Human nature and governance: soulcraft and statecraft in eleventh century China

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Chapter 1
From Ancient Prose[1] to Wang Anshi

In the fourth month of 1068, after most of the state councilors who had been continuously serving his great-uncle Renzong (r. 1022-1063) and father Yingzong (r. 1063-1067) had left the central government,[2] the twenty-year-old emperor Zhao Xu 趙頊 (1048-1085, r. 1067-1085, temple name Shenzong 神宗),[3] intent on carrying forward his ancestors' great enterprise in its second century and having been looking for someone to assist him,[4] interviewed Wang Anshi 王安石 (1021-1086), asking him what should be done first in governance.[5] To this Wang replied: "Beginning with choosing the craft" 以擇術為始.[6] This implies that Wang saw there were at least two different kinds of statecraft before Shenzong: the existing one that was carried forward from the previous reigns[7] and the alternative Wang was presenting to him.

To see what exactly it was that was passed on to the new emperor and why he would choose to replace it with the one proposed by Wang Anshi, this chapter first traces back to its source – Han Yu's "Tracing the Way," where a path-breaking[8] humanist political theory of self-governance was formulated for the post-An Lushan Rebellion (755-763) new world. Decentralizing moral authority to individual literati (士 *shi*), Han asked them to take social-political actions according to their own moral sense under the general principle of broadly loving humans and doing so

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[1] This new concept was central to the social-political movement Han Yu and others were campaigning in the eighth century. *Wen* could refer to non-rhythmic prose writing, but *gu* did not just refer to the style, laying its focus rather on the idea. To call a prose piece "*gu*" was to convey the sense that one was expressing one's own view on a matter of public interest by organizing words in a way that gave focal place to one's independent thinking. Combined, it was a new concept emerging in the Tang-Song transition in the Koselleckian sense of concept creation (*Futures Past*, chapter 5).

[2] On Shenzong's actions before interviewing Wang Anshi, see Zhu Yiqun, "Song Shenzong qiyong Wang Anshi zhi Jiangningfu"; Zhou Jia, *Bei Song zhongyang richang zhengwu*, 156-57; Ye Tan, *Da bianfa*, 48-50; and Zhao Dongmei, *Da Song zhi bian*, chapters 8-10. On Shenzong's attack on Han Qi, see Smith, "Shen-Tsung's Reign," 357.

[3] Calling Zhao Xu "Shenzong" is anachronistic for the period when he was alive. This nonetheless could serve as a convenient designation.

[4] See the statement made in Shenzong's voice in the 1082 palace exam question (Liu Lin et al. eds., *Song Huiyao jigao*, 7.24, 5400-01). For bibliographical notes on this primary source, see Hartman, *The Making of Song Dynasty History*, chapter 1.

[5] Zhao Dongmei notes this meeting has received scant attention (*Da Song Zhi Bian*, chapter 12).

[6] Huang Yizhou, Xuzizhitongjianchangbian *shibu* (*XCBSB* hereafter), 3a.92; Yang Zhongliang, *JSBM*, 59.1042. *"Shu"* 術 could be a special term (Makeham, "The Legalist Concept of *Hsing-ming*," 88).

[7] Hartman takes 1045-68 as one period ("Sung Government and Politics," 31). Smith similarly considered the period between 1046 and 1067 as one of relative quietness ("Shen-Tsung's Reign," 323).

[8] Han was part of his generation as David McMullen demonstrated ("Han Yü." See also Bol, *"This Culture of Ours*," 398n83). But in producing this political theory, he went the farthest.

appropriately, the two cardinal *political* values from the Confucian tradition. By the mid-eleventh century, this approach to governance finally ascended to become the mainstream, thanks especially to the ancient prose (*guwen* 古文) movement leader Ouyang Xiu 歐陽修 (1007-1072).[9] In the latter two parts of his "On the Roots" 本論, Ouyang supplemented Han's theory with a more feasible method of realization. Furthermore, during the Jiayou and Zhiping periods (1056-1067), he practiced it in the government with like-minded court officials, till the capable Shenzong saw what it did to imperial authority and began to reassert it with the political theory Wang Anshi had developed by the late 1050s.

I

Han Yu and the Advent of a Humanist Theory of Self-Governance

Like most studies of eleventh century intellectual history, the story has to begin with Han Yu and the piece he spent many years in the making thereof, knew would be dangerous to make public, and expected to only become current in a future time[10] -- "Tracing the Way." "One of the most influential texts in later Chinese thought,"[11] it has been interpreted by many scholars from multiple perspectives.[12] The reading below is from that of political theory. Reading its beginning part against two contexts – an early Chinese political philosophical discourse in discontent with which Han composed this piece and the Tang's prevailing way of governance Han was challenging – and paying attention to Han's rhetorical strategy, we shall come to see that Han wrote it to present a decentralized way of governance against the Tang status quo.[13] It begins with these declarations that seem to have come out of nowhere:

[9] Hartman notes "*guwen* played only a minor role in Song political culture before Ouyang Xiu" ("Zhu Xi and His World," 113).
[10] Han Yu, "Chong da Zhang Ji shu," in *Han Changli wenji zhushi* (*HCLJ* hereafter), vol. 1, 201-05.
[11] Bol, *"This Culture of Ours,"* 128; de Bary and Irene Bloom eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition, Volume One*, 569.
[12] See, for example, Chen Yinke, "Lun Han Yu"; Hartman, *Han Yü and the T'ang Search for Unity*, 145-62; Bol, *"This Culture of Ours,"* 128-31; Yang, *The Way of the Barbarians*, 29. Youngmin Kim's discussion of Han Yu (*A History of Chinese Political Thought*, chapter 5) focuses on political identity and the relationship between self and things.
[13] On Han was calling for dismantling the Tang status quo in "Tracing the Way," see Bol, *"This Culture of Ours,"* 130.

> To love broadly is what is meant by *ren* (humanity).[14] To practice this appropriately is what is meant by *yi* (appropriateness). Proceeding from this [*renyi*] to go there is what is meant by *dao* (way). Being sufficient of oneself without depending on externals is what is meant by *de* ([moral] power or virtue). "*Ren*" and "*yi*" are defined terms. "*Dao*" and "*de*" are empty positions.[15]
> 博愛之謂仁，行而宜之之謂義。由是而之焉之謂道，足乎己無待於外之謂德。仁與義為定名，道與德為虛位。[16]

As if for fear his reader would have no clue what these sentences were about, after taking issue with Laozi's speaking of *daode* in an anti-humanist way,[17] Han gave a detailed explanation for why it was necessary for him to make the above proclamation:

> The way of the Zhou dynasty declined, Confucius passed away, [books] were burned in the Qin, [the school] of Huang[di]-Lao[zi] [prevailed] in the Han, as did Buddhism in the Jin, Wei, Liang, and Sui dynasties. During these times, those who spoke of *daode* and *renyi*, if not joining Yang Zhu, then joined Mozi; if not joining Laozi, then joined Buddha. Joining them, one necessarily left this [Confucius]. The one they joined was [treated as] the master; the one they left as the servant. The one they joined they followed; the one they left they defamed. Alas, later people, should they desire to hear the theory of *renyi* and *daode*, who should they follow and hear it from? Laozians said: "Confucius is my teacher's disciple." Buddhists said: "Confucius is my teacher's disciple." Those who conducted [the business of] Confucius, accustomed to hearing their theories, took delight in their absurdity and belittled themselves, also saying things like "My teacher also had taken him as his teacher." Not only did they uphold such in their mouths, but they also wrote such in their books. Alas, later people, even if they want to hear the theory of *renyi* and *daode*, whom should they follow and seek it from?
> 周道衰，孔子沒，火於秦，黃老於漢，佛於晉、魏、梁、隋之間。其言道德仁義者，[18]不入於楊，則入於墨。不入於老，則入於佛。入於彼，必出於此。入者主之，出者奴之。入

[14] Short of an exact English equivalent, I prefer this rendering as the two dimensions of its meaning – the human race and humaneness or benevolence – match how Han Yu used it more closely. When rendering it as an adjective, "humane" is the choice.
[15] Translation modified from Bol's (*"This Culture of Ours,"* 128-29).
[16] Han Yu, "Yuan dao," in *HCLJ*, vol. 1, 15.
[17] On anti-humanism in the *Classic of Daode*, see Moeller, *The Philosophy of the* Daodejing, 136-37.
[18] In Hartman's translation (de Bary and Bloom eds., *Sources of Chinese Tradition*, *Volume One*, 570), *renyi* is put before *daode*. It seems to me that in this only place where Han put *daode* before *renyi*, he was referring to the mistaken way in which the relationship between the two had been treated by those speaking of it during the period between Confucius and himself.

> 者附之，出者汙之。噫，後之人其欲聞仁義道德之說，孰從而聽之？老者曰：“孔子，吾師之弟子。”佛者曰：“孔子，吾師之弟子也。”為孔子者，習聞其說，樂其誕而自小也，亦曰“吾師亦嘗師之”云爾。不惟舉之於其口，而又筆之於其書。噫，後之人，雖欲聞仁義道德之說，其孰從而求之？[19]

Han told us he formulated his theory on the relationship between *renyi* and *daode* with which "Tracing the Way" opened because he thought after Confucius passed away, how the two related to each other had been muddled. This all-too-important context the author went to great lengths to point out to us, to the extent of being overly repetitive, however, is yet to be discussed fully. This probably has something to do with the term *daode*.

Today, *daode* is often equated with "morality."[20] Seeing it as a synonym of *renyi*, many also take it as an essential feature of the Confucian tradition. For instance, accusing it of restraining human development and twisting human nature, Liu Zehua charges Confucianism of putting *daode* above all.[21] Setting aside the difference between morality and virtue – anyone with a sense of right and wrong has a morality[22] but not everyone thus has good ethical qualities –,[23] this was not how Han Yu was using this term here. If we leave behind our preexisting notion of what *daode* means in later times, we can see Han was *contrasting* it with *renyi*, taking issue with those who in his view had mistaken its relationship with the latter.

Han's narration of the thousand plus years between Confucius and himself is highly stylized and he did not detail exactly who mistook this relationship and how.[24] Still, by way of some helpful clues, we can get a sense of what Han was referring to.

The first clue comes from Sima Tan 司馬談 (c. 165-110 BCE), who wrote:[25] "*Yin-yang*, *Ru* (Confucius' profession), *Mo* (face tattooing punishment that became the name of a school),

[19] Han Yu, "Yuan dao," in *HCLJ*, vol. 1, 17.
[20] See, for example, Yuli Liu, "The Unity of Rule and Virtue in Confucianism," 218. This works better for later imperial times, including the period under study, hence my rendering it so for the eleventh century but not necessarily for earlier times.
[21] Liu Zehua, *Bashi zi shu*, 329-34.
[22] Cua, *Moral Vision and Tradition*, 278.
[23] The two, however, tend to be conflated (again, see Yuli Liu, "The Unity of Rule and Virtue in Confucianism," 234-35).
[24] For some possibilities, see Gao Buying, *Tang Song wen ju yao*, 147-48.
[25] Like all historians, Sima Tan had his own agenda, as did his son. This, however, does not mean that we cannot take their views as potentially helpful clues. For such an example, see Sato Masayuki, *Xunzi lizhi sixiang*, chapters 1 and 2. For critical discussions of the two Simas, see Petersen, "Which Books Did the First Emperor of Ch'in Burn?";

name, law, and *daode* – these are used for governing" 夫陰陽、儒、墨、名、法、道德，此務為治者.[26] To the older Sima, *daode* is one of the techniques used in governance that is distinct from the one used by those in the same profession as Confucius. Furthermore, according to his son Sima Qian 司馬遷 (145? – c. 87 BCE), using *daode* as a core technique to govern was not restricted to Laozi, but was shared by a variety of political philosophers. For instance, at the end of a combined biography of Laozi, Zhuangzi, Shen Buhai and Han Fei, the younger Sima commented:

> The *dao* Laozi valued contained nothing and responded to change with inaction, thus when he wrote his work, his rhetoric and terminology were abstruse and difficult to understand. Zhuangzi dissipated *daode* and let loose his opinions, but his essence, too, lay mainly in spontaneity. Shenzi treated the lowly as befit the lowly, applying this [principle] to relating [official] titles to actual [duties]. Hanzi snapped his plumb line, cut through to the truth of things, and made clear true from false, but carried cruelty and harshness to extremes, and was lacking in kindness. All of these sprang from the idea of *daode*, but Laozi was the most profound of them all.[27]
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> 老子所貴道，虛無，因應變化於無為，故著書辭稱微妙難識。莊子散道德，放論，要亦歸之自然。申子卑卑，施之於名實。韓子引繩墨，切事情，明是非，其極慘礉少恩。皆原於道德之意，而老子深遠矣。[28]

These four political philosophers,[29] despite their differences, share in using an approach to governance that originated from the idea of *daode* (*daode zhi yi* 道德之意) articulated in the

Kidder Smith, "Sima Tan and the Invention of Daoism, 'Legalism,' *et cetera*"; Nylan, "Sima Qian"; and Kern, "The 'Masters' in the Shiji."

[26] Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 130.3993. For a similar view, see https://ctext.org/he-guan-zi/xue-wen. Smith rightly notes that Sima Tan was organizing knowledge by intellectual content rather than by personal names or texts ("Sima Tan," 129). It seems to me this applies to what Smith takes as an exception – *mo* – as well, as Sima could be referring to the technique of punishing men by inking characters on their faces.

[27] Translation modified from Nienhauser ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records*, *Volume VII*, 29.

[28] Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 63.2622. The twentieth century scholar Zhang Shunhui thinks "周秦學者言主術同宗'道德'" (*Zhou Qin dao lun fawei*, 36). Zhang Liwen went even further, saying "先秦…時代精神的核心話題是'道德之意'" (*He he xue*, preface to the second edition, 5). This is how Zhang organized the pre-Qin part of his *Zhongguo zhexue sichao fazhan shi*. Like most scholars, Zhang treats *renyi* and *daode* as similar to rather than contrasting with each other (*He he xue*, 7).

[29] One could contend Zhuangzi was not concerned with governance, but the quote below from *Zhuangzi* suggests otherwise.

Classic of Daode attributed to Laozi,[30] among them Laozi went the deepest and the farthest. The Simas' views reflected their perspectives, but it seems they were not too far off the mark, as in one instance, Han Yu also grouped Laozi together with Shen Buhai and Han Fei.[31] Moreover, that the "Legalist" approach to governance originated from Laozi seemed common knowledge in the Song. For instance, Su Shi expressed this view in his essay "On Han Fei,"[32] and Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033-1107) similarly said:

> After Laozi, there were Shen Buhai and Han Fei. On the surface, the way of Shen and Han seem far away from that of Laozi, but their origin came from Laozi.
> 老子之後有申、韓，看申、韓與老子道甚懸絕，然其原乃自老子來.[33]

The Qing scholar Zhu Yixin 朱一新 (1846-1894) also pointed out:

> What was covered in Mr. Lao's book was broad. The schools of name, laws, Yang, Mo, Zhuang, Lie, and military strategists, none was not rooted in it. Therefore, Laozi was the ancestor of heterodoxy.
> 老氏書所賅者廣，名、法、楊、墨、莊、列、兵家莫不本之，故老子為異端之宗。[34]

Among the four listed by Sima Qian, except for Shen Buhai,[35] each has stated a view on the relationship between *daode* and *renyi*. Laozi took a combative stance, seeing its *dao* as incompatible with *renyi* and calling for doing away with such humanist virtues in governance:

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[30] Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 63.2605-06: "老子修道德，其學以自隱無名為務。…著書上下篇，言道德之意五千餘言而去。" I translate the *Daodejing* of Laozi, taken as exchangeable with *Laozi*, in this way so as to highlight the special term *daode*, a center of this study.
[31] Han Yu, "Song Meng Dongye xu," in *HCLJ*, vol. 1, 349-50.
[32] Su Shi, "Han Fei lun," in *Su Shi wenji*, 4.102.
[33] Cheng Hao and Cheng Yi, *Er Cheng ji*, 235. Cf. Lu Guolong's discussion in *Song ru weiyan*, 90-91. On the relationship between Han Fei's teachings and the *Classic of Daode*, see Ivanhoe, "Hanfeizi and Moral Self-Cultivation," 35-38. For studies of Han Fei's interpretations of Laozi from a mainly literary perspective, see Denecke, *The Dynamics of Masters Literature*, 288-300, and Queen, "Han Feizi and the Old Master."
[34] Zhu Yixin, *Wuxietang da wen*, 1.40. Wu Genyou notes that in direct opposition to Confucius, who inherited the virtue-centered Zhou culture, Laozi revolutionized it with *dao*, resulting in the sharp opposition between Confucian and Daoist political philosophies, one focusing on *de*, one focusing on *dao* (Wu Genyou and Fang Xudong, "He Wei Zhengzhi Zhexue?" 175; see also Wu Genyou, *Daojia sixiang jiqi xiandai quanshi*, 3-4, 27).
[35] Surviving fragment of Shen's writings do not contain terms like *daode* or *renyi*. In a revision of his own view, Herrlee G. Creel thought Shen not was a Daoist, nor had he been influenced by Daoism (*Shen Pu-hai*, chapter 11), on the grounds that Shen lived before Laozi's book came into being. It could be, though, that the idea of *daode* had been current before the book titled *Classic of Daode* took a textual form.

> When the great *dao* is abandoned, there is *renyi*. … Cut off *ren*, abandon *yi*, and the people will return to being filial and kind. … When *dao* is lost there is *de*; when *de* is lost there is *ren*; when *ren* is lost there is *yi*.[36]
> 大道廢，有仁義。… 絕仁棄義，民復孝慈。…失道而後德，失德而後仁，失仁而後義。[37]

Zhuangzi stressed the crucial importance of putting *daode* before *renyi*:

> The *de* [power] of emperors and kings takes Heaven and Earth as its ancestor, *daode* its master, and nonaction its norm. … If you speak of *dao* and not of its sequence, then it is not the *dao*; and if you speak of *dao* that is not the *dao*, then what is there to adopt from *dao*? Therefore, the men of ancient times who clearly understood the great *dao* first expounded Heaven and then *daode* followed. Having expounded *daode* and then *renyi* followed.[38]
> 夫帝王之德，以天地為宗，以道德為主，以無為為常。…語道而非其序者，非其道也；語道而非其道者，安取道？是故古之明大道者，先明天而道德次之，道德已明而仁義次之。[39]

And Han Fei produced a detailed account of what governing with *renyi* meant in his time and the destructive results it would bring about to the ruler, despite the good reputation this way of governance enjoyed:

> When the sage implements laws in the state, he must necessarily go against the world and go along with *daode*. … Those who study statecraft in the world, in counselling the rulers, do not say, "Make use of the august and commanding position and thereby harass the wicked and villainous ministers," but all say, "[Practice] *renyi*, grace, and love and that is all." The rulers of our time delight in the reputation of *renyi* but do not scrutinize the actual results. Therefore, the graver consequences were that their states demise and they die while the lighter were that their territories shrink and the rulers despised. How to make this clear? Providing for those in poverty and difficulty is what the world

[36] Translation modified from Ivanhoe, *The* Daodejing 道德經 *of Laozi* 老子, 18-19 and 41.
[37] Chapters 18, 19, and 38 of the *Classic of Daode*.
[38] Translation modified from Watson, *The Complete Works of Zhuangzi*, 100, 102.
[39] Guo Xiang et al., Zhuangzi *zhushu*, 13.251, 256. Differing from the two Simas, Sato does not see a conflicting relationship between *renyi* and *daode* in the *Zhuangzi*, nor does he take *daode* there as referring to a way to govern the world (*Xunzi lizhi sixiang*, 91-92).

calls *renyi* while feeling compassion for the populace and being unable to bear punishing them is what the world calls grace and love. However, if one provides for those in poverty and difficulty, then those without merit get rewarded; and if one cannot bear to kill and punish, then violence and chaos will not cease. If the state had men who had no merit but got rewarded, then externally, the people would not work hard to confront the enemies and cut heads off; internally, they would not prioritize laboring in the fields and manufacturing quickly. Rather, all would want to use goods and money [to bribe], serve the rich and the noble, work on private virtues, and make personal names, in order that they may thereby get distinguished offices and fat salaries. As a result, wicked and self-seeking ministers become many and violent and outrageous fellows increasingly gain the upper hand. What but ruin can befall the state?[40]

聖人為法國者，必逆於世，而順於道德。…世之學術者說人主，不曰"乘威嚴之勢以困姦邪之臣"，而皆曰"仁義惠愛而已矣"。世主美仁義之名而不察其實，是以大者國亡身死，小者地削主卑。何以明之？夫施與貧困者，此世之所謂仁義；哀憐百姓不忍誅罰者，此世之所謂惠愛也。夫有施與貧困，則無功者得賞；不忍誅罰，則暴亂者不止。國有無功得賞者，則民不外務當敵斬首，內不急力田疾作，皆欲行貨財、事富貴、為私善、立名譽以取尊官厚俸。故姦私之臣愈眾，而暴亂之徒愈勝，不亡何待？[41]

In the "Illustrious Schools" (*xianxue* 顯學) chapter, Han Fei made it clear those advocating *renyi* to rulers in his time were the Confucians.[42] To be sure, *ren* was an overarching virtue frequently spoken of by Confucius in the *Analects*.[43] There he also spoke of *yi*, but far less frequently and never together with *ren*. Coupling the two together began with Mencius.[44] Scholars of early Chinese philosophy have been treating *ren* and related values as personal virtues in the

[40] Translation modified from Harris, "Han Fei on the Problem of Morality," 124-25 and Liao, *The Complete Works of Han Fei Tzu*, 124-25, 127-28.
[41] Chen Qiyou, Han Feizi *xin jiao zhu*, 4.14.287-88, 4.14.293.
[42] Ibid., 19.50.1124, 19.50.1143.
[43] Tu, "*Jen* as a Living Metaphor in the Confucian *Analects*," 48. The concept of *ren* there centers on but is broader than Han Yu's *ren* as "broad love." About Confucius in the *Analects*, Michael Hunter has convincingly argued that the *Analects* as a *book* did not come into being before the Western Han (*Confucius beyond the* Analects. See also Hunter and Kern eds., *Confucius and the* Analects *Revisited*). This, however, does not negate the conventional wisdom that the parts of which the *Analects* was made up came from the Eastern Zhou period (see, for example, Goldin, "Confucius and His Disciples in the *Lunyu*" and Slingerland "Review of Michael Hunter, *Confucius Beyond the* Analects"). One piece of evidence supporting this latter view this study can supply is that the entries in the *Analects* do not show any awareness of Laozi's concept of *daode*, which had figured prominently in Confucian texts since the *Xunzi*, as we shall soon see.
[44] As Zhu Xi noted (*Sishu zhangju jizhu*, 199). Note, however, Chen Daqi thinks *yi* had already figured centrally in the *Analects* (*Kongzi xueshuo*, preface, 4-5, 125), as does more recently Hagop Sarkissian ("Ritual and Rightness in the *Analects*," 95).

realm of self-cultivation for long. To the political philosophers quoted above, however, *renyi* does not just refer to an individual person's cultivation of his own ethical character, but rather the core *political* values defining an approach to governance associated with Confucius and his followers. From Han Fei's characterization, this approach features meeting the people's needs and treating them with compassion and kindness.[45] To Han Fei, this harms the ruler's interests because being kind to the people would lead them to pursue their own projects in life and away from serving the state.[46]

And, despite Wang Chong 王充 (27-c. 97)'s controversial claim that "Confucius is the ancestor of *daode*" 孔子，道德之祖, [47] neither the term *daode* nor such a Laozian concept can be found in the *Analects*. The same with *Mencius*.[48] Among self-claimed defenders of the way of Confucius, Xunzi was perhaps the first to use the term frequently.[49] Again, we can take a cue from Sima Qian:

> Excellency Xun detested the governance of his chaotic times, with demised states and tyrannical rulers one following the other, refusing to follow the great Way and instead laboring at sorcery and spells and believing in omens. Vulgar Confucians argued over minutiae; those like Zhuang Zhou further disturbed customs with farce. Thus he inquired into the successes and failures of handling things by way of *Ru*, *Mo*, and *daode*, expounding them in sequence in several tens of thousands of characters, and expired.[50]
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> 荀卿嫉濁世之政，亡國亂君相屬，不遂大道而營於巫祝，信禨祥。鄙儒小拘，如莊周等又猾稽亂俗，於是推儒、墨、道德之行事興壞，序列著數萬言而卒。[51]

[45] On the difference between Confucian and Legalist ways of governance with regard to their approach to political communication, see De Weerdt, "What Did Su Che See in the North?" 466.
[46] For relevant discussions, see Harris, "Critiquing Heavily Normative Conceptions of Harmony," 173-77.
[47] Wang Chong, *Lun heng*, 29.
[48] Though we shall see in chapter 4 that Mencius broached the crucial link between morality and human nature.
[49] Sato, *Xunzi lizhi sixiang*, 287. This is perhaps why Han Yu thought the transmission of the way of *renyi* stopped at Mencius ("Yuan dao," in *HCLJ*, vol. 1, 22).
[50] Translation modified from Nienhauser ed., *The Grand Scribe's Records. Volume VII*, 184.
[51] Sima Qian, *Shiji*, 74.2852-53.

From such words like "learning comes to ritual and then stops – this is called the ultimate of *daode*" 學至乎禮而止矣，夫是之謂道德之極,[52] it seems Xunzi sought to incorporate *daode*,[53] a concept that probably had become quite influential by his time, into ritual, the means by which to realize *renyi*.[54] Xunzi, however, did not explicitly state how he saw the relationship between *renyi* and *daode*.[55] Moreover, according to Masayuki Sato, the Daoist concept of *daode* had penetrated into Xunzi's writings to such an extent that it perhaps helped prevent *Xunzi* from being replaced by the Huang[di]-Lao[zi] 黃老 thought popular in the Han dynasty.[56]

Another major follower of Confucius who handled the relationship between *daode* and *renyi* was Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53BCE – 18AD). In his *Exemplary Figures* 法言, Yang made it explicit what he took away from Laozi and what he disapproved of therein:[57] "There is something I adopt from Laozi's talks of *daode*. When it comes to his chiseling away at *renyi* and extinguishing ritual learning, I do not adopt" 老子之言道德，吾有取焉耳。及捶提仁義，絕滅禮學，吾無取焉耳.[58] Yang also presented a view on how to handle the relationship between *daode* and *renyi*:

> The [relationship between] *dao*, *de*, *ren*, *yi*, and *li* is perhaps like the human body. … Conjoined, they constitute something akin to the primal unity; separated, [their force] dissipates. If a single person is in command of all his four limbs, his body is complete.[59]
> 道德仁義禮，譬諸身乎。… 合則渾，離則散。一人而兼統四體者，其身全。[60]

[52] Wang Xianqian, Xunzi *jijie*, 1.12. Translation modified from Hutton, *Xunzi*, 5.
[53] As Cai Renhou notes (*Kong Meng Xun zhexue*, 475). Cai, however, seems to equate *daode* with its later imperial meaning "morality." His statement that Xunzi rarely directly used *daode* is also inaccurate, as Sato points out (*Xunzi lizhi sixiang*, 65-66).
[54] Hutton, "Ethics in the *Xunzi*," 74-79. See also Ivanhoe, "A Happy Symmetry" and Goldin, *Rituals of the Way*.
[55] As can be seen from Xunzi's uses of *daode* (Sato, *Xunzi lizhi sixiang*, 287).
[56] Sato, *Xunzi lizhi sixiang*, chapter 2, quote at 109-10. By "Daoist," Sato mainly refers to Zhuangzi, given his methodology of looking for the exact word *daode*, which did not appear in Laozi's *Classic of Daode*, though the whole book, from its title onward, was about the idea of *daode*, as Sima Qian noted.
[57] Peter Bol has noted this (*"This Culture of Ours,"* 129).
[58] Yang Xiong, *Yangzi fayan*, 4.10. Translation modified from Nylan, *Exemplary Figures*, 57. For a critique of Yang Xiong's take on Laozi's *daode*, see Su Shi, "Han Yu you yu Yang Xiong," in *Su Shi wenji*, 65.2035.
[59] Translation modified from Nylan, *Exemplary Figures*, 55.
[60] Yang Xiong, *Yangzi fayan*, 4.9-10. For a similar view in early China, see https://ctext.org/su-shu/1/zh. Some modern scholars follow this. See, for example, Chen Daqi, *Kongzi xueshuo*, 153; Cua, *Moral Vision and Tradition*, 283; Shu Dagang and Shen Shengchao, "Dao de ren yi li." It seems to me the internal structure of these five goes like this: *dao* is constituted by *renyi*, which is realized by *li*. Those who act according to this *dao* is considered having *de*. For a similar view, see Hutton, "Ethics in the *Xunzi*," 76-78.

Like Han Yu, Yang sought to make *daode* always coupled with *renyi* (as well as *li*, that by which to realize *renyi*). But not only did Yang put *daode* before *renyi*, he also did not seem to have provided an explanation for why they must be combined.

Still others took a more ambivalent stance. For instance, at the same time when affirming "The foundation of *dao* is *renyi* and that is all" 夫道之本，仁義而已矣,[61] Xun Yue 荀悅 (148-209) also acknowledged the efficacy of governing with *daode*:

> For those who cross big rivers, the best way is to take a boat and the second swim. Those who swim toil and are in danger, whereas those who take a boat are at leisure and secure. If they go into the water when weak, they will surely get drowned. Those who govern the people with intelligence and capability are like swimming; those who govern the people with *daode* are like taking a boat.
> 濟大川者，太上乘舟，其次泅。泅者勞而危，乘舟者逸而安，虛入水則必溺矣。[62]以知能治民者，泅也；以道德治民者，舟也。[63]

These were not necessarily what Han Yu had in mind exactly, but they were all within the full range of discourse on the relationship between *daode* and *renyi* that was available to him, some of which he did engage explicitly in "Tracing the Way." For instance, other than pointing out Laozi's slighting *renyi*, he also quibbled with Yang Xiong and Xunzi for "picking out something from [Laozi's talks of *daode*] but not carefully; speaking of [the relationship between the *renyi* and *daode*] but not in detail" 擇焉而不精，語焉而不詳. With this partial reconstruction giving us a glimpse of what Han Yu was referring to,[64] we can now see, in this earlier discourse Han was engaging with, *renyi* and *daode* were two technical terms used to refer to two distinct ways of governance, the former originating from Confucius, the latter Laozi. The distinction between the two used to be quite clear-cut, as Laozi's *daode* was designed to oppose the Confucian *renyi* head-on, but beginning with the *Xunzi*, the term *daode* gained a more and more permeating presence in

[61] Xun Yue, *Shenjian*, 1.1.
[62] I am not sure what purpose *shi* 矣 serves here, as the usual meanings of this character do not seem to make sense in this context.
[63] Xun Yue, *Shenjian*, 1.6. Put forward in the form of a question, this seems to reflect what was current in Xun's time.
[64] For a fuller picture, see https://ctext.org/pre-qin-and-han?searchu=%E9%81%93%E5%BE%B7, especially those search results that have *daode* and *renyi* in close proximity.

texts attributed to the Confucian tradition, creating ever more linguistic and conceptual confusions as time went on.[65]

It is against this background that it becomes clear what Han was trying to achieve with the theory on the relationship between *renyi* and *daode* (*renyi daode zhi shuo* 仁義道德之說) he laid out at the very beginning of "Tracing the Way." By putting *renyi* before *daode* and depriving the Daoist terms *dao* and *de* of their independence, making them empty positions that have no meanings of their own but have to be filled with those of *ren* and *yi*,[66] he was attempting to drive out the Laozian concept of *daode* from this discourse and give pride of place to the way of governance Han Fei deemed detrimental to the monarch. With this powerful conceptual action, it seems Han Yu wanted to make sure that even though the term *daode* may still be in currency, it shall not be used to refer to a Laozian concept any more.

Why did Han take such a serious issue with Laozi's *daode*? Here another context figures in – Tang politics. In an influential article titled "On Han Yu," Chen Yinke notes Han's target was the emperors and prime ministers around Han's time who advocated Daoism.[67] Seeing the Tang imperial house's reverence of Laozi that reached an apex during Xuanzong's 玄宗 reign (712-755) as ridiculous, however, Chen thought the issue Han Yu had with them was that their indulgence in a superstitious religion made the people suffer by harming the social customs.[68] In Han Yu's rhetoric, there were indeed such words that seem to support understanding his point at this level.[69] However, if we are willing to let go of the assumption that a ruler could afford indulging in something unrelated to his full-time job – governing a vast population across an expansive territory through a large bureaucracy in the face of other power holders who would seize whatever opportunities there are to contend with him,[70] we can see what Han was attacking was not just the influence of Daoist religion in social customs but actually the way the Tang was governed.

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[65] As can be seen in the multiple meanings the term *daode* was used to refer to in the eleventh century that we shall see toward the end of this chapter.
[66] On filling empty categories with concrete meanings, see Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 187.
[67] To the evidence Chen presented, see also Han Yu's own statement in Han, "Chong da Zhang Ji shu," 201: "今夫二氏之所宗而事之者，下乃公卿輔相，吾豈敢昌言而排之哉？" Han only stopped short of pointing his fingers at the monarch.
[68] Chen Yinke, "Lun Han Yu," 326-28.
[69] See, for example, Han Yu, "Lun Fo gu biao" (*HCLJ*, vol. 2, 399).
[70] Smith and Ebrey, "Introduction," 7. On reciprocity being the "cardinal principle of Tang patronage for Buddhism and Daoism," see Benn, "Taoism as Ideology in the Reign of Emperor Hsüan-Tsung (712-755)," 7.

In an insightful study of the Tang's Daoist ideology focusing on Xuanzong's reign,[71] Charles David Benn argues that

> The emperor favored Daoist theories of self-cultivation[72] and statecraft because they offered theoretical support for the contentions that the monarch holds all authority and that officeholders must devote themselves to public service. He integrated classical and religious Daoism in his efforts to capitalize on their doctrines. To disseminate the ideology among his people and to train Daoist officeholders, he introduced institutional innovations which became unique features of Tang culture.[73]

Regarding Daoist statecraft, Alex Feldt recently pointed out:

> [T]he political structure presented in the *Laozi* would necessarily be autocratic, with a centralized government ruled by the Daoist sage and administered by numerous ministers. The ruler or autocrat would operate through *wuwei*, allowing the ministers and others to have direct control of government functions, while always maintaining ultimate control and authority. Thus, the ruler would enjoy supreme political authority.[74]

Benn notes Xuanzong's use of Daoist ideology in governance reached a high point during the Tianbao period (742-755),[75] to the extent that "most of his acts enhancing the prestige of Daoism and integrating it with the state ritually, politically and academically during that period gave it a

[71] On the similarities (and differences) between Xuanzong and Huizong, see Bol, "Emperors Can Claim Antiquity Too," 202.
[72] The Daoist theories of "self-cultivation" are not about trying to acquire virtues, but using physical and mental therapeutics to attain longevity. On the different kinds of cultivation in the context of governance, see the Conclusion.
[73] Benn, "Taoism as Ideology," 3. Drawing on Benn, Paul van Els notes that this period also saw a highpoint in the reverence of the *Wenzi*, a text "traditionally ascribed to a disciple of Laozi" (*The Wenzi*, 2).
[74] Feldt, "Governing through the Dao," 335. On Chinese emperors' using Daoism as a means of political legitimization, see Lagerway, *Taoist Ritual in Chinese Society and History*, chapter 15. On the political uses of religion in Chinese history, see Yang, *Religion in Chinese Society*. I see Daoism as more than an instrument for legitimacy.
[75] Benn, "Taoism as Ideology," 11. Benn thinks Xuanzong was in line with earlier Tang emperors in using Daoism "as a dynastic, monarchical and bureaucratic ideology" (ibid., 1). From his study and that of Barrett's discussed below, it seems this became more conspicuous from the third emperor Gaozong (r. 649-683) and then most obvious under Xuanzong. That in relation to his project on *The Essentials of Governance*, where chapter 13 was titled *renyi*, Wu Jing 吴兢 (670-749) got demoted suggests it was perhaps not to Xuanzong's taste. On Wu Jing's agenda, see De Weerdt and McMullen, "Introduction," xv-xvi, xix-xx.

privileged status in the belief that it was indispensable to the state."[76] T. H. Barrett further observes that

> Xuanzong's efforts to create an alternative to the traditional Confucian conception of monarchy were finally rejected only under later dynasties, and his many ideological innovations did not simply evaporate in 755 in the face of the rebellion of An Lushan. Rather the Tang dynasty continued to draw on the reserve of ideological capital he had amassed until its final demise, and the fact that this process took a century and a half to complete bears witness to the efficacy of Xuanzong's strengthening through Daoism of the prestige of his family line.[77]

Moreover, under Xianzong 憲宗 (r. 805-820), the emperor during whose reign Han Yu probably wrote "Tracing the Way,"[78] there came another sustained effort at recentralization that resulted in "a remarkable resurgence of Chang-an's authority within a mere fifteen years."[79] And Barrett points out this coincided with the emperor's continued support for Daoism.[80]

Regardless of whether Han Yu was responding to the recentralization during Xianzong's reign or faulting Xuanzong for his full-scale adoption of Daoist ideology in the decade leading to the rebellion, or both, that he was working against centralized rule is certain: by defining *dao* in an open-ended way – "proceeding from this to go there" – and *de* as moral autonomy – "being sufficient of oneself without relying on externals [for moral guidance]" –, Han made the central authority irrelevant in an individual's moral decision-making. Against the mid-Tang mainstream that still saw the monarch as "the ultimate source of social values,"[81] Han Yu produced a new approach to governance that grants moral authority – the right to decide what is the right thing to do – to each individual literatus,[82] telling them there isn't a predefined way one must follow and that it is not necessary to rely on any authority other than oneself.

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[76] Benn, "Taoism as Ideology," 8.
[77] Barrett, *Taoism under the T'ang*, 72-73.
[78] Shao-yun Yang seeks to date "Yuan dao" to 812 ("*The Way of the Barbarians*," 28, 52-53).
[79] Dalby, "Court Politics in Late T'ang Times," 611-12. See also Peterson, "The Restoration Completed," 153-54.
[80] Barrett, *Taoism under the T'ang*, 78. DeBlasi thinks the ninety years between 760 and 850 featured decentralization on the whole, despite Xianzong's "ephemeral" attempts at recentralization (*Reform in the Balance*, 8-9).
[81] DeBlasi, *Reform in the Balance*, 67. By "social values," I take DeBlasi as meaning values current in the society.
[82] As it is, Han meant this for the *shi* (literati or men of letters) only. Those who professions were agriculture, manufacture, or commerce as well as those in the non-secular sectors were not included (Han Yu, "Yuan dao," in *HCLJ*, vol. 1, 17).

It is worth paying close attention to Han's rhetorical strategy:[83] a good writer, Han knew the attack would be the more effective if his ammunition was focused on one target that went the farthest rather than being diffused among many. This is why while on the surface, he mainly called out Laozi,[84] in presenting *renyi* as the only right way to govern, he actually implicitly denied legitimacy to all the other approaches to governance from China's past – like that of the Legalists, who, after all, contributed to the making of the first empire in China.[85] Combined with the fact that he used his detailed and unmuddled theory contrasting *renyi* with *daode* to structure the whole piece, we can see Han was using Laozi's *daode* as a rhetorical device to refer to all kinds of approaches to governance, originating from the Central Country (*zhong guo* 中國)[86] or not, that did not fall in line with the one he was advocating. With this, Han Yu was trying to make the way to govern he referred to with the term *renyi* the only one for the Chinese people to have, because, he claimed, loving humans appropriately is something that can be agreed upon by all human beings under Heaven (*tianxia zhi gongyan* 天下之公言), whereas Laozi's *daode*, due to the fact that it is spoken of after having abandoned *renyi*, is but the private opinion of one person [the ruler, for the interest of his own state] (*yiren zhi siyan* 一人之私言).[87]

In the middle of "Tracing the Way," Han gave an illustration of how this way of governance works: in creating the civilization, how did the sages decide what is the right thing to do? "They looked to the needs and desires of men and created institutions that satisfied their desires in a way that led them to care for each other."[88] That is, to Han, governing with *renyi* means seeing the government's job as meeting human needs by means of various cultural forms for finer humanity among humans. Han's sages – whom he differentiated from mundane monarchs[89] – were the

[83] This is inspired by discussions in Yang, "*The Way of the Barbarians*," 16, 22.
[84] For Han's awareness of the other ways of governance in general, see his "Song Meng Dongye xu," in *HCLJ*, vol. 1, 349-50; for his attitude toward the Legalist way in particular, see "Lun bu zei xing shang biao," in ibid., vol. 2, 395. For his view on the Qin state whose power the Legalists' theories helped increase, see his "Yu Meng Shangshu shu," in ibid., vol. 1, 317-8.
[85] For recent studies of just two among them, see, for instance, Pines trans., *The Book of Lord Shang* and Goldin ed., *Dao Companion to the Philosophy of Han Fei*. Given the size of this group and the fact that it was their approach to governance that initiated China's imperial era to which the Tang belonged, Han's silence on them constituted an implicit strong statement.
[86] Bol, "Geography and Culture."
[87] Han Yu, "Yuan dao," in *HCLJ*, vol. 1, 15. Goldin notes Han Fei's *gong* 公 was just the ruler's self-interest (*After Confucius*, 59).
[88] Bol, *"This Culture of Ours,"* 129.
[89] Han Yu, "Yuan dao," in *HCLJ*, vol. 1, 18-19. Conflating the two has led Hsiao Kung-chuan to claim this piece was about revering the monarch (*Zhongguo zhengzhi sixiang shi*, 252). For a critique of Hsiao's approach, see Kim, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, introduction.

exemplars for his intended readers to emulate, each on their own. Because this political theory put love of humanity at its center, this was a humanist way to govern. Because political philosophers from Laozi to Han Yu all took governing with *renyi* as the identifying feature of the approach of Confucius and his followers, I think we can justifiably call this humanist political theory "Confucian."[90]

In summary: read against the earlier discourse on the relationship between *renyi* and *daode* Han was reacting against and the Tang's centralized way of governance Han was challenging, as well as paying attention to his rhetorical strategy, we can see Han Yu's overarching purpose in writing "Tracing the Way" was to replace the approach to governance referred to with Laozi's *daode* that centralizes authority to the monarch in an anti-humanist way with the Confucian one referred to with *renyi* that decentralizes moral authority to the literati in a humanist way.[91]

Inherent in Han's political theory is moral individualism and value pluralism: except for establishing two inter-related values – broad love of humans and doing so appropriately – as a general principle, Han gives no definition for what is moral.[92] Rather, in authorizing each individual to simply proceed from *renyi* and make moral decisions entirely on their own, Han reveals his normative view that one should establish "a personal moral foundation independent of society" within oneself and use this "personal version of the dao of the sage" to make one's moral judgment.[93] In other words, what Han presents is a theory of self-governance under the guideline of loving humans appropriately.[94] "Tracing the Way" is thus the founding text in this new way of governance that Song political philosophers kept engaging with, either as Han's followers trying to improve it or as his opponents seeking to cancel it. The choice Wang Anshi asked Shenzong to make was regarding this.

My uses of "decentralization" and "self-governance" in the case of Han Yu need some explication. By the former, I mainly refer to Han's theory of dispersing the locale of moral authority among individual literati rather than having it concentrated in the court or the emperor.

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[90] As noted in the Introduction, this historical version of Confucian political theory was very different from that advocated by contemporary "Confucian" political thinkers. For a recent example of the latter, see Bai, *Against Political Equality*.

[91] For what I mean by "decentralization," see below.

[92] This is consistent with DeBlasi's observation that Han Yu thinks humans are not moral by nature (*Reform in the Balance*, 132).

[93] Bol, *"This Culture of Ours,"* 133-34.

[94] While seeking to establish a similar case for the mid-Tang ancient prose proponents in general, DeBlasi does not think "Tracing the Way" supports this reading, given the role of sage-rulers in there (*Reform in the Balance*, 138). The key lies in recognizing the clear distinction Han Yu made between sage-rulers and monarchs.

Moreover, Han did not have the power to grant political authority, nor did he theorize such. But decentralizing moral authority opened the path for decentralizing political authority, which eventually happened by the mid-eleventh century, as we shall soon read below. The same with "self-governance": by this I mean Han's theory was one of having individual literati making moral decisions on their own. This again did not involve political decision-making until the mid-eleventh century.[95]

Intellectual life tends to be ahead of social-political developments, sometimes by centuries. After the An Lushan rebellion, in David McMullen's words, "[t]he court no longer provided the framework in which the scholarly community rehearsed and defined their political values. At the same time, there was political and social continuity."[96] Like all ground-breaking ideas, Han Yu's political theory had to await a fitting social soil. Through the last decades of the ninth century, the medieval aristocrats constituting the body politic with the Tang ruling house continued to exist.[97] Their being tightly bound up with the imperial family through marriage and other social networks made the outdated centralist ideology linger on. Although this elite demised around the turn of the tenth century, the subsequent Five Dynasties proved no better times for self-governance. This only became possible in the more long-lasting Song state founded in 960.

Beginning with the second emperor (r. 976-997), in part to replace the powerful founding elite with men from outside the circle of established families,[98] the Song had been increasingly recruiting civil servants mainly through the examination system.[99] By the mid-eleventh century, when the Song was at the turn of its second century, the founding families who helped the Zhao 趙 house build the state had been considerably replaced by a new type of elite consisting mainly of degree holders, who had by now become semi-hereditary.[100] While the original intention of the exam system was to recruit literati "dependent on government service and unstintingly loyal to the

[95] For a helpful discussion of the difference between moral and political authority, see Koselleck, *Critique and Crisis*, 58-60.
[96] McMullen, "Views of the State in Du You and Liu Zongyuan," 61. On the development toward individual autonomy in the late eighth and early ninth centuries, see id., *State and Scholars in T'ang China*, 261-62 and "Han Yü."
[97] Tackett, *The Destruction of the Medieval Chinese Oligarchy*.
[98] Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China," 409: from 976 to 1063, the percentage of policy-making offices held by professional elite had been steadily increasing at the same time when that held by the founding elite was steadily declining. On the origins of Song elite, see Hymes, "Sung Society and Social Change," 621ff.
[99] Smith and Ebrey, "Introduction," 6-7.
[100] Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations of China," 408-09.

throne,"[101] over time they grew more independent,[102] relying not so much on the imperial house as on the polity – the political entity constituted by current and prospective participants in the political system consisting of examinees, examiners, teachers, officials, and the emperor, among others, each possessing negotiating power to some extent.[103] It was among these men of letters, led by Ouyang Xiu through the ancient prose movement – a literary intellectual movement carried forward from its mid-Tang proponents like Han Yu –, that a self-governing republic[104] first materialized.

II
Ouyang Xiu and Self-Governance

> More than two hundred years after Han Yu, the world got Master Ouyang. His learning promotes that of Han Yu and Mencius, so as to reach Confucius. Manifesting the substance of humanity and appropriateness in ritual and music, it seeks to be in line with the great Way. … The literati, no matter worthy or unworthy, agree without prior consultation that "Master Ouyang is today's Han Yu."

[101] Smith and Ebrey, "Introduction," 7.

[102] Although it is still customary for many scholars to start by saying the Song was a period of centralized rule, the century-old view of Naito Konan that it was marked by autocracy because such literati were more dependent on the emperor given their lack of an independent power basis has been critiqued by historians of middle period China. See, for example, Bol, *Neo-Confucianism in History*, 117-19; Hymes and Schirokauer, "Introduction," 43, 46; Wang Ruilai, "Lun Songdai xiangquan" and "Lun Songdai huangquan," 144–5. See also the surveys of the debate on the power relationship between the emperor and the prime minister in Northern Song in Skonicki, "Employing the Right Kind of Men," 45-51 and Song, *Traces of Grand Peace*, 153-56. To these, we can add one solid piece of evidence: in 1057, most examinees felt Ouyang Xiu, one literatus who was selected through the examination system in the 1020s and who was entrusted by his office with the power to change the exam standards, was their patron, rather than Renzong. As Hilde De Weerdt notes, this was the year when imperial prerogative to fail candidates was rescinded (*Competition over Content*, 9n13).

[103] De Weerdt, *Competition over Content*. Although De Weerdt thinks the state is still important, her work does highlight the agency of non-state players consisting mainly of the literati. Paul Smith and Patricia Ebrey call these "cohabitants of the Song state" ("Introduction," 5-7).

[104] For uses of this term, see Min, "The Republic of the Mind"; Song, "Tension and Balance," 275; Kim, *A History of Chinese Political Thought*, chapter 6 and "A Decentralized Republic of Virtue." What I hope this study adds is that Han Yu's "Tracing the Way" laid the theoretical foundation for this republic and that it debuted in the mid-eleventh century and survived three reigns that sought to end it by practicing Wang Anshi's theory (Shenzong, Zhezong and Huizong, the latter two only when they were ruling in person), before flourishing in the Southern Song. On a republic not needing to be non-monarchical, see Hankins, "Exclusivist Republicanism and the Non-Monarchical Republic" and *Virtue Politics*, chapter 3. On the Jiayou administration being a monarchical republic, see Lu Guolong, *Song ru weiyan*, 25.

> 愈之後二百有餘年而後得歐陽子，其學推韓愈、孟子以達於孔氏，著禮樂仁義之實，以合於大道。…士無賢不肖，不謀而同曰："歐陽子，今之韓愈也。"[105]

Ouyang's successor Su Shi, one of Wang Anshi's foremost critics, thought his teacher carried forward Han Yu's governing with *renyi* by giving it concrete forms in ritual and music.[106] This theoretical supplement was made in "On the Roots" 本論, regarding which a twentieth century scholar noted:

> "On the Roots" originated from Changli's[107] "Tracing the Way," and had particularly numerous theories inquiring into the source. Previous people said: were Mr. Ouyang's "On the Roots" not practiced, Changli's "Tracing the Way" would ultimately be empty assumptions only.
> "本論"淵源於昌黎"原道"，而特多探原之說。前人謂歐公"本論"不行，則昌黎"原道"終為虛設。[108]

Han Yu never got to make state policy.[109] Nor did he produce a theory on how to get from the current non-Confucian way of governance to governing with *renyi*. Rather, at the end of "Tracing the Way," raising the question of how to get from the status quo to the ideal he outlined, Han answered: "burning their books and turning their temples into abodes."[110] As Li Gou 李覯 (1009-1059) pointed out, this is both violent and impractical.[111] Moreover, such forceful measures can hardly be undertaken by any agent other than those who are in control of the government.[112] And yet the reality is that Han Yu was seldom on good terms with them. The fundamental problem

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[105] Su Shi, "*Jushi ji* xu," in Ouyang Xiu, *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, preface. Dated to 1091. See also Chen Shidao, *Houshan tancong*, 109 and Yuan Xingzong, "Ba Liu Yuanfu wen," in Zeng Zaozhuang and Liu Lin eds., *Quan Song wen*, 218.200.
[106] For Ouyang's own view on Han Yu's legacy, see the comment he wrote by the end of Han Yu's biography in Ouyang Xiu and Song Qi, *Xin Tang shu*, 176.5269.
[107] Choronym of Han Yu's self-claimed ancestral home.
[108] Huang Gongzhu ed., *Ouyang Yongshu wen*, preface, 11. That "On the Roots" was continuing "Tracing the Way" seems the shared view among commentators, even though they differ on what exactly Ouyang was continuing and how well he did it (Hong Benjian, *Ouyang Xiu shi wen ji jiao jian*, 515-16). James Liu's analysis of this essay focuses on Ouyang's gradualism, an abiding theme Liu finds in him (*Ou-Yang Hsiu*, 114-15, 163–65). This view is carried forward by Ronald Egan (*The Literary Works of Ou-Yang Hsiu*, 70).
[109] Chen Shidao, *Houshan tancong*, 109.
[110] Han Yu, "Yuan dao," in *HCLJ*, vol. 1, 23.
[111] Li Gou, *Li Gou ji*, 16.146.
[112] This is perhaps why scholars assume the subject here is the government. For instance, Egan thinks Han was urging the government to do this (*The Literary Works of Ou-Yang Hsiu*, 70). So does Yang (*The Way of the Barbarians*, 93). Strictly speaking, the text of "Tracing the Way" did not designate the subject.

with his dramatic approach to implementing his political theory is that it essentially pinned the hope for realizing literati self-governance on there appearing a powerful man in the government willing to take that kind of action, which was beyond Han's control. By contrast, in "On the Roots," Ouyang proposed a more viable way to practice Han's ideas and it was thanks to this that Han's new approach to governance finally went beyond being a mere theory.

At the beginning of the final version of "On the Roots," Ouyang set up Buddhism as the rhetorical device with which to refer to all the various ways of governance not in line with the one he was advocating.[113] Looking back to the more than a millennium of history when the Central Country suffered the harm from the Buddhist way, Ouyang found expelling it had not worked. Rather, it kept coming back after being removed for a while, each time with greater force. The reason, Ouyang pointed out using a medical metaphor, was because China's vital energy became deficient from within, making itself susceptible to external causes of illness. Thus, to save China from being invaded by the barbarian way of governance, the more fundamental thing to do was to fill the Chinese world with *liyi* – the basis with which to victory over Buddhism –, not giving it any chance to exert its way onto the Chinese people.

The term *liyi* came from the *Xunzi*,[114] where it as David Nivison notes was sometimes used interchangeably with *li*.[115] In line with Xunzi,[116] Ouyang also used it to refer to the ritual system consisting of various specific forms of ritual and music. And, just like Xunzi's *li* was for better meeting human needs by aligning their potentially insatiable desires with limited material resources,[117] Ouyang's ritual and music, practiced in state and society and taught at schools, were for guiding the people toward *renyi*,[118] like how they were in antiquity:

[113] For more on Ouyang's rhetorical strategy, see below.
[114] Eric Hutton argues that *yi* 義 as used by Xunzi does not have a ready equivalent in English ("Ethics in the *Xunzi*," 72–73).
[115] Nivison, "Response to James Behuniak," 113.
[116] Precisely because he very much adopted Xunzi's method, Ouyang began the third part with what he thought was not helpful in the *Xunzi*. Ouyang's 1042 view on ritual did not change when he wrote the introduction to the treatise on ritual and music in the *New Tang History* in the 1050s. As his son wrote, "其於《唐書.禮樂志》，發明禮樂之本" (*Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1371). For a discussion of Ouyang's work on this, including its dating, see Sung, "An Ambivalent Historian." For an analysis of the introduction, see Bol, "*This Culture of Ours,"* 195-97.
[117] Wang Xianqian, *Xunzi jijie*, 13.337: "故制禮義以分之，以養人之欲，給人之求，使欲必不窮乎物，物必不屈乎欲." For a discussion, see Ivanhoe, "A Happy Symmetry," 315.
[118] On Ouyang's project being one of humanist, see Fuller, "Moral Intuitions and Aesthetic Judgments," 1324.

> In the people's lives, if they were not laboring in the fields, they were occupied in ritual and music; if they were not in their homes, they were in the schools. What they heard with their ears and saw with their eyes were nothing but *renyi*, towards which they were gladly drawn tirelessly. Throughout their lives, they did not see other things. How could they have the spare time to aspire for what was outside these? It is therefore I say that even if there were Buddhism at that time, it would have had no way to get into the people, because there were such instruments then.
> 民之生也，不用力乎南畝，[119]則從事於禮樂之際；不在其家，則在乎庠序之間。耳聞目見，無非仁義，樂而趣之，不知其倦。終身不見異物，又奚暇夫外慕哉？故曰雖有佛無由而入者，謂有此具也。[120]

The reason why people are drawn to Buddhism, Ouyang pointed out in the next part, was because they had long been accustomed to it. Under this situation, calling for them to ban Buddhism as Han Yu said and asking them to turn to *liyi* – something they had never seen or heard of – would only scare them away. Rather, the way to victory over Buddhism was simply to diligently perform all kinds of rites at all level of society – from imperial sacrifice to Heaven to a commoner's wedding and immerse people in them. In this way, humanity would gradually get realized in a generation (*shi er hou ren* 世而後仁).[121]

Like Han Yu's focusing his ammunition on Laozi's *daode* in his attack on all the ways of governance not in line with governing with *renyi*, Ouyang, an equally good writer, was using Buddhism for the same purpose. This can be clearly seen from the following sentences in the last part of "On the Roots":

> In the past, the barbarians lived mixed up admist the Nine Provinces – the so-called Rong of Xu, the White Di, the Man of Jing (i.e., the Chu), the Yi of the Huai [River], and the like. The Three Dynasties [of Xia, Shang, and Zhou] having declined, [barbarians] like these all invaded the Central Country. Thus the Qin, as western Rong, took possession of the Eastern Zhou capital, and [the rulers of] both the Wu and the Chu states arrogated to themselves the title of king. … At that time, even though Buddhism had not arrived yet, how could the Central Country not become barbarian?

[119] Che Hsing-chien notes Ouyang Xiu had a sober view on the non-applicability of the well-field system in his time ("Shi lun Ouyang Xiu de Ruxue fan ben lun," 168n100). This suggests that Ouyang was perhaps again applying the rhetorical strategy of simplifying the message for ideological advocacy.
[120] Ouyang Xiu, "Ben lun zhong," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 122.
[121] Ouyang Xiu, "Ben lun xia," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 124.

> Therefore, when the kingly way isn't made clear and *renyi* abandoned, the harms of the barbarians would come.[122]
>
> 昔者戎狄蠻夷雜居九州之間，所謂徐戎、白狄、荊蠻、淮夷之類是也。三代既衰，若此之類並侵於中國，故秦以西戎據宗周，吳、楚之國皆僭稱王。…當是之時，佛雖不來，中國幾何其不夷狄也。以是而言，王道不明而仁義廢，則夷狄之患至矣。[123]

Following Han Yu, Ouyang's purpose was to establish the way of governance Han formulated in "Tracing the Way" as the only legitimate way to govern. For this, he called all the other ways "barbarian," to indicate their inferiority. Buddhism, with its foreign origin, makes a convenient target.[124] But the "barbarians" he list were not necessarily those living outside the Central Country – except for Buddhists, all lived within the bounds of "China." Nor was Ouyang's focus on their ethnicities. Rather, he was using Buddhism as the representative of all the "barbarian" ways of governance that did not feature *renyi*, including the one that helped strengthen the Qin state and turn it into an empire. To Ouyang, like to Han Yu, the only way for the Chinese people to have was to govern with *renyi* – the Confucian way.

That Ouyang was a successor to Han Yu on a decentralized approach to governance may be counterintuitive. Indeed, he has frequently been taken as a centralist. For instance, in *Ordering the World*, Robert Hymes and Conrad Schirokauer think Ouyang was someone who, like almost all in the Northern Song, asks "the center to act systematically and positively on the world around it."[125] Their textual basis is the original first part of "On the Roots" that Ouyang deleted when editing his own anthology not long before his death in 1072.[126] In that part, Ouyang premised using adorning ritual and music to revitalize *renyi* on having strengthened the state first:

> Revenue was sufficient for use and able to provide for natural disasters. Soldiers were sufficient to ward off calamity but did not go so far as to cause calamity. Only with all this supplied did they embellish ritual and music and promote *renyi* to educate and guide them.[127]

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[122] Translation modified from Yang, *The Way of the Barbarians*, 93.
[123] Ouyang Xiu, "Ben lun xia," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 123-24.
[124] Yang thinks Ouyang's argument here was that "Buddhism's influence was far less dangerous to the Chinese civilization than the barbarian incursions of Confucius' day" (*The Way of the Barbarians*, 92). James Liu notes Ouyang's attack on Buddhism "was confined to theory" (*Ou-Yang Hsiu*, 165).
[125] Hymes and Schirokauer, "Introduction," 14-16.
[126] On this revision, see Higashi Hidetoshi, *Fugu yu chuangxin*, 230, 232.
[127] Translation modified from Hymes and Schirokauer, "Introduction," 14-15.

> 財足於用而可以備天災也，兵足以禦患而不至於為患也。凡此具矣，然後飾禮樂、興仁義以教道之。[128]

As Hymes and Schirokauer noted, this represented Ouyang's thinking in the 1040s,[129] more precisely in 1042, when he was amidst the developments that led to the short-lived Qingli reform of 1044 in which he played the role of an ideologist.[130] With the Tangut war in the background,[131] those calling for a reform were expected to deliver a stronger state. What Ouyang wrote in this part constituted some ideas on how to attain it. However, between it and the latter two parts, there was an inherent contradiction: governing with *renyi*, as Han Fei rightly pointed out, entails allowing the people to go about their own business, and yet for strengthening the state, Ouyang needed the subjects to "devote themselves to the state selflessly" 忘身許國.[132] Perhaps aware of this, Ouyang began the original trilogy by making a distinction between roots and branches 本末 and the precedent and the subsequent 先後, suggesting what he dealt with in the first part was temporally prior. This may have avoided making himself self-contradictory in logic, but the overall title of the three parts as a whole was after all "On the Roots," a topic the original first part did not go into. Whichever reason it was that eventually led Ouyang to make the well-considered decision to delete it,[133] that part was not where contemporaries saw Ouyang's legacy lied.[134] Rather, cutting out the part on strengthening the state and keeping guiding the people toward *renyi* with ritual and music suggests that Ouyang later made a choice between the two conflicting goals.

The deletion was made in the early 1070s, but Ouyang's choice was made much earlier, during the decade of "self-cultivation and political quiescence" following the failure of the 1044 reform. As James Liu points out, after returning to the central government in 1054, Ouyang "no longer desired to promote another reform," only wanting to make some improvements.[135] In doing

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[128] Ouyang Xiu, "Ben lun shang," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 412.
[129] Hymes and Schirokauer, "Introduction," 14.
[130] Bol, *"This Culture of Ours,"* 172.
[131] McGrath, "The Reigns of Jen-Tsung and Ying-Tsung," 300-16.
[132] Ouyang Xiu, "Ben lun shang," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 123. The view that the state has to be strengthened first before the people can be cultivated is in line with the logic stated at the opening of *Guanzi*: "倉廩實則知禮節" (Dai Wang, *Guanzi jiaozheng*, 1.1).
[133] Higashi thinks Ouyang deleted the first part, where anti-Buddhism did not figure, to reflect his strong attitude to exclude Buddhism late in his life (*Fugu yu chuangxin*, 239).
[134] See, for example, the offering pieces written on Ouyang's death (*Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1331-52).
[135] Liu, *Ou-yang Hsiu*, 69. On the same page, Liu also points out Ouyang realized he was wrong to provoke factional dispute in the past, even though his strong personality did not stop him from "making criticisms or raising objections."

so, he finally fell in line with the administration whose approach to governance Wang Anshi disapprovingly characterized as "in everything following the natural pattern and tendency" 一切因任自然之理勢.[136] Peter Bol also notes the mature Ouyang focused on *wen*,[137] the various cultural forms with which to guide the people toward *renyi*. It was this commitment to cultural things (*wenwu* 文物), not the ideas he flirted with on strengthening the state in 1042,[138] that "had come to define the mainstream of the new intellectual culture" by the 1050s.[139]

Other than using an all-embracing ritual system to gradually realize *renyi*, Ouyang also fixed another issue in Han Yu's theory. The stress Han put on building a personal foundation of morality and being fully self-sufficient within oneself could be taken as encouraging individuals to be different from others, with the logical result being that some would make this an end in itself, by writing in an idiosyncratic and strange way. In Ouyang's words, "were one to be different from the majority, then one must necessarily do what is odd and strange" 苟欲異眾，则必为迂僻奇怪."[140] This was precisely a direction the ancient prose movement took, resulting in the so-called Imperial University Style (*Taixue ti* 太學體) that celebrates eccentricity.[141] In 1057, being in charge of the examination and under the support of his central government colleagues,[142] Ouyang

See also Qi Xia, *Wang Anshi bianfa*, 97. Frederick Mote also notes the change Ouyang Xiu and his fellow Qingli reformers underwent in the 1050s and 1060s (*Imperial China*, 138).

[136] Wang Anshi, "Ben chao bainian wushi zhazi," in *LCJ*, 41.446.

[137] Bol, "*This Culture of Ours,*" 201. Uffe Bergeton has been problematizing translating *wen* as culture ("From 'Awe-Inspiringly Beautiful' to 'Pattern in Conventional Behavior'"; *The Emergence of Civilizational Consciousness in Early China*; and "Found (and Lost?) in Translation"). For a critique of his methodology, see Pines, "Review of *The Emergence of Civilizational Consciousness in Early China*."

[138] Bol, "*This Culture of Ours*," 196.

[139] Bol, "The Sung Context," 33. Ouyang's dropping government activism during this decade can also be known from those unhappy about his actions thereafter. For instance, in 1059, Wang Anshi's confidant Wang Ling 王令 (1032-1059) wrote Ouyang Xiu a poem, urging him not to forget his erstwhile ambition (*Wang Ling ji*, 447). This suggests that in reality, Ouyang was no longer pursuing it. See also Wang Anshi's complaint in 1061 (Li Tao, *XCB*, 193.4678).

[140] Ouyang Xiu, "Yi xue zhuang," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 889. See also the record of conduct Wu Chong wrote for Ouyang in ibid., 1339.

[141] For a helpful discussion, see Zeng Zaozhuang, "Bei Song Guwen Yundong de quzhe guocheng." Cf. Ge Xiaoyin, "Ouyang Xiu paiyi 'Taixueti' xin tan." Ge's including Hu Yuan as being among Ouyang's targets jars with the congeniality of the Jiayou central government officials as perceived by Ouyang Xiu's sons (Ouyang Fa et al., "Shiji," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1377), as well as Ouyang's own officially expressed view of Hu in 1056 ("Ju liu Hu Yuan guan gou Taixue zhuagn," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 868-69). The same applies to Ming-kin Chu's seeing Ouyang's 1057 action as ending the pluralistic culture that had come into being under Hu Yuan in the Imperial University (*The Politics of Higher Education*, 64).

[142] Bol, *"This Culture of Ours,"* 192. This indicates that Ouyang was acting on behalf of the court for public interest, rather than pushing his personal agenda high-handedly. On Ouyang seeing the government's job as meeting human desires, see Bol, "The Sung Context," 35.

changed the grading criteria to discourage this, thereby redirecting the movement back to focusing on using writing ancient prose to develop one's own "ideas about what ought to be done."[143]

In a recently published book, Ming-kin Chu takes this as Ouyang Xiu advancing his own intellectual agenda high-handedly,[144] and as such "very likely inspired Wang Anshi to adopt similarly high-handed tactics two decades later."[145] Chu's observation precisely tells the necessity to study the content of Wang's learning, which we shall see was diametrically different from Ouyang's. Here let us note that Ouyang was not using this high-handed measure to centralize authority. Rather, the point of this apparently authoritarian action was to select into officialdom men with their own moral sense who would act independently according to the personal moral foundation established within themselves. As Peter Bol notes, in practice, Ouyang "left it to learned individuals to determine correct policy according to the occasion."[146] In other words, this is a centralist action the purpose of which was to populate the government with self-governing officials to whom authority[147] shall be decentralized.[148] This was a major step in getting Han Yu's theory of self-governance as improved by Ouyang Xiu implemented at the national level – however small the odds were, Ouyang after the mid-1050s *was* the supportive powerful man Han Yu had pinned his hopes on over two centuries ago.[149]

That this small probability event could have occurred was thanks to the convergence of multiple factors, including imperial personality and health. Renzong 仁宗 (r. 1023-1063), the second palace-born Song emperor, was a soft, or kind, person, neither entertaining imperial ambitions nor wishing to exact the people, even before his health made these impossible.[150] In

[143] Bol, "The Sung Context," 28.
[144] Chu, *The Politics of Higher Education*, 61-65.
[145] Ibid., 13.
[146] Bol, "The Sung Context," 44. This is consistent with Skonicki's observation that the Qingli reformers "advocated a more decentralized conception of government in which local officials were charged with the task of transforming the populace and initiating political order" ("Cosmos, State and Society," 513).
[147] More than moral authority here, but actually including political authority.
[148] Delegation also featured in the original first part of "On the Roots," as Hymes and Schirokauer noted ("Introduction," 15). This fits the inside outsider Chia-fu Sung finds in Ouyang ("An Ambivalent Historian"), i.e., someone who wishes to remain independent of the bureaucracy of which he is a part.
[149] On Ouyang's political and intellectual authority in the 1050s, see Bol, "The Sung Context," 28-29.
[150] McGrath, "The Reigns of Jen-tsung and Ying-tsung"; Zhou Jia, *Bei Song zhongyang richang zhengwu*, 114, 223-24. Hartman argues that the allegory of a humane Renzong reign was mainly a Southern Song construction (*The Making of Song Dynasty History*, chapter 8), but the temple title *ren* conferred on him after he passed away in 1063 suggests this was how ranking officials in the early 1060s saw the core feature of his governance. Moreover, this was also how Wang Anshi repeatedly characterized it from the late 1050s to the late 1060s, in communications with both Renzong himself ("Shang Renzong Huangdi yan shi shu," in *LCJ*, 39.410) and his grandnephew Shenzong ("Ben chao bainian wu shi zhazi," in *LCJ*, 41.445).

1056/1, he further fell dysfunctionally ill[151] and never fully recovered since.[152] This presented Ouyang Xiu and his like-minded fellows in the central government a rare chance to practice self-governance at the highest level, by making decisions on state affairs through collective deliberation.[153]

Such affairs included imperial succession – Renzong happened to be also heirless, and the decision on whom to inherit him was in effect made by Ouyang Xiu and his colleagues collectively.[154] From the detailed account on how Renzong's adopted heir got established as emperor Yingzong 英宗 (r. 1063-1067),[155] it seems Renzong was forced to take the advice repeatedly offered him by his court officials.[156] The authority enjoyed by Yingzong was even less: not only did this adoptee have less political capital to begin with, but he was also indebted to and overpowered by those ranking officials who mostly continued to hold power through the end of his reign. Even though he may have wanted to more actively exercise imperial power,[157] his health and swift death made that at best an unfulfilled wish. Coupled with corresponding institutional developments – by the last decade of Renzong's reign, with independent institutions like the Remonstrance Bureau and the Censorate constituting independent restraints on imperial power,[158]

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[151] Li Tao, *XCB*, 182.4394.

[152] Although there were instances when Renzong sought to re-assert imperial authority, like in 1061 (Hartman, "Sung Government and Politics," 85).

[153] On decision-making from 1056 to early 1067, see Han Qi's biography in *Song shi*, 312.10224-26. On Ouyang Xiu's tenure during this period, see his "Bozhou qi zhi shi di yi biao," submitted in the spring of 1068, in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 719: "更二府之繁，蓋亦八年之久." See also Ouyang's biography in *Song shi*, 319.10378-9 and that in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1364. On collective deliberations during Renzong's reign, see Zhou Jia, *Bei Song zhongyang richang zhengwu*, 238-51. On Han and Ouyang being like-minded, see Han's own account in the offering piece he wrote for Ouyang (Han Qi, "Ji wen," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1331): "餘早接公，道同氣類." See also the account given by Ouyang Xiu's son in ibid., 1378.

[154] On Ouyang's leading role in this, see his record of conduct written by Wu Chong in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1339: "凡再上疏，請立皇子以固天下根本。及在政府，遂與諸公協定大議."

[155] Yang Zhongliang, *JSBM*, volume 51.

[156] This was made explicit in the brief account in Xu Ziming, *Song zai fu biannian lu*, 5.318. From the latter, we also learn that the choice of Yingzong as Renzong's adopted heir was proposed by Mei Yaochen, who conceived of the idea, together with Wen Yanbo and Fu Bi, not as Han Qi's biography says originated from Renzong himself (*Song shi*, 312.10225). Such historiographical inconsistencies indicate the sensitive nature of this matter, in the handling of which the court officials probably crossed a line that they knew would come with consequences. On this awareness in Fan Zhen, see Yang Zhongliang, *JSBM*, 51.903; in Sima Guang, ibid., 51.913; in Han Qi, *Song shi*, 312.10225. By all means, Renzong's agency was not clearly seen in this process.

[157] Zhou Jia, *Bei Song zhongyang richang zhengwu*, 156-57; Xiao-bin Ji, *Politics and Conservatism in Northern Song China*, 108.

[158] Note, however, like Luo Jiaxiang (*Bei Song dangzheng yanjiu*, 31), Ari Levine thinks they were for restraining ministerial power (*Divided by a Common Language*, 80).

a system of checks and balances had been established –,[159] imperial authority kept declining during the Jiayou (1056-1063) and Zhiping (1063-1067) periods.

As a result, when Yingzong's heir Zhao Xu took the throne on the twenty-fifth day of the first month of 1067,[160] the way of governance theorized by Han Yu and carried forward by Ouyang Xiu – that is, decentralizing authority to individual literati and leaving affairs in the state to be managed by them on their own, each according to their independent judgment of what is the right thing to do on each occasion under the general principle of loving humans appropriately – had become established at all levels of government, resulting in a world where, as Wang Anshi complained, "one person has one sense of what is right and ten persons ten" 一人一義，十人十義.[161]

A capable young man showing an interest in *Hanfeizi* when still a prince,[162] Shenzong was intent on stepping up his personal grasp on power.[163] He also had greater ambitions:[164] to carry forward and enlarge the Zhao house's accumulated assets in its second century and into the indefinite future[165] by strengthening the state in the competitive East Asian world order,[166] in which the Song had been paying for peace since the beginning of the eleventh century.[167] For realizing them, the existing ranking officials were probably deemed in the way, for in about a year, with Ouyang Xiu taking the lead, they had left the central government one after another.[168]

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[159] As Hartman has demonstrated ("Historical Narrative and the Two Faces of Song Dynasty Governance," 43, 47, 54). See also id., "Sung Government and Politics," 103-12. This can be also seen from Wang Anshi's disapproving summary of the key features of Renzong's reign ("Ben chao bainian wu shi zhazi," in *LCJ*, 41.444-46).

[160] Li Tao, *XCB*, 209.5073.

[161] Ma Duanlin, *Wenxian tongkao*, 31.293. Ming-kin Chu translates more of this quote in *The Politics of Higher Education*, 92.

[162] Li Tao, *XCB*, 205.5005.

[163] Zhu Yiqun notes Shenzong wanted to take back the scepter of power that had been decentralized for long as soon as possible ("Song Shenzong qiyong Wang Anshi," 360).

[164] Zhao Dongmei thinks Shenzong's ambition derived from a need to prove the merit of the branch to which he and his father, who became the emperor by adoption, belonged (*Da Song zhi bian*, 225-26). Zhou Jia notes the continuity between Yingzong's attempt to become more active in the daily management of government affairs months before his death and the corresponding measure Shenzong understook five months after ascending the throne (*Bei Song zhongyang richang zhengwu*, 156-57).

[165] Liu Lin et al. eds., *SHY*, *xuanju* 7, 5401.24.

[166] Ibid., 5399.20. On this world order, see Tackett, *The Origins of the Chinese Nation*.

[167] On Shenzong's seeing militant neighboring states and powerful men as the two paramount issues to address, see his words in Li Tao, *XCB*, 250.6093.

[168] In Ouyang's biography in *Song History*, it is said that "神宗初即位，欲深譴修" (*Song shi*, 319.10380; *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1368). Li Tao even registered "上初欲誅修" (*XCB*, 209.5079). Whatever it was, their departure shortly after Shenzong took the throne perhaps told the new emperor's attitude towards them.

Meanwhile, Shenzong began approaching Wang Anshi, whose work had long impressed him.[169] Three months after becoming the emperor, Shenzong appointed Wang to govern Jiangning 江寧, Wang's home prefect where he had been living free of official duty for some four years, and Wang, who kept declining central government appointments until then, took it;[170] half a year later, the emperor further summoned Wang to be his Hanlin academician, and Wang took it, again.[171] When during their first meeting in 1068/4 Wang advised the emperor to begin with choosing the craft, what he meant was replacing the humanist literati self-governance with his that was developed to counteract it.

III
Wang Anshi and the Self-Governing Mainstream

A broadly learned literatus with literary and administrative capabilities, Wang Anshi followed the ancient prose movement early in his career.[172] Desiring a perfect order,[173] however, Wang came to be concerned about the loss of a uniform way due to the moral individualism and value pluralism inherent in the very practice of writing ancient prose. By the mid-1050s at the latest, Wang had made his discontent with Han Yu and Han's successor Ouyang Xiu known.

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[169] On Shenzong being Wang's reader when still a prince, see "Wang Jinggong Anshi zhuan," in Hong Ye et al. eds., *Wanyanji shan cun*, 370: "神宗在藩邸，見其文, 異之." See also Wang Anshi's biography in *Song shi*, 327.10543 and Shenzong's words in Huang Yizhou, *XCBSB*, 92: "朕久聞卿道術德義" and Yang Zhongliang, *JSBM*, 59.1045: "朕知卿久，非適今日也." While Wang Anshi was the architect of the reform, Shenzong was its owner: not only did he originate it, but he also kept directing it and pushing it forward, with or without Wang Anshi personally spearheading it – after Wang's permanent retirement, Shenzong kept hiring men who he thought had grasped Wang's approach to governance, be they Wang Anshi's relatives or students. And Shenzong could fire them as he wished, especially with his increased grasp on power thanks to the efforts of Wang Anshi and his associates, like in the Yu Fan case (Chu, "Official Recruitment, Imperial Authority, and Bureaucratic Power"). For works highlighting Shenzong's agency, see Ye Tan, *Da bianfa* and Li Yumin, "Song Shenzong zhizao de yi zhuang da yuan'an" and "Wutai Shi'an xin tan." On Shenzong's role in the reform, see Cui Yingchao and Zhang Qifan, "Xi Feng bianfa zhong Song Shenzong zuoyong" and Li Guoqiang, "Lun Bei Song Xining bianfa de shizhi."

[170] Before accepting this position, Wang had declined Shenzong's summon to the court once. For a close examination of this process, see Zhu Yiqun, "Song Shenzong qiyong Wang Anshi."

[171] Zhao Dongmei, *Da Song zhi bian*, 144-45.

[172] See, for instance, the cover letters he wrote around 1045 to literati officials who he thought were in a position to help advance his career on finishing the three-year tenure of his first job (first of the two "Shang Zhang Taibo shu" and "Shang Zu Wuze shu," in *LCJ*, 77.810-12). According to Wang's own account, at this time, he had not completed his learning (second of the three "Da Wang Shenfu shu," in *LCJ*, 72.768: "某學未成而仕"). Another indicator of this was that he kept diligently studying while working at his first job (Luo Chuanqi and Wu Yunsheng, *Wang Anshi jiaoyu sixiang yanjiu*, 9-10).

[173] Bol, "*This Culture of Ours*," chapter 7.

Across Wang Anshi's oeuvre, criticisms of Han Yu were numerous,[174] some of which will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. He was less explicit about Ouyang, a widely respected social superior who expressed an interest in meeting him since the 1040s[175] and recommended him to central government positions twice, once in 1054, once 1056.[176] Still, going beyond rhetoric and reading the texts against their contexts, we can see how he saw Ouyang and the mainstream defined by this Song Han Yu.

In 1056,[177] around the time of their first meeting, Ouyang wrote Wang a poem, the first half of which reads:

翰林風月三千首　Mr. Hanlin's Wind and Moon [Poems], three thousand pieces;
吏部文章二百年　Director of Personnel Department's refined writings, two hundred years.
老去自憐心尚在　Aging, I take pity on myself, having but the wish [to lead];
後來誰與子爭先　Of those coming forward, who can contest the first place with you?[178]

To this Wang responded:

欲傳道義心猶在　Desiring to transmit the meaning of the Way, that wish is still in me;
強學文章力已窮　Exerting myself to learn refined writings, I have been exhausted.
他日若能窺孟子　Were I able to gain a glimpse of Mencius someday;
終身何敢望韓公　How dare I look up to Mr. Han all my life.[179]

When interpreting this poetic exchange, Gu Yongxin chose to agree with the Qing defender of Wang Anshi Cai Shangxiang 蔡上翔 (1717-1810), who thought this was evidence that the two extremely admired each other and that Wang actually wanted to regard himself as the Han Yu of

[174] In *LCJ*, see, for example, "Qiu huai" 秋懷 (12.181), "Du Mo" 讀墨 (4.112), "Han zi" 韓子 (34.371-72), "Bo Yi" 伯夷 (63.674-75), "Yuan xing" 原性 and "Xing shuo" 性說 (68.626-27) and "Shang ren shu" 上人書 (77.811).
[175] Zeng Gong, "Yu Wang Jiefu di yi shu," in *Zeng Gong ji*, 16.255.
[176] Ouyang Xiu, "Zai lun shuizai zhuang," and "Jian Wang Anshi Lü Gongzhu zhazi," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 865, 871.
[177] On this dating, see Li Deshen, *Wang Anshi shi wen xinian*, 91. See also Gu Yongxin, *Ouyang Xiu xueshu yanjiu*, 194n1.
[178] Ouyang Xiu, "Zeng Wang Jiefu," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 395.
[179] Wang Anshi, "Fengchou Yongshu jianzeng," in *LCJ*, 22.264. The same view was expressed in "Qiu huai," in *LCJ*, 12.181. Wang's intellectual relationship to Mencius is discussed in chapters 2 and 4.

his time.[180] The several Song interpretations we have, however, all suggest otherwise. For instance, Ye Mengde 葉孟得 (1077-1148) commented:

> Mr. Wang, Duke of Jing,[181] initially did not know Mr. Ouyang Wenzhong.[182] Zeng Zigu made efforts to recommend him [to Ouyang], who was then willing to socialize with him, but Duke of Jing would not get himself connected in the end. At the beginning of the Zhihe period (1054-55), he was Administrative Assistant in the Herds Office, while Wenzhong returned to the court. It was only then he was known and why Ouyang wrote the verse "Mr. Hanlin's Wind and Moon [Poems], three thousand pieces; Director of Personnel Department's refined writings, two hundred years." However, Duke of Jing still did not think him someone who knew himself, therefore he responded with: "Were I able to gain a glimpse of Mencius someday, how dare I look up to Mr. Han all my life." He expected himself to be Mencius and took Wenzhong as Han Yu.
> 王荊公初未識歐文忠公，曾子固力薦之，公願得游其門，而荊公終不肯自通。至和初，為羣牧判官，文忠還朝，始見知，遂有"翰林風月三千首，吏部文章二百年"之句。然荊公猶以為非知己也，故酬之曰："他日儻能窺孟子，此身安敢望韓公。"自期以孟子，處公以為韓愈。[183]

The Song commentator of Wang Anshi's poems Li Bi 李壁 (1158-1222) told us that a friend of his read "how dare I look up to Mr. Han" as Wang meaning he still did not wish to be Han Yu and ridiculing Ouyang for being fond of emulating Han.[184] Zhu Yi 朱翌 (1097-1167) similarly informed us of a contemporary reading: "Those discussing this say Wang Anshi was angry that Ouyang Xiu compared him to Han Yu" 議者謂介甫怒永叔以退之相比.[185] Slight differences aside,[186] they all took Wang Anshi as not happy about being compared to Han Yu. This is consistent with the biography of Wang Anshi written by his Song followers, where it was written:

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[180] Gu Yongxin, *Ouyang Xiu xueshu yanjiu*, 194-5. For a similar view, see Xie Yingxin, "Jiayou shiqi Ouyang Xiu yu Wang Anshi jiaoyi yanjiu."
[181] Wang Anshi was conferred upon the title of Duke of Jing Fiefdom 荊國公 late in his life.
[182] Ouyang Xiu's posthumous title.
[183] Quoted from Gu Yongxin, *Ouyang Xiu xueshu yanjiu*, 194n1.
[184] Wang Anshi, *Wang Jingwengong shi jianzhu*, 33.827: "是猶不願為退之，且譏文忠之喜學韓也."
[185] Zhu Yi, *Yijueliao za ji*, 36.
[186] There were also different understandings of whom Ouyang was referring to with Director of Personnel Department (Wang Anshi, *Wang Jingwengong shi jianzhu*, 33.827). As we shall see below, those did not seem to be how Wang Anshi took it.

"In learning, he expected himself to be like Mencius, not speaking of Xun Kuang or Han Yu" 其學以孟軻自許，荀況、韓愈不道也.[187]

Wang Anshi's own take tells us more. In a letter to Ouyang Xiu that Gu Yongxin thinks was referring to this exchange,[188] Wang wrote:

> I was excessively praised. This is not what a senior great man should appropriately bestow a junior unworthy person on. Is this perhaps what is called enticing him and wanting him to get to this point? Nevertheless, I am afraid I still cannot live up to your expectation. I thus force myself to reciprocate the gift you sent me out of deep kindness, not daring to talk about poetry. If you would forgive me for my transgression, I would be most fortunate.
> 惟褒被過分，非先進大人所宜施於後進之不肖，豈所謂誘之欲其至於是乎。雖然，懼終不能以上副也。輒勉強所之，以酬盛德之貺，非敢言詩也。惟赦其僭越，幸甚。[189]

Thinking Ouyang showered undue praise upon himself, Wang surmised this was perhaps because the senior official wanted to entice himself toward a goal he set for him. Regardless, Wang feared he could not live up to Ouyang's expectations in the end. Noting his responding poem was only in return for Ouyang's present, he asked Ouyang to forgive him for his disobeyance. It seems that Wang read Ouyang's poem as his using future leadership in the ancient prose movement to encourage him to emulate Han Yu.[190] Politeness aside, Wang Anshi was not moved.

Wang's view on the mainstream revealed itself even more in the exchanges between him and his close friend Wang Ling 王令 (1032-1059). In 1054, Anshi entered into an unusually intimate relationship with Ling,[191] a young man in whom Wang Anshi seemed to have found a

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[187] "Wang Jinggong Anshi zhuan," in Hong Ye et al. eds., *Wanyanji shan cun*, 375.
[188] I share Gu's view on this: the first and third sentences in the quote below look like a prose version of "嘉篇為貺豈宜蒙," the last line in Wang's "Fengchou Yongshu jianzeng" (*LCJ*, 22.264).
[189] Wang Anshi, second of "Shang Ouyang Yongshu shu," in *LCJ*, 74.784. The beginning of this quote was repeated in the fourth letter to Ouyang (*LCJ*, 74.785).
[190] In the 1040s, Ouyang Xiu criticized Wang Anshi for imitating Han Yu's style in writing (Zeng Gong, "Yu Wuang Jiefu di yi shu," in *Zeng Gong ji*, 16.255). This suggests that to Ouyang, the point of learning from Han Yu lied elsewhere.
[191] Through repeated efforts, Wang Anshi married his wife's sister to Wang Ling (Wang Anshi, "Yu jiu shi Wu silu yi Wang Fengyuan yin shi shu," in Wang Ling, *Wang Ling ji*, 399; and the chronicle of Wang Ling's life in ibid., 442, 444-45). After Ling's premature death, Anshi not only wrote an epitaph for him (ibid., 383-84), but also numerous pieces reminiscing him (ibid., 397-402, especially "Si Fengyuan"). He also took responsibility for Ling's posthumous daughter, marrying her well (ibid., 422). The intensity of emotions Wang Anshi invested in Wang Ling seemed verging on a kind of transference, perhaps in proportion to his perceived loneliness in the world at that time.

sounding board, if not a soulmate. Frequently painting the Renzong reign in a dark tone,[192] Ling wrote this verse to Anshi: "It is hard to fight for the Way with the likes of stealers; good at thinking, my fellows together say 'return'" 難與躔徒爭有道，好思吾黨共言歸.[193] Seeing the court as being filled with fellow stealers [of imperial authority] who had lost the [proper] way,[194] Ling thinks the wise thing to do for men like himself and Wang Anshi – the minority party – was to stay away from it.[195] Wang Anshi greatly appreciated his friend's advice, thinking that compared with those who wanted himself to go along with the world, only what Ling said fully accorded with what he wanted to say from his heart.[196] In a poem inviting Ling for a face-to-face discussion on how to save the fallen world, Anshi revealed his intent to expel the heterodoxy (*yiduan* 異端), counting on Ling's help in this enterprise.[197] As for what exactly went wrong in their times, in a letter to Lü Huiqing 呂惠卿 (1032-1111), Wang Ling made it clear: "the literati abandoned *daode* and compete with each other to learn refined writings" 士之舍道德而爭以文字為學也.[198] This seems a commentary on the first two lines in Wang Anshi's responding poem to Ouyang Xiu.

Wang Anshi's explicit statement of his view on the mainstream was made in his several memorials submitted to Emperor Renzong. From 1058 to 1061, Wang repeatedly complained to Renzong on the lack of talents in both government and society. For instance, at the beginning of his myriad-word letter,[199] he declared: "I have tried to observe those in office in the world, [finding] no more lack [of talents] than in the present. … I also sought out [talents] on the streets and in the

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[192] See, for example, Wang Ling, "Meng huang," in *Wang Ling ji*, 41-42.
[193] Wang Ling, "Ji Jiefu," in *Wang Ling ji*, 189.
[194] In 1062/6, Sima Guang voiced a similar concern ("Jin xi shu," in *CJJ*, 24.349: "威福之柄一失於人而習以為常，則不可復收矣"). A firm believer in maintaining the balance of power (Sariti, "Monarchy, Bureaucracy, and Absolutism," 74-75; Bol, "*This Culture of Ours*," chapter 7; and Zhao Dongmei, *Da Song zhi bian*, 392-94, 421-23), Sima was concerned about the imbalance in power distribution due to declined imperial authority. In *Politics and Conservatism in Northern Song China*, Xiao-bin Ji argues that Sima consistently aimed for increasing imperial authority. The evidence Ji produces is mainly for the reigns of Renzong, Yingzong and early Shenzong. These happen to coincide with the period of imperial authority decline. For the period after Shenzong's authority had been significantly boosted in comparison with that of the grand councilors, Ji is yet to produce convincing evidence.
[195] For more of such advice to Wang Anshi, see Wang Ling, "Da Wang Jiefu shu" and "Yu Wang Jiefu shu," in *Wang Ling ji*, 326-28. Both dated to 1058 (ibid., 444). He Wenhuan perceptively noted that "按當日朝政國勢，未為甚失，措辭乃爾，大是背逆" (ibid., 413).
[196] See especially Wang Anshi's twelfth letter to Wang Ling: "逢原所以教我，得鄙心所欲出者。…大抵見教者，欲使安石同乎俗、合乎世耳。非足下教我，尚何望於他人" (*Wang Ling ji*, 395-96).
[197] Wang Anshi, "Ji Wang Fengyuan," in ibid., 396. Note here Wang painted himself as the true Confucian and the mainstream as the likes of Shen Buhai and Han Fei. This suggests such were common rhetorical strategies shared by literati of different ideologies in their seeking to establish their own vision as the orthodox.
[198] Wang Ling, "Yu Lü Jifu shu," in *Wang Ling ji*, 330.
[199] For slightly different counts of the characters in this letter, see Drechsler, "Wang Anshi and the Origins of Modern Public Management," 354.

fields, but not seeing many either" 臣嘗試竊觀天下在位之人，未有乏于此时者也….臣又求之於閭巷草野之間，而亦未見其多焉.[200] If we link such complaints to the context – this was, as a matter of fact, the Jiayou (1056-1063) period, an era many thought full of talents[201] thanks to the long-term intellectual leadership of Ouyang Xiu in literati society and now also in the central government,[202] the illocutionary force of Wang's words becomes clear.[203]

In this long letter to Renzong, Wang sharply contrast the ability to be useful to the state, what he called "talent" 才 (*cai*), with literary skills, what he called "the learning for carving insects and cutting seals" 雕蟲篆刻之學 (*diaochong zhuanke zhi xue*), which to him not only did not help make talents useful to the state, but actually harmed the making of such. Labeling those gifted with the latter "the unworthy," Wang made a daring statement: "Now the unworthy luckily rose to high-ranking officials. They therefore got to extend [such luck] to their likes, gathering them in the court. This is why those in the court are mostly unworthy. Even though there might be some who are worthy and wise, facing the difficult situation of lacking assistance, they often cannot get their way among them" 今使不肖之人，幸而至乎公卿，因得推其類聚之朝廷，此朝廷所以多不肖之人，而雖有賢智，往往困於無助，不得行其間也.[204] Hong Mai 洪邁 (1123-1202) told us "at the time Fu Bi and Han Qi were grand councilors. Unhappy on reading it, they knew he would necessarily make trouble were his wish fulfilled." 當時富、韓二公在相位，讀之不樂，知其得志必生事.[205] Ouyang's name was not mentioned, but Fu and Han were his allies sharing his

[200] Wang Anshi, "Shang Renzong Huangdi yan shi shu," in *LCJ*, 39.411. This was reiterated in "Shang shizheng shu" (ibid., 424) and "Ni shangdian zhazi" (ibid., 438).
[201] Su Shi, "*Jushi ji* xu": "自歐陽子出，天下爭自濯磨，… 長育成就，至嘉祐末，號稱多士," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1. Cao Jiaqi notes this in "'Jiayou zhi zhi' wenti tan lun," 63.
[202] On Ouyang's leadership among the Confucians, see *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1331-34, 1336, 1339, 1341, 1343, 1346, 1355. On his decisive role in the shaping of Northern Song political culture and literati character, see Hartman, "Zhu Xi and His World," 113. These made Wang Anshi's not mentioning his role as an intellectual leader in the offering piece he wrote on Ouyang's death but rather focusing on his personal success all the more striking (*Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1332).
[203] For Wang's negative comments on Ouyang after Shenzong took the throne, see Wang Anshi, *Xining zoudui rilu*, 135; and Li Tao, *XCB*, 211.5134-35.
[204] Wang Anshi, "Shang Renzong Huangdi yan shi shu," in *LCJ*, 39.418. In the late 1060s, Wang again complained to Shenzong about the status quo that was carried forward from the previous decade (Yang Zhongliang, *JSBM*, 69.1045).
[205] Hong Mai, *Rongzhai suibi*, IV.4.673. Zhu Yiqun notes Wang Anshi's antagonistic relationship with Han Qi during the Jiayou period, which went back probably to their first working together in the 1040s ("Song Shenzong qiyong Wang Anshi," esp. 352-54).

approach to governance.[206] Perhaps not coincidentally, after 1059, there was no longer any reports on personal interactions between Wang Anshi and Ouyang Xiu, at least as far as Gu Yongxin's thorough search for evidence showing their having a "friendship" goes.[207]

On what grounds, then, did Ouyang Xiu recommend Wang Anshi for central government positions in the mid-1050s, leading Wang to think he wanted to pass leadership in the ancient prose movement to himself? Before the early 1060s, Wang Anshi was known for classical scholarship, literary skills, and adminstirative capabilities, in addition to having inadventently built a reputation for not seeking to get ahead on the official ladder.[208] In both times when Ouyang recommended Wang, Ouyang was, in line with his commitment to literati self-governance, seeking to restrict imperial power by having the emperor hear independent opinions from principled speaking officials. As early as 1034, he had pointed out the remarkable power of the speaking officials, as they "could address the monarch on any policy issue."[209] In 1054,[210] Ouyang wanted to fill the two vacant remonstration positions with men who would not take advantage of the reputation of the speaking officials to seek their own career advancement. This makes Wang Anshi, a man with a track record of being able to hold onto his own principle, an ideal candidate.[211] The 1056 recommendation likewise stressed Wang's adherence to principles,[212] a quality Wang had exhibited in the poem exchange above as well. While Ouyang also mentioned the fame Wang had made in the world for his erudition and writing, he did not recommend Wang for his ideas on governance.[213] Quite on the contrary, after 1059, the year Wang's such ideas revealed themselves

[206] See Ouyang Fa et al., "Shiji," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1377 for his relationship with Fu and Han Qi, "Ji wen," in ibid., 1331 that with Han Qi.
[207] Gu Yongxin, *Ouyang Xiu xueshu yanjiu*, 192-98. Wang Shuizho also notes their personal interactions got increasingly sparser after the late 1050s (*Wang Shuizhao zixuanji*, 209).
[208] Chen Zhi'e, *Bei Song wenhua shi shulun*, 21-22.
[209] Hartman, "Sung Government and Politics," 105. In this he apparently shared the position of Fan Zhongyan 範仲淹 (989-1052), who sought to restrain imperial power by having it rely on "the power of remonstrance and the power of opinion" (Liu, "An Early Sung Reformer," 124). This could have contributed to creating the impression that he wanted to "seize the ruler's authority" (*duo renzhu quan* 奪人主權) for the benefit of the literati, a charge filed against him in 1054 (Li Tao, *XCB*, 176.4269).
[210] Ouyang Xiu, "Jian Wang Anshi Lü Gongzhu zhazi," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 870-71. On the dating, see Gu Yongxin, *Ouyang Xiu xueshu yanjiu*, 193n4.
[211] Comparing Ouyang's recommendations for Wang Anshi with those for Su Xun and his sons, there seems to be a difference between his liking the Sus' ideas in an affectionally personal way and his recommending Wang more on professional grounds.
[212] Ouyang Xiu, "Zai lun shuizai zhuang," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 865.
[213] Before Shenzong, Wang was appointed to central government positions either for his literary skills, like drafting edicts, or administrative capabilities, like managing state herds and finance. Only Shenzong gave him "virtual free rein to implement [his ideas]" (Mote, *Imperial China*, 139).

in the myriad-word letter to Renzong, neither did Ouyang recommend Wang any more nor was there any known socialization between them.[214]

Under this situation, aware of his singularity[215] and knowing when to advance and when withdraw,[216] Wang Anshi's overall strategy was to stay away from the court as much as possible, to maintain his integrity. In his own words: "In the past, because what I learned was impractical, making it hard to get along with the times, I therefore wanted to seclude myself in leisurely and idle positions, by which perhaps to fulfill my wish" 舊惟所學之迂闊，難以趨時，因欲自屏於寬閑，庶幾求志.[217] Compared with working in the central government or as central government emissaries, Wang preferred being a prefect, where as the local head he could apply his ideas on governance in the area under his administration freely – precisely the gist of self-governance.[218] Wang did occasionally accept central government jobs, but often when he had no choice but to.[219] He showed some passion when appointed as Drafter, a position granting him direct access to emperor Renzong, but eventually he realized that when the court was filled with men whose ideology he did not share, chances of influencing the emperor with his ideas were minimal, not to mention Renzong's own inclination to let things be how they naturally are. As he spoke of his experience between 1061 and 1063: "When I was Drafter during Renzong's reign, I only went up to the palace once, nor did I have friends among senior officials" 在仁宗朝知制誥，只一次上殿，與大臣又無黨.[220]

Wang, however, did not passively wait for his time to come. Rather, he kept advancing his own agenda in ways he could, a main part of which being to build up his influence through writing and teaching. Around the same time when self-governance was being established as the mainstream, Wang's major work got into circulation, as his student Lu Dian told us:

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[214] The only known interaction thereafter was Ouyang's writing a letter of congratulations on Wang Anshi's becoming the prime minister in 1071 (Gu Yongxin, *Ouyang Xiu xueshu yanjjiu*, 196-97).
[215] Wang Anshi, "Shang Renzong Huangdi yan shi shu," in *LCJ*, 39.410-11.
[216] For Wang's own statement of his principles on when to advance in the officialdom and when to withdraw, see his poem "Chou Wang Bohu": "逢時豈遽廢，避俗聊須噤" (*LCJ*, 5.116). For a discussion, see Yang Qianmiao, *Wang Anshi "Yi" xue yanjiu*, 200-05.
[217] Wang Anshi, "Shouzhao ling shishi xie biao," in *LCJ*, 60.647. Written to Shenzong in 1070.
[218] Deng Guangming, *Bei Song zhengzhi gaigejia Wang Anshi*, 16; Zhao Dongmei, *Da Song zhi bian*, 144.
[219] For instance, the 1054 appointment to the Herds Office 群牧司 was eventually taken up under Ouyang Xiu's instruction (Yang Zhongliang, *JSBM*, 59.1037). For a sense of how his confidant Wang Ling advised him on how to reject central government appointments without offending those in power, see id., "Da Wang Jiefu shu," in *Wang Ling ji*, 326.
[220] Li Tao, *XCB*, 234.5684.

> Between the Jiayou (1056-1063) and Zhiping (1064-1067) periods, … to the south of the Huai [River], literati and senior officials venerated Mr. Anding's[221] learning. I alone doubted it. Only when I got Duke of Jing's *Miscellaneous Theories from Huainan* and his *Commentary on the "Great Plan"* did I say yes in my heart. It was thereupon that I was willing to become Mr. Linchuan's disciple.
>
> 嘉祐、治平間，…淮之南，學士大夫宗安定先生之學，予獨疑焉。及得荊公《淮南雜說》與其《"洪範"傳》，心獨謂然，于是願掃臨川先生之門。[222]

To Lu, Wang's learning as formulated in these two pieces of work was distinct from those taught by Hu Yuan 胡瑗 (993-1059), a man in Ouyang's camp who in early Jiayou was Lecturer in the Imperial University.[223] With regard to the main feature of Hu's learning as compared to that of Wang Anshi, his student Liu Yi 劉彝 (1017-1086) summarized to Shenzong as follows:[224]

> Your servant heard that the sage's way has its substance, function, and cultural form. Things like the ruler and the officials, father and son, *renyi* and ritual and music that cannot be changed across time constitute its substance.[225]
>
> 臣聞聖人之道，有體、有用、有文。君臣父子，仁義禮樂，曆世不可變者，其體也。[226]

To Hu, like to Ouyang Xiu, the values guiding human relationship that remain constant all the time are *renyi*.[227] By contrast, this was how Wang Anshi's follower[228] characterized his learning:

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[221] Hu Yuan 胡瑗 (993-1059).

[222] Lu Dian, "Fu Fujun muzhi," in Zeng Zaozhuang and Liu Lin eds., *Quan Song wen*, 101.244. In 1063, taking leave of the court on his mother's death, Wang never responded to the court's summon again. Rather, after finishing his mourning period, he chose to teach in his home prefect, training his first batch of students. For the students he taught during this period, see Liu Chengguo, *Jinggong Xinxue yanjiu*, 63ff.

[223] Ouyang Fa et al., "Shiji," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1377.

[224] This conversation took place in 1069.

[225] For alternative translations, see Chu, *The Politics of Higher Education*, 57; Wood, *Limits to Autocracy*, 73-74; and de Bary, "A Reappraisal of Neo-Confucianism," 89.

[226] Zhu Xi, *Wu chao mingchen yanxing lu*, 316.

[227] On the difference between Hu and Wang, see Lu Guolong, *Song ru weiyan*, 125.

[228] On this author being Cai Jing and not his brother Cai Bian, see Zhang Chengzhong, "Cai Jing wei 'Wang Anshi zhuan' kao." Whichever Cai it was, it is certain that this was written by an admirer who sought to tell the larger issue Wang was concerned with. Compared with those penned by Wang's opponents that read more about polemics than substance, like the one in *Song shi* (327.10541-53) that drew heavily on Sima Guang's *Sushui jiwen*, this sympathetic perspective tallies more with the image of Wang emerging from his own writings that we shall see in the next chapter.

> Since the Former King's blessings were depleted, states differed and families were different. From Han till Tang, such development [of diversity] from the original [unity] gradually deepened. When the Song arose, cultural things flourished, but it had not been known that *daode* [lies in] the workings of nature and destiny.[229] Anshi strived after a hundred generations, seeking to match [the achievements of] Yao, Shun, and the Three Dynasties. He penetrated what could not be predicted from [the natural workings of] day and night or yin and yang, and entered [the domain of] the magical. Initially, he wrote *Miscellaneous Theories* in tens of thousands of words. The world said his words were on a par with those of Mencius'. It was thereupon that literati under Heaven began to trace the idea of *daode* and look into the root cause of nature and destiny.
> 自先王澤竭，國異家殊。由漢迄唐，源流浸深。宋興，文物盛矣，然不知道德、性命之理。安石奮乎百世之下，追堯、舜、三代，通乎晝夜陰陽所不能測而入於神。初著《雜說》數萬言，世謂其言與孟軻相上下。於是天下之士始原道德之意，窺性命之端云。[230]

Renyi was gone, and the cultural forms featuring the mature Ouyang's legacy that Hu Yuan shared were considered unhelpful for solving the issue of value diversity Wang was mainly concerned with.[231] In their place, Wang put the idea of *daode* that was first formulated by Laozi in the *Classic of Daode*, further coupling it with a topic Confucius was rather reluctant to touch upon[232] but was introduced into the Confucian tradition by Mencius – human nature.[233] These were also what emperor Shenzong thought were most impressive in Wang's learning, telling him: "Since you were in the Hanlin Academy, I first got to hear the theory of *daode*, thereupon my mind was slightly opened up and awoken" 自卿在翰林，始得聞道德之說，心稍開悟[234] and "You know the workings of nature and destiny" 卿知性命之理.[235]

On the biases in Wang's other biographies, see Pei Rucheng and Sun Jianmin, "Lun Song Yuan shiqi de sange Wang Anshi zhuan."

[229] The grounds for my inserting "lies in" in the rendering are presented in chapter 3.

[230] Chao Gongwu, *Junzhai dushuzhi jiaozheng*, 525–26.

[231] For a contemporary response against this, see Shu Dagang, "'Fu shi san shu, ji jue cisheng bu xu guo,'" 530.

[232] The *Analects*, 5.13. For a discussion of how commentators from He Yan through the Cheng brothers and Zhu Xi to Dai Zhen and Zhang Xuecheng had interpreted this passage, see Ivanhoe, "Whose Confucius? Which Analects?"

[233] For more on this, see chapters 2 and 4.

[234] Wang Anshi, *Xining zoudui rilu*, 63; Li Tao, *XCB*, 233.5661. Wang was appointed to the Academy in 1067 and had his first audience with the emperor in 1068/4. Geng Nanzhong 耿南仲 (?-1128), one of Wang Anshi's followers, characterized Wang's learning as the learning of *daode* (*daode zhi xue* 道德之學), which to Geng had brought about great increase in state power (Li Jingde ed., *Zhuzi yulei*, 101.2572-73).

[235] Li Tao, *XCB*, 234.5684.

In the first section, we have seen that in "Tracing the Way," Han Yu made a powerful action to drive out *daode*, so as to make *renyi* the only legitimate way to govern. In section II, we also saw that in the latter two parts of "On the Roots" that reflected the mature Ouyang Xiu's approach to governance, he carried forward this dropping of *daode*, only putting forward a better way to realize *renyi* – using ritual and music, the cultural things. Wang's learning was centered on counteracting this. As the Jurchen literatus Zhao Bingwen's 趙秉文 (1159-1232) noted: "Since Master Han, [people] talked about *renyi* but did not touch upon *daode*. This was why Mr. Wang had a theory of *daode* and nature and destiny" 自韓子，言仁義而不及道德。此王氏所以有道德性命之說也。[236]

It should be noted that Han Yu did not succeed in driving out the term *daode*. Rather, it seems by the eleventh century, it had been co-opted by the Confucians, as can be seen in this 1070/8 court discussion:

> Zeng Gongliang (999-1078) said, "*Daode* should be used as well." Shenzong said, "What the current generation referred to as *daode* is not *daode*." Anshi said, "The village hypocrite looks like [having] *daode* but actually [has] no *daode*."
> 曾公亮言："當兼用道德。"上曰："今一輩人所謂道德者，非道德也。"安石曰："鄉原似道德而非道德也。"[237]

Of the two concepts of *daode* in this conversation, the one referred to by Zeng Gongliang was, Shenzong told us, used by the Confucian mainstream,[238] which Shenzong and Wang Anshi did not approve of. Rather, the *daode* they deemed desirable was a different one, the one Wang Anshi taught Shenzong on meeting him. Some scholars take Wang's lecturing the young emperor on *daode* as evidence of his practicing Confucian principles,[239] but in his diary, Wang recorded

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[236] Zhao Bingwen, "Yuan jiao," in *Xianxian Laoren Fushui wenji*, 1.1. For an intellectual biography of Zhao, see Bol, "Seeking Common Ground," 502-12. For a late eleventh-century attempt to make *daode* and *xingming* compatible, see Zhang Lei, "Shang Huang Jianpan shu," in *Zhang Lei ji*, 847 (Zhang was born in 1054. Even if the letter was written when he was 20, it would still be dated to after the reform had been launched). Bol points out Zhang's philosophical position cannot stand up to scrutiny ("A Literati Miscellany and Sung Intellectual History," 129-30).
[237] Li Tao, *XCB*, 214.5217-18.
[238] Like the one referred to by Liu Yi in the above response to Shenzong ("臣師胡瑗以道德仁義教東南諸生") or Ouyang Xiu's use of *daode* in the original first part of "On the Roots" ("Ben lun shang," in *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 413: "論道德，可興堯舜之治"). For more examples of this use, see *Ouyang Xiu quanji*, 1336 ("以文章道德為一世學者宗師") and 1341 ("明於道德，見於文章").
[239] See, for example, Yu Yingshi, *Zhu Xi de lishi shijie*, 38-40.

himself telling Shenzong where his concept came from and what it was meant for: "The way Laozi talked about *daode* is precisely that by which the ruler operates the world" 如老子言道德者，正人主所以運天下.[240]

In summary, this chapter has shown that in "Tracing the Way," Han Yu formulated a humanist theory of self-governance for the post-An Lushan Rebellion new world that decentralizes moral authority to each literatus, asking them to decide what is the right thing to do on their own according to the general principle of loving humanity broadly and doing so appropriately. By the mid-eleventh century, Ouyang Xiu, leader of the ancient prose movement, supplemented Han's political theory with a more viable method of implementation – gradually realizing *renyi* through ritual and music –, and, together with like-minded ranking officials in the central government, took advantage of the quiet decade from Renzong fell dysfunctionally sick in 1056 to the swift demise of his adopted successor Yingzong in 1067 to practice literati self-governance at all levels of government. As a result, what Han Yu theorized over two centuries ago finally became the mainstream, resulting in a world where, as Wang Anshi complained, each person had a sense of what is right and ten persons ten. It was against this context that Wang Anshi worked out his political theory, the purpose of which was to reverse this long-term development toward decentralization that originated in the mid-Tang.[241] Now let us see how this reversal was theorized.

[240] Wang Anshi, *Xining Zoudui rilu*, 134; Yang Shi, *Yang Shi ji*, 125. Undated. From what they were discussing, it is likely this took place earlier in the reform. Wang followed by saying that "it is only because those below average do not know the gist that the people lead each other to confuse the custom and fall into indolence" 但中人以下不明其旨，则相率乱俗，陷為偷惰. It was perhaps for this reason that he, his son, and his students produced over a dozen of commentaries on *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi* (Zhang Yuhan, "Bei Song Xinxue yanjiu," 37–38. See also Chao Gongwu, *Junzhai dushuzhi jiaozheng*, 11.471). Scholars studying this body of work find they were trying to convince the literati to let go of their own moral standards (see, for example, Yin Zhihua, "Wang Anshi de Laozi *zhu* tanwei," 48; Lin Chun Hung, "Lü Huiqing Daode Zhenjing *zhuan* yu Zhuangzi *yi* zhong de sixiang san lun," 81; Lin Ming-chao, "Wu wo er wu wu fei wo"; and Yamada Takashi, "Lü Huiqing guanyu *Laozi Zhuangzi* sixiang qianxi," 54).
[241] Skinner, "Introduction," 25; Hartwell, "Demographic, Political, and Social Transformations," 395.