them alone but instead takes *tian* as a perspective to shine on them. And that too is only a case of going by the rightness of the present 'this' (*yinshi*). 'This' is also a 'that'. 'That' is also a 'this'. 'That' posits a 'this' and a 'that' – a right and a wrong – of its own When 'this' and 'that' – right and wrong – are no longer coupled as opposites – that is called the hinge of way (*daoshu*). When this hinge finds its place in the center, it responds to all the endless things it confronts, thwarted by none. For it has an endless supply of 'right', and an endless supply of 'wrongs'. (Q. F. Guo, 1961, p. 66; Ziporyn, 2009, p. 12)

We are often fixated on one perspective to view things as 'this' or 'that' and judge them 'right' or 'wrong'. To disengage from these distinctions is to take the perspective of *tian* to shine on all things. This method is called *yinshi*, which means that we should not deny the presence of 'this' or 'that' but rather, respond to each of them that is encountered at every moment. This response can be characterized by *daoshu*. In ancient China, *shu* (namely hinge) is an essential part of a door that allows for it to open or close (Duan, 1981, p. 255).

To install a door, we need to position a hinge in its place, around which the whole door could rotate. Once it is positioned, the hinge can revolve freely and not be fixed in any directions. Accordingly, we can easily open or close the door.

Analogically, we can use this hinge's feature to understand *daoshu*. *Daoshu* suggests non-fixation (on any perspectives) and also a freedom to move (between perspectives). At one moment, it uses a perspective to view the present thing that it encounters, calling it 'this.' At another, its perspective varies, and the thing that it called 'this' would be called 'that'. The boundary between 'this' and 'that' thus becomes fluid. Hence, *daoshu* just responds to the present thing and calls it 'this' or 'that', without fixation on any distinctions between the two. In other words, it just goes by the rightness of the present 'this', namely *yinshi*. The method *yinshi* is also presented through a monkey-trainer fable:

A monkey trainer was distributing chestnuts. He said, 'I'll give you three in the morning and four in the evening'. The monkeys were furious. 'Well then', he said, 'I'll give you four in the morning and three in the evening'. The monkeys were delighted. This change of description and arrangement caused no loss, but in one case it brought anger and in another delight. He just 'went by the rightness of their present "this"' (*yinshi*). Thus, the Sage uses various rights and wrongs to harmonize with others and yet remains at rest in the middle of the equalizer of *tian* (*xiuhu tianjun*). This is called 'Walking Two Roads'. (Q. F. Guo, 1961, p. 70; Ziporyn, 2009, p. 14)

The monkeys' attention was fixated on the number of chestnuts that they would receive in the morning, and their emotions varied with the numbers of the chestnuts distributed. They were furious when told they would receive fewer chestnuts in the morning than the evening, whereas delighted when told they would get more in the morning. Owing to their fixed perspectives, monkeys' emotions were easily influenced by external changes.

To appease monkeys, the monkey trainer used the method *yinshi*. Unlike monkeys, he detached from any fixed perspectives. As the total chestnuts that he can distribute (seven chestnuts) remained unchanged, to him, both plans (namely 'three morning-four evening' and 'four morning-three evening') were feasible and acceptable. In accordance with monkeys' reactions, he changed his plan from 'three morning-four evening' to 'four morning-three evening' to satisfy and harmonize these monkeys.

Yinshi can also be captured in the metaphor *tianjun*. *Jun* (namely equalizer) refers to the equation of things on its two sides. Analogically, *tianjun* refers to the equation of all things of the world. The phrase *xiuhu tianjun* thus reveals an ideal mental state to us: when treating everything as equal, we would not be fixated on any perspectives (unlike monkeys' fixation on the chestnuts in the morning) but respond freely to everything that we encounter (as the monkey trainer responded to monkeys' reactions) at every moment; and we are not only in mental tranquility, but in harmony with the external world (as the monkey trainer in harmony with those monkeys).

Having analyzed these five metaphors, we can gain a full understanding of *yiming* as a method to detach from epistemic distinctions and debates. Ordinarily, we are attached to some fixed perspectives, by which things are viewed as 'this' or 'that', 'right' or 'wrong'. These distinctions lead us into debates. To avoid this unhappy situation, we should take the perspective of *tian* (the sky). It means that we are free from any formed, bounded, or finite perspectives, but just going by rightness of the present 'this' (suggested by *tianjun* and *daoshu*), allowing each of things to go its own way (*tianlai*) and responding freely to everything that we encounter at every moment. Moreover, our horizons are not constraint

in narrowness but broadened to boundlessness (*tianni*); nor are we exhausted particularly in debates (*tianfu*). Consequently, we reach an ideal mental state without boundary or exhaustion, a state that is intimately associated with the feature of the sky, that is, infiniteness.

5. Conclusion

In this article, I focus on the puzzling term *yiming*. Although there are various accounts of it, however, none is satisfactory. My account first takes an etymological approach to investigate the pictorial meaning of *ming*, which can be formulated as ‘X shining on Y’. Hence, instead of using *ming*’s common translations, such as ‘brightness’, ‘clarity’ and ‘illumination’, I use the formula ‘X shining on Y’ to account for *yiming* and demonstrate that *yiming* refers specifically to ‘using *tian* to shine on everything’. In comparison with previous accounts, my account not only points out an intimate relation between *yiming* and *tian* (the sky), but also gives a full description of how *yiming* is adopted to detach from epistemic distinctions and debates.

To elaborate on how *yiming* is adopted, I further unpack a cluster of metaphors, namely *tianjun*, *tianfu*, *tianni*, *tianlai* and *daoshu*. Since these metaphors bear an identical structure: *tian/dao* + concrete noun, they together provide an insight into the perspective of *tian* (the sky) in contrast to any fixed perspectives. As the sky is formless, boundless, and infinite, the perspective of *tian* is beyond and superior to any fixed perspectives. Taking the perspective of *tian*, we follow the methods of *yinshi* and *shiqi ziyi*, responding freely without distinctions to everything that we encounter at every moment. Consequently, we are detaching from epistemic distinctions and debates, and free from external influences. In short, *yiming* is the crucial way that the QWL suggests to eventually reach mental tranquility.

Notes

1. There is large literature on *yiming*. For discussion of different interpretations of *yiming* in English scholarship, see Lai and Chiu (2013).
2. In different places of the QWL, *ming* is understood variously as clarity, illumination, enlightenment and bright, see Radice (2001, pp. 34–36). Different translations can also be found in A. C. Graham and Burton Watson’s works, see Graham (2001, p. 52) and Watson (2013, p. 10).
3. For instance, some scholars translate *ming* as ‘clarity’ and interpret *yiming* as ‘stop clarity’, whereas some translate *ming* as ‘illumination’ and interpret *yiming* as ‘use illumination’. These different interpretations can be found in Xu (2014), Lou (2004), Lo (1999), Radice (2001), Lai and Chiu (2013), and Wu (2013).
4. As *ming* is an image-based graph, its meaning is associated with its image (Qiu, 1988, pp. 128–129). For discussion of how image is related to thought in Chinese philosophy, see S. R. Wang (2009).
5. Metaphor is usually considered as ‘image-based’ or ‘imagistic’ language/thought, which can serve as a linguistic ‘sign’ of otherwise inaccessible, shared, and deep conceptual structure (Slingerland, 2004a, p. 336; Gandolfo, 2019, p. 328). This function of metaphor is commonly practiced by early Chinese thinkers to present their philosophies. As Edward Slingerland observes, ‘they (early Chinese thinkers) devoted a great deal of conscious attention to developing vivid and consistent sets of interlocking metaphors and metaphorical blends, which makes metaphor and blend analysis a particularly crucial tool when approaching these

- texts' (Slingerland, 2011, p. 2). Hence, by examining these *tian*-associated metaphors, we can reach a better understanding of *yiming*. For discussion of metaphors in the *Zhuangzi*, see Chong (2006, p. 370); for systemic discussions of how conceptual metaphors are involved in everyday language, see Lakoff (1979, pp. 202–251), and Lakoff and Johnson (1980); for the methodology of metaphor analysis applied to cross-cultural dialogue, see Slingerland (2004b); for discussion of conceptual music metaphors in Chinese art theories, see Park (2020). In addition, for the reason to include *daoshu* in discussion of these *tian*-associated metaphors, see my detailed discussion in Section 3.2.
6. For a detailed account of the debate between Liu Xiaogan and Esther Klein, see Defoort (2016, pp. 9–23).
 7. Yu Jiayi observes that the concept of author does not exist in early texts; the circulation of knowledge relied on individual chapter; and the received texts were compiled from individual chapters that already circulated (Yu, 2007, pp. 200–210, 213–215). Li Ling echoes Yu's observation, remarking that early texts are often made up at random by fragmentary chapters and have no stable structures (L. Li, 2004, pp. 197–198). Christoph Harbsmeier also questions the presence of authorship in early texts by examining the first-person pronouns, see Harbsmeier (1999, pp. 221–245). For the process of composition of early texts, William Boltz suggest that 'the practice of compiling texts from a reservoir of preexisting materials, combined with whatever newly composed material was called for, was not just widespread but also norm' (Boltz, 2005, p. 70). Focusing on the notion of textual fluidity, Oliver Weingarten also gives a concise review of scholarship in classical Chinese philology, see Weingarten (2009, pp. 599–600).
 8. For different writings of *ming* that are recorded in these early materials, see P. Li (2003, pp. 508–511).
 9. Similar readings of this graph can also be found in Ma (1985, p. 54) and M. R. Guo (1982, p. 393).
 10. One may argue that as early Chinese words typically function both as nouns and verbs, the use of *ming* as 'to shine', or 'to make bright', or 'to make clear' next to 'brightness' or 'clarity' is rather common. Nonetheless, I maintain that by the pictorial meaning, we can directly and easily capture all the three elements, whereas one or two elements are often obscured in common translations. The formula 'X shining on Y' can give us a full picture of *ming*.
 11. The phrase *riyue zhiming* also appears in the *Guanzi* (X. F. Li, 2004, p. 647).
 12. In this article, I adopt Ziporyn's translation, and use italics when revisions are made.
 13. According to a phrase in the *Mozi*, namely 'debate is that which is to *ming* the distinction of right and wrong' (Y. R. Sun, 2001, p. 415), the *Mozi* also understands *ming* in this problematic way. For a detailed discussion of *ming* in the *Mozi*, see Coutinho (2016, pp. 90–91).
 14. According to Dong, Bernhard Karlgren makes every effort to avoid using *tongjia* (T. H. Dong, 2012, p. 4).
 15. See Q. F. Guo (1961, pp. 339, 925).
 16. For discussion of the relation between *ming* and *zhao*, see Section 2. Wang Zhonglin observes a relation between *ming* and *zhaozhi yutian* but fails to give further elaboration. See Z. L. Wang (1996, p. 56). The relation between *tian* and *ming* is also shown in the phrase *tianming* 天明, which appears in texts such as the *Mozi*, the *Hanfeizi*, and the *Wenzi*. See Y. R. Sun (2001, p. 92), X. S. Wang (1998, p. 138), and L. Q. Wang (2000, p. 293).
 17. This perspective is echoed in the chapter 11 of the *Zhuangzi*, where we are told that with the perspective of *tian*, the sage views things without favors or biases; otherwise, our integrity would not be in purity (Q. F. Guo, 1961, p. 398).
 18. The QWL questions every perspective that people commonly hold. Nonetheless, it does not suggest that we should forsake all perspectives, but that we should seek a perspective that is superior to all others. This point is mirrored by Radice's insightful remark, 'though Zhuangzi advocates a kind of relativism, he still believes that one perspective—that of the sage—is superior to all others so long as they exclude each other (such as the perspectives held by Confucians and Mohists)' (Radice, 2001, p. 35). For me, this superior perspective is related to

tian. Qian Mu also observes the central role that *tian* takes in the *Zhuangzi* (Qian, 2002, pp. 296–298).

19. Many translators neglect the identical structure between the four *tian*-associated metaphors, translating them in an inconsistent way: taking *lai*, *fu* and *jun* as a concrete noun, whereas translating *ni* as an abstract noun (for example, ‘distinction’). For different translations of *tianni*, see Wen (2011, pp. 79–83).
20. Both *tian* and *dao* play central roles in the Daoist philosophy. The two are considered as basic principles that everyone should follow. In the following discussion of these *tian* or *dao* associated metaphors, I take *tian* and *dao* as concrete nouns (that is, *tian* refers to the sky and *dao* to road) to describe the Daoist basic principles, namely Nature and Way.
21. I do not suggest that the first group of metaphors just question the nature of debate and we cannot read methods from them, or that the second group just provide methods and we cannot read their questioning the nature of debate. I do suggest that the first focus on questioning the nature of debate, while the latter center on methods.
22. My account of *ni* is based on the *Shuowen jiezi* and the *Mozi*. The *Shuowen jiezi* says that ‘*ni*, which is *bi* (倪, 俾也)’ and ‘*pi*, which is *bini* of the parapet on the city wall (陴, 城上女牆俾倪也)’ (Duan, 1981, pp. 376, 736). The *Mozi* also describes *bini* as this, ‘*bini*: the width is three *chi*; the height is two *chi* and five *cun* (俾倪: 廣三尺, 高二尺五寸)’ (Y. R. Sun, 2001, p. 519). According to these descriptions, *ni* refers to a wall that is specifically used for defense.

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