LOOKING TO THE PAST TO GUIDE THE PRESENT: ANCIENT-STYLE LEARNING CONCEPTIONS OF THE LINEAGE OF FORMER WORTHIES

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The lineage of former worthies

- Mencius 孟軻 (fl. 4th c. BCE)
- Xunzi 荀卿 (fl. 3rd c. BCE)
- Yang Xiong 揚雄 (53 BCE-18 CE)
- Wang Tong 王通 (late 6th-early 7th c. CE)
- Han Yu 韓愈 (768-824)
Yao transmitted [this dao] to Shun, Shun transmitted it to Yu, Yu transmitted it to Tang, Tang transmitted it to Wen, Wu and the Duke of Zhou, who in turn transmitted it to Confucius. Confucius transmitted it to Mencius, [but] it was not transmitted after Mencius’ death. Xunzi and Yang Xiong got parts of it, but they did not get the essence; they spoke of it, but were not precise.
Research on Ancient-style Learning Lineages

- The origins of Han’s lineage
  - 陳寅恪
  - 黃雲眉
- The influence on later Neo-Confucian lineages
  - Thomas Wilson
  - 大島晃
- The criteria informing the composition of Song Ancient-style Learning lineages
  - 何寄澎
- My approach
Liu’s strategy of self-promotion and the lineage of former worthies

- Liu argued that he, like the former worthies, was endowed by heaven with the innate capacity to understand the dao.
- Liu’s wen, like that of the former worthies, had the power to enlighten the age to the dao and facilitate the realization of socio-political order.
“After composing the Unofficial History, I conducted a thorough examination of the purport of the six classics. I thereupon encompassed the mind of Yang Xiong and Mencius, and happily matched the compositions of the “Master of Wen that Hits the Mark,” Wang Zhongyan (Wang Tong). I then changed my name to “Open”, and my style name to “Successor to the Path.” The intent [of these names] is that I will “open” the dao of the ancient sages and worthies in the present, and “open” the ears and eyes of my contemporaries, making them keen and perspicacious. I certainly desire to “open” them up and lay out this path, causing the past and present to proceed through me” (from Liu Kai’s “Biography of Mr. Filling in What was Lost” 補亡先生傳).
“From the time of Han’s death, there has not been anyone [to carry on this work]. Today, the reason that I write is also to continue the restoration of Confucius’ dao. I do not yet know - will heaven cause me to come forth? Will it designate me to serve as its vessel? [If it does], then how could my virtue possibly be up to this task! As my disciple stated, if I have indeed obtained the dao of the sages, then it is possible [for me] to measure up to the [accomplishments] of these former masters” (from Liu Kai’s “First Reply to Cang Bing” 答臧丙第一書).
“My wen is without fault. If I were to follow the wen of the age, how would it be possible to transmit education to the people? . . . My dao is the dao of Confucius, Mencius, Yang Xiong, and Han Yu; my wen is the wen of Confucius, Mencius, Yang Xiong and Han Yu” (from Liu Kai’s “Responding to Reproach” 應責)
“If you are able to hold fast to this mind which today loves me, then you will transform the masses and cause them to love me. Those who love me will then show their closeness to me and join me in the dao. In this way, getting everyone under heaven to follow me will not be difficult. Morality, virtue, benevolence and righteousness will have that which they rely on, and ritual, music, punishments and government administration will be put to use. The state will not have worries over disputes and killing, and the people will have the customs of trust and yielding. A brilliance greater than the virtuous sounds of the former sages will permeate the populace” (from Liu Kai’s “Letter to Ren Tangzheng” 與任唐徵書）。
Zhiyuan 智圆 (976-1022)

- Zhiyuan was a monk of the Tiantai 天台 tradition of Buddhism who promoted an inclusive vision of Ancient-style Learning.
- He sought to disassociate Ancient-style Learning’s anti-Buddhist rhetoric from what he identified as its principal message.
- He argued that the two members of the lineage of former worthies who lived after Buddhism’s introduction into China – Wang Tong and Han Yu- were not opposed to Buddhism.
- Buddhism and Confucianism should work together to morally transform the populace.
In “Reading Mozi,” Han Yu disputed the widely held claim that Mozi and Confucius espoused two mutually incompatible worldviews.

He asserted that the dispute that developed between the followers of the two schools resulted from their desire to promote their own teacher’s views.
Ministry of Personnel Officer [Han’s] “Reading Mozi,”
Stated that Mohists and Confucians are neighbors.
I know the Mohist doctrine of universal love,
What difference is there between it and Buddhism?
If you approve of Mohism, then you approve of Buddhism,
This is as evident as gazing up at the firmament.
Their trajectories may well differ,
But they are the same in their purport and provenance.
Later students studied Han’s writings,
And how he excelled at critiquing Buddhism.
Before they had mastered Master Han’s dao,
They already studied his tantrums.
They forgot the root and disputed the branch,
In past and present this has been a waste of effort.
Now, Han donned Confucian caps and clothed himself in Confucian garb; he orally recited the "wen" of the six classics, and his mind experienced the "dao" of the five virtues. He was thus a disciple of Confucius. Hence it was certainly appropriate for him to castigate Buddhism, Daoism and the theories of the Hundred Schools in order to revere his teaching.
As for Buddhists and Confucians, their words are different yet their principle is connected. They both transform the people in order to move them towards goodness and keep them away from evil. Confucianism is the teaching that adorns the body, and thus it is called the external canon; Buddhism is the teaching that cultivates the mind, and thus it is termed the internal canon. If we consider the body and the mind, then there is the distinction of internal and external. How could the ignorant masses transcend the body and mind? If not for our two teachings, what means would there be to transform them? Ah, Confucianism and Buddhism; they are conjoined (as intimately) as the two faces (of a single piece of cloth)!” (from Zhiyuan’s “Biography of the Master of the Mean” 中庸子傳).
Shi Jie 石介 (1005-1045)

- Shi Jie was staunchly anti-Buddhist. In contrast to Zhiyuan, he espoused an exclusivist vision of Ancient-style Learning.

- He employed the lineage of former worthies in two ways:
  - He argued that the former worthies also held an exclusivist conception of Confucianism and that they attacked the enemies of the dao.
  - He appealed to the former worthies to justify his use of non-governmental means to advance the Ancient-style Learning agenda.
“Now, the *dao* of Yao, Shun, Yu, Tang, King Wen, King Wu, the Duke of Zhou and Confucius, is the *dao* that has been constantly practiced for ten thousand generations and which cannot be altered. *Buddhists* and *Daoists* employed perverse and absurd teachings to destroy it; Yang Yi used shrewdly dissolute and unfounded words to crush it. I attack those who [seek to] destroy and crush my sages’ *dao*; I do not attack Buddhists, Daoists and Yang Yi. I study the *dao* of the sages [and so] I have no choice but to retaliate against those who attack my sages’ *dao*” (from Shi Jie’s “Discourse on Anomalies”怪說).
“Now, whenever the ancient sages and worthies perceived that all under heaven was not at peace, that the people were not stabilized, and that the sage’s *dao* was not illuminated, they took it as their personal duty [to rectify this] and did not dare be complacent. Today, the correct *dao* is broken, the sages’ classics are destroyed, and dissolute writing and licentious music run rampant throughout the world. The absurd and preposterous teachings of Buddhism and Daoism, as well as the heterodox words of Yang and Mo are freely practiced within heaven and earth, [yet] the Son of Heaven does not ban [them]... Even if you fall far short of the ancient sages and worthies, you should exhaust all of your strength and only then cease. If there is a chance that this *dao* will be roughly preserved through [the efforts of] my disciple, then this is still better than doing nothing” (from Shi Jie’s “Letter to Licentiate Shi Jianzhong” 與士建中秀才書).
Non-governmental means of advancing the Ancient-style Learning agenda

- Support for the construction of shrines dedicated to the former worthies
- The establishment of a private academy
- The composition of letters to young men of promise urging them to join the movement
“Viewed from the period following the Zhou dynasty, those who completely attained [the status of] worthies were Mencius, Yang Xiong, Wang Tong, and Han Yu. However, if we compare their achievements and ethical conduct, [it is clear that] the difficult circumstances [they faced] should not necessarily be replaced with [political] success. In the three hundred years after Han Yu, among worthies who faced difficult circumstances, there is also the Master of Taishan (Sun Fu). Mencius, Yang Xiong, Wang Tong, and Han Yu all transmitted their dao to disciples. Once they transmitted it to disciples, they also conveyed it through texts, and as these texts circulated widely, their dao was greatly illuminated. The Master (Sun Fu) also transmitted this dao to his disciples. Since he has transmitted it, he also intends to convey it through texts, causing these texts to circulate widely and this dao to be greatly illuminated. For this reason, on the southern slope of Mt. Tai, he set up a school, built a lecture hall, accumulated the texts of the former sages to fill it, and together with his group of disciples resided there” (from Shi Jie’s “Inscription for the Mt. Tai Academy” 泰山書院記).
Song Ancient-style Learning thinkers espoused different conceptions of the movement.

Not all Song Ancient-style Learning thinkers were committed to the use of state institutions to achieve the movement’s goals.

The lineage found in Han Yu’s *Yuandao* did not exert a substantial influence on Song Ancient-style Learning lineage discourse.