

## FATE, FORTUNE, CHANCE, AND LUCK IN CHINESE AND GREEK: A COMPARATIVE SEMANTIC HISTORY

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In *The Consequences of Modernity*, sociologist Anthony Giddens suggests that new notions of risk and trust are distinctly modern developments that supplant earlier notions of fate, fortune, and *fortuna*; nowadays, the unexpected comes not from turns of fate or divine intervention but from risk.<sup>1</sup> From the “Fei Ming” 非命 chapters of the *Mohist Canon* to modern attacks on theological fatalism and scientific determinism, fatalism (as distinct from a belief in fate) has a long history of disrepute. As a modern critic puts it:

If time confers respectability on philosophical problems, there are few issues in the history of philosophy with more right to be carefully and charitably considered than fatalism. Yet in the twentieth century, at least, this approach has certainly not been adopted. Contemporary discussions of fatalism have been scattered and perfunctory, almost always concluding with a summary dismissal of the fatalist’s argument. Typically, the fatalist is seen as making some rather sophomoric blunder—mistaking a tautology for a substantive thesis about necessity, misunderstanding the scope of a ‘model operator’, misrepresenting facts about the future as facts about the past, and the like.<sup>2</sup>

If Anthony Giddens and Mark Bernstein are right, the prevailing tendency to counterpose “modern” notions of chance, randomness, risk, and so forth with a “pre-modern” notion of fate, *fortuna*, and fatalism attributes universality to the semantics and categories of the modern formulation, which it privileges over an obscure amalgam, somehow connected with alterity and the distant past. A “from religion to philosophy” paradigm has tended to dominate earlier Classical approaches to the subject,<sup>3</sup> and the charge of “fatalism” has not infrequently been leveled against Chinese thought, often as a result of a confusion between fatalism and fate.<sup>4</sup>

By fate or destiny I mean the notion that there is a set or immutable pattern to the world. It may be understood as humanly knowable or ultimately inscrutable, personified as (or under the power of) a God or independent of any divine will. At the level of individual agency, a conscious agent is apt to consider the “fate” she is “given” in life, and ask what can be changed and what is unalterable. In this sense, the concept of fate can provide a way to categorize or discriminate what can and cannot be changed. The related epistemological question is foreknowledge: both about what is given (fate) and about what is alterable. Belief in fate (for the non-fatalist) may be closely connected to divination, since divination is based on the premise that fate can be controlled or at least influenced by conscious entities available to human contact.<sup>5</sup>

Fatalism is the belief that events are fixed in advance and unchangeable by human agency. The idea that human action has no influence on events is readily confused with determinism, the doctrine that every event has a cause, either an earlier event or a natural law. Both are thus distinct from the belief in fate. The strong fatalist believes that outcomes are set by what is “given,” with no significant scope for intervention; therefore, she has no practical need for distinguishing which outcomes can be altered. (One can, of course, be fatalistic about some things and not about others.) Nor does the fatalist have a practical epistemological problem; for her, the future, like the past, cannot be undone.

A considerable corpus of twentieth-century sinological scholarship, Chinese and otherwise, also has wielded the charge of fatalism, to various effects. Ruan Yuan 阮元 and other Qing scholars attacked Song and Ming dynasty Neo-Confucianism.<sup>6</sup> Some twentieth-century Chinese scholars portrayed Xia and Shang dynasty religion unfavorably as “primitive” in comparison to the Zhou.<sup>7</sup> Attitudes toward fatalism have also been used as a basis for classifying Warring States thought.<sup>8</sup>

In one of the most influential studies of the subject, Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896–1951), a student of Hu Shi, articulated five theories from the Eastern Zhou and Warring States: the theory that *ming* (“fate”) is fixed (*ming ding lun* 命定論), the theory that *ming* rectifies (*ming zheng lun* 命正論), the theory of awaiting *ming* (*si ming lun* 俟命論), the theory of *ming* as a wheel (*ming yun lun* 命運論), and the contra-*ming* theory (*fei ming lun* 非命論).<sup>9</sup> Fu’s original study and much later scholarship indebted to it attest to the importance of the problem of fate in Warring States thought.<sup>10</sup> Recent studies have also shown its centrality to Han philosophy, especially in the *Taixuanjing* 太玄經 of Yang Xiong 揚雄 and in the *Lunheng* 論衡 of Wang Chong 王充.<sup>11</sup> Fu’s original terms also have been reinvented in the process of translation: *ming ding* as predeterminism, *ming zheng* as moral determinism, *ming yun* as fatalism, and *fei ming* as anti-fatalism.<sup>12</sup> Such formulations do not tend to reveal contexts in which concepts of fate, fatalism, and necessity arose, the problems they were intended to address, the “work” they were intended to do, the systems of metaphors of which they were elements, and the systems of beliefs and practices toward which they stood in relations of contrast or opposition.

The present essay is a brief and comparative historical overview of the semantic fields of “fate” in Classical Greece and pre-Buddhist China. It is intended as a preamble to a more extended comparative treatment of interrelated complexes of concepts of fate, fortune, luck, and chance in ancient China and Greece—the two “Classical” cultures that have, in many ways, come to define East and West. The first two sections describe key elements in the Chinese semantic field from the Warring States and the Han and in the reinvention of the earlier lexicon in contemporary Chinese terms for such entirely modern concepts as risk, randomness, and (statistical) chance. I deliberately avoid Buddhist language because it warrants separate study. My account of the Greek semantic field focuses on Homer and the Διός Βουλή, on Parmenides and the problem of fate and necessity, on Plato and the role of *daimons*, and on a very brief treatment of the “On Fate” topos in Hellenistic Greece. In the third section I attempt a very brief comparative metaphorology; met-

aphors for the action of fate included command, division or allotment, and wheel or cycles of change.<sup>13</sup>

In presenting these semantic fields I seek to avoid the respective pitfalls of over-generalizing (by ignoring differences in time, place, and context) and of projecting the concepts of one tradition onto the other.<sup>14</sup> To that end, I have avoided any attempts to classify theories of fate. Nonetheless, I have heuristically identified eight overlapping topoi that cover much of the theoretical range of the semantic fields of fate in early China and Greece. I use them as a convenience, to group similar expressions, not as a classification.

1. Fate as divine “command” of one or more anthropomorphic gods, ancestors, spirits, or other divinities.

2. Fate as something predetermined at birth or inception (whatever its scope). This topos does not imply determinism, insofar as “destiny” may operate in specific and limited ways and not be the only factor that controls human life. The first of Fu Sinian’s five theories is an instructive example of the limited power of the range of interpretation of “fixed fate” to determine the actual unfolding of human lives:

命定論者，以天命為固定，不可改易者也。此等理解，在民間能成牢固不可破之信念，在學人口中實不易為之辨護。

The theory that *ming* is fixed held that the command of heaven was something that was fixed and could not be altered. This was understood in different ways. The common people took it to mean that [*ming*] could be completed and secured but not gotten rid of. The learned took it to mean that [*its*] substance could not easily be changed or protected.<sup>15</sup>

3. Fate as subject to the exercise of human choice and free will.

4. Moral fate. Fu Sinian’s second and third theories of *ming* show the range of nuance possible, even when linking (some aspects of) destiny to virtuous conduct:

命正論者，謂天眷無常，依人之行事以降禍福，

The theory that *ming* rectifies held that the affections of heaven were not constant, and that conduct towards others could bring down good fortune or calamity.<sup>16</sup>

俟命論者，謂上天之意在大體上是福善而禍淫，然亦有不齊者焉，賢者不必壽，不仁者不必不祿也。夫論其大齊，天志可微，舉其一事，吉凶未必。

The *si ming* theory holds that the intentions of highest heaven are in the main to bring good fortune to the good and calamity to the licentious, but that there are those whom it does not help. Those who are worthy are not necessarily long-lived, and those who are unbenevolent are not necessarily without emoluments.<sup>17</sup>

The theory of awaiting *ming* was the specifically Ruist view that heaven rewards virtue overall, but unpredictably, with the implied recommendation to practice self-cultivation and await the Mandate of Heaven. A moral heaven rewards virtue; therefore, people can affect destiny through moral choices. To describe this view as moral determinism overstates the case.

5. Fate as subject to random chance, luck, fortune, et cetera.
6. Fate as predictable, whether construed as necessity, mechanical cycles, or the operation of laws of nature.
7. The problem of transpersonal versus individual destiny.
8. Explicit denial of "fate" or "fatalism," whatever that is taken to mean.

Although there is tension between (3) and (4) and between (5) and (6), these orientations are not mutually exclusive, and each has many interpretations.

### *The Chinese Semantic Field*

The earliest written records in China are the Shang dynasty oracle-bone inscriptions. These nonnarrative divination records present the records of the reading of oracle-bone "cracks." Shang divination covered a wide variety of subject matter: sacrifice, military campaigns, hunting, excursions, calendrics, agriculture, weather, illness, childbirth, dreams, construction, tribute, and requests for divine or ancestral approval and assistance.<sup>18</sup> The oracle-bone inscriptions use the graph *ling* 令, command or decree, in two arguably distinct senses: (1) command or decree and (2) the noun *ming*, possibly the name of a deity.<sup>19</sup> There is no separate graph for these two distinct concepts; they are separated through context. Although *ming* became the key term for fate or destiny, it always retained its close links with *ling* and command. In some inscriptions, *ming* was associated with the high god Di 帝, who has the preeminent power to issue commands.<sup>20</sup> In the expression *Di ming* 帝命, "the decree of Di," *Ming* may have been the name of a deity to whom divinations were addressed.<sup>21</sup>

Shang beliefs about divine command were inseparable from divination. Most oracle texts were divinations about the future, whether assertive of human preference or interrogative toward divine will, but without the implication of fixed or blind fate or determinism. Thus, from the earliest times, the semantic fields for fate and destiny were intertwined with the practice of a range of techniques that furthered personal welfare through personal access to mantic knowledge. By the term mantic access I mean a range of techniques of prediction and divination, starting from the oracle-bone records.<sup>22</sup> A detailed description of these, their provenance, local variations, et cetera is beyond the scope of this discussion, but there is some evidence that mantic access was far greater in China than in Greece. It can be said with some certainty that the earliest Chinese beliefs about fate concerned the topos of divine command; there is also considerable evidence that they presupposed some kind of notion of free will or human choice, rather than a notion of predetermined lot, despite a variety of efforts to portray Shang religion as fatalistic.<sup>23</sup>

### *Ming 命 in the Zhou and Warring States*

In the late Zhou and Warring States we find both a broader semantic field for words concerned with fate, fatalism, and destiny and an increasingly complex range of

concepts associated (and debated) with the word *ming*. The difficulties of the term *ming* are not simply problems of translation. There was no consensus on how to define the term, and rival thinkers tended to use it in different meanings, even within the same text. *Ming* also occurs in binomes that amplify or specify its meaning.<sup>24</sup> Here are some of the most important Zhou and Warring States uses of *ming*, both singly and in compounds. Some are widely discussed in the scholarly literature; others are less well known.<sup>25</sup>

(a) *Ming* as decree, command, or mandate. Accounts of *ming* vary widely as to who or what did the decreeing.

(b) *Ming* as life and death, the extent of one's life span; for example:

死生有命也，富貴在天

Life and death have their *ming*; wealth and honor reside in Heaven. (*Analects* 12.5, Zixia quoting a saying he has heard)

死生命也

Life and death are decreed. (*Zhuangzi* 6:241)<sup>26</sup>

These two meanings of *ming* correspond closely to the topoi of fate as divine command and fate as in some sense predetermined at birth or inception (topoi 1 and 2). Neither, however, precludes the operation of free will (topos 3) or the action of chance events (topos 5). *Ming* as command allows for, but does not require, the rewarding of virtue (topos 4) and the action of predictable regularities on the world (topos 6).

### 1. *Ming* commanded

(a) Si Ming 司命, the Director of Destinies.<sup>27</sup> Two chapters of the *Nine Songs* 九歌 within the *Songs of Chu* 楚辭 are titled “Da Si Ming” 大司命 and “Shao Si Ming” 少司命. A deity named Si Ming is the object of sacrifice in divination in texts excavated at Baoshan and Fangmatan,<sup>28</sup> possibly an astral divinity associated with the fourth star of the Wen Chang Palace constellation in Ursa Major.<sup>29</sup>

(b) *Tian ming* 天命, the mandate or decree of heaven, perhaps the most important sense of *ming* as “decree.” The *Odes* and *Documents* frequently repeat the idea that Heaven's decree is not constant, meaning that a ruler cannot count on it unless he is worthy of it. The *Ode* of this title, “Da ming” 大命 (Great *ming*), refers to Heaven's mandate devolving on King Wen:

有命自天，命此文王

There was a mandate from heaven; it mandated this King Wen in Zhou, in the capital, and the female successor a girl from Shen. (Mao 236)<sup>30</sup>

This passage also makes it clear that the decree worked through both men and women. In a passage in the *Documents*, the Duke of Zhou tells Prince Shi that, even though the Shang dynasty has lost the Mandate, he dare not rest assured of the mandate of the Lord on High (Shang Di ming 上帝命) because:

天命不易，天難諶；…

Heaven's mandate is not easy [to preserve]; Heaven is hard to depend on.<sup>31</sup>

The attitude toward *ming* in the *Analects* is a subject of considerable disagreement. Confucius seems to have believed in it, at least in early life:<sup>32</sup>

君子有三畏畏天命畏大人畏聖人之言

A *junzi* fears three things: the Mandate of Heaven, great persons, and the words of sages. (*Analects* 16.8)

## 2. *Ming* ab initio

(a) *Shou ming* 壽命, a “*ming* of longevity” or its opposite, early death. This phrase is associated with the meaning of *ming* as life span (discussed above).<sup>33</sup> Xunzi refers to soldiers who flee for their lives as literally “running toward their *ming*” (*ben ming* 奔命).<sup>34</sup> This term assumes added importance in the *Lunheng* (discussed below).

(b) *Xing ming* 性命, (human) nature and fate, as the two overlapping factors that together determine life's course.<sup>35</sup> This term is particularly prevalent in the *Zhuangzi* (sixty instances) and the *Lunheng* (twenty-seven instances). It also appears in the *Lunyu* (2.4 and 9.18), the *Huainanzi* (fourteen instances), and the *Lü Shi chungiu* (twelve instances). It does not occur in the *Mengzi*.

## 3. Choosing *ming*

Several phrases describe attitudes and actions of acting with, conforming to, following, or actively completing or grasping *ming*. They all emphasize the exercise of free will through understanding and choice.

(a) *An ming* 安命, resting in *ming*, or *an ming shun ming* 安命順命, resting in conformity with *ming*. Tang Junyi associates these phrases with the *Zhuangzi*, but neither occurs in that text.<sup>36</sup> *An ming* does occur in the *Baopuzi*.<sup>37</sup>

(b) *Cheng ming* 成命, completing *ming*. According to the *Zhuangzi*, for someone who understands it fate is a means to let things come to completion, for example the adroit swimmer, who explains his skill to Confucius:

I begin with what is inborn, grow it by essential nature, and complete it by means of fate (*cheng hu ming* 成乎命). . . . I don't know why I do what I do; that is fate! (*Zhuangzi* 19: 657–658)

By contrast, the *Ode* “Hao tian you cheng ming,” which describes King Wen's and King Wu's receipt of heaven's mandate as complete and entire, links “completing *ming*” to the moralized *ming* of the Mandate of Heaven (topos 4):

昊天有成命，二后受之

成王不敢康，夙夜基命

Great Heaven has complete mandate; two sovereigns received it. Cheng Wang dared not be easy; morn and night he laid its ground. (Mao 271)

(c) *Da ming* 達命, grasping hold of *ming*. According to the *Zhuangzi*, fate is in part a matter of strategy, and the wise assess their times and decide how to act: those of penetrating insight do not trouble about what knowledge cannot remedy:<sup>38</sup>

達大命者隨

達小命者遭

to grasp great *ming* is true conformity;

to grasp small *ming* is happenstance. (*Zhuangzi* 30:1059)

(d) *Fu ming* 復命, returning to *ming*, in the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*; for example:

復命搖作而以天為師，人則從而命之。

Sages who return to *ming* and take heaven as their teacher become models for others.

(*Zhuangzi* 25:880)

(e) *Li ming* 立命, establishing *ming* in Mencius (*Mengzi* 7A1).

(f) *Shun ming* 順命, conforming to *ming*. According to Mencius:

莫非命也，順受其正。人物之生，吉凶禍福，皆天所命。

There is nothing that is not *ming* and one receives and conforms to one's own correct [one]. Good and bad fortune, prosperity or grief, in human life all these are as heaven decrees. (*Mengzi* 7A2)

Conforming to *ming* includes ensuring that one follows one's correct destiny, a topic that recurs in several Han discussions.<sup>39</sup> According to Xunzi, the *junzi*

夫此順命，以慎其獨者也

conforms to *ming* and thereby preserves his authentic singularity. (*Xunzi* 3/30)

(g) *Sui ming* 遂命, following destiny. The *Zhuangzi* attributes to Huang Di the view that

聖也者，達於情而遂於命也。

Sages are those who penetrate into true form and follow according to *ming*. (*Zhuangzi* 14:507)

(h) *Zhi ming*, understanding *ming*, presents special difficulties, and is discussed separately below. These few examples illustrate the point that these phrases were used in different texts to express a range of points of view, and cannot be identified with particular meanings of, or theories about, the word *ming*.

#### 4. Moral *ming*

The most important expression of moral *ming* was *tian ming*, the transpersonal, moral *ming* mandated by Heaven, discussed above. Other notions of transpersonal *ming* (discussed below) do not necessarily link macro-destiny with virtue.

(a) *Shou ming* 受命, receiving the decree. Sometimes this formulation refers both to the receipt of a (human) command (e.g., at *Zhuangzi* 4:153), but at other times it clearly refers to the decrees of fate:<sup>40</sup>

受命於地，唯松柏獨也在冬夏青青；受命於天，唯舜獨也正，幸能正生

Of those who receive their *ming* from earth, the pine and cypress stand alone; winter and summer they are fresh and green. Of those who receive their *ming* from heaven, Yao and Shun stand alone; they have the luck to be able to regulate their own lives. (*Zhuangzi* 5:193)

This passage links receiving *ming* with self-determination (topos 3).

### 5. Chance and *ming*

(a) *Shi ming* 時命, the fate of the times. The Warring States semantic field does not seem to contain explicit references to luck and chance (of the kind that are so prominent in the *Lunheng*). Warring States texts, do, however, frequently refer to the importance of “the times” one was born in as a key to human prospects, in references to “the fate of the times” and in remarks on the importance of acting in accord with the opportune moment. These references differ in two ways from locutions for transpersonal *ming* concerned with the fate of states (*guo ming*) or individuals (*ren ming*) discussed below. First, they are not used as arguments for moral *ming*. Second, they involve notions of chance (topos 5), insofar as chance or luck determines when one will be born. (They also involve notions of regularity and causality [topos 6], insofar as the “regularities” of a given time are subject to study and prediction.)

Associations of *ming* and *shi* appear across the Warring States intellectual spectrum. A Mohist argument for the existence of ghosts and spirits refers to the rule of King Wen as a newly appointed mandate for Zhou, whose *ming* was newly appointed. By contrast the Shang no longer held the mandate: the *ming* of Shang Di was not timely 帝命不時.<sup>41</sup>

A *Zhuangzi* passage links the decline of *dao* and the adverse fate of the times:

時命大謬也。當時命而大行乎天下

The fate of times was terribly wrong. Had time and *ming* been right, they might have done great deeds in the world. (*Zhuangzi* 16:555)

According to Confucius and Xunzi (quoting *Analects* 12.5):

遇不遇者，時也；死生者，命也。

Meeting with success or failure are matters of the time; life and death are matters of *ming*. (*Xunzi* 28/39)

In the *Lienü zhuan* biography of the Daughter of Wu, wife of Ling of Zhao, King Wuling of Zhao dreams of a girl who sings of a beautiful woman not yet born:

命兮命兮，逢天時而生

Oh Ming, O Ming, when she meets the time of Heaven she will be born.<sup>42</sup>

In these, and in later Han examples, both personal and dynastic destiny are linked with the times and *shi* 時, timeliness, doing the right thing at the right time.<sup>43</sup>



## 6. Predictable *ming*

(a) *Zhi ming* 致命. This phrase has three distinct meanings arising from the meanings of *ming* as life span, fate, and command. It means “to sacrifice one’s life” at *Analects* 19.1: “A *shi* who perceives danger is prepared to deliver over his life” 士見危致命. Zhuangzi uses it in the sense of “cause” or “bring about” when he attributes to Confucius the advice that

莫若為致命。  
Nothing is as good as realizing *ming*. (*Zhuangzi* 4:160)

Here *ming* may be understood either as one’s life or as one’s destiny. Realizing *ming* also refers to “carrying out a command,” for example in Xunzi’s statement that Prince Fa was respectful in carrying out his charge (*zhi ming*) but obstinate in refusing reward.<sup>44</sup>

(b) *Zhi ming* 知命, “understanding *ming*.” “Understanding *ming*” meant several different things. It was most widely understood to mean the knowledge or acceptance of destiny as heaven’s decree,<sup>45</sup> and was strongly associated with sagacity in Ruist texts; for example:

不知命無以為君子也  
Whoever does not understand *ming* cannot become a *junzi*. (*Analects* 20.3)

自知者不怨人，知命者不怨天。  
Those who understand themselves do not begrudge others; those who understand *ming* do not begrudge Heaven. (*Xunzi* 4/21)

The claim that *ming* could be understood does not strictly imply that *ming* is predictable.

## 7. Transpersonal *ming*

(a) *Da ming* 大命, great *ming*. The *Ode* of this title (Mao 236, discussed above) makes it clear that it refers to the macro-destiny of a kingdom, not merely of an individual, insofar as the mandate applies to the entire Zhou kingdom. The *Han Feizi* also refers a “great *ming*” of both heaven and humanity:

天有大命，人有大命  
Heaven has a great *ming*; humanity has a great *ming*.<sup>46</sup>

(b) *Xiao ming* 小命, or “small *ming*.”

(c) *Guo ming* 國命, the destiny of a state. Xunzi makes the distinction explicit:

人之命在天，國之命在禮。  
A person’s *ming* lies with Heaven; a state’s *ming* lies in its rites. (*Xunzi* 16/4 and 17/43)

The *Chunqiu fanlu* (Luxuriant dew of the springs and autumns) directly links the *ming* of the entire populace of a state to whether or not its ruler conforms to the Mandate of Heaven:

唯天子受命於天，天下受命於天子，一國則受命於君。君命順，則民有順命；君命逆，則民有逆命；

The ancients say: only the son of heaven receives the mandate from heaven, the (people of the) empire receive the mandate from the son of heaven. A state receives its mandate as one from its lord, and if the lord conforms to it [the Mandate of Heaven] then the people have a conforming *ming*. If the lord opposes it, then the people have a contrary *ming* (*ni ming*).<sup>47</sup>

(d) *Ren ming* 人命, the fate of an individual, as distinguished from *guo ming*, the fate of a state (discussed above).<sup>48</sup>

Transpersonal *ming* also emphasizes free will (the choices of King Wen and the girl from Shen) and the link between mandate to rule and moral rectitude.

### 8. Contra-*ming*

(a) *Fei ming* 非命, the Mohist “against *ming*” doctrine. This is the title of chapters 35–37 of the Mohist Canon. It was historically linked to Mohist attacks on Ruists, for example in the “Qiwu lun” (*Zhuangzi* 2) account of the *shi fei* 是非 of the Ruists and the Mohists. The Mohist arguments targeted a Ruist understanding of *ming* as predetermination (topos 2). More generally, however, any number of attacks on specific senses of *ming* might be described as “*fei ming*,” but most particularly Wang Chong’s attack on the notion of the course of life as predetermined.

(b) *You ming* 有命, the question of the existence of fate. The Mohists first take the up the question of the doctrine of fatalism, the existence of fate:

[孰]有命非命也，非孰有命非命也

[The doctrine that] *ming* exists is not *ming*, but to reject the doctrine that *ming* exists is to reject [the reality of] *ming*. (*Mozi* 46/20–21)<sup>49</sup>

The skeptical thread in the *Zhuangzi* asks whether we can know whether life is fated:

莫知其所終，若之何其无命也？

莫知其所始，若之何其有命也？

Since we do not know the end of things, how can we say they have no *ming*? Since we do not know the beginning of things, how can we say they have *ming*? (*Zhuangzi* 27: 958)<sup>50</sup>

### Other Terms

For all its lexical variety, *ming* was not the only term used in Warring States texts to describe notions of fate, destiny, and cause.

(a) *Fen* 分 were “allotments,” identified with *ming* and variously understood as life span, longevity, prosperity, or specific individual destiny, to be used and cherished, including by the force of human effort:

未形者有分，且然無間，謂之命

The formless had allotments [*fen*] but they were still not divided out, and they called them *ming*. (*Zhuangzi* 12 : 424)

(b) *Jie* 節, fate as decree or opportunity, literally a nodal meeting, or “meeting over intervals.” Xunzi uses *jie*, literally a node or joint of bamboo, but more broadly unexpected circumstance or opportunity, to *define* fate:

節遇謂之命。

Harming one’s nature is called illness; meeting the node [*jie*] is called *ming*. (*Xunzi* 22/6)

(c) *Bian hua* 變化, change and transformation, including the cycles of life, death, and the seasons. In the *Zhuangzi* the sage Wang Tai “takes it as fated that things change” (命物之化).<sup>51</sup> Elsewhere the *Zhuangzi* has Lao Dan admonish Confucius that “*ming* cannot be transformed” (命不可變).<sup>52</sup> Similarly the *Zhuangzi* refers to the transformations of affairs as “the movements of destiny” (命之行).<sup>53</sup>

(d) *Shi* 勢, configuration or “setup.”<sup>54</sup> A wide range of texts stress the importance of timeliness (*shi*) and configuration in response to one’s times and to fate, by understanding whether or not the times or even more local strategic “configurations” of time and place held good or were inauspicious.

(e) *Sheng* 聖 or sagacity, the notion that the activities of the sage or *sheng ren* 聖人 prominently included understanding, and were coming to some kind of accommodation with, fate. (What this meant varied widely.)

(f) *Ji xiong* 吉凶 and other terms for good and bad auspice (discussed below).

All these concern the relations of *ming* to what might broadly be called chance. By contrast, the term *yi* 義, duty (a form of command), links *ming* to moral duty. *Gu* 故, purpose or cause, and *chang* 常, constancy (in nature), emphasize notions of necessity or predictability (*gu* and *chang*).

### *Han Accounts of Ming*

In a summary of Han meanings, Michael Nylan distinguishes twelve conceptually distinct meanings of *ming*: (1) fate or decree, (2) duty, (3) destiny, (4) predestination, (5) causal connections and their possibilities, (6) the manifestation of Heaven’s will, (7) the inevitable, (8) empirical facts, (9) the created world, (10) life span, (11) objective circumstances, and (12) circumstances beyond human control.<sup>55</sup> The preceding discussion shows that many of these were already evident in Warring States texts. To the extent that Han rulers consolidated a new orthodoxy, Han Confucianism remained concerned with debates about *ming*, prominently including the idea that kings received the mandate of heaven (帝王受天命).

The problem of fate reemerges as an important issue in Han debates, especially in the thought of Yang Xiong and Wang Chong.<sup>56</sup> Wang devotes some eighteen chapters of the *Lunheng* to variants of the claim that all or most aspects of human life are determined at birth.<sup>57</sup> Wang Chong’s targets were, on the one hand, the divina-

tion practices of his own time and, on the other, the Confucian moralism of both his own and earlier times, specifically the concept of moral *ming*, as described by both Warring States texts and Han Confucians.<sup>58</sup> An example of the latter is Ban Biao, who argued in the *Han shu* treatise “On the Destiny of Kings” (*Wang ming lun* 王命論) that heaven selected upright rulers, specifically the Han founder Gaozu 漢高祖, for their virtue, by means of *tian ming*.<sup>59</sup> Wang’s attack on moral *ming* introduces new categorizations of kinds of fate and places a new emphasis on the role of chance as a factor in the outcome of human life. His arguments are not entirely consistent; they tend to cohere within, but not always between, chapters.<sup>60</sup> My purpose here is not to present a unified view of *ming* in the *Lunheng*, but rather to show how he extended the discourse on fate.

Wang Chong held that the unfolding of *ming* in both physical and political life was determined at three levels: the personal level of inborn nature and endowment, the interpersonal level of chance encounters, and the transpersonal level of time and common destiny.<sup>61</sup> Wang distinguished three kinds of *ming*: favorable, neutral, and adverse. He argued that *ming* was not determined by a superhuman power and could not be changed (or predicted) by ethical behavior.

*Ming and fortune* (lu 祿). In the chapter “Ming and Fortune” (*Ming lu*), Wang emphasizes that every individual, from king to commoner and from sage to ignoramus, has a *ming*:

有死生壽夭之命，亦有貴賤貧富之命。

There is a *ming* of life and death and of long or short life span; there is also a *ming* of honor or low rank and of wealth and poverty. (*Lunheng* 3, p. 20).<sup>62</sup>

People’s fortunes rise and fall according to the wealth and honor decreed by *ming*, time, and circumstances, not as a result of their efforts to affect it:

是故才高行厚，未可保其必富貴；智寡德薄，未可信其必貧賤。或時才高行厚，命惡，窮而不進；知寡德薄，命善，興而超踰。故夫臨事知愚，操行清濁，性與才也；仕宦貴賤，治產貧富，命與時也。

Therefore, great ability and estimable conduct never guarantee wealth and honor. Nor are limited knowledge and poor conduct reliable indicators of poverty and low status. Sometimes someone with great ability and estimable conduct has a bad *ming*; it weakens him so that he cannot come up to it. Someone with limited knowledge and poor conduct may have an auspicious *ming*, and soar and fly. Therefore, when considering circumstances, wisdom and stupidity and the exercise of pure or mean conduct are matters of innate nature [*xing*] and talent; high and low status in office and poverty and wealth in business are matters of *ming* and timing [*shi*]. (*Lunheng* 3, p. 20)<sup>63</sup>

The force of the argument is that it is better to await the right time than to exhaust oneself pursuing destiny. The *tian ming* exists but is not knowable beforehand. When people exert themselves to acquire wealth and honor,

廢時失務，欲望富貴，不可得也。雖云有命，當須索之。

they go against the opportune moment and lose the matter at hand; they hope for wealth and honor but cannot obtain it. Although they say that *ming* exists, they think that they have to search for it. (*Lunheng* 3, p. 26)

The notions of a *ming* of longevity (*shou ming*) and the importance of the times (*shi*) will be familiar from the last section.

*Ming ab initio*: shan e 善惡, fu huo 禍福, ji xiong 吉凶. The first level at which *ming* acted was the personal level of inborn nature (*xing*). The chapter “Initial Endowments” (“Chu bing” 初稟) defines *ming* as that which is received from Heaven at birth.<sup>64</sup> It argues that both *ming* and *xing* are received at birth, even though they may not fully manifest themselves until adulthood, or later. Wang argues that each person receives a destiny 凡人受命, and people all obtain an allotment of good and bad fortune 已得吉凶矣 at the time they receive *qi* 氣 from their parents at birth:

夫性與命異，或性善而命惡，或性惡而命善。操行善惡者，性也；禍福吉凶者，命也。  
Now *xing* and *ming* may be at odds. In some cases, the *xing* is good but the *ming* is bad; in others, the *xing* is bad but the *ming* is good. Deliberate conduct and good and bad deeds are matters of *xing*; prosperity and good and bad auspice are matters of *ming*. (*Lunheng* 6, p. 51)

Wang argues that people receive *xing* and *ming* together at birth; *ming* is manifested internally as *xing* and externally as the form of the body.<sup>65</sup> He also argues that these gradations of fate are inherent in the body before birth, just as the distinction between cocks and hens is inherent in the eggshell; the same is true of all animals, plants, and seeds.<sup>66</sup> This account of *ming* is not deterministic. The example of genetic predisposition provides an apt analogy. One’s genetic heritage may make a particular illness all but inevitable. Nonetheless, individual choices may affect its severity and the extent to which it handicaps or shortens one’s life.

According to Wang Chong, *tian ming* is no exception to the principle of *ming* as endowed at birth. Dynastic founders may receive specific signs of the investiture of kingship as adults, at the time of their accession to the throne, but they receive the *tian ming* at birth. Wang also argues that kings have distinguishing marks. He even attributes to kings the ability to recognize the distinguishing marks of officials who have a *ming* of wealth and honor; this provides a new explanation for accounts of kings “recognizing talent” that first appear in the Warring States and continue well after the Han.<sup>67</sup>

*Chance and luck* (*xing ou* 幸偶). The second level at which individual human destinies unfolded was the interpersonal level of chance meetings. The chapter “Chance and Luck” (“Xing ou”) describes the action of chance and luck as complicating factors that affect the action of *ming*.<sup>68</sup> It argues that happiness is a matter of luck (*xing*); reward and punishment are matters of (good or bad) fortune, *ou*. Yan Hui and Bo Niu, students of Confucius who died young, provide traditional examples to illustrate bad luck. Wang also adduces a set of examples of arbitrariness in nature: individual crickets and blades of grass survive not because they are virtuous but because they are lucky.<sup>69</sup>

*A Hierarchy of mings*. A third level at which fate acted was the transpersonal level of the times (*shi*) or fate held in common (*da ming*, *da yun* 大運). Wang’s “Meaning of Fate” (“Ming yi” 命義) chapter begins with a disagreement between Mohists and Ruists over whether the time of death is subject to *ming*.<sup>70</sup> The argu-

ment is not whether *ming* exists, but whether or not human life spans are subject to it. Both sides make arguments that are interestingly quantitative. The Mohists cite cases of mass death, through war, epidemic, and natural catastrophe; they argue that so many people cannot have had the same *ming*. The Confucian response is also “statistical”: in light of the total population, these numbers are not impossibly large. They argue that, out of the total population, individuals with the same *ming* were inexorably drawn to those unfortunate locales. The next set of arguments claims that an improbably large number of lowborn people experience elevation of their fortunes.

This chapter articulates and resolves a tension between *ming* as strictly individual and the transpersonal *ming* of times and or states (topos 7, above):

故國命勝人命，壽命勝祿命。

the *ming* of the state [*guo ming*] takes precedence [literally, is victorious] over the *ming* of individuals [*ren ming*]; the *ming* of longevity [*shou ming*] takes precedence over the *ming* of prosperity [*lu ming*]. (*Lunheng* 6, p. 46)

The *ming* of a state is connected with the stars, whose good and bad auspice change as they revolve and wander. The rationale for the *ming* of life span is that life span is visible in, and determined by, the body, not by the stars. A strong or weak constitution determines life span:

故言“有命”，命則性也。

Therefore when we speak of *ming* existing, *ming* is inherent nature (*xing*). (*Lunheng* 6, p. 47)

The *ming* of wealth and honor, by contrast, is from the stars, and their signs are in heaven.

In this chapter Wang also distinguishes three kinds of *ming*: standard (*zheng ming* 正命), consequent (*sui ming* 隨命), and contrary (*zao ming* 遭命):

“正命”謂本稟之自得吉也

Standard *ming* refers to the case where someone receives good fortune [*ji*] from his own basic endowment at birth. (*Lunheng* 6, p. 49)<sup>71</sup>

In cases of standard *ming* the bones are good and the “fated” good fortune comes naturally and spontaneously, without effort. By contrast, consequent *ming* requires considerable effort:

“隨命”者，戮力操行而吉福至，縱情施欲凶禍到

In the case of consequent *ming*, good fortune and well-being come only by dint of effort and deliberate good conduct; if this person gives in to his inner nature and desires bad auspice and malaise will result. (*Lunheng* 6, p. 50)

Contrary *ming*, on the other hand, is irreparable:

“遭命”者，行善得惡

In the case of *zao ming*, conduct is good and results are bad. (*Lunheng* 6, p. 50)

The combination of *xing* and *ming* presents a complex calculus that is very far from predestination by either *xing* or *ming*. The one exception seems to be adverse fate, against which there is no recourse. Wang goes on to address cases of persons with good natures but bad lives, people who should have obtained the benefits of contingent *ming* but achieved the disasters of contrary *ming*. He argues that contingent and contrary *ming* are mutually exclusive. He also introduces “three natures” (*san xing* 三性) that correspond to the three *ming*. A person of standard *xing* spontaneously has the five (constant) virtues 五常 from birth. Consequent *xing* follows the natures of the father and mother. This consideration leads Wang Chong to emphasize the importance of caution during pregnancy and to advocate strictures on the activities of pregnant women.

Wang thus articulates four overlapping influences: (1) *ming*, (2) *lu*, good fortune in the general sense of prosperity and the specific sense of emoluments, (3) *zao yu* 遭遇, adverse encounters, and (4) *xing ou* 幸偶, chance and luck. These four distinct factors provide a nuanced, nondeterministic explanation of the action of fate. *Ming* governs wealth and honor, but luck waxes or wanes. If one’s destiny is wealth and honor, luck thrives (and vice versa). Adverse encounter refers to extraordinary change (*feichang zhi bian* 非常之變), such as a sage’s being imprisoned. A person with good *ming* and waxing luck may not be harmed by an adverse encounter, but if this factor is great enough, it can overcome the influence of both *ming* and luck.

Chance refers to the good and bad luck that result from accidents: an innocent person falsely imprisoned or a guilty one who escapes.<sup>72</sup> Adverse encounter and chance and luck either tally with or go against destiny and luck. In the actual world, *xing* and *ming* are either auspicious or not, and good and bad fortune wax or wane; this depends on contingencies. People live or die according to chance, and few accomplish all their deeds and obtain their hearts’ desires.

The operation of different kinds of *ming* also follows a descending hierarchy: state (*guo ming*) over individual (*ren ming*), survival and longevity (*sheng ming*, *shou ming*) over prosperity and honor and wealth (*gui ming*, *fu ming*).

Innovations in the *Lunheng* discussion of *ming* focus on clusters of terms: the interrelations of *ming* and the opportune moment (*shi*), the embedding of *ming* in inner nature (*xing*) and the visible body (*ti* 體), and a new distinction between luck and chance. Terms for “luck” in the sense of good and bad auspice, include *lu* (good fortune, prosperity, emoluments), *ji xiong* (good and bad auspice), *shan e* (good and bad fortune), and *fu huo* (good fortune and calamity), all discussed above. By contrast, in modern parlance the terms *xing ou* and *zao yu* 遭遇, adverse encounters, really refer to chance, rather than “luck,” the more usual translation. They refer to accidental or unpredictable events (*xing ou*) and to catastrophic and unpredictable change (*zao yu*). In a modern analysis, both would refer to chance.

Thus Wang Chong builds on the Warring States discourse on *ming*, but in a new and original way. He vehemently argues against most of the topoi presented above. He retains the notion of *ming* but reformulates it as subject to chance. His new “embryological” emphasis on initial endowments introduces a “genetic” account of *ming* that gained prominence in Six Dynasties Daoist texts.<sup>73</sup>

### *A Contemporary Semantic Field*

Specifically modern terms add to the semantic field of words for luck, fortune, chance, and risk.

(a) *Yun* 運, luck or fortune. The root meaning of *yun* is to carry, transport, or use, and also to revolve. The derivative meaning is fortune, luck, fate, for example in the phrases *yun qi* 運氣 or luck and *hao yun* 好運 or good luck. *Yun* was also part of a cycle metaphor, as in *tian yun* 天運, the (fortune-bearing) movement of the celestial bodies.

(b) *Xing* 幸, luck, good fortune, or happiness. These two senses of “lucky” combine in *xing yun* 幸運, very fortunate, or *xing yun'er* 幸運兒, “fortune’s favorite,” and *xing yun zhi shen* 幸運之神, “Lady Luck.”<sup>74</sup> *Xing* approaches the meaning of “chance” in the phrases *jiao xing* 僥幸, luckily or by a fluke, or *xing de* 幸得, to obtain by chance, and *xing shi* 幸事, “something that happened out of sheer luck.”<sup>75</sup>

(c) Terms for willfulness and risk-taking. One group of Chinese translations for the English “random” refer to the emotional disposition to be willful (e.g., *sui yi* 隨意, as one pleases, or *ren yi* 任意, willful or arbitrary). Similarly, several terms for risk-taking in Chinese focus on the willingness to put oneself in danger, rather than on the statistical aspects of risk, for example *mao xian* 冒險, to take risks.

(d) *Qiao* 巧, opportune, coincidental, fortuitous. This is the Chinese term that perhaps comes closest to the notion of chance in the sense of randomness or accident. Related compounds include *qiaohe* 巧合 (coincidental or serendipitous), *cou-qiao* 湊巧 (fortuitous), *qiao dangr* 巧當兒 (opportune moment or coincidence), *qiao jin* 巧勁 (knack or coincidence), and *qiao shi* 巧事 (coincidence). The root meaning, however, seems to be opportunity, linked to *qiao*’s other meaning of skill or craft.

(e) *Sui ji* 隨機, random, stochastic. This term is used in a variety of technical terms for random or stochastic processes: randomness (*sui ji xing* 隨機性), stochastic system (*suiji xitong* 隨機系統), stochastic model (*suiji moshi* 隨機模式), et cetera. It is also used in the more traditional phrase *sui ji yingbian* 隨機應變, “act according to circumstances.”

### *A Note on Divination*

Conspicuously absent from the foregoing (and following) discussion is a detailed account of the language and practice of Greek and Chinese divination and other mantic techniques. Relevant religious practices included divination by various methods, the interpretation of signs (dreams, omens, anomalies, etc.), and the efforts of specialists (oracles, mediums, etc.) to ascertain divine commands.<sup>76</sup> A central problem in both traditions was mantic access: *who* had access to this information and these techniques? Some techniques for mantic access focused on shamanism, including the activities of Chinese *wu* 巫 shamans and other shaman officials and mediums, probably including practitioners at the popular level.<sup>77</sup> Other techniques concerned the interpretation of omens, including dreams and other signs and prodigies. In contrast to the passive receipt of omens, specific divination methods



allowed the diviner actively to seek answers and ascertain (or direct) the will of specific deities. Some techniques of prediction and divination were based on the “reading” of the clouds and stars, the *Yi jing* and milfoil divination, and the use of daybooks such as those unearthed in the tombs at Shuihudi to determine auspicious times for events such as marriages and campaigns.<sup>78</sup> Techniques for the prediction of individual destiny included physiognomy (including by mothers of their children), the interpretation of dreams and anomalies in nature, geomantic techniques such as *feng shui*, horoscopes, divination boards, and the manipulation of personal names to avoid adverse fate.<sup>79</sup> This range of beliefs and practices is also an important part of Chinese discourses on fate and fatalism, both early and late.

Greek religion also included figures and techniques with special skills in divination and the interpretation of signs, including seers (*manteis*), omens, and oracles.<sup>80</sup> Some of these religious beliefs take fate as the command of one or more deities who can be petitioned or whose will can be ascertained. In this sense, belief in fate is inextricably connected with beliefs about mantic access. Again, these issues require separate treatment.

#### *A Note on Women’s Fate*

The absence of discussion of the *ming* of women is a striking lacuna in this otherwise detailed semantic range, especially in the *Lunheng*. Wang Chong clearly believes that *ming* applies to individual women, since “Mandated Emoluments” begins with the assertion that anyone of the category of having a head, eyes, and blood in his veins has a *ming*.<sup>81</sup> “Initial Endowments” shows a particular awareness of women as factors in transmitting *ming* to men, yet the ramifications of *ming* for women in themselves is never discussed. Therefore it is of particular interest that a recently excavated text makes specific reference to “Women’s Fate” 婦命, but further details must await the publication of that text.<sup>82</sup>

#### *The Greek Semantic Field*

Greek accounts of fate fall into two fairly distinct historical strata, before and after the fourth century B.C.E.<sup>83</sup> Pre-fourth-century texts, beginning with Homer, describe “fate” in several fairly distinct terms and metaphors: (1) μοῖρα or αἶσα, transparent metaphors of division, lots or portions of destiny, death, or of allotted life span. Over time these were replaced by (2) metaphors of spinning and binding, in which fate is a thread spun about the “spindle” of each life. In later works, *moira* increasingly becomes personified as the “Spinners,” the Three Fates or Μοῖραι. (3) Misfortune was attributed to δαίμωνες, who variously gave out misfortune or guided individual destinies. (4) There was the problem of the relation of fate and the gods, most specifically to the will of Zeus, king and most powerful of the gods.<sup>84</sup> To these we may add (5) the appearances of the Moirai or Fates as objects of cults as birth goddesses (Hesiod, Pausanias, etc.; in Latin, the Parcae [“childbearing”] were equivalent to the Moirai). (6) After the fourth century, fate was viewed as the principle that ruled both the world overall and the lives of individuals, expressed by the term εἰμαρμένη.

I sample texts representing three strata of the pre-fourth-century picture: Homer, Parmenides, and Plato. Each text defines one or more “problems of fate”; they precede, inform, and significantly differ from later uses of fate as a dramatic element in tragedy and Hellenistic debates on fate and fatalism. The Homeric corpus first poses, and conspicuously does not resolve, problems of fate and fatalism. The relation of fate to both the will of Zeus and the free will of mortals is ambiguous. Pre-Socratic philosophy “is divided into two halves by the name of Parmenides” (b. 515–510 B.C.E.), who abandons cosmogony in favor of divine instruction on the “true” world of unchanging reality (including fate) and makes fate a vivid aspect of unchanging being. Fate figures in Plato’s (427–347 B.C.E.) account of the soul and the defense and self-representation of the Platonic Socrates. As an aspect of divination and discourses of prognostication, it is also an indirect issue in the history of Greek medicine, the “inquiry concerning nature,” and the creation of the category of rationality. These texts, images, and metaphors precede rejections of determinism by Aristotle (384–322 B.C.E.) and Epicurus (341–270 B.C.E.) and defenses of it by the Stoa, for whom fate assumed central prominence as a philosophical problem.<sup>85</sup>

#### *Fate in Homer*

(a) Μοῖρα. Just as a range of meanings informed Chinese *ming*, a range of forms and meanings inform Greek *moira*. Μοῖρα, μέρος (from μείρομαι, “to receive a portion”) and αἶσα were lots or portions, of destiny, of death, or of allotted life span. The oldest terms for fate, μοῖρα and αἶσα, referred to a share, lot, or portion, most immediately of death, hence destiny as allotted life span (topos 2). These “shares” could refer to literal, material goods or to special destiny, to the anger of a specific god (topos 1), to a decree of fate beyond the will of the gods (topos 6), or to combinations of all of these. Thus, Achilles tells Thetis that after he has killed Hector he will accept his own death at the hands of the gods because even Herakles was conquered by his fate (*moira*), and the anger of Hera:

ὣς καὶ ἐγών, εἰ δὴ μοι ὁμοίη μοῖρα τέτυκται, κείσομ’ ἐπεὶ κε θάνω.  
and so, too, shall I lie, if a like fate has been worked for me when I die. (*Iliad* 18.1190–1121)

Its opposite was ἄμορος, ἄμοιρος, or ἄμμορος, to be bereft of a thing, unfortunate, or to be without a lot or share. Demosthenes refers to a piece of land as “no man’s land” (ἄμοροῖος).<sup>86</sup> Similarly, to be ἀμορία (or ἄμμορία) was to be “fate-less” in the sense of having no portion, for example in the statement that Zeus well knows

μοῖράν τ’ ἀμμορίην τε καταθνητῶν ἀνθρώπων  
the portions and bereftnesses of mortals. (*Od.* 20.76)

For the most part, *moira* occupied a place apart from social status, the share of wealth, rank, and privilege that results from birth, although *Iliad* 3 describes Agamemnon as “born of good *moira* and happy in [the protection of] a *daimon*” μοιρηγενές, ὀλβιόδαιμον (*Il.* 3.182).

Nor did *moira* result from the “just deserts” of virtuous or unvirtuous action (topos 4). It referred rather to sudden reversals and situations that threaten the order decreed by the gods (topos 5). As Hector boasts to Andromache, no man can kill him prematurely because fate is a power that cannot be gainsaid by god or man:

οὐ γάρ τίς μ' ὑπὲρ αἴσαν ἀνήρ Ἄϊδι προΐάψει μοῖραν δ' οὐ τίνα φημι πεφυγμένον  
 ἔμμεναι ἀνδρῶν,  
 No man will hurl me to Hades beyond my portion, but fate I say no one of mankind can  
 flee. (*Il.* 6.487–489)

(b) Κατὰ μοῖραν “according to fate” and κατ’ αἴσαν “according to measure,” and ὑπὲρ μοῖραν and ὑπὲρ αἴσαν. The passage above raises the problem of how or whether action “beyond fate” could occur. The phrases κατὰ μοῖραν, “according to fate,” and κατ’ αἴσαν, “according to measure,” occur frequently in the Homeric corpus; “beyond fated measure”—ὑπὲρ μοῖραν and ὑπὲρ αἴσαν—are relatively rare. More important, they are always counterfactual in one of several senses, with a range of meanings from physical to moral “impossibility” (topos 6).<sup>87</sup> The one instance of the phrase ὑπὲρ μοῖραν in the Homeric corpus occurs when Poseidon intervenes to save Aineas from Achilles, ostensibly to avoid the wrath of Zeus, since he is fated (μόριμον) to survive the war (*Il.* 20.301–302). Poseidon uses an appeal to destiny to deter him from any further encounter with Achilles,

μὴ καὶ ὑπὲρ μοῖραν δόμον Ἄϊδος εἰσαφίκηα  
 lest, beyond fate, you go down to the house of Hades. (*Il.* 20.336)

Apollo also intervenes to prevent the Argives from winning victory “beyond the portion of Zeus” (ὑπὲρ Διὸς αἴσαν) (*Il.* 17.321). We may read these instances in two ways. Taken at face value, the gods intervene to preserve the decreed order and prevent mortals from acting outside it. Read rhetorically, appeals to fate provide a powerful rationale for the gods to intervene according to their own wishes (presumably, within the limits of fate).

In battle, “beyond fate” or “beyond measure” clearly refers to premature and violent death (topos 2). In other contexts, “beyond measure” has the broader connotations of impropriety or even impiety (topos 4). On two occasions, Paris agrees that Hector’s reproaches are “according to measure” (κατ’ αἴσαν) and “not beyond measure” (οὐδ’ ὑπὲρ αἴσαν) (*Il.* 3.59 and 6.333). Excess also can verge on impiety. After a pitched battle, the Greeks prevailed “beyond measure” (*hyper aisan*), when they captured the body of Kebriones and stripped him of his armor (*Il.* 16.780). In these cases, “beyond measure” labels an act as morally, rather than physically, “impossible.”

In all these instances, it is noteworthy that *moira* does not seem to be linked either to divination (attempts to understand and perhaps conform to a fated future) or to *metis* μῆτις (the skills and wiles that Greek society so prized for dealing with unpredictable and rapidly shifting situations).<sup>88</sup> *Metis*, it appears, was not used to thwart the decrees of fate.

(c) The Διὸς βουλή or “Plan of Zeus,” the relation of fate to the will of Zeus, king and most powerful of the gods (topos 1). Homer never resolves the question of the relation of *moira* to the will of the gods, and they coexist ambiguously.<sup>89</sup> Human affairs “lie on the knees of the gods” (*Odyssey* 1.267). The “destructive plan of the gods” θεῶν ὀλοὰς διὰ βουλὰς causes the suffering of Oedipus (*Od.* 11.276), and “the will of the gods” θεῶν ἰότητι causes the death of Patroklos (*Il.* 19.9), the toils of Odysseus (*Od.* 7.214), and the Trojan War (*Od.* 12.190 and 17.119). Yet the gods acknowledge a fate beyond their power to alter. For example, Poseidon grudgingly acknowledges that it is Odysseus’ *aisa* to escape death (*Od.* 5.288 ff.).

While fate appears not to be a problem for the gods in general, it poses a more particular, and also unresolved, problem for the plan of Zeus (Διὸς βουλή). As king of the gods, Zeus is more powerful than all the other gods combined, and his will has a unique status. The beginning of the *Iliad* makes it clear that the will of Zeus is brought to completion with the sack of Troy. In the *Odyssey*, Zeus is more accommodating to the will of the other gods, for example in the return of Odysseus. Nevertheless, Zeus has no more power than the other gods to determine the span of an individual life (topos 2). Zeus, as the “steward of war for mankind” (*Il.* 19.224), may weigh the fates of antagonists in battle and may even attempt to defer the *moira* of a hero in battle (*Il.* 16.431–443 and 22.167–181), but his will inevitably and seamlessly conforms to the fate of that individual. As Terence Irwin points out, Zeus and the fates point to two distinct notions of (partial) order within the Homeric universe: the impersonal, inexorable, amoral (and usually inscrutable) order of the fates (topos 6) and the intelligent, moral, justice-based rulership of Zeus (topos 1).<sup>90</sup> The moralizing retrospective accounts of Hesiod, Pindar, and Aeschylus (topos 4) linked the power of the Moirai with the government of Zeus and led to the worship of Zeus as Μοιραγέτης, “leader of the Moirai,” in the fifth century B.C.E..

(d) Δαίμωνες. Psychopompic *daimons* or guides of the soul (from the root *da-* δαίω, δατέομαι, to divide, especially to cut up portions of meat, in sacrifice) variously gave out misfortune or guided individual destinies. *Daimons* were originally “sharers” who shared out allotments to humankind (topos 1). As such they are linked to the metaphor of apportionment that underlines the terms *moira* and *aisa*. Like them, they were powers beyond human will, older than the anthropomorphic Olympian gods and incomprehensible, δαιμόνιος (topos 6).<sup>91</sup> They are not major presences in Homer, where they usually cause illness (*Od.* 5.396) and such misfortunes as Odysseus’ imprisonment on Ogygia:

ἀλλ’ ἐμὲ τὸν δύστηνον ἐφέστιον ἤγαγε δαίμων  
only my unhappy self did the *daimon* lead to her hearth. (*Od.* 7.248)<sup>92</sup>

To some extent, the activity of *daimons* can be contrasted to that of the gods (θεοί) as thwarting and aiding human purposes, respectively.

(e) Fate personified and the metaphor of spinning. Fate was personified as several goddesses, who were linked to notions of destiny (topos 2), punishment, retri-

bution, and justice (topos 6), typically revealed by oracles, omens, prodigies, and signs. They also pose the problem of the relation of fate and the gods: Themis or Δίκη (Justice), Ανάγκη (Necessity), Μοῖρα (Fate), and the Μοῖραι (Three Fates). The Three fates were variously represented as handmaidens of Dike and as the “Spinners” of human destinies. The Moirai appear infrequently in Homer as three figures who spin the thread of destiny around each individual. Alkinoos describes the fates as “Heavy Spinners” Κλώθες when he speaks of the unusual destiny (*aisa*) of Odysseus, who, once he returns safely to Ithaka,

πέισεται ἄσσα οἱ αἴσα κατὰ Κλώθες τε βαρεῖται γεινομένω νήσατο λίνω, ὅτε μιν τέκε μήτηρ  
will bear as much as his destiny and the Heavy Spinners spun for him at birth with thread, when his mother bore him. (*Od.* 7.197)

This “spinning” takes place primarily at birth (topos 2), but also at marriage (*Od.* 4.207), where the Moirai could be bearers of good fortune and, in some accounts, sing for the bridal couple.<sup>93</sup> In Homer, the gods are also “spinners” of fate. In *Iliad* 24 “the gods spun life thus for afflicted mortals” (ὥς γὰρ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι) (*Il.* 24.525). The *Odyssey* begins when “the gods had spun for him his return home” (τῶ οἱ ἐπεκλώσαντο θεοὶ οἴκόνδε νέεσθαι) (*Od.* 1.17). The gods spun the destruction of Troy (*Od.* 3.208), the fate of Odysseus (*Od.* 11.139), and his beggar persona (*Od.* 16.64).

The division and personification of *moira* into the Three Fates or Μοῖραι, who spin, weave, and cut off the thread of each life, first appears in Hesiod (*Theog.* 904–906). Here the Fates are the daughters of Zeus and Themis—Clotho, Lachesis (“getting by lot”), and Atropos (from which one cannot turn)—and only reappear together in Plato.

### *Parmenides*

In the climactic passage of fragment 8, Parmenides uses specifically Homeric language and diction to describe “what-is” (ἔστιν) and to frame the claim that the truly real is unchanging and immobile.<sup>94</sup>

κρατερὴ γὰρ Ανάγκη πείρατος ἐν δεσμοῖσιν ἔχει, τό μιν ἀμφὶς ἔέργει  
For strong Ananke holds it in bonds of chain that binds it all around. (*Parmenides* frag. 8, lines 30–31)

οὐδὲν γὰρ <ἢ> ἔστιν ἢ ἔσται ἄλλο πάρεξ τοῦ ἑόντος, ἐπεὶ τό γε Μοῖρ ἐπέδησεν οὐλον ἀκίνητόν τ' ἔμμεναι.  
For [there is] nothing [that] exists or will exist other than what is, since Moira has fettered it so as to be whole and immovable. (*Parm.* frag. 8, lines 36–38)

Here the powers of Moira and Ananke come together to bind reality in strongly Homeric diction: *krateros* (used of Zeus) and *peiratos en desmoisi*.

In the poem of Parmenides, it is a beneficent *daimon* who guides the possibly shamanic journey of a young man toward the discovery of truth:<sup>95</sup>

ἵπποι ταί με φέρουσιν, ὅσον τ' ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἰκάνοι, πέμπτον, ἐπεὶ μ' ἐς ὁδὸν βῆσαν  
πολύφημον ἄγουσαι δαίμονος

The *mares* that bear me as far as my heart aspires sent me on, when once they set me on  
the much-spoken road of the *daimon*. (*Parm.* frag. 1, lines 1–3)

He reaches the gates of the paths of Night and Day, filled with huge doors, and Dike the avenger Δίκη πολύποινος holds the keys (line 9).<sup>96</sup> A goddess welcomes him and tells him:

χαῖρ', ἐπεὶ οὔτι σε Μοῖρα κακὴ προὔπεμπε νεέσθαι  
Rejoice, for it is no ill Fate that sends you to travel here. (line 26)

### Plato

Plato's fullest account of the Moirai is in the *Republic* (*Rep.* 617b–621a), where they sing in harmony at a common task. Their activity is likened to Ananke and to the *daimons* that guide the fates of individuals (topos 7). Socrates explains how souls choose their lives in the order of the lots they draw. They are then brought before Lachesis, first of the Moirai, who

ἐκείνην δ' ἐκάστῳ ὃν εἴλετο δαίμονα, τοῦτον φύλακα συμπέμπειν τοῦ βίου καὶ  
ἄποπληρωτὴν τῶν αἰρεθέντων.

sends forth a *daimon* for each [soul] to guard his life and to bring to pass what he has  
chosen. (*Rep.* 620e)

The *daimon* next leads the soul to Clotho. The turning of her spindle ratifies the destiny (*moiran*) that the soul has chosen. Finally, the *daimon* leads the soul to Atropos, “she who cannot be turned,” who “fixes the web so as to be irreversible” ἀμετάστροφα τὰ ἐπικλωσθέντα ποιοῦντα. From there, with no look back, it goes beneath the seat of Necessity ὑπὸ τὸν τῆς ἀνάγκης ἰέναι θρόνον and finally to the Plain of Lethe ὁ τῆς Λήθης πεδῖον (*Rep.* 621a).

*Daimons* play a major role in the self-representation of the Platonic Socrates, who claimed repeatedly that a *daimon* guided his destiny, which he describes as unusual and remarkable (topos 7). His *daimon* also figures prominently in his self-defense in the *Apology*:

ὅτι μοι θεῖόν τι καὶ δαιμόνιον γίγνεται [φωνή] . . . ἐμοὶ δὲ τοῦτ' ἔστιν ἐκ παιδὸς  
ἀρξάμενον, φωνή τις γιγνομένη, ἣ ταν γένηται, αἰεὶ ἀποτρέπει με τοῦτο ὃ ἂν μέλλω  
πράττειν, προτρέπει δὲ οὔποτε.

that something divine and daemonic would befall me . . . ever since my early childhood a  
voice of sorts would come to me, which, when it came, always turned me back from  
what I was intending to do, and turned me toward what I was not. (*Apol.* 31d)

He remarks to the jury that something marvelous (θαυμάσιον) had happened to him. That very morning, he had met with the approval of

ἣ γὰρ εἰωθυῖά μοι μαντικὴ ἢ τοῦ δαιμονίου ἐν μὲν τῷ πρόσθεν χρόνῳ παντὶ πάνυ  
πυκνὴ αἰεὶ ἦν καὶ πάνυ ἐπὶ μικροῖς ἐναντιούμενη, εἴ τι μέλλοιμι μὴ ὀρθῶς πράξειν.  
the mantic voice of the *daimon*, to which I had become accustomed, [which] in  
times past was always close at hand to oppose the smallest thing I might intend in error.  
(*Apol.* 40a)

Socrates' account is reflected in the *Euthyphro*, which gives a quasi-humorous account of these charges:

μανθάνω, ὦ Σώκρατες· ὅτι δὴ σὺ τὸ δαιμόνιον φῆις σαυτῷ ἐκάστοτε γίγνεσθαι.  
Socrates, it is because you say that something daimonic is always in attendance upon you. (*Euth.* 3b)

The *Theaetetus* also makes clear that Socrates' *daimon* attends to the fine details of his life. In his account of the midwifery of the soul, he describes how he chooses his association:

ἐνίοις μὲν τὸ γιγνόμενόν μοι δαιμόνιον ἀποκωλύει συνεῖναι, ἐνίοις δὲ ἔῃ,  
with some, the daimonic [presence] comes and forbids me to associate, with others, it permits it. (*Th.* 151a)

*Daimons* also figure prominently in Plato as guides of the soul before birth and after death. In the *Phaedo*, individual *daimons* appear as psychopompoi after death:

λέγεται δὲ οὕτως, ὡς ἄρα τελευτήσαντα ἕκαστον ὁ ἐκάστου δαίμων, ὅσπερ ζῶντα εἰλήχει, οὗτος ἄγειν ἐπιχειρεῖ εἰς δὴ τινα τόπον, οἷ δεῖ τοὺς συλλεγέντας διαδικασσάμενους εἰς  
It is said that, when each person dies, the *daimon* of each, who had charge of him while he was alive, this same one tries to lead him to a certain place. (*Phaedo* 107d)

The wise soul follows the guide, but a soul overly attached to the body lingers, and “only after much resistance and much suffering, and with excessive force, can it be led away by its guiding *daimon* (τοῦ προστεταγμένου δαίμονος) (*Phaedo* 108b), who leads it to judgment,

ἐπειδὴν ἀφίκωνται οἱ τετελευτηκότες εἰς τὸν τόπον οἷ ὁ δαίμων ἕκαστον κομίζει  
when the dead come to the place to which the *daimon* leads each. (*Phaedo* 113d)

Greek philosophical reflection on fate moves away from the Homeric problem of the limits of the will of Zeus. As we have seen, Plato takes it up with the role of *daimons* and the destinies of individual souls (*Republic* and *Timaeus*). Aristotle takes it up in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, *De Interpretatione*, the *Metaphysics*, and the *Physics*.

After the fourth century, “Moirai” was increasingly replaced by the term εἰμαρμένη. Fate was viewed as a principle that ruled both the world overall and the lives of individuals. It is well known that determinism (asserted and denied in both physical and ethical contexts) became a central problem of post-Aristotelian Greek philosophy. From the late second century B.C.E. to the third century C.E., discussions of fate became part of a philosophical repertoire common to all the philosophical schools. It was central to the Stoa for four hundred years, although no Stoic treatise on it has survived. Discussions of the topics of fate and providence appear in texts variously titled *On Fate*, *On Nature*, *On the Possible*, *On Providence*, and *On the Gods*. A surviving text titled *On Fate* begins with Chrysippus of Soli (280–207 B.C.E.), followed by Cicero (106–43 B.C.E.) and Alexander of Aphrodisias (second-third century C.E.).<sup>97</sup> Surviving accounts refer to the views of Epicurus (341–270 B.C.E.), the skeptic Carneades (214–129 B.C.E.), and several figures associated with the Stoa:

its founder Zeno of Citium (335–263), Boethus of Sidon (second century B.C.E.), Posidonius (135–51 B.C.E.), and Epictetus (ca. 55–135 C.E.).<sup>98</sup> Lost texts are attributed to the Platonist Plutarch (first century C.E.), Tertullian (second century C.E.), and second-century Peripatetics and Stoics. There were also fourth-century Christian works titled “Against Fate” by Gregory of Nyssa and Diodorus of Tarsus.

Aristotle separates himself from predecessors who did not recognize chance or luck (ἡ τύχη) or spontaneity (το αὐτοματον) among the causes of events (love, strife, etc.). He addresses the relation of causation to chance and luck (topos 5) and argues that even when a cause can be ascribed (as in the determinist arguments he rejects), we speak of some things as happening by chance and others as not (*Physics* 2.4).

### *Root Metaphors*

There are several areas of common or contrasting metaphor between the semantic fields of Chinese *ming* and Greek *moira*. Some of these metaphors also reflect the topoi that have informed this discussion. The metaphor of fate as command appears prominently in both traditions as specifically divine commands (topos 1). Both traditions contain accounts of the involvement of divinities in human destiny, the relation of fate to the power of gods, the possibility of predictive divination, and the possibility of an impersonal power of fate beyond the power of gods to control. There were important differences in the purpose and techniques for divination and the availability of mantic access. Chinese metaphors of divine command concern the division and allotment of shares according to the commands of the gods (or ancestors), whose orders had the force of fate. Greek metaphors of divine command shifted from sharers to spinners, who spun and bound the courses of individual human lives with the threads of fate. Other more general senses of fate, such as punishment, retribution, the fruit of past actions (in this and former lives), and more abstract notions of causality and constancy in nature, seem absent from both China and Greece.

In both traditions the topos of fate as an endowment (topos 2) appears in metaphors of division and allotment. Accounts of fate as division differed both between and within the two cultural contexts, as to what was apportioned, by whom, to whom, and to what end. Both *Ming* and *moira* portray fate as a lot or allotment of life span and as an autonomous power of destiny. Both words partake of a root metaphor of division and allotment, from which it is tempting, but dangerous, to over-generalize. What was apportioned, by whom, to whom, and to what end differed both between and within the two cultural contexts. The Greeks described the *moira* of epic heroes and dramatic figures. Homer tells us little about what commoners believed about fate. By contrast, Chinese *ming* appears in discussions of the lives of commoners, as soldiers fleeing battle or as ordinary people trying to live out their life spans undisturbed; some are even attributed to the commoners themselves, albeit in texts of elite authorship.

Root metaphors also associate fate with change or constancy in nature; some accounts of destiny as a wheel or cycle emphasize randomness or unpredictability



(topos 5), others the predictable behavior of regular cycles (topos 6). The Chinese notion of fate as a wheel or cycle (*yun*) partakes of a metaphor of wheels or cycles, which are perfectly predictable insofar as they are both regular and repetitive. The cycle metaphor appears as *tian yun* 天運, the (fortune-bearing) movement of the celestial bodies, and the notion that the cycles of fate correspond with the cycles of the stars, in Zou Yan, in the *Lunheng*, et cetera. Its most significant presence as the Buddhist wheel of reincarnation is beyond the scope of this discussion. The wheel or cycle metaphor is less prominent in non-Buddhist-influenced Chinese treatments of *ming*. The Wheel of Fortune that is such a powerful metaphor for luck in the West has a completely opposite direction from the Chinese metaphor. The Chinese “wheel of fate” is a wheel in constant motion and regular recurrence; the Western Wheel of Fortune turns and then comes to rest. The force of this metaphor is an arbitrary and unknowable point at which the wheel will stop.

The specific association of fate with inevitable change seems particular to pre-Buddhist Chinese accounts, where *ming* includes life span, wealth, and fortune in explicitly changing times. Fate in this sense may apply to individuals, families, nations, empires, or polities. By contrast, Parmenides uses fate as a metaphor for the specifically unchanging and immobile nature of “what-is.” Other Greek thinkers associated change with the action of fate (in association with justice, necessity, and retribution), but in rhetorical and intellectual contexts very different from the Chinese. Anaximander describes a balance between coming into and passing out of being based on necessity and mutual “penalty and retribution” δίκην καὶ τίσις, but it is based not on fate but on “the assessment of time” κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν.<sup>99</sup> Heraclitus speaks of all things “undergoing alteration” ἀλλοιοῦται and even of the sun being subject to the retribution of the Fates, the handmaidens of Dike, but his focus is the integrity of the order of nature and the physical world.<sup>100</sup> References to the action of fate or justice became part of the rhetoric of appeals to Nature φύσις, expressed in legal and moral language that appealed to a wide range of Greeks of the fifth-century B.C.E.. These were used to justify diverse positions.<sup>101</sup> Pre-Buddhist Chinese accounts, by contrast, include but do not emphasize notions of causality and constancy in nature.

Yet other systems of metaphor speak to questions of human choice and free will (topos 3), including ethical choices (topos 4). Both traditions took up the relations of fate, sagacity, and free will, but with very different results. Greek metaphors of spinning and binding tended to express human powerlessness. Chinese accounts take the understanding of and harmony with fate (according to very different formulas) as a defining characteristic of the sage. Chinese accounts focus on the figure of the sage as someone who “understands” fate.

This preliminary evidence from Chinese and Greek suggests some common notions of fate, but very different attitudes toward fatalism. Pre-Buddhist Chinese accounts combine acceptance of fate with strong anti-fatalism and well-developed notions of strategy or maneuvering room within its decrees. Life span may be fated, but within it free will reigns. Change and resilience are the order of the day and open to human strategy and ingenuity. A wide range of texts stress the importance of

timeliness (*shi* 時) and configuration or “setup” (*shi* 勢) in response to one’s times and to one’s fate. Thus, longevity and good auspice were fated and unknowable, but could be cherished and cultivated through knowledge and sagacity. In this sense, both the *Zhuangzi* and the *Xunzi* take “strategic” attitudes toward omnipresent *ming*. Greek accounts of fate contain a significant fatalist element. Greek fates were variously personified: as Moira, the Moirai, the power of Themis or Dike, the will of Zeus, or the activity of *daimons*. These divinities alternatively held fate in their power and coexisted with an autonomous “fate” beyond their control. The decrees and commands of these divinities and divine agencies were consistently portrayed as fixed, binding, and inexorable.

#### Notes

Earlier versions of this article were presented as papers at conferences and symposia at the University of London (1997), the Association for Asian Studies (1998), the University of Oregon (1998), the University of California at Riverside (2000), and the Breckenridge Conference Center, York, Maine (2000). Other aspects of this research appear in Raphals 2002 and Raphals forthcoming. I have benefited from comments and discussion with Stephen R. Bokenkamp, Rob Company, David N. Keightley, Deirdre Sabina Knight, Michael Puett, David Schaberg, Robin D. B. Yates, and an anonymous reader for *Philosophy East and West*.

- 1 – Giddens 1990, pp. 29–31. Giddens notes that “trust” appears frequently in everyday language, but some uses invoke deeper meanings of “faith” insofar as trust presupposes a relation to risk and the unanticipated results of action. Similar views of the concept of risk as a defining feature of modernity are expressed in Peter Bernstein 1996. See also Hacking 1975 and 1990.
- 2 – Bernstein 1992, p. 1. See also Craig 1988; Doob 1988; Holm and Bowker 1994; Turner 1996.
- 3 – Greene 1944; Cornford 1957; Dietrich 1965; Doyle 1984.
- 4 – Weber 1951; Turner 1996.
- 5 – This complex topic is the subject of another forthcoming paper.
- 6 – Ruan Yuan, “Xing ming gu xun.” See also Tang 1962, pp. 197–198; Gu et al. 1926–1935; Zhou 1982.
- 7 – Chan 1967, pp. 286–302; Xu 1963, pp. 154–155; Tang 1957, pp. 17–18. Cf. Chen 1997.
- 8 – Chen 1994a, 1994b, 1997b.
- 9 – Fu 1952, vol. 3, p. 114; Fu 1980, vol. 4, pp. 253–258, as quoted in Wang 1996. An editor of the journal *Renaissance*, Fu pioneered the use of European philological methods as a new basis for historical research (he studied in Britain and Germany from 1920 to 1927).

- 10 – Tang 1957, 1962, 1963, 1964; Miyazaki 1963; Graham 1967; Mori 1971; Tateno 1983; Kanaya 1986; Nylan 1993; Chen 1994a.
- 11 – Nylan 1993 and 1997.
- 12 – Chen 1994a, pp. 4–5.
- 13 – Lakoff and Johnson 1980; Reding 1996 and 1997.
- 14 – Detienne and Vernant 1978; Raphals 1992; Lloyd 1996, pp. 3–6.
- 15 – Fu 1952, p. 114.
- 16 – Ibid., p. 115.
- 17 – Ibid., p. 116.
- 18 – Keightley 1978, pp. 33–35.
- 19 – Xia 1980; Hong Jiayi 1983, p. 122.
- 20 – Di presided over lesser gods and royal ancestors and was responsible for the welfare of the Shang kingdom. See Poo 1998, p. 224 n. 37.
- 21 – For example, 貞: 不惟帝命作我田 (Yao 6746.1) in Yao and Xiao 1989, p. 127b. Other examples of nominal uses of *ling* = *ming* occur at Yao 6928.1 *zheng*, 14295.1, and 34146.1. In Xia Lu's interpretation (1980, p. 86) of the inscription 貞: 帝于令(命)? (Yao 1239.1) Di-sacrifice is offered not to Si Ming, the Director of Destinies who is accorded the power of fate in Zhou sources, but to another god named Ming. See also Ding 1988, p. 203.
- 22 – Poo 1998, pp. 3 ff.
- 23 – For a particularly lucid presentation of this combination see Smith 1991, pp. 13–14.
- 24 – Some of those presented here are taken from a series of papers between 1957 and 1962, originally published in Chinese and later published in English in *Philosophy East and West*. Tang Junyi used nine verb-object compounds to identify pre-Qin doctrines of *ming* that, in his view, all originated in the Zhou religion of the *Odes* and *Documents*. They are: (1) the “understanding *ming*” of Confucius, (2) the Mohist “against *ming*,” (3), Mengzi's “establishing *ming*,” (4) Zhuangzi's “resting in *ming*,” (5) the “Returning to *ming*” in the *Laozi* and *Zhuangzi*, (6) Xunzi's “controlling” or “causing *ming*,” (7) Zou Yan's “omen of receiving *ming*,” (8) the *Zhong yong*'s “what heaven has decreed is called nature” 天命之謂性, and (9) the “arriving at [awareness of] *ming*” 至於命 in the *Xici* commentary to the *Changes* (49/Shuo/1). See Tang 1957, pp. 1–2, and Tang 1962, pp. 196–197. He does not identify specific passages or elaborate their contexts, and at least one of them is probably periphrastic.
- 25 – Fu 1952; Tang 1957, pp. 1–33; Tang 1962; Mori 1971; Kanaya 1986; Nylan 1993, pp. 35–39; Smith 1991, pp. 35–37.

- 26 – Translations are my own unless otherwise specified. Throughout, I use the terms *ming*, fate, decree, and mandate in both the nominal and verbal senses for *ming* to avoid a kind of crypto-fatalism.
- 27 – *Da Si Ming* and *Shao Si Ming*, trans. Waley (1955). See Zhang 1991.
- 28 – Several strips in the excavations from Baoshan recommend divinations and sacrifice to Si Ming. See *Baoshan Chujian*, strips 212–215, 236–238, and 242–244. Si Ming also appears as an authority over life and death in a text discovered in a Qin tomb in Gansu. Here, the resurrection of a man named Tan was granted when Tan’s master argued to Si Ming that Tan did not deserve to die for a minor offense. See Peng 1991; Poo 1998, p. 66; He 1989; Li Xueqin 1990; Harper 1994.
- 29 – See Li Ling 1990, p. 84.
- 30 – See Mori 1971, pp. 7–22. The girl from Shen was the wife of Wen Wang and mother of Wu Wang. Her life story appears in the *Lienü zhuan* in the “Three Mothers of the Zhou” (*juan* 1, story 6). For discussion of the trope of female virtue in the rise and fall of dynasties see Raphals 1998, pp. 11–26, 29.
- 31 – *Shang shu*, Zhou shu, Prince Shi (16): 18b–19a, trans. Legge (1960, pp. 475–477). People let its mandate fall (*zhui ming* 墜命) because they cannot maintain the virtue of their predecessors. See Tang 1962, p. 199.
- 32 – Fu Sinian argues that some *Lunyu* references to *ming* mean *tian ming* (2.4, 6.10, 9.1, 12.5, 14.36, 16.8, and 20.3). Fu resolves the inconsistency by arguing that Confucius initially believed in the Mandate of Heaven, but rejected it in later in life, after his own failures. See Fu 1952, pp. 32b–33a, and 331.
- 33 – Cf. *Zhuangzi* 29:998. This phrase is particularly prevalent in the *Zhuangzi* (ten instances), the *Taiping jing* (sixteen instances), and the *Lunheng* (thirteen instances) (searches were conducted using Scripta Sinica).
- 34 – *Xunzi* 15/60. The term still retains the sense of being in a desperate hurry.
- 35 – Ruan Yuan, “Xingming guxun” (Fu 1952; Mori 1971).
- 36 – Tang 1962, pp. 196–197 (English), and Tang 1957, p. 1 (Chinese), respectively. These phrases may be periphrastic for later Daoist notions of “resting in *ming*” (*an ming*), since this phrase does not appear in the *Zhuangzi*.
- 37 – *Baopuzi*, *juan* 11, p. 177.
- 38 – *Zhuangzi* 19:630.
- 39 – The passage continues: someone who understands *ming* does not stand under a wall that is about to collapse. Yang Xiong takes up this example in the *Fa yan* (6:17). Wang Chong discusses “standard *ming*” in detail (discussed below).
- 40 – Zou Yan’s “omen of receiving *ming*” 受命之符 is also an example of *shou ming*.

- 41 – *Mozi* 31/62.
- 42 – *Lienü zhuan*, *juan* 7, story 13, p. 7:10a.
- 43 – *Zhuangzi* 17:596; *Han Feizi* 8:122; *Huainanzi*, pp. 333, 376; *Lü Shi chungiu*, *juan* 4.1, p. 186; *Shuo yuan* 1:10b.
- 44 – *Xunzi* 16/23. This is quite distinct from Tang Junyi's reference to Xunzi's "controlling" or "causing *ming*" in note 24, above.
- 45 – Other understandings of the term included understanding or obeying either the orders of a ruler or the "orders" of heaven-decreed nature. See Nylan 1993, p. 35 n. 92; Mori 1971, pp. 35–41; Kanaya 1986, pp. 136–166.
- 46 – *Han Feizi* 8:121.
- 47 – *Chunqiu fanlu* 11.1, p. 283.
- 48 – Ning Chen (Chen 1997b) has used the notions of transpersonal and individual *ming* as a way to resolve the internal inconsistencies in the *Mengzi*.
- 49 – Cf. Graham 1978, pp. 489–490. The *Lü Shi chungiu* chapter "Living Out One's Lot" ("Jin shu" 盡數) provides an apt example of this argument. It describes how sages use the knowledge of *yin* and *yang* to understand what benefits the myriad creatures and helps them to live out their allotted life spans, without either augmenting or cutting them off (*Lü Shi chungiu* 3.2).
- 50 – The translation of this passage depends on whether we read 其所終 and 其所始 as referring to the cycles of heaven and earth described earlier in the passage or to the span of human lives. I have taken it in the former sense. In the latter sense the passage would read: "Since we do not know our ends, how can we say we are not fated [to die]; since we do not know how we began, how can we say we are fated?"
- 51 – *Zhuangzi* 5:189. Graham takes *ming* as naming rather than as ordering destiny: "he does his own naming of the transformations of things" (Graham 1986, p. 76).
- 52 – *Zhuangzi* 14:532.
- 53 – *Ibid.*, 5:212.
- 54 – The semantic range of *shi* includes both static and dynamic elements, which Jullien respectively calls *disposition* (position, circumstances) and the more instrumental *dispositif* (power, potential), elegantly rendered by Janet Lloyd as "setup." See Jullien 1995, p. 11.
- 55 – Nylan 1993, p. 35; Tang 1962, p. 214; Tang 1963, pp. 42, 48; Graham 1967, pp. 215, 255.
- 56 – For the problem of fate in the *Taixuanjing*, see Nylan 1993.
- 57 – *Lunheng* 1–7, 9–12, 20–21, 42–43, 53–55.
- 58 – For a more complex view of Han Confucianism, see Nylan 1999.

- 59 – *Han shu* 100A, 4207–4212.
- 60 – This point is argued persuasively in Nylan 1997.
- 61 – This analysis is indebted to Loewe 1978, pp. 681–682, 701–702, 780–783.
- 62 – Cf. Forke 1962, vol. 1, pp. 144 ff.
- 63 – Forke’s translation is misleading because it inserts a notion of predestination that is not in the text. Later in the chapter he translates *ming pin* 命貧—literally, someone with a *ming* of poverty—as “in the case of a person predestined for poverty” (Forke 1962, 1 : 49).
- 64 – Forke 1962, 1 : 130 ff.
- 65 – 王者一受命，內以為性，外以為體 (*Lunheng* 12, p. 126).
- 66 – *Ibid.*, p. 128.
- 67 – Henry 1987; Raphals 1992.
- 68 – Cf. Forke 1962, 1 : 151 ff.
- 69 – Other examples of arbitrariness include: from which pore a sore breaks out, which insect the spider traps, which fish are caught in the net, who gets caught, the response to calamity, and being crushed by a wall or river bank collapse.
- 70 – Cf. Forke 1962, 1 : 136 ff.
- 71 – *Lunheng* 6, pp. 49–50. Forke (1962, 1 : 138–139) translates these as “natural,” “concomitant,” and “adverse.”
- 72 – Cf. Rescher 1995.
- 73 – Cf. Bokenkamp 2000.
- 74 – Liang et al. 1993, p. 424.
- 75 – *Ibid.*, p. 424.
- 76 – The *Gujin tushu jicheng* (*yishu* 藝術, vol. 47, pp. 5681–7854) contains biographical entries for diviners under the categories of: oracle bones and milfoil stalks (*bushi* 卜筮), astrology (*xingming* 性命), physiognomy (*xiangshu* 相術), geomancy (*kanyu* 堪輿), and computational arts (*shushu* 數術).
- 77 – Von Falkenhausen 1995; Poo 1998.
- 78 – Maspéro 1924; Kalinowski 1991; Loewe 1979, 1981, 1982, 1988a, 1988b; Yates 1997.
- 79 – For accounts of later techniques for the management of fate see Chao 1946; Smith 1991; Topley 1973; Yuan 1919, 1926, 1947.
- 80 – Halliday 1913; Vernant 1974.
- 81 – *Lunheng* 3, p. 20.

- 82 – Conference on Excavated Texts, Sponsored by the Luce Foundation, Dartmouth College and Beijing University, Beijing, 18–21 August 2000.
- 83 – These themes appear consistently in treatments of the subject in the Classics, the history of philosophy, and religion. See Greene 1944; Guthrie 1962–1981; Irwin 1989, pp. 16, 157, 171, 180; Burkert 1985, pp. 129–130.
- 84 – These include Themis or Dike (in addition to their later roles as deities of Justice and Punishment, Dike is associated with an orderly flow of time, as is Moira with the orderly division of space) and ἀνάγκη (Necessity), revealed by oracles, omens, prodigies, and signs.
- 85 – For Parmenides’ dates see Guthrie 1962–1981, vol. 2, pp. 1–2, based on Plato’s (*Parm.* 127a–c) description of a meeting between the old Parmenides and the young Socrates. For the inquiry concerning nature see Lloyd 1987, pp. 1–4, 38–49. Conspicuously absent from this preliminary study are medical and other scientific works. For a discussion of fate as an area of speculation that offers “some of the greatest problems for, or the maximum resistance to, any scientific takeover,” see Lloyd 1987, pp. 4, 38–49. As Lloyd points out, much of the discourse on prediction in medicine and astronomy concerned prognosis of the course of disease or the prediction of the positions of the sun, moon, and planets. These predictions did not significantly involve the operative notions of fate.
- 86 – Demosthenes, “On the Halonnesus,” 7.40.
- 87 – Of the 101 instances of μοῖρα in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, only one is in the phrase *huper moiran*. *Uper aisan* occurs five times out of forty instances of *aisa*.
- 88 – Detienne and Vernant 1978. For “metic intelligence” in China see Raphals 1992.
- 89 – For example, *Il.* 1.5; *Od.* 11.297.
- 90 – Irwin 1989, pp. 16–17.
- 91 – Greene 1944, p. 12.
- 92 – Cf. *Il.* 9.600 and *Od.* 3.166, 5.396, 12.295.
- 93 – For example, at the marriage of Peleus and Thetis and Zeus and Themis.
- 94 – Parmenides also wrote in Homeric hexameter and began his poem, in the Homeric manner, with a claim for divine inspiration.
- 95 – Guthrie considers the *daimon* to be Helios, the sun; Austin takes her as “the goddess.”
- 96 – Austin 1986, pp. 156–157; Guthrie 1962–1981, 2 : 7–9.
- 97 – Cicero, *De fato*; Sharples 1983; den Boeft 1970; Bobzien 1998.
- 98 – Amand 1945; Cioffari 1935.

- 99 – Kirk and Raven 103; Diehls and Kranz 12A9.
- 100 – Kirk and Raven 207, 229; Diehls and Kranz 22B90, 94.
- 101 – According to Greene (1944, p. 228), these included naïve individualists, super-patriots (in defense of the state's right to exist), democrats (in defense of the status quo), aristocrats (in defense of a reactionary coup), and the Athenian empire itself (in defense of the conscription of Melian neutrals).

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