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# A Confucian Slippery Slope Argument

Michael Harrington\*

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**Abstract:** The Song and Ming dynasty Confucians make frequent use of what would today be identified as a slippery slope argument. The *Book of Changes* and its early commentaries provide both the language and the rationale for this argument, inasmuch as the Confucians regard these texts as a method for identifying tiny problems that will one day threaten the state. While today the slippery slope argument is often criticized for promoting an unreasoned resistance to change, a close look at its use by Confucians reveals that they largely avoid this criticism, using the argument in a reasoned way to target not change, but excess.

**Keywords:** slippery slope argument, hairsbreadth argument, Mozi, Yang Zhu, Cheng Hao, Buddhists, Wang Yangming, Zhu Xi

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Diviners have no reason to fear the slippery slope argument. When coins are flipped or yarrow stalks drawn from a pile to identify a hexagram from the *Book of Changes* [易经], and the diviner uses this hexagram to predict a future state of affairs, the strength of the prediction has little if anything to do with an argument. Those philosophers and political leaders who rely on the *Book of Changes* as a work of political philosophy rather than as a tool for divination have more to fear from the way it shapes their arguments about the future of the state. To use the book's hexagrams in identifying an imbalance of forces in a given state, and to show how this imbalance will step by step lead to catastrophe in the future, is to employ all the components of what is now called a slippery slope argument. The Song (960–1279) and Ming dynasty (1368–1644) Confucians who enthusiastically promoted the *Book of Changes* as a work of political philosophy did not use the metaphor of the slippery slope, but they occasionally used a comparable image derived from an early commentary: a hairsbreadth mistake in direction that leads one to go a thousand miles off course. An analysis of this image in the work of Song and Ming dynasty Confucians will reveal a close cousin of the slippery slope argument that is distinctively Confucian, and which I will refer to simply as the hairsbreadth argument. Though the components of the argument vary slightly from author to author, it can be shown to have a single recognizable structure, and suggests the influence of the *Book of Changes* on Confucian argument even outside the commentary tradition.

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## The Hairsbreadth Argument [Refer to page 78 for Chinese. Similarly hereinafter]

The *Book of Rites* [礼记] is the first extant text to employ the claim that a hairsbreadth mistake will result in going a thousand miles off course.<sup>1</sup> It does not purport to be the origin of this claim, but attributes it to the *Book of Changes*. The claim does not, however, appear in the *Book of Changes* itself or in any of the early commentaries known as the ten wings. The earliest extant commentary to contain it is the *Thorough Examination of the Hexagrams* [通卦验], one of the Han dynasty (206 BC–AD 220) commentaries that became known as the “weft of the *Changes*” [易纬].<sup>2</sup> The text of this commentary says that “if you make the root straightforward, then the ten thousand things will be principled, but if you err by a hundredth of a hairsbreadth, you will stray by a thousand miles.” The commentary on the *Thorough Examination* attributed to Zheng Xuan 郑玄 (127–200) uses slightly different wording to make the claim, as do the many Confucians who employ it over the course of the Song and Ming dynasties, but these variations do nothing to change its meaning, and so I will not address them here.

Taken by itself, the expression is patently untrue. Sometimes we can make a small mistake without expecting that it will lead to enormous and terrible consequences. That is, we can sometimes err by a hundredth of a hairsbreadth and find that we have done exactly a hundredth of a hairsbreadth’s worth of damage. The *Thorough Examination*, however, is not discussing any and all mistakes, but only those that concern the “root.” The specific root that concerns the text is the structure of the cosmos that manifests itself over time in the progression of the seasons and the calendar, but the Confucians who borrow the hairsbreadth argument from this text are concerned with causality more generally. The metaphor of the root refers to a cause, and not the cause of one thing but of many things, since the single root is the cause of many branches. An error in the root will then be multiplied in all the branches that stem from it. Those who deal only with the branches have no reason to fear such broad consequences. The branch is not a cause, but an effect, and so a mistake here will not be passed on to or ramified in anything further. Both a mistake in the root and one that is the size of a hairsbreadth are not easy to see, but they gradually produce highly visible consequences: the mistake in the root produces the large and visible mistake in the branches, and the hairsbreadth mistake produces the thousand-mile wandering off course.

When I refer to the hairsbreadth argument in the remainder of this paper, I do not mean that a fully formed argument with clearly identified premises and conclusion is presented in the text I am addressing. The slippery slope argument in the West is likewise often indicated with stock expressions, and the developing of a complete argument is left to the reader. Frederick Schauer, for instance, develops a rich variety of sources for the slippery slope argument in legal cases simply by doing a LEXIS search for stock expressions such as “the camel’s nose is in the tent,” “a foot in the door,” and “the thin edge of the wedge.”<sup>3</sup> There has been some debate in recent years about what is required to develop such a stock expression into a complete slippery slope argument. There is no question that the slippery slope argument is an argument from negative consequences, but it is almost always defined by further criteria. The argument that “if such-and-such occurs, then something bad will follow from it” is broad and does not illuminate anything specific to the slippery slope.<sup>4</sup> A

1 Chap. 9 of “Jing jie” [经解], in the *Book of Rites*.

2 On the *Yijing* apocrypha, see Richard J. Smith, *Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World* (Charlottesville and London: University of Virginia Press, 2008), 77–82.

3 Frederick Schauer, “Slippery Slopes,” *Harvard Law Review* 99, no. 2 (1985): 362.

4 Hugh LaFollette differentiates the slippery slope from other negative consequentialist arguments, though he notes that Eugene Volokh does not. See Hugh LaFollette, “Living on a Slippery Slope,” *The Journal of Ethics* 9, (2005): 477. Eugene Volokh, “The Mechanisms of the Slippery Slope,” *Harvard Law Review* 116, (2003): 1026–1134.

narrower category of argument that is slippery enough to have appeared in explanations of the slippery slope proceeds as follows: “if you do such-and-such for a certain reason, and that reason also justifies doing something bad, then you should not do such-and-such, even though it does not seem bad on its own.” Since this argument does not warn of a gradual worsening, it has been described as a consistency argument rather than a slippery slope.<sup>5</sup> If I accept the line of reasoning when it leads to the first action, it would be inconsistent of me not to allow the second action as well, based as it is on the same course of reasoning. If I reject the second action, then for consistency’s sake I also ought to give up the first.

The consistency argument can be changed into a slippery slope argument by specifying that the first case is unobjectionable, but the second is more objectionable, and a third still more objectionable. This is the distinctive feature of the slippery slope as it currently appears in a sampling of recent philosophical books and articles: it involves a series of steps, beginning with a small or seemingly innocuous one. Douglas Walton, for instance, considers the slippery slope to be an argument composed of this feature—the argument from gradualism—combined with the broader argument from consequences.<sup>6</sup> Schauer frames the argument in the following way: “a particular act, seemingly innocuous when taken in isolation, may yet lead to a future host of similar but increasingly pernicious events.”<sup>7</sup> Hugh LaFollette’s version is not significantly different: “if we do *X*, then, through a series of small analogous steps, circumstances *Y* will probably occur,” where *X* is “*prima facie* morally permissible” and *Y* is “immoral.”<sup>8</sup> In what follows, I will use the term “slippery slope” only to refer to the argument as presented in the work of these authors. Though each of them identifies several variations on the slippery slope argument, I will work only with the general definition provided above, since the hairsbreadth argument does not match any of these variations exactly.

Needless to say, the hairsbreadth argument is a composite of the argument from consequences and the argument from gradualism, and so it meets Walton’s criteria for the slippery slope. As an argument from consequences, it does not treat the hairsbreadth error as a problem in itself. The problem is its consequence: the thousand mile straying off course. As an argument from gradualism, it does not treat the hairsbreadth error as immediately causing the thousand mile straying off course. The error must slowly ramify, causing one first to stray a mile off course, then two miles, and so on.

The hairsbreadth argument also shares a less laudable characteristic of the slippery slope: it can be used fallaciously. Though the slippery slope argument is sometimes regarded as invariably fallacious, for reasons spelled out below, I will here follow Walton and Schauer in distinguishing a fallacious from a non-fallacious version. As identified by Walton, the fallacious slippery slope argument “is used as a tactic to try to suggest that you will be locked in to a series of consequences with no turning back, once you have made the initial step.”<sup>9</sup> There are few contexts in which an initial step entirely determines a series of consequences. Archery is one of them—once you release the arrow with just slightly imperfect aim, there is nothing you can do to stop it from moving farther and farther off course, until it ends

5 Wibren van der Burg concludes that this kind of argument is not a slippery slope (“The Slippery Slope Argument,” *Ethics* 102, no. 1 (1991): 56). LaFollette differentiates the slippery slope from consistency arguments, though he notes that Volokh does not (“Living on a Slippery Slope,” 479).

6 Douglas Walton, *Slippery Slope Arguments* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 222.

7 Schauer, “Slippery Slopes,” 361–362.

8 LaFollette, “Living on a Slippery Slope,” 478.

9 Walton, Van der Burg, and LaFollette argue that the slippery slope argument should be avoided altogether (Walton, *Slippery Slope Arguments*, 29; Van der Burg, “The Slippery Slope Argument,” 65; LaFollette, “Living on a Slippery Slope,” 476).



up far from the target. But in most contexts, many things can be done to avoid arriving at the later and more disastrous consequences in the series. The navigational context of the hairsbreadth argument is one of these—set a course toward an island on the horizon and, however imperfect your initial judgment is, you can always dip an oar in the water to correct it. Walton argues that non-fallacious slippery slope arguments “have to be just strong enough to shift a burden of proof in a balanced dialogue.”<sup>10</sup> For instance, someone making the hairsbreadth argument to warn the navigator could note that the sun is setting, and so it will be difficult to make corrections to the course once the boat is in motion.

Shifting the burden of proof, then, requires a sensitivity to the context in which the controversial initial step of the series will take place. As Schauer puts it, “a persuasive slippery slope argument depends for its persuasiveness upon temporally and spatially contingent empirical facts rather than (or in addition to) simple logical inference.”<sup>11</sup> This distinction between empirical facts and logical inference gives us another way to talk about the difference between a non-fallacious and a fallacious version of the slippery slope. A fallacious slippery slope argument treats it merely as a matter of logical inference. The problem here is that, since we do not know the future with absolute certainty, we can never be entirely sure that an apparently harmless change will not lead to an undesirable consequence, and so we can use the logical form of the argument in any prediction of a future state of affairs. Such an approach to the slippery slope argument leads to what Schauer identifies as “undifferentiated risk aversion,” or “a general plea for caution in the face of an uncertain future.”<sup>12</sup> This is why Glanville Williams (1911–1997) notes, in a passage cited by LaFollette among others, that it “is the trump card of the traditionalist, because no proposal for reform, however strong the argument in its favor, is immune from the wedge objection.”<sup>13</sup> Confucians have special reason to be sensitive to this critique, since they have long been caricatured as unreflective traditionalists.<sup>14</sup> If the hairsbreadth argument of the Confucians is to avoid the problems mentioned above, it must be attentive not only to its own logical form, but to the “empirical facts,” or to the context in which it is employed. Namely, it must address any factors that would prevent the initial step in the series from leading to the negative consequence down the road.

I mentioned above that the first extant text to use the hairsbreadth argument is the *Book of Rites*. In this text, the argument serves just the kind of unreflective traditionalism that Williams and LaFollette warn against. The relevant passage in the *Book of Rites* begins by explaining the purpose of various rituals. In James Legge’s translation, “the ceremonies at the court audiences of the different seasons were intended to illustrate the righteous relations between subject and minister; those of friendly messages and inquiries, to secure mutual honor and respect between the feudal princes.”<sup>15</sup> It goes on to mention the rituals of mourning and sacrifice, social meetings in the country districts, and marriage. Afterward, it explains what will happen should such practices be discontinued. In the case of the rituals I quoted above, “if the ceremonies of friendly messages and court attendances

10 Walton, *Slippery Slope Arguments*, 14.

11 Schauer, “Slippery Slopes,” 381.

12 Ibid., 376.

13 Glanville Williams, “Euthanasia Legislation: A Rejoinder to the Nonreligious Objections,” in *Euthanasia and the Right to Death*, ed. A. B. Downing (London: Peter Owen, 1969), 143. This passage appears in Van der Burg, “The Slippery Slope Argument,” 42 and LaFollette, “Living on a Slippery Slope,” 489.

14 For the ancient view of Confucians as unreflective traditionalists, see Mozi, “Feiru xia” [非儒下], 4, translated in Burton Watson, *Basic Writings of Mo Tzu, Hsiün Tzu, and Han Fei Tzu* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 127–128. For this view in the twentieth century, see Lin Yu-sheng, *The Crisis of Chinese Consciousness: Radical Anti-Traditionalism in the May Fourth Era* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978).

15 Chap. 7 of “Jing jie,” in the *Book of Rites*. Legge’s translation may be found in vol. 28 of *The Sacred Books of the East*, ed. F. Max Müller (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1885), 258.

were discontinued, the positions of ruler and subject would fall into disuse, the conduct of the feudal princes would be evil, and the ruin wrought by rebellion, encroachment, and oppression would ensue.” Quite a dramatic consequence! The text argues against abolishing any of “the old rules of propriety” on the following basis: each prevents disorder, and so removing any of them will lead to disorder. The argument here is an exceptionally tidy example of the formal fallacy known as “denying the antecedent.” It assumes that, if the various rituals are the cause of order, then the absence of these rituals will cause disorder, overlooking the fact that there may be causes of order that are not rituals.

This chapter, which begins simply as an argument from negative consequences, becomes a hairsbreadth argument in its conclusion. It notes that “the instructive and transforming power of ceremonies is subtle (微); they stop depravity before it has taken form, causing men to move daily toward what is good.” The rituals, in other words, act in a way that is too subtle to be visible, but their effect gradually becomes visible in the order of the state. The absence of their teaching and transformation will also begin its work in this subtle area, but its effect will gradually become visible in the disorder of the state. And so, “a mistake, then, of a hair’s breadth, will lead to an error of a thousand *li*.” The *Book of Rites* locates the hairsbreadth argument at the conclusion of its dubious line of reasoning, as a way of capping and reinforcing it. The Song and Ming dynasty Confucians who use the hairsbreadth argument will also locate it toward the end of a conversation or discourse, but as we will see, they are generally more sensitive to the factors that can prevent the hairsbreadth mistake from leading to the thousand mile straying off course.

### Versus Mozi and Yang Zhu <sup>[81]</sup>

The hairsbreadth argument appears twice in the *Posthumous Writings of the Two Chengs* [二程遗书], the collection of sayings from Cheng Yi 程颐 (1033–1107) and his brother Cheng Hao 程颢 (1032–1085).<sup>16</sup> Both appearances are in the section of the *Posthumous Writings* that can be reliably attributed to Cheng Yi.<sup>17</sup> They are, in fact, two versions of the same argument, indicating either that Cheng Yi made this argument regularly, or that two different students recorded their own versions of a single conversation with him. The argument concerns the positions of the classical schools of Mozi and Yang Zhu 杨朱, and constitutes a kind of commentary on passage 3B:9 from the work of the classical Chinese philosopher Mencius.

The passage from Mencius is filled with arguments from negative consequences, as he provides evidence for his claim that the world has always alternated between periods of order and disorder. One of his examples from the past is the period succeeding the death of the ancient sage kings Yao 尧 and Shun 舜. Their lifetimes involved a period of order, but after their deaths “the Way of sages became scarce.” Specifically, the new rulers tore down houses to make ponds and lakes for themselves, “so that the people had nowhere to rest and be content,” and they tore up fields to make gardens and parks, “so that the people could not acquire clothing and food.” Perhaps a result of these actions, or at least concomitant with them, was a rise in “crooked words and violent actions,” and eventually “the world returned to great disorder.” The root problem is that the rulers took the resources of the people, such as the houses that sheltered them and the fields that provided them with food. When the livelihood of the people was destroyed, they turned to violent actions and were

16 *Collected Works of the Two Chengs* [二程集] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1981), 171, 231.

17 See A. C. Graham, *Two Chinese Philosophers* (Lasalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1992), 141.



unable to maintain the land around them, a decay reflected in the extreme numbers of “wild beasts” that arose. As Mencius says elsewhere in his work, the most important cause of stability for the rulers is the approval of the people.<sup>18</sup> The loss of that approval here brings about disorder.

In Mencius’s own time, the cause of disorder lies more explicitly in “crooked words,” namely, the doctrines of Yang Zhu and Mozi. In Mencius’s analysis, the world has divided itself into two factions. One follows Yang and the other follows Mo. Mencius boils down the thinking of each faction into a single doctrine. For the Yangists, the doctrine is “to be for oneself,” while for the Moists, the doctrine is “universal love.” These doctrines are not matters for the classroom, but have far reaching political consequences, as one may infer a more troubling second doctrine from each of them. From “to be for oneself” one may infer that “there is no ruler,” while from “universal love” one may infer that “there is no father.” If I acknowledge only myself as the standard of action, then I will not respect the directives of the ruler, while if I love everyone equally, I will not treat my father as deserving special respect. Mencius describes those who fail to acknowledge their ruler and those who fail to acknowledge their fathers as being in the state of “wild beasts.” That is, they have not adopted an order to their actions that would result in a prosperous society. Those who do not acknowledge a ruler will not help others through the action of government, while those who do not acknowledge their fathers will not take care of their family. As a result, the virtues of duty and humaneness will be impeded, “leading these beasts to eat people up, and people to eat up each other.”

Mencius concludes this description with an account of the causal sequence that will be significant for Cheng Yi and later Confucians. He says that when these crooked words “arise in the heart, they do harm to one’s affairs. When they arise in one’s affairs, they do harm to one’s government.” In other words, the disorder of the times springs from doctrines. Though the negative effect of these doctrines requires several steps—from the primary doctrine to its reasonable inference, to the actions that result from that inference—Mencius does not use the language of the hairsbreadth argument here. He does not suggest that there is little problem with the primary doctrines of Mozi and Yang Zhu considered in themselves, or that their negative consequences occur in an expanding series. The case will be different for Cheng Yi and other later Confucians.

Cheng Yi’s students must have been concerned that he and his uncle Zhang Zai 张载 (1020–1077) were too close to the Moists in their thinking, since he several times defends himself and his uncle against this charge. One of Cheng Yi’s most famous students, Yang Shi 杨时 (1053–1135), wrote a letter suggesting that Zhang Zai’s *Western Inscription* [西铭] contained Moist elements. Cheng Yi’s response is useful to examine, as it clarifies that the problem with the Moists is their characterization of the root of human action. Cheng Yi says that “the *Western Inscription* sheds light on how there is one principle divided into many particulars, while in the case of the Moists there are two roots and no divisions.” He goes on to comment, “taking one’s treatment of the old and young and extending it to other people shows that principle is one, while a love without distinction or gradation shows that there are two roots.”<sup>19</sup> Zhang Zai, in other words, is simply following Mencius’s concept of extension: one’s love must have a primary focus—namely, the family—but it can be extended to people outside the family until one has some kind of love for all human beings.<sup>20</sup> The followers of Mozi on the other hand imply that human love has two roots, the love of

18 Mencius, 7B:14.

19 *Collected Works of the Two Chengs*, 609.

20 Mencius, 1A:7.

family and the love of everyone else, neither of which can be dependent on the other. Cheng Yi implicitly acknowledges that the Moists are promoting the unity of principle, but they fail to include in their doctrine the fact that it is divided into many particulars. “The crime of omitting its divisions,” he says, “is that you will have universal love but no duty.” Our duty is differentiated by context—what we owe to our parents will be different from what we owe to our siblings, or to our fellow citizens. What the Moists need to do is not necessarily to remove the doctrine of universal love, but to add to it the doctrine of duty.

Mo and Yang themselves, unlike their followers, come in for remarkably little criticism among the Confucians of the Song dynasty. P. J. Ivanhoe has noted that Mozi’s “system was not bad *per se*” for these Confucians, committed as they were to their own idea of universal love.<sup>21</sup> Cheng Yi himself is an advocate for “making no distinction between near and far, between the relation and the stranger.”<sup>22</sup> One of his students must have noticed the possible affinity between Cheng Yi and Mozi that such a statement suggests, and asked why we should not study Mozi’s works. Cheng Yi responds to this student with the hairsbreadth argument, to show how the apparently praiseworthy doctrines of Mo and Yang may nevertheless be associated with the horrific consequences identified by Mencius. He begins by acknowledging the goodness of both Yang and Mo, saying that “Yang Zhu was at root a student of duty and Mozi was at root a student of humaneness.”<sup>23</sup> Mencius, in fact, was mistaken if he claimed that, for Mozi, one relates to the son of one’s neighbor in the same way that one relates to the son of one’s brother. Cheng Yi asks rhetorically, “how could words like this ever be found in the book of Mozi?”<sup>24</sup> The worst that Cheng Yi says about Yang and Mo in this recorded conversation is that “what they studied was somewhat partial (偏).” Cheng Yi does not say what he means by partiality here other than that it causes the doctrines of Yang and Mo to “flow” (流).<sup>25</sup> The doctrine of universal love, for instance, has a tendency to flow into the doctrine of not recognizing one’s father. It is essentially “partial,” or unbalanced.

Mozi himself does not adopt the doctrine of not recognizing one’s father because he balances the universal love doctrine with his study of humaneness. The study of humaneness preserves the difference in degree in the love shown to other people, while the doctrine of universal love emphasizes that the love shown is the same. It is worth noting that Mencius himself recognized that the harmful effects of the universal love doctrine could be avoided by adding another doctrine to it. He points out that Mozi’s student Yi Zhi 夷之 adds to the doctrine of universal love the additional doctrine that “its application should begin with one’s blood relations.”<sup>26</sup> Like the doctrine of duty, this specification of where the application of one’s love should begin corrects the root of action, so that it promotes rather than destroys the social order. The universal love doctrine nonetheless retains its tendency to flow into the more harmful doctrine. According to Cheng Yi, this is the real reason why Mencius criticizes Yang and Mo, because he “recognized that their flow would necessarily

21 Philip J. Ivanhoe, *Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mengzi and Wang Yangming* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2002), 33. See pages 30–33 for an analysis of the attitude of Song dynasty Confucians toward Mozi, as well as a translation of Cheng Yi’s hairsbreadth argument against the Moists.

22 *Collected Works of the Two Chungs*, 742.

23 *Ibid.*, 231.

24 The relevant passage is *Mencius*, 3A:5, where he attributes this claim not to Mozi but to Yi Zhi, one of Mozi’s students. For Cheng Yi’s own view, that one should treat one’s brother’s son the same as one’s own, see *Collected Works of the Two Chungs*, 234, or the translation in Wing-Tsit Chan, *Reflections on Things at Hand* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1967), 175–177.

25 Cheng Yi also discusses the flow of Yang and Mo at *Collected Works of the Two Chungs*, 157, though without reference to the hairsbreadth argument.

26 *Mencius*, 3A:5.

reach this point.” To reinforce his claim, Cheng Yi presents the hairsbreadth argument: “in the great majority of cases, when intellectuals study the way, ‘err by a hundredth of a hairsbreadth and you will stray by a thousand miles.’”

Although the wording of the hairsbreadth argument is substantially the same in the *Book of Rites* and the *Posthumous Writings*, it means something quite different. Both versions are arguments from gradualism, and so they require something to be minimal at first but inclined to grow. In the *Book of Rites* version, what is minimal is the connection between the rites and the order of the state. Because people do not see this connection, they do not believe that there is any negative consequence to abandoning the rites. The *Book of Rites*, then, is not describing a mistake that is minimal. Rather, it is in overlooking what is minimal that one first makes a mistake. In the *Posthumous Writings*, on the other hand, what is minimal is the mistake—namely, the mistake made in the learning of Yang and Mo. It is minimal because there is nothing wrong with the doctrines in themselves, so long as one or more doctrines are added to keep them from developing into doctrines that are truly mistaken, such as the doctrine that there is no ruler. Cheng Yi’s teacher Zhou Dunyi 周敦颐 (1017–1073) considers all doctrines to be minimal, since they occur in the heart where no one can see them, but when Cheng Yi uses the hairsbreadth argument, he refers only to the unbalanced but correctable doctrine as minimal.<sup>27</sup> Presumably the doctrine that there is no ruler does not belong to this category, since no further doctrine could be added to it so as to keep it from disrupting the order of the state.

The hairsbreadth argument also requires something to drive the small mistake forward though a series of ever worsening consequences. Cheng Yi’s version has two drivers: the partiality of the doctrine, and the increasing reliance on it by “later generations of students” (后之学者).<sup>28</sup> Cheng Yi does not flesh out the second of these, but in a different conversation he provides a more thorough explanation of the partiality of Mo and Yang. Or, rather, he shows that the problem with the doctrines of Mo and Yang is already found in the partiality of a pair of early Confucians. In *Analects* 11:15, Confucius says that his student Zizhang 子张 (503 BC–?) went too far, and that another student, Zixia 子夏 (507 BC–?), did not go far enough.<sup>29</sup> Cheng Yi explains that Zizhang was a little too generous, while Zixia did not do enough. Both of these students were within the fold of Confucianism, but their respective errors led them toward doctrines outside the school. “Step by step (渐),” Cheng Yi says, “generosity will lead to universal love, while not doing enough will lead to being only for oneself.” In other words, certain attitudes that do not themselves indicate a departure from Confucianism will lead toward doctrines well outside the boundaries of the school, namely, to the doctrines of Yang and Mo. Cheng Yi notes here, as he did in the passage we studied earlier, that Yang and Mo themselves do not reach the point of disregarding their fathers or rulers, though “their mistakes must necessarily reach this point.” The problem of excess is that there is something to drive one’s action forward, but nothing to limit it, while the problem of deficiency is that there is something to limit the action, but nothing to drive it forward. In each of these cases one fails to achieve the center.

Though Cheng Yi did not explicitly tie the hairsbreadth argument to this passage from the *Analects*, their close connection was not lost on Yin Tun 尹焯 (1071–1142), one of his more accomplished students. Yin wrote a commentary on the *Analects* that explicitly links

27 See Zhang Dainian, *Key Concepts in Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Edmund Ryden (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), 209, who notes that, for Zhou Dunyi, “incipience is confined to mental activity.”

28 *Collected Works of the Two Chengs*, 231.

29 See *Collected Works of the Two Chengs*, 176 and 171. The former is translated in Wing-Tsit Chan, *Reflections on Things at Hand*, 280–281.

its mention of going too far or not far enough to the hairsbreadth argument. I quote the passage here simply to show the close connection observed in Cheng Yi's circle between the mistakes of Mo and Yang, the problem of going too far or not far enough, and the hairsbreadth argument. Cheng Yi himself establishes the connection between the first two; Yin Tun shows the connection between the latter two. Yin says, "if you err by a hundredth of a hairsbreadth, you will stray by a thousand miles." This is why the teaching of the sage is to restrain what is excessive and extend what does not go far enough, to return to the Way of centrality and that is all." Yin Tun's more famous contemporary Zhu Xi 朱熹 (1130–1200) found this short comment so impressive that he quoted it in his own widely read collection of commentaries on the *Analects*.<sup>30</sup>

### Versus Buddhists and Daoists [83]

Zhu Xi's use of the hairsbreadth argument in his own recorded conversations is sporadic and often not well explained. He does use it once in a way that merits some attention, when he has a conversation with a man from Danyang.<sup>31</sup> The man says that, in his hometown, he can only find teachers who will lecture on culture and language, rather than the self-restraint practiced by Confucius's student Yan Hui 颜回 (521–481 BC). Zhu Xi responds with the hairsbreadth argument, then goes on to explain: "when students these days direct their attention to classical books, their flow then takes them on to the commentaries. When they direct their attention to history, their flow then takes them on to acquiring profit. Otherwise, they immediately enter Buddhism and Daoism. Quite a fearful mistake!" Zhu Xi finds the hairsbreadth argument so helpful here that he repeats it again later in the conversation, to which the man from Danyang responds: "You Panyuan 游判院 says that Buddhists are both concerned with the investigation of things and in possession of knowledge, but what they see is not essential." Zhu responds that "those who study Buddhism these days produce many interpretations, but they are not as straightforward as what other Buddhists earlier said." Just as Cheng Yi sees a decline from Yang and Mo to their students, so Zhu Xi sees a decline from the earlier to the later Buddhists. The primary problem, however, is one of flow. Students do not approach learning with doctrines that would allow them to come to rest at the right point. They are unable to stop at the study of classical texts and history, but move on to commentaries and the search for profit, or they go in the opposite direction and become Buddhists and Daoists. Perhaps earlier Buddhists had a better doctrine or combination of doctrines that would allow them to study and speak straightforwardly, but most students today lack that combination. As Zhu Xi puts it elsewhere after presenting both the hairsbreadth argument and Confucius's distinction between going too far and not going far enough, lofty students today "go beyond heaven and earth" and "will necessarily enter Buddhism and Daoism," while lowly students "sink into a pit" and "will necessarily enter commercial concerns."<sup>32</sup> In these passages, Buddhism and commerce replace Moism and Yangism as representing the problems of going too far and not going far enough. Unlike Cheng Yi, Zhu Xi does not identify a specific partial doctrine or suggest an additional doctrine that would prevent contemporary students from flowing into these damaging positions.

For a discussion of the specific doctrines that make Buddhists subject to the hairsbreadth argument, we must turn to the Ming dynasty Confucian Luo Qinshun 罗钦顺 (1465–1547)

30 See the *Collected Commentaries on the Analects* [论语集注] on *Analects*, 11:15.

31 Li Jingde, ed., "Xunmenren er" [训门人二], in *Classified Conversations of Zhu Xi* [朱子语类] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1986), 2765.

32 Li Jingde, ed., "Lushi" [陆氏], in *Classified Conversations of Zhu Xi*, 2980.



and his more famous contemporary Wang Yangming 王阳明 (1472–1528). Both use the hairsbreadth argument to indicate the severe consequences of adopting mistaken Buddhist doctrines about the nature of the heart. Neither of them regards the Buddhist doctrines as needing the addition of other doctrines to keep them from pushing their students off course. The doctrines are not partial, but wrong, and need to be replaced by others. Luo Qinshun singles out the following Buddhist doctrine for critique: “shed light on your heart and see your nature.”<sup>33</sup> There is nothing wrong with the wording of this doctrine. In fact, Luo immediately follows it with a Confucian doctrine that uses almost the same language: “exhaust your heart and know your nature.” In other words, the problem with the doctrine lies not in its words but in the way that the Buddhists interpret them. According to Luo, what the Buddhists mean by these words is that the nature is no different from the heart. By confusing the two, the Buddhists have “deceived the later generations of the world, so that they reach the point of abandoning human relationships and destroying the heavenly principle.” Living in accordance with our nature involves participating in human relationships and bringing about a social order according to the heavenly principle. Those who identify the nature with the heart end up with only the heart and not the nature, losing sight of human relationships and the heavenly principle. Note that Luo does not claim the Buddhists of the past have reached this point, but that they have led later generations to it. The stimulus to this negative consequence is the mistaken doctrine. “If someone mistakenly regards the heart as the nature,” Luo says, “this may accurately be described as a case of ‘err by a hundredth of a hairsbreadth and you will stray by a thousand miles.’”<sup>34</sup>

There is no reason to provide a detailed account here of Wang Yangming’s use of the hairsbreadth argument in his criticism of the Buddhists, as it follows the same pattern.<sup>35</sup> Like Luo, Wang describes the Buddhists as having made a mistake about the heart. They treat the heart that is active making decisions during the day as different from the heart that is tranquil at night, when in fact there is only one heart that responds differently in different circumstances. The doctrine of rejecting activity is based on a mistake about the heart, and should not be combined with an additional doctrine but rejected altogether. What is minimal about the mistake here? Neither Luo nor Wang explain why the Buddhist mistake is minimal, but it seems to be for the same reason as in the *Book of Rites* version. The *Book of Rites* treats the abandonment of rituals as a minimal mistake because there is no obvious connection between the rituals and the social order that they bring about. In the case of the Buddhists, there is no obvious connection between their reduction of nature to the heart and their abandonment of human relationships. The doctrine could be misunderstood as a matter for academic debate with no consequences for the social order.

Presumably the Buddhists targeted by Luo and Wang would not disagree that their understanding of the heart has the abandonment of human relationships as its consequence, since many of them openly celebrate and advocate casting off family relationships and entering monastic life. The response of such a Buddhist to Luo and Wang would not be to deny the cause-and-effect relationship in the hairsbreadth argument, but to argue that its consequence is beneficial rather than negative. In other words, the Buddhist response would not need to address the hairsbreadth argument at all. In this regard it would differ from the response of the Yangists or Moists, who would not argue that the consequence of their

33 *Kun zhi ji* [困知记] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1990), 3. For an English translation, see Lo Ch’in-shun, *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, trans. Irene Bloom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), 51.

34 *Kun zhi ji*, 1, translated in *Knowledge Painfully Acquired*, 49.

35 See Wang Yangming, *Chuan xi lu* [传习录] (Zhengzhou: Zhongzhou Ancient Books Publishing House, 2008), 314–315. For an English translation, see Wing-Tsit Chan, *Instructions for Practical Living and other Neo-Confucian Writings* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1963), 203.



doctrines identified by Mencius is good—that is, that it is good for “people to eat up each other”—but that their doctrines do not lead to such a consequence.

### Versus Zhu Xi <sup>[85]</sup>

As we have seen, Wang does not treat Buddhist doctrines as capable of avoiding negative consequences when properly combined with additional doctrines. He does, however, allow for additional doctrines when he argues against his fellow Confucian Zhu Xi. Even when arguing against Zhu Xi, Wang is more concerned than Cheng Yi to arrive at a single doctrine that serves as an adequate root of human action, such that it needs nothing added to it. Cheng Yi arguably does not explicitly develop such a doctrine. When he says that “there is one principle divided into many particulars,” he could be taken to be combining two doctrines: first, that principle is one, and second, that it is divided into many particulars. Emphasize one of these over the other, as the Moists and Yangists do, and you make the hairsbreadth mistake that takes you a thousand miles off course.

We see one of Wang’s most careful attempts to find a single root of human action in a conversation with one of his students about the work of Zhu Xi.<sup>36</sup> Wang’s student Cai Xiyuan 蔡希渊, has asked him about Zhu Xi’s new arrangement of the classical text, the *Great Learning* [大学]. Zhu Xi has put the section on “investigating things so as to extend one’s knowledge” in front of the section on “making one’s intentions sincere.” As Wang understands it, this reordering implies that students should investigate things outside of them before they work on making their intentions sincere. “According to the new arrangement,” he says, “one first goes out and exhaustively investigates the principles of affairs and things.” The problem with this approach is that the students who adopt it will become thoroughly absorbed in the objects of their investigation, and will lose sight of themselves. As a result, they will investigate thing after thing without acquiring any virtue of their own. A second doctrine will have to be added to the “investigate things” doctrine if the students are to make their investigation a virtuous practice. “It is necessary to add the concept of reverence (敬),” Wang says, and then the investigation of things will be “directed at one’s person and heart.” That is, students who pay attention to the “how” of their investigation, to how they are investigating things, will cultivate themselves in the course of understanding the world around them. Although this self-cultivation is a good consequence, it is brought about in this case by two different doctrines: first, “investigate things,” and second, “be reverent.” In Wang’s view, a multiplicity of doctrines means that “there is no root and origin.” Wang is using the term “root” here not as we have seen it used above, to refer to any source of human action, but as the single source of action waiting to exercise its power when subordinate sources stop getting in the way. Like Yang and Mo, Zhu Xi’s students are compensating for the subordinate or incomplete character of their primary doctrine by adding others to it, and so none of these doctrines may be considered as primary, or as the true root.

Wang has an alternative, which is the basis for his student’s question about the *Great Learning*. Where Zhu Xi puts the section on investigating things before the section on making one’s intentions sincere, Wang proposes retaining the older arrangement, in which the section on sincere intentions appears first. His point is not philological, but rooted in his attempt to overcome the problems created by Zhu Xi’s multiple doctrines. “Make your

36 Wang criticizes Zhu Xi elliptically at *Chuan xi lu*, 250–251, translated in *Instructions for Practical Living*, 162. Wang provides the same argument in more detail at *Chuan xi lu*, 151, translated in *Instructions for Practical Living*, 86.

intentions sincere” is, in fact, the primary doctrine that needs nothing added to it. “If one regards making the intentions sincere as the master,” Wang says, “and then makes an effort to investigate things and extend one’s knowledge, the effort will come to a conclusion.” It is not that the investigation of things should not be undertaken, but that it will follow from the prior doctrine of making one’s intentions sincere. Students who follow this prior doctrine will investigate things without neglecting themselves, because the root of their enterprise is within them, in the correcting of their own intentions. We could read Cheng Yi’s argument against the Moists as following the same pattern. The problem is not the doctrine of “universal love,” but regarding that doctrine as the sole root of action. If one begins instead with doing one’s duty, then one will still love universally, but as an extension of the love that one initially feels for one’s family. Love must begin with what is primary if it is to have good consequences. Likewise, in Wang’s argument about learning, if one does not begin one’s learning with what is primary, “this is what is referred to as ‘err by a hundredth of a hairsbreadth and you will stray by a thousand miles.’”

### Conclusion <sup>[85]</sup>

If we compare Wang’s use of the hairsbreadth argument with the other Song and Ming dynasty versions we have identified, we see that they have a distinctive common thread, despite their minor differences. In each case, the speaker is warning a listener that a certain doctrine will lead to a significant negative consequence, not necessarily because the doctrine itself is bad or because it produced this consequence in the life of its author, but because the students of this author will inevitably remove whatever safeguards prevented the doctrine from leading to its consequence. The students or, in some cases, the later generations, are the third party in the argument, to be added to the speaker who makes the argument and the listener at risk of adopting the controversial doctrine.<sup>37</sup> The unspoken assumption here seems to be that students do not understand the doctrines of their teachers very well. Because they fail to see how the different doctrines fit together, they are content to follow only one or some of them. This imbalance leads them to bring about the negative social consequence implicit in these doctrines. The speaker warns the listener about the doctrine, then, not so much for the listener’s own sake as for the sake of the future well-being of this lineage of students.

Within this broad framework, the Song and Ming dynasty authors who use the hairsbreadth argument vary the character of the mistake and the reason why it is minimal. The mistake could be adopting a doctrine that will lead either to excessive or deficient action, as in the case of Cheng Yi’s Moists and Yangists, it could be poorly defining an important term, as in the case of Luo’s Buddhists, or it could be adopting the wrong doctrine as the primary root of human action, as in the case of Wang’s Zhu Xi. All of these mistakes are minimal, but for different reasons. For Cheng Yi, Mozi’s mistake is minimal because he adds to it his study of humaneness, preventing it from having any negative consequence that would allow the observer to identify it as a mistake. The same goes for Zhu Xi in Wang’s analysis: his privileging of the investigation of things has no negative consequence because he adds to it the doctrine of reverence. When Luo and Wang criticize the Buddhists, on the other hand, the mistake is minimal not because it has no consequence, but because it appears unconnected with its consequence, a purely intellectual error having nothing to do with eroding the social order.

37 Walton asserts that slippery slope arguments must have three parties: the warner, the respondent, and a third party that leads the respondent to the negative consequence (*Slippery Slope Arguments*, 222).

We earlier identified the fallacious version of the slippery slope argument, following Walton and Schauer, as attempting to convince listeners that they are locked into a given progression once they have taken the first step. Since the hairsbreadth argument concerns the doctrines of particular schools or sects, we may say that it becomes fallacious when it insists or implies that members of a particular school or sect can rely only on one particular doctrine. For instance, Cheng Yi could have asserted that the actions of Mozi may proceed only from the doctrine of universal love. If members of a school or sect can rely on only one doctrine, then they are entirely subject to any tendency it has to drive them unexpectedly off course. The versions of the hairsbreadth argument that we have analyzed do not all of them take this fallacious form. The arguments against the Buddhists are the weakest. Although Zhu Xi allows that earlier Buddhists held straightforward doctrines, he does not explain what made them straightforward, or why they did not go too far, as the doctrines of their successors do. Luo and Wang at least identify specific Buddhist doctrines, and they explain what drives these doctrines on to negative consequences, but they do not suggest that there is any way of avoiding the consequences other than abandoning the doctrines. Of course, since they think of the doctrines as wrong, they would argue that they should be abandoned irrespective of their consequences, but this does not make their use of the hairsbreadth argument any more compelling.

In the case of Cheng Yi's argument against Yang and Mo, or Wang Yangming's argument against Zhu Xi, the speakers themselves generally explain how the negative consequences may be avoided by listeners who nonetheless make the hairsbreadth mistake. Zhu Xi, for instance, may add the doctrine of reverence to his doctrine of investigating things. Other doctrines presumably could also be put in place as safeguards to prevent the negative consequence of the mistake. The speaker is simply saying that the mistake in the initial doctrine will always exercise a pull over the students who adopt it, and they will have to be attentive and work hard to stay on course, as though trying to drive a car whose wheels are out of alignment. These arguments are not fallacious in the sense described above, and constitute examples of a distinctively Confucian method for predicting the future by analyzing the tendencies of the present.

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## 儒家的“滑坡论证”

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**摘要:** 宋明儒家学者经常使用“毫厘论证”，即今天所说的“滑坡论证”，其用语和理据来自《易经》及早期易传易注。儒家认为能用这种方法识别威胁国家根本的细微问题。今天人们常批评“滑坡论证”增加了“易”（变化）的阻力。然而，若仔细考察宋明儒家对该论证的运用，我们会发现其方式合理，针对的是“过”而非“易”，这在很大程度上避免了上述批评。

**关键词:** 滑坡论证 毫厘论证 墨子 杨朱 佛家 道家 儒家

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占筮者没理由害怕“滑坡论证”，他们抛几枚铜钱或抽出几根蓍草，就能从《易经》六十四卦中占得一卦，以此预测未来的事态。这种预测灵验与否，与某种论证没什么关系。哲学家和政治领袖却把《易经》当作一部政治哲学著作，而非占筮之书。他们根据《易经》来论证国家前途，因而会更具忧患意识。用书中的卦来识别某一特定事态中各种力量的不平衡，并预测这种不平衡将如何一步步地导致灾难，这实际上就是运用了今天所说的“滑坡论证”。宋明儒者大力提倡《易经》的政治哲学著作意义，他们没有使用“滑坡”的隐喻，而是从早期易传易注中引用了一种类似的说法——“差若毫厘，谬以千里”。分析宋明儒家论著中的相关论述，可揭示这种说法与“滑坡论证”的密切关系。下文笔者把儒家“差若毫厘，谬以千里”之论简称为“毫厘论证”。尽管不同儒者在运用该论证时的内容略有不同，但都有一个清晰可辨的共同结构。这说明《易经》对儒家论辩方式的影响不仅限于其传注传统。

### 一、毫厘论证 [见英文版第90页，下同]

《礼记》是现存最早使用“差若毫厘，谬以千里”的典籍。（《礼记·经解》）它也没有声称首创了该说法，而是将其归于《易经》。然而，《易经》或者“十翼”中都没有看到这一说法。在现存的《易经》

注解文献中,该说法最早见诸《通卦验》。<sup>①</sup>《通卦验》中说:“故正其本,而万物理。失之毫厘,差以千里。”后世《通卦验》的注解文献对这句话的措辞又略有不同,宋明儒家对它的说法也不尽一致,但表述用字的差异并未改变它的意思,因此本文对这些差异存而不论。

“差若毫厘,谬以千里”本身显然不是真命题。我们有时也会犯小错,但不会想到这个小错将会铸成大错。亦即有时“差若毫厘”,其后果恰好也是“谬以毫厘”。然而《通卦验》讨论的并不是所有的错误,而只是那些关乎“本”的错误。它所说的“本”是指在四时交替、历法运演的过程中显现出来的宇宙结构。儒家学者借用“毫厘”之论时考虑的却是更普遍的因果关系。“本”隐喻了因,但并非某一个事物的因,而是许多事物的因,正如树根是树枝的因。“本”处发生一个错误,会蔓延至其生发的所有树枝。只考虑树枝的人,当然不会担忧如此广泛的后果。树枝不是因,而是果,因此枝节处的一个错误并不会传播通达到其它地方。“本”上的错误和“毫厘”之误都不易察觉,但它们会逐渐产生出显著后果:“本”上的细微差错会导致树枝上很大的明显错误,亦即“毫厘”之差导致“千里”之谬。

下文论及“毫厘论证”时,并不想前提明确、结论清晰地加以完整论述。西方的“滑坡论证”也常用惯用语句来阐述,而把完整论证的过程留给读者去思考。例如,弗雷德里克·绍尔(Frederick Schauer)从法律案例中找到了各种“滑坡论证”来源。他的方法很简单,即使用LEXIS语料库的词语检索功能搜索诸如“骆驼的鼻子在帐篷里”(the camel's nose is in the tent)、“迈进门槛的一只脚”(a foot in the door)、“楔子的细棱”(the thin edge of the wedge)等词语。<sup>②</sup>近年来,对如何将这些惯用说法发展成为完整的“滑坡论证”一直存在争论。毫无疑问,“滑坡论证”是一种关于负面结果的论证,但是它几乎总是要考虑进一步的因素。诸如“若某某事发生,则某种坏事会随之发生”这样的论点过于宽泛,对于揭示“滑坡”之论并没有帮助。<sup>③</sup>人们对“滑坡论证”的解释往往更加狭义、足够“滑”:“倘若你是出于某种原因去做某事,而该原因证明这件事是不对的,那么你不就不应去做某事,即便它本身看起来并不坏。”由于这一论证并未警告事态会逐渐恶化,也有人说它是一致性论证而非“滑坡论证”。<sup>④</sup>如果接受了导向第一步行动的推理思路,却不允许第二步行动,那就是前后矛盾,因为它们的推理思路是一样的。如果拒绝第二步行动,那么出于一致性的考虑,也应该放弃第一步行动。

倘若上述第一步行动无可非议,而第二步、第三步却引起越来越多的反对,那么一致性论证就变成了“滑坡论证”。这是近期出版的哲学著作和论文中滑坡论的辨别属性。它包括一系列步骤,始于不起眼的、似乎无害的第一步。如道格拉斯·沃尔顿(Douglas Walton)认为,“滑坡论证”具有以下特征——结合了渐进论和广义的结果论。<sup>⑤</sup>绍尔构建了该论证的框架:“一个具体行为,孤立来看似乎无害,却可能导向一组危害性越来越大的相似事件。”<sup>⑥</sup>休·拉福莱特(Hugh LaFollette)给出的版本也

① 该书由汉代郑玄(127-200)著,是《易纬》中的一部。关于《易经》注解文献,参见司马富(Richard J. Smith):《探索宇宙与管理世界》(Fathoming the Cosmos and Ordering the World),夏洛茨维尔:弗吉尼亚大学出版社,2008年,第77-82页。

② 弗雷德里克·绍尔:《滑坡》(Slippery Slopes),《哈佛法学评论》(Harvard Law Review)总第99卷1985年第2期,第362页。

③ 休·拉福莱特(Hugh LaFollette)把“滑坡论证”与其它负面结果论进行了区分,并指出尤金·沃洛克(Eugene Volokh)未对二者加以区别。参见休·拉福莱特:《生活在滑坡上》(Living on a Slippery Slope),《伦理学报》(The Journal of Ethics)总第9卷2005年,第477页;尤金·沃洛克,《滑坡的机制》(The Mechanisms of the Slippery Slope),《哈佛法学评论》总第116卷2003年,第1026-1134页。

④ 韦布伦·范德伯格(Wibren van der Burg)的结论是,这种论证不是“滑坡论证”(《滑坡论证》(The Slippery Slope Argument),《伦理学》(Ethics)总第102卷1991年第1期,第56页)。拉福莱特区分了“滑坡论证”和一致性论证,并指出沃洛克未作此区分(《生活在滑坡上》,第479页)。

⑤ 道格拉斯·沃尔顿:《滑坡论证》(Slippery Slope Arguments),牛津:克拉伦登出版社,1992年,第222页。

⑥ 绍尔:《滑坡》,第361-362页。



差不多：“如果做X，那么，经过一系列类似的步骤，很可能会发生Y。”这里的X“乍看似乎在道德上是可接受的”，而Y是“不道德的”。<sup>①</sup>下文中，“滑坡”这一术语仅指上述论著中阐述的论证。虽然每一位学者都指出了几种“滑坡论证”的变体形式，笔者仅采用该论证的一般定义，因为上述任何一种变体形式都无法与“毫厘论证”精确匹配。

毋庸置疑，“毫厘论证”是结果论与渐进论的结合体，因此它合乎沃尔顿对“滑坡论证”的界定条件。基于结果论，“毫厘论证”并不认为问题在于“差若毫厘”本身，而在于其结果，即“谬以千里”。基于渐进论，它并不把“差若毫厘”视为导致“谬以千里”的直接原因。谬差必须像树枝那样逐渐扩散开去，先差以一里，再差以二里，如此这般，才能最终“谬以千里”。

“毫厘论证”和“滑坡论证”还有一个不值得称道的共同点——都有可能被误用。虽然有人认为“滑坡论证”总是谬误，但如前所述，这里将按照沃尔顿和绍尔的思路，把谬误性滑坡论证和非谬误性滑坡论证区分开来。沃尔顿认为谬误性滑坡论证“被用作一种策略，以说明你一旦迈出了第一步，就会陷入一系列后果而无法回头”。<sup>②</sup>实际上，由第一步完全决定一系列后果的情形很少。射箭是其中之一：如果瞄得不太准，箭一旦射出，就无法阻止它越来越偏离箭靶的路线，最后落在远离目标的地方。但在大多数情况下，可以采取多种措施来避免发生越来越灾难性的系列后果。航行就是另一类“毫厘论证”的情形：对着远处地平线上的一座岛确定航线，无论最初的判断多么离谱，总能够通过划浆矫正航线。沃尔顿说，非谬误性滑坡论证“要足够强大，能在平等对话中转移举证的责任”。<sup>③</sup>例如，如果有人运用“毫厘论证”警示领航员，他可能注意到太阳正在下落，开船后很难再矫正航线。

要转移举证责任，需要对接下来有争议的一步保持敏感。正如绍尔所说：“有说服力的滑坡论证有赖于时间及空间上偶发的经验事实，而不是（或不仅是）简单的逻辑推论。”<sup>④</sup>这种对经验事实和逻辑推论的区分通过另一种方式阐明了谬误性滑坡论证与非谬误性滑坡论证的不同。谬误性滑坡论证就仅仅将论证视为一种逻辑推论。问题是，由于不能绝对知晓未来，我们总是无法完全确定一个表面看来无害的变化是否会导向一个不愿看到的结果。因此，在预测未来事态发展时，我们可运用该论证的逻辑形式。这种滑坡论证方法所导向的是绍尔所说的“无差别的风险规避”，或者“在面对不确定的未来时，泛泛地呼吁谨慎”。<sup>⑤</sup>这就是为什么格兰维尔·威廉斯（Glanville Williams）说逻辑推论的滑坡论证是“传统主义者的王牌，因为任何的改革建议，不管论证形势多么有利，都不免会遭受‘楔形异议’（wedge objection）”。<sup>⑥</sup>拉福莱特等人就引用了这段话。儒家学者对这种批评更加敏感，因为长期以来他们就被讽刺为欠考虑的传统主义者。<sup>⑦</sup>如果儒家的“毫厘论证”想要避免上述问题，不仅需要注意逻辑形式，还要注意相关“经验事实”，或运用其具体情景。亦即必须解决所有可能

① 拉福莱特：《生活在滑坡上》，第478页。

② 沃尔顿、范德伯格和拉福莱特都认为，应该完全避免“滑坡论证”（沃尔顿：《滑坡论证》，第29页；范德伯格：《滑坡论证》，第65页；拉福莱特：《生活在滑坡上》，第476页）。

③ 沃尔顿：《滑坡论证》，第14页

④ 绍尔：《滑坡》，第381页。

⑤ 绍尔：《滑坡》，第376页。

⑥ 格兰维尔·威廉斯：《安乐死立法问题：驳非宗教性异议》（*Euthanasia Legislation: A Rejoinder to the Nonreligious Objections*），载唐宁（A. B. Downing）编《安乐死与死的权利》（*Euthanasia and the Right to Death*），伦敦：彼得·欧文出版社，1969年，第143页。本段见引于范德伯格：《滑坡论证》，第42页和拉福莱特：《生活在滑坡上》，第489页。

⑦ 古代认为儒者是欠考虑的传统主义者的观点，见《墨子·非儒下》。20世纪学者相应观点，见林毓生：《中国意识的危机——“五四”时期激烈的反传统主义（增订再版本）》，穆善培译，贵阳：贵州人民出版社，1986年。

阻碍第一步导向后续负面结果的因素。

上文提到，现存最早运用“毫厘论证”的典籍是《礼记》。其中的“毫厘论证”所服务的正是威廉斯和拉福莱特所指的欠考虑的传统主义。如《礼记》的相关段落是在解释各种礼仪的目的：“故朝觐之礼，所以明君臣之义也。聘问之礼，所以使诸侯相尊敬也。”（《礼记·经解》）接下来又提到了“丧祭之礼”“乡饮酒之礼”和“昏姻之礼”，然后解释了若不能继续践行上述诸礼会发生什么。“聘觐之礼废，则君臣之位失，诸侯之行恶，而倍畔侵陵之败起矣。”多么戏剧性的后果！这段话反对废除任何“旧礼”的理由是：每一种礼都有防止失序的作用，因此取消任何一种礼都会导致混乱。这里的论证恰好说明了所谓“否认前项”（denying the antecedent）的谬论。它假设礼仪是秩序的成因，礼仪的缺失就会导致混乱，却忽略了一个事实——秩序的成因可能并非礼仪。

《礼记》该篇以简单的负面后果论开始，推理思路不太可靠，结论处却用了“毫厘论证”来概括并加强论点。“礼之教化也微，其止邪也于未形，使人日徙善远罪而不自知也。”亦即礼仪发挥作用的方式过于微而难见，然而其效果逐渐从国家秩序上显现出来。礼教的缺位开始时也微而难见，但其结果将逐渐显现为国家的失序。这样就会出现“差若毫厘，谬以千里”的情况。宋明儒家在运用“毫厘论证”时也将之作为对话或论述的结尾，不过他们更注重那些可能阻碍“毫厘”之误导向“千里”之谬的因素。

## 二、孟子、程颐论墨子和杨朱<sup>[93]</sup>

“毫厘论证”在《二程遗书》中出现过两次，<sup>①</sup>都在程颐所写的一节文字内。<sup>②</sup>实际上，它们是同一论证的两个版本，要么是程颐重复运用了这一论证，要么是他的两位弟子分别记录了程颐的论证。该论证评论了《孟子·滕文公下》第九段关于墨子和杨朱两个学派观点的论述。

孟子的这段话充满了负面结果论，是为了说明“天下之生久矣，一治一乱”。他引用的是远古时圣王尧和舜去世后的时期。这两位先王在世时是治的时代，去世后变成了乱的时代。用孟子的话来说，即“尧、舜既没，圣人之道衰。”“暴君代作，坏宫室以为污池，民无所安息；弃田以为园囿，使民不得衣食。”或许是“邪说暴行又作”的缘故（至少是与之相伴生的），最终“天下又大乱”。他认为，问题的根本在于统治者攫取百姓的资源，比如他们安身立命的房屋和田地。当百姓生计困难时，他们就转而采取暴力行为且无暇顾及土地，这一衰败景象表现为蜂拥而至的“禽兽”。正如孟子在书中另一处所说，对统治者而言，稳定主要在于“得乎丘民”。（《孟子·尽心下》）亦即失去人民的支持就会带来灾难。

在孟子时代，乱的主要原因是“邪说”，即杨朱和墨子的学说。按照孟子的分析，世人分为两派，一派从杨，一派从墨。孟子分别用一个词语总结了兩派的思想主张。杨氏一派主张“为我”，而墨氏一派主张“兼爱”。这些主张就教学而言无关紧要，但其政治后果却非常深远，因为从这两者导出的下一步思想可能更令人不安。从“为我”可能导出“无君”，而从“兼爱”则可能导出“无父”。如果一个人只把自己当作行为准则，就不会尊重国君的指令；若无差别地爱任何人，就不会特别尊敬父亲。孟子

<sup>①</sup> 程颢、程颐：《二程集》，北京：中华书局，1981年，第171页、231页。

<sup>②</sup> 见安格斯·格雷厄姆（Angus Graham）：《两位中国哲学家——程明道和程伊川》（*Two Chinese Philosophers: Ch'eng Ming-tao and Cheng Yi-chuan*），拉萨尔：公开法庭出版社，1992年，第141页。

认为不认国君和父亲的人处于“禽兽”状态。亦即他们不愿让自己的行为服从于某项指令，哪怕它能让社会繁荣起来。不认国君就无法通过政府作为来帮助他人，而不认父亲就不会照顾自己的家庭。其结果就是“仁义充塞，则率兽食人，人将相食。”（《孟子·滕文公下》）

孟子还详细总结了其中的因果顺序，这对程颐及后世儒者具有重要意义。他说：“（邪说）作于其心，害于其事；作于其事，害于其政。”亦即当时之乱是源于诸学说。当然，这些学说要产生负面影响还需要几个步骤——从最初的学说，到合理的推论，再由此产生行为——孟子在此并未运用“毫厘论证”的语言。他认为墨子和杨朱的学说本身就有问题，其负面后果也不是以扩展的方式发生的。但程颐和其他后世儒者却不这样认为。

程颐的弟子一定担心过老师及其叔父张载在思想上过于接近墨子的思想，程颐还曾就此专门为自己和张载辩护过。程颐最著名的弟子杨时曾写信给他说明张载的《西铭》一文包含了一些墨子思想。而程颐的回信阐明了墨家的问题在于其对人类行为之“本”的特征描述：“西铭明理一而分殊，墨氏则二本而无分。”他进一步说：“老幼及人，理一也。爱无差等，本二也。”<sup>①</sup>换言之，张载只不过秉承了孟子的延伸概念：一个人的爱一定有其优先考虑的对象，即家庭；但它还能延伸到家庭之外的人，最终将爱延伸至所有人。<sup>②</sup>另一方面，墨氏门徒又认为人之爱有二“本”，即对家庭的爱和其他所有人的爱，二者互不依赖。程颐含蓄地指出了墨家提倡“理一”但未能在其思想中纳入“分殊”：“无分之罪，兼爱而无义。”我们对父母的爱与对他人的义有区别。墨家要做的不是废除“兼爱”之说，而是要补充“义”的思想。

值得注意的是，宋儒对墨子和杨朱的批评并不像对墨门、杨门弟子那样猛烈。艾文贺（Philip Ivanhoe）指出，宋儒认为墨子的“思想体系本身没有问题”，他们也在发展自己的“兼爱”思想。<sup>③</sup>程颐本人就倡导“无远迩亲疏之别”。<sup>④</sup>他的一位弟子大概是注意到了程颐和墨子在这个观点上的类似性，便问为何他们不去学习墨子的论著。程颐就用了“毫厘论证”来说明墨子和杨朱的思想表面上看起来值得赞誉，却可能产生孟子所说的可怕后果。他首先承认墨、杨二人之善，说“杨朱本是学义，墨子本是学仁”。<sup>⑤</sup>事实上，如果孟子说墨子认为一个人与邻居儿子的关系和他与侄儿的关系一样，他就错了。程颐反问：“墨子书中何尝有如此等言？”<sup>⑥</sup>这段语录中，程颐对杨、墨二人批评最厉的不过是“但所学者稍偏”。他没有明说这里的“偏”是何意，只说“故其流遂至于无父无君”。<sup>⑦</sup>如“兼爱”学说有流于“无父”思想的趋势。它在本质上是“偏”的，不平衡的。

墨子本人并没有提出“无父”的观点，因为他对“仁”的研究平衡了“兼爱”思想。“仁”的思想提倡爱有差等，而“兼爱”思想强调的是爱无差等。值得注意的是，孟子意识到可以通过补充其他思想来避免“兼爱”学说的不良影响。他指出墨子的弟子夷之在“兼爱”学说中加入了“施由亲始”的思想。（《孟子·滕文公上》）如同“义”的思想，这种思想明确了一个人的爱该始自何处，纠正了行为之

① 程颢、程颐：《二程集》，第609页。

② 参见《孟子·梁惠王上》。

③ 艾文贺：《儒家传统中的伦理——孟子和王阳明的思想》（*Ethics in the Confucian Tradition: The Thought of Mencius and Wang Yang-ming*），印第安纳波利斯：哈克特出版社，2002年，第33页。艾文贺在本书第30—33页分析了宋儒对墨子的态度，并将程颐关于墨家的毫厘论证翻译成英文。

④ 程颢、程颐：《二程集》，第742页。

⑤ 程颢、程颐：《二程集》，第231页。

⑥ 有关段落是《孟子·滕文公上》第5段。在该段中，孟子认为这是墨子弟子夷之的观点而非墨子的主张。关于程颐本人对“兄弟之子犹子也”的观点，见《二程集》第234页。

⑦ 程颐还讨论了杨、墨之流（见《二程集》第157页），但未提及“毫厘论证”。



“本”，因此是促进而不是破坏了社会秩序。然而，“兼爱”学说仍有可能流于更加有害的学说。程颐认为这是孟子批评杨、墨的真正原因，因为孟子“知其流必至于此”。程颐还运用了“毫厘论证”来支持自己的观点：“大凡儒者学道，差以毫厘，谬以千里。”<sup>①</sup>

尽管在《礼记》和《二程遗书》中“毫厘论证”的措辞大体一致，含义却大不相同。两个版本都是从渐进论而来，都需要初看是“微”却会不断发展的东西。在《礼记》中，“微”是礼与国家秩序之间的联系。因为人们看不到这种联系，所以不相信废除礼制会有什么负面后果。《礼记》并不是要描述错误多么微不足道，而是说忽视了“微”才犯了最初的错误。而《二程遗书》里的“微”就是一个错误，即在学习杨、墨二人思想时所犯的错误。这个错误微不足道，因为他们的学说本身并没有什么不对，只要用一种或几种其它学说对其进行补充，使其不要发展成真正错误的思想（如“无君”）就可以了。程颐的老师周敦颐（1017-1073）认为，所有的学说都是“微”的，因为它们在无人看见的心中发生。但是当程颐运用“毫厘论证”时，“微”是指那些虽不平衡但可矫正的思想。<sup>②</sup>可以假定，“无君”的思想不属于这个范畴，因为无法再靠补充其他思想来防止其扰乱国家秩序。

要使小错发展为逐渐恶化的一系列结果，“毫厘论证”还需要某种推力。程颐的版本有两个推力：学说之“偏”以及“后之学者”<sup>③</sup>对其过于固守。程颐没有具体说明后者，却在另一次谈话中全面解释了杨、墨之“偏”。更确切地说，他指出杨、墨学说“偏”的问题也发生在两位孔子弟子身上。《论语·先进》中，孔子说“师也过，商也不及”。<sup>④</sup>这里，师即子张，商即子夏。程颐解释此句道：“师只是过于厚些，商只是不及些。”二人皆孔门弟子，但各自的错误将他们引向了儒家之外的学说。程颐说：“厚则渐至于兼爱，不及则便至于为我。”换言之，某些态度本身并不会表明偏离儒家学说，但却会将其引向儒家之外，即杨朱和墨子的学说。如前文一样，程颐指出：“杨、墨，亦未至于无父无君，……其差必至于是也。”“过”的问题在于，有行动的推动力却没有行动的限制力；而“不及”的问题在于，有行动的限制力却没有行动的推动力。无论哪种情况都不能达于“中”。

程颐虽未明确将“毫厘论证”与《论语·先进》联系起来，他的弟子尹焞（1071-1142）却看到了二者之间的密切关系。尹焞写了一篇《论语》评论，把“过”“不及”与“毫厘论证”挂钩。以下引文只是为了说明程颐师生注意到了杨、墨之错误、“过”和“不及”的问题，以及“毫厘论证”之间的密切关联。程颐建立了前两者之间的联系，尹焞揭示了后两者的联系。尹焞说：“‘差之毫厘，谬以千里。’故圣人之教人抑其过，引其不及，归于中道而已。”与尹焞同时期的朱熹对他这个短评印象非常深刻，还在其流传甚广的《论语集注》中引用了该评论。<sup>⑤</sup>

### 三、朱熹、罗钦顺论佛家和道家 [97]

朱熹语录中对“毫厘论证”的使用很零散，且大多未作具体说明。不过，他与一位丹阳人士交谈时使用的“毫厘论证”值得注意。<sup>⑥</sup>对方说“乡里多从事文辞”，而不是“颜子克己”。朱熹即用“毫厘

① 程颢、程颐：《二程集》，第231页。

② 周敦颐认为：“通微生于思”。见张岱年：《中国古典哲学概念范畴要论》，《张岱年全集（第四卷）》，石家庄：河北人民出版社，1996年，第688页。

③ 程颢、程颐：《二程集》，第231页。

④ 参见程颢、程颐：《二程集》，第176页和第171页。

⑤ 参见朱熹《论语集注》中论《论语》第十一章“先进”部分。

⑥ 黎靖德编：《训门人二》，《朱子语类》，北京：中华书局，1986年，第2765页。

论证”回复，并解释说：“学经书者多流为传注，学史者多流为功利，不则流入释老。大谬也。”他可能发现“毫厘论证”很有用处，在谈话中又重复了一次。这位丹阳人答道：“游判院说释氏亦格物，亦有知识，但所见不精。”朱熹答云：“近学佛者又生出许多知解，各立知见，又却都不如它佛原来说得直截。”正如程颐看到了杨、墨与其弟子之间的落差，朱熹也看到了早期佛家与后世佛家之间的落差。其中最主要的问题是“流”。弟子们追名逐利、忙于注疏，或又南辕北辙而归入佛老，以致没有潜心学习经史典籍而未领悟真正的学问。也许早期佛家的学问较好，所学所说直接明了，但朱熹时代的学士多无此才能。朱熹讲了“毫厘论证”和孔子对“过”与“不及”的区分后，还在另一处说：“高者便说做天地之外去，卑者便只管陷溺；高者必入于佛老，卑者必入于管商。”<sup>①</sup>这里的佛、商替代了墨、杨，仍指“过”与“不及”的问题。但朱熹并没有像程颐那样指出某学说之“偏”，或建议对某学说进行补充以防止当代学者流入那些有害的主张。

要用“毫厘论证”讨论佛家具体学说，就不得不提到明代儒者罗钦顺（1465-1547）和当时声望更高的大儒王阳明。二人均用“毫厘论证”指出接受错误的佛家心性教义可能导致的严重后果。他们都认为，不必对佛家教义补充其它学说来防止学佛者步入歧途，因为佛教教义的问题不在于“偏”，而在于其本身就是错误的，所以要用其它学说来替代它。罗钦顺批评了佛家的“明心见性”教义，<sup>②</sup>随后还提出了用词相似的儒家主张“尽心知性”。可见“明心见性”的问题并不在措辞，而在佛家的阐释方法。罗钦顺认为佛家用“明心见性”表达的是性与心没有不同，并混淆了性与心，以致“误天下后世之人，至于废弃人伦，灭绝天理”。依人性而生活，就是要参与人伦，按照天理构建社会秩序。把性等同于心，最终所见不过是心，而不是性，由此看不到人伦和天理。在这里，罗钦顺并未说佛家过去就有这样的主张，而是说他们引导后人提出了这种观点，而导致这一负面后果的就是那条错误教义。他说：“其或认心以为性，真所谓‘差毫厘而谬千里’者矣。”<sup>③</sup>

这里不必再详述王阳明如何运用“毫厘论证”批评佛家，他的模式和罗钦顺的差异不大，<sup>④</sup>都说佛家在心的问题是错误的，把日间活跃的做决策的心和夜间静谧安宁的心视为不同的心，而实际上只有一颗心，只是对不同情况做出了不同反应。这种拒绝活跃的学说是基于对心的错误理解，不应当和其它学说结合在一起，而应将其完全摒弃。那么，这个错误之“微”是什么呢？罗钦顺和王阳明都没有解释为什么佛家的错误是细微的，但其错误原因似乎和《礼记》中的一样。《礼记》把废弃礼仪视为“毫厘之差”，因为礼仪与社会秩序之间并没有明显的关联。佛家将性简化为心，这和抛弃人伦并无明显联系。可能有人会误认为这条佛家教义只是具有学术争论，并不会对社会秩序造成什么后果。

相信罗钦顺和王阳明所批评的佛家也不会否认他们对心的理解会导致抛弃人伦的后果，因为他们大多公开宣扬、倡导解脱人伦、步入修行。在回应罗钦顺和王阳明时，他们并不否定“毫厘论证”中的因果关系，而是争辩其结果是有益的而非负面的。亦即佛家的回应根本不讨论“毫厘论证”，这一点和杨、墨后学不同。杨、墨后学不会辩称（孟子所说的）其学说可能导致的“人将相食”结果是好的——而是辩称他们的学说根本不会导向那样的结果。

① 黎靖德编：《陆氏》，《朱子语类》，第2980页。

② 罗钦顺：《困知记》，北京：中华书局，1990年，第3页。

③ 罗钦顺：《困知记》，第1页。

④ 王阳明：《传习录》，郑州：中州古籍出版社，2008年，第314—15页。



#### 四、王阳明论朱熹 [99]

上文已提及王阳明认为佛教教义即使与其他学说结合也无法避免负面后果，但在批评朱熹的观点时却考虑了补充其它学说。王阳明在反驳朱熹时比程颐更注重找寻一种可以作为人类行为之“本”且无需增补其他学说。程颐虽未明确提出这种学说，但他的“理一分殊”可能结合了两种学说：一种是“理一”，另一种是理的“分殊”。若只强调其中一种，就会像杨朱学派和墨家学派那样，“差以毫厘，谬以千里”。

王阳明在与一位弟子讨论朱熹论著时，就非常谨慎地寻找人类行为之“根本”，<sup>①</sup>其弟子蔡希渊就朱熹对《大学》文本结构重排提出疑问。朱熹把“格物致知”一节调到“诚其意”一节之前。阳明认为这种顺序变化的目的是首先要格身外之物，然后再使其意“诚”。王阳明说：“新本先去穷格事物之理，即茫茫荡荡，都无着落处。”他认为该方法的问题是学生会因此完全陷入所格之物，而看不到自我。其结果是一物一物地格下去，却在自己的德行方面毫无收获。因此，若要使学生的“格物”成为有德行的实践，就需在“格物”说中加入另一种学说。“须用添个敬字方才牵扯得向身心上来。”亦即如果学生注意“格物”的方式方法，就会在理解周围世界的同时修养身心。修养身心是好的结果，但它其实是由两种学说产生的：“格物”和“敬”。在王阳明看来，学说来源的多重性就意味着“无根源”。这里他用的“根”与上文讨论的“本”不同，不是指任意人类行为根源，而是指等其他次要根源不再妨碍时发挥作用的唯一行为根源。像杨、墨一样，朱熹的弟子可用其它学说来补充其主要学说的从属性或不完整性。这样就没有任何一个学说可视为主要的，或真正的“根”。

针对弟子提出的朱熹把《大学》“格物致知”一节调整到“诚其意”一节之前的问题，阳明的解决方案是应保留原来的次序，让“诚其意”一节在先。他的理由跟文献学没什么关系，而是要解决朱熹学说多重性所造成的问题。其实“诚其意”就是主要学说，无需再补充什么。阳明指出：“若以诚意为主，去用格物致知的工夫，即工夫始有下落。”并非不要格物，而是要先“诚其意”再格物。遵从“诚其意”说的学生格物时就不会忽视自我，因为其业之“本”在于自身，在于矫正自身的“意”。程颐反驳墨家学派时用的是同样的模式：问题不在于“兼爱”说，而在于把它视为唯一的行为之“本”。相反，如果一个人先尽本分，他仍然会“兼爱”，只不过是作为对家庭之爱的延伸。而爱要有好的结果，就必须从最原始最基本的方面开始。同样，王阳明关于学问的论述中，如果一个人不从最基本的方面着手治学，即“所谓毫厘之差，千里之谬”。

#### 五、结论 [100]

比较王阳明和其他宋明学者对“毫厘论证”的运用，我们会发现这些论证尽管有细微差异，却有一个明显的共同思路。他们都在警告某一学说会导向一种显著的负面后果，这未必是由于该学说本身的错误，或该学说创建者还在世时就已导致了这种后果，而是由于创建者的弟子会不可避免地拔掉防止该学说导向不良后果的“保险栓”。这些弟子或后学是“毫厘论证”中除论证人和可能采用争议学

<sup>①</sup> 在《传习录》第250-251页，王阳明简略地批评了朱熹，在《传习录》第151页，他又详细重申了该论点。

说的听者之外的第三方。<sup>①</sup>这里有个假设，即弟子没有透彻理解老师的学说。他们没有将不同的学说组合在一起，而仅仅满足于遵从其中一种或几种学说。这种不平衡导致了这些学说的潜在负面社会后果的发生。所以，论证人警告听者注意某一学说，与其说是为了听者，毋宁说是为听者的徒子徒孙着想。

在这个大框架中，宋明儒者运用“毫厘论证”时涉及的错误性质以及错误之“微”的原因各不相同。可能是采用了一个会导向“过”或“不及”行为的学说，如程颐所论墨、杨二学派；可能是没有好好定义重要术语，如罗钦顺所论佛家；可能是采取了错误的学说作为人类行为之“根本”，如王阳明所论朱熹。所有这些错误最初都“微”而难见，但原因各不相同。对程颐而言，墨子的错误之所以“微”，原因是他在“兼爱”说中加入了自己对“仁”的研究所得，以免出现负面结果使学者将把它看作一个错误。王阳明所论的朱熹也是如此：由于加入了“敬”的思想，他对“格物”的特别看重并没有负面结果。不过，罗钦顺和王阳明所论佛家的错误之“微”，并不是因为它没有负面结果，而是因为它看起来与结果之间没什么关联，似乎只是一种知识错误，不会侵蚀社会秩序。

我们在前文按沃尔顿和绍尔的思路辨别了“滑坡论证”的谬误版本，即试图让听者相信一旦采取了第一步就会陷入固定的进路。由于“毫厘论证”涉及一些具体学派或宗派的学说，如果它强调或暗示某一学派或宗派的成员只能依赖某一种学说，就是谬误的。比如，倘若程颐断言墨子的行为只能是由其“兼爱”说而来，那就是谬误。如果某一学派或宗派的成员只能固守某一种学说，而该学说有使他们偏离正轨的倾向，他们也会沿着这个倾向走下去。我们所分析的各种“毫厘论证”版本并非都采用了这一谬误形式。然而针对佛家的论证是最弱的。朱熹虽然认为早期佛家也有直截明白的学说，却并未解释其直截明白的原因，以及它们为何没能像后世佛家学说那样发展下去。罗钦顺和王阳明至少还确定了具体的佛教教义，也解释了是什么因素推动这些教义走向负面结果的，但他们暗示除了放弃这些教义没有其他方法可以避免负面后果。当然，由于他们认为这些教义本就是错误的，所以主张直接放弃，不用去考虑会导致什么结果。只不过这无助于提高其“毫厘论证”的说服力。

在程颐论杨、墨，或王阳明论朱熹时，论证人笼统解释了听者犯了“毫厘”之误后应该如何避免产生种种负面结果。例如，朱熹可以把“敬”加入其“格物”学说。也许加入其他学说也能发挥“保险栓”的功能，防止该错误造成负面结果。论证人简单地指出，原学说中的错误对于采用该学说的人总有一种“拉力”，因此他们要时刻留意，努力保持不偏离轨道。在上述示例中，“毫厘论证”不是谬误，反而可以作为儒家特有的一种方法，即通过分析当下趋势来预测未来。

（译审：罗妍 责任编辑：张发贤 责任校对：寇辰）

<sup>①</sup> 沃尔顿在《滑坡论证》第222页称，“滑坡论证”中必须有三方，即警告者，应答者，以及和把应答者导向负面结果的第三方。

# Invitation for Manuscript Submission

## Confucian Academy (Chinese Thought and Culture Review)

Officially launched in August 2014, the journal *Confucian Academy* (Chinese Thought and Culture Review) [ISSN 2095–8536, CN 52–5035/C] is a leading Chinese–English bilingual scholarly journal dedicated to traditional Chinese thought and culture in prompting conversations among world civilizations.

*Confucian Academy* cordially invites the submission of manuscripts for consideration for the next issue. Authors may submit manuscripts in Chinese or English while Chinese–English bilingual manuscripts are strongly preferred, in which case authors will receive a double payment upon publication. The corresponding author of an accepted manuscript will be notified and receive credit for payment. *Confucian Academy* additionally provides the corresponding author with two complimentary copies of the print issue in which the article appears.

### 1. Main Sections

Dialogue of Civilizations, Academic Forum, Studies on Traditional Chinese Philosophy, Yangming Culture, Horizon of Sinology, and Masters of Chinese Studies

### 2. Manuscript Format and Style

The papers should meet the general criteria of significance and academic merits with reliable reference. Chinese manuscripts should generally be 7,000 to 12,000 words in length; English manuscripts no more than 7,000 words. Title, abstract, keywords, biographical notes, text, and references are required in each manuscript.

#### 1) Abstract and Keywords

Submissions must include an abstract of up to 200 words and three to six keywords or phrases for indexing purposes.

#### 2) Biographical Notes, Affiliations, and Full Contact Details

All manuscripts are to be supplied with 200-word biographical notes, academic affiliations, and full contact information for all authors including email, mailing address, and telephone numbers.

#### 3) References and Footnotes

All references are included as footnotes. Manuscripts should indicate footnotes in text by a superscript number starting with “1” and number them consecutively throughout the entire manuscript. Detailed requirements are as follows:

Book: Author(s), *Title of book*, Edition number (Place of publication: Publisher, Year of publication), Page(s).

Chapter in Book: Author(s), “Title of chapter,” in ch. xx of *Title of book* (Place of publication: Publisher, Year of Publication), Inclusive pages.

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