

中国的“轴心文明”及其突破^{*}

□ 董 平

摘要: 基于“轴心期”概念的批评性反思, 本文认为, 中国的“轴心时代”是西周(公元前1046年—公元前771年), 而不是所谓公元前800年—公元前200年的春秋战国时代。西周的礼乐文明, 确乎代表了自尧、舜以来某种积古流传之价值体系的制度性显化。西周解体之后, 中国文化经历了思想上与制度上的多重突破, 至公元前2世纪中叶的汉武帝时代, 方始重置了时代思想与西周“轴心文明”的相互关系。经过“后轴心时代”思想与制度之多重突破, 儒学终究凸现为古代社会公开的政治意识形态, 成为“轴心文明”价值的坚守者与看护者, 也因此而成为现实政治的监督者与批判者。正是在儒学展开其自身的历史绵延之中, 中国文化的主体性遂得以清晰显现, 并为其筑就了独特的“价值屏障”。

关键词: 雅斯贝斯 轴心期 轴心文明 西周 礼乐文明

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作者董平, 浙江大学求是特聘教授、博士生导师(浙江 杭州 310000)。

一、关于“轴心期”概念的再检讨 [见英文版第4页, 下同]

众所周知, 德国哲学家雅斯贝斯(Karl Jaspers, 1883—1969)在他最为重要的历史哲学著作《历史的起源与目标》一书中, 提出了“轴心期”概念。该书初版于1949年, 此后多次重印, “轴心期”概念连同作者的名字一起蜚声于海内外学术界。雅斯贝斯认为, 世界历史不仅应当存在一个“轴心期”, 并且事实上也存在这样一个“轴心期”, 他把这一“世界历史轴心”衡定于公元前500年左右, 存在于公元前800年到公元前200年之间所发生的精神历程之中。“正是在那里, 我们同最深刻的历史分界线相遇。”^①因为在这一时期当中, 在中国、印度与西方这三个“互不知晓”的区域同时出现了一批代表人物, 中国有孔子、老子, 以及包括墨子、庄子在内的其他众多的哲学家; 在印度出现了《奥义书》和吠陀; 伊朗的琐罗亚斯德正在传播其关于人世生活就是善与恶的斗争的观点; 在巴勒斯坦, 出现了以利亚、以赛亚、耶利米等先知; 在希腊, 则有荷马, 以及哲学家巴门尼德、赫拉克利特、柏拉图等人。在这

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^① 卡尔·雅斯贝斯:《历史的起源与目标》, 魏楚雄、俞新天译, 北京: 华夏出版社, 1989年, 第8页。

短短几个世纪中，同时在中国、印度和西方涌现出为其各自文明奠定价值基础的人物，并且他们所思考的问题是具有共性的，他们都开始意识到整体的存在，同时也意识到自身以及自身的限度。

雅斯贝斯进一步认为：“直至今日，人类一直靠轴心期所产生、思考和创造的一切而生存。”每一次时代的新飞跃，都是通过对轴心期的回顾来实现的，“轴心期潜力的苏醒和对轴心期潜力回忆，或曰复兴，总是提供了精神动力”。因此对轴心期这一开端的复归，在中国、印度和西方是不断发生的事情。正因为轴心期代表了一种人类共享的文明，所以任何未与轴心期获得联系的民族，便是被排斥于“历史”之外的，是处于“非历史”状态的，生活在轴心期三个地区以外的人们，要么就如此这般地保持其原始的“非历史生活”，要么就与其中的一个相接触而被“拖进历史”。“生活在轴心期以后的全部人类，不是保持原始状态，就是参与当时唯一具有根本意义的新事态发展过程。”^①更重要的是，“轴心期同化了存留的一切。从轴心期起，世界历史获得了唯一的结构和至少持续到我们时代的统一”^②。

雅斯贝斯关于“轴心期”的上述基本观点，引起中国史学界、哲学界相当普遍的赞同性回应，人们似乎从雅氏的描述之中体会到了一种扬眉吐气，中国终于被西方人认为是人类历史的“轴心期”文明之一了。毫无疑问，雅氏的学术眼界及其思想视域确乎是宏大的，他站在20世纪的时代高度，纵观“历史”以及“世界历史”的整体，强调了中国、印度、西方在“互不知晓”的情况之下达成了所思问题的同一性，从而代表了人类文明价值的共相基础以及“历史”发展的共相基础及其发展结果之可能的共享性。然而，如果我们透过雅氏那多少显得有些隐约与迟疑的笔调加以领会，便会发现他实质上是在表达一些并不迟疑与隐约的观点：

(1) 尽管造成“轴心期”共性的真正原因仍然是未知晓的，但某种原因在史前介入于西方、印度与中国，则很可能是这种共性的根源。雅氏引用了阿尔弗雷德·韦伯的观点，并认为这是“迄今为止最精深的、在方法论上可论证的假设”，“他证明道，中亚国家的铁骑战车实际上的确突入到中国、印度和西方，并把马匹引入了古代文明，在三个地区导致了类似的结果”。“印欧骑马民族造成了这一历史转折点。公元前3000年末期，他们已到达欧洲和地中海。公元前1200年左右，他们实行新的大迁徙，一直远远推进到伊朗和印度。同样，到公元前2000年末期，其他骑马民族也到达了。”^③照此看来，“印欧骑马民族造成了这一历史转折点”，他们在公元前3000年至公元前1200年间分别到达欧洲、印度、中国，正是造成“轴心期”三大区域尽管“互不知晓”却能呈现出文化同一性的根源。

(2) 雅氏把人类历史确认为三个阶段：“史前”“历史”“世界历史”。这三重划分，与“空间”上的西、东方无关，与“时间”上的时代先后无关，而仅仅与“文化”有关。所谓“史前”，即是西方、印度、中国进入“轴心期”之前的状况，那些未曾实现“轴心期突破”的民族，在他们与任何一个“轴心期”文明接触而被“拖入历史”之前，也都处于“史前”状态；所谓“历史”，即是三个“轴心期”文明以及受其影响的民族所展开的历史；所谓“世界历史”，则是完全由西方的科学技术直接导致并推动的，它肇始于1500年至1830年这一段时期，但真正开始于20世纪，作为人类历史的新阶段，“世界历史”即是“世界和人类的全球统一，今天它正在成为现实。它展现了真实的全人类的世界历史”^④。包

① 卡尔·雅斯贝斯：《历史的起源与目标》，魏楚雄、俞新天译，第14页。

② 卡尔·雅斯贝斯：《历史的起源与目标》，魏楚雄、俞新天译，第15页。

③ 卡尔·雅斯贝斯：《历史的起源与目标》，魏楚雄、俞新天译，第24页。按：阿尔弗雷德·韦伯（Alfred Weber, 1868—1958），德国经济学家与社会—文化理论家。他是著名社会学家、政治学家、哲学家、历史学家马克斯·韦伯（Max Weber, 1864—1920）的弟弟，著有《工业区位论》一书，对现代经济地理学的发展影响深远。

④ 卡尔·雅斯贝斯：《历史的起源与目标》，魏楚雄、俞新天译，第84页。

含在雅氏论述之中的意思是清楚的：“历史”起源于“轴心时期”，终结于“世界历史”，其终极目标则是全球统一的“真实的全人类的世界历史”。再显著不过的是，“世界历史”仅仅是西方“历史”向现代的持续性突破而展开的，与印度、中国这两个“轴心期”文明无关，因为印、中两国虽然实现了“轴心期突破”而进入了“历史”，但他们的历史完全是复沓的，“中国和印度总是在延续它们自己的过去时存活”^①。仅仅是“过去时”的延续很难算得上是真正的“历史”，正因此故，中国文化一元的形式，终究使“精神生活变成了静止干瘪的木乃伊”^②。正是精神生活“木乃伊式”的僵死，使中国虽然进入了“历史”，却终究又丧失、沉寂于历史。与此不同的是，西方进入“历史”之后便不断地寻求突破而实现其精神—文化的卓越，“在突破中，各种各样的欧洲民族轮换地拥有其创造时代。然后，从突破中，欧洲整体获得了它的生命”^③。“科学技术的根源与日耳曼—罗马民族一起奠定。由于科学技术，这些民族完成了历史的突变，他们开始了真正世界性的、全球的人类历史。只有这些民族，才仍然能在决定人类命运方面发挥积极的作用。”^④

雅氏提出“轴心期”概念作为人类“历史”的起源，我认为其真实用意并非真正重视文明源起的多元统一，或基于人类理性与精神生活的公共性而重视不同地域空间之历史的自身开展终究可能走向精神世界的统一，而是通过他独特的观审角度，在承认印度、中国与西方并列而进入“历史”的前提下，又通过印度、中国“历史”本身之历史性的否定，而肯定唯有西方这一“轴心期”文明才真正代表了人类共同的“世界历史”之终极“目标”。在某种意义上，这便是“世界历史”的共同命运。印度与中国这两大东方的“轴心期”文明，自进入“轴心期”之后，实质上便堕入了暗昧的沉沦。在印、中那里，“历史”固然有其开端，但开端即是终结，“过去时的延续”不是历史，更不代表任何历史意义。与此相对，西方这一“轴心期文明”通过其持续的突破而实现了“历史”所应有的全部内容^⑤，最终以科学技术的突破而标志着人类已经进入“第二轴心”时代，“历史”将以“世界历史”的统一状态来实现其终极“目标”。显而易见，雅氏的“轴心期”概念及其基于“轴心期”文明所做的关于历史的解释，实质上仍然是“西方中心论”的，只不过表面上承认了“历史”的多点起源而已。在雅氏看来，西方的宗教—政治观念即是历史意义的统一性本原，而科学技术正是这种统一性的现代标志，因而直白地说，人类不同区域的文明，不论其曾经是否为“轴心期”文明，都必然走向西方的统一，因为“放之四海而皆准的真理之统一只有在科学技术中才出现”^⑥。

基于以上关于雅氏“轴心期”概念的再检讨，我认为这一概念的提出的确是富有创造性的，在某种意义上颇为有利于文明—历史的理解与阐释，因此显然是深刻而具有重要意义的。但另一方面，雅氏关于“世界历史”统一性的设想，基于科学技术这一“放之四海而皆准的真理之统一”，人类历史走向基于科技的全球统一，按他的见解乃是必然的，而这样一来，显然将消弭不同文明的历史及其发展

① 卡尔·雅斯贝斯：《历史的起源与目标》，魏楚雄、俞新天译，第71页。

② 卡尔·雅斯贝斯：《历史的起源与目标》，魏楚雄、俞新天译，第72页。

③ 卡尔·雅斯贝斯：《历史的起源与目标》，魏楚雄、俞新天译，第72页。

④ 卡尔·雅斯贝斯：《历史的起源与目标》，魏楚雄、俞新天译，第73页。

⑤ 雅氏在第一篇第六章《西方的特殊性》中，列举九点（第73—78页）西方的特殊性来证明科学技术为什么只能由西方来创造，而不可能发生在中国、印度两大文化区域。其中第一点是中、印地理构造的“封闭”，第二点是“政治自由思想”的缺失，“中国和印度对自由一无所知”。地理与政治的双重封闭具有关键意义，是其他诸点得以引导出来的基础。

⑥ 卡尔·雅斯贝斯：《历史的起源与目标》，魏楚雄、俞新天译，第291页。雅氏充分强调“西方的文化连续性”，“尽管有非同寻常的破裂、毁灭和显然是总体的衰败，西方从未丧失其文化连续性”（卡尔·雅斯贝斯：《历史的起源与目标》，魏楚雄、俞新天译，第71页），看来所谓“中世纪”的一千年，并未以真正有意义的形式而进入雅氏的学术视野。所谓“非同寻常的破裂”等等，仍然不足以妨碍雅氏关于西方文化的连续性及其不断突破的论断。

结果,科技便成为“世界历史”之所以为可能的本原性根据。不过显而易见的是,雅氏的这一设想,似乎全然忽视了我称之为“文明间性”的存在及其必然包含着的哲学领悟、思维习惯、生活方式、价值体系、社会礼俗等方面的差异。也许正与此相关,英国著名的历史学家汤因比(Arnold J. Toynbee, 1889—1975)则从东西方不同文明形态及其文化内涵所彰显的价值理念为思考基点,认为东亚文明,明确讲是中国文明,才代表了世界文明走向统一的可能基础。^①或许同样基于世界历史统一性的展望,亨廷顿(Samuel P. Huntington, 1927—2008)则于20世纪90年代提出著名的“文明冲突”论。我多次指出,亨廷顿的观点其实比雅斯贝斯更具有文明多元源起及其相互之间的平等意识。但有意思的是,福山(Francis Fukuyama, 1952—)虽然是亨廷顿的学生,但由于转向了以科学技术为基点的叙述路向,因此他的“历史终结”论,实质上便是对雅斯贝斯“第二轴心”时代的再度论证。

上面我之所以简略提及具有世界声誉的几位思想家的观点,是想表明,尽管雅氏的“轴心期”概念是重要的,但人们对由此所引导出来的问题其实并没有停止讨论,观审基点的不同导致人们得出不同的结论。仅就雅氏的观点而言,他厘定公元前800年—公元前200年为“轴心期”的基本时段界限,窃以为仅仅适用于西方,而不适用于东方的两大“轴心期”文明,不论是印度还是中国。比如在印度,真正奠定印度文明之核心价值的东西,并不是佛教,而是以吠陀为典范并经由《奥义书》而获得其哲学意义之特别阐释的印度教文明。在四部吠陀中,人们通常认为最重要的《梨俱吠陀》(Rig Veda)诞生于公元前1500年,而主要的《奥义书》,作为吠檀多或“吠陀的末尾”,拉达克里希南认为它们大抵诞生于公元前800年—公元前700年,其全部出现于佛教诞生之前则是基本上可以肯定的。^②对印度文化本身而言,吠陀以及作为其哲学精义的《奥义书》,毫无疑问比佛教居于更为重要的、基础性的本原地位,它们在印度的宗教—政治—文化历史上的“正统性”影响则是持续而不曾断绝的,因此将吠陀—奥义书的时代视为印度文化的“轴心期”也许更为恰当。换句话说,印度文明的“轴心期”应当以公元前800年为下限,而不是上限。就印度文化的历史展开而言,吠陀—奥义书确实是其精神生命的根本源泉,是一直在印度的精神世界中发挥着深刻而持久的影响力的。

同样的,我将要表明:中国文化的“轴心期”不在公元前800年—公元前200年的春秋战国时代,而是公元前1046年—公元前771年的西周时期。西周奠定了中国政治与文化的制度基础及其根本的价值理念,对中国文化全部历史进程所产生的影响不仅是持久而绵远的,并且是深刻且具有根本重要性的。

二、西周：中国文化的轴心时代 [6]

孔子“发现了”西周,发现了西周作为一种制度、一种文明、一种价值形态的独特性、典型性及其重要性。他的一生,实质上便是追寻西周并试图重新实现“礼乐制度”所承载之文明价值的一生,及

① 汤因比同样设想了“世界统一”的未来,但他认为,正是以原子能为代表的科学技术的出现,依靠武力征服而把“地球上的广大部分统一起来的传统方法”已经很难做到,“同时,我所预见的和平统一,一定是以地理和文化主轴为中心,不断结晶扩大起来的。我预感到这个主轴不在美国、欧洲和苏联,而是在东亚”。“就中国人来说,几千年来,比世界任何民族都成功地把几亿民众,从政治文化上团结起来。他们显示出这种在政治、文化上统一的本领,具有无与伦比的成功经验。这样的统一正是今天世界的绝对要求。”(转引自何兆武、柳卸林主编:《展望二十一世纪:汤因比与池田大作对话录》,《中国印象——外国名人论中国文化》,北京:中国人民大学出版社,2011年,第399页)池田大作也同意汤因比的观点,认为“从两千年来保持统一的历史经验来看,中国有资格成为实现统一世界的新主轴”(转引自何兆武、柳卸林主编:《展望二十一世纪:汤因比与池田大作对话录》,《中国印象——外国名人论中国文化》,第400页)。

② 参见S. Radhakrishnan, *The Principal Upanishads* (New Delhi: Indus, 1994), 22.

至晚年，“甚矣，吾衰也！久矣，吾不复梦见周公”^①。于是删《诗》《书》，定礼乐，作《春秋》，以六经而垂范后世，便是以经典文本形式而寄寓其关于“礼乐制度”的文明理想，既为其价值理念之后世有述而确立传承系统，又深寓为后王立法之意。换句话说，儒学的经典文本、价值理念、文化理想其实都是以西周的“礼乐制度”为基础而建立起来的。

孔子对于西周的尊崇，并非出于其个人的情感偏好，而是经过其理性的深刻反思、批评而做出的历史抉择。“周监于二代，郁郁乎文哉！吾从周。”^②“监”，传统解为“视也”，实也“借鉴”之意。^③西周制度是借鉴了夏、商二代，在二代的基础上有了更为完备的发展，呈现出了“郁郁乎文”的形态。正是西周制度文质交相映现的“郁郁乎文”，成了孔子“吾从周”的根本理由，因此也就可以说，孔子之“从周”，实质是“从文”，是对人文的抉择，对历史过程中所形成的人道之文明价值的抉择。西周的制度文明，按照孔子的见解，虽其文之“郁郁”乃度越二代，但其中也包含着对于二代的因革损益，所以说：“殷因于夏礼，所损益，可知也；周因于殷礼，所损益，可知也。其或继周者，虽百世可知也。”^④历史在“因”的过程中实现其绵延的统一性，又通过“损益”来体现其时代的适应性，是故“因”与“损益”的统一，便是历史的连续性与阶段性的统一，是为历史的绵延。

由孔子所发现的这一三代制度及其文明传承统绪的历史，显而易见并不是以夏代作为开端，而是仍然可以上溯的。夏代而上，便是所谓“三皇五帝”，其中虽有茫昧不清、无法诉诸“考证”的传说或神话，未可视之为“历史事实”，但必可视之为民族的集体记忆，其中是体现了民族文化的“价值真实”的，因此实质上即为中华民族之“史诗”。包括雅斯贝斯在内的西方学者，他们都认为中国没有“史诗”，若就长篇叙事的形式而言，中国确乎没有类似于《伊利亚特》《奥德赛》那样的史诗，但若就史诗所承载的特定文明信息，尤其是关于民族来历、人神关系、生产生活方式、价值理念形成等方面而言，“三皇五帝”的传说实质上即是中华民族的“史诗”，是民族的英雄传奇。人们在“三皇五帝”之传奇的追溯与叙述之中，寄寓了民族的自我认知，表达了对世界以及山川鬼神的理解，描述了先民走向文明的轨迹，阐释了形成于现实生活的基本价值理念，而成为民族之渊源以及生活共同体之所以形成的集体记忆。按照《史记·五帝本纪》的记述，由黄帝而至于尧、舜，其中所深寓着的，正是中华民族作为一个生活—文化共同体的形成过程，及其最终走向制度建设以实现自我治理的艰难历程。到了尧、舜时代，基于民族共同体的基本形成，通过制度以实现共同体管理的理念已经明确建立起来，更重要的是，建立制度的原则已经得到清楚明白的阐释，这就是法天道以立人道，原天道而为人道立法。由尧所确立的这一致治原则，成为中国文化所领悟的“文明”根源，尧所实现的对于天下的治理，也就成为中国制度文明的原初形态或基础原型。

基于这一观点，我们大抵便能领会孔子之所以盛赞“尧之为君”的原因了。他说：“大哉，尧之为君也！巍巍乎！唯天为大，唯尧则之。荡荡乎！民无能名焉。巍巍乎！其有成功也；焕乎，其有文章！”^⑤“唯天为大，唯尧则之”，是即效法天道而为天下之治的根本原则；“焕乎其有文章”即所谓“文明”，是依循天道而建立人道、为人的现实生活秩序立法所实现的结果。在《尚书》的记载当中，尧“钦明文思安安”，且能“允恭克让”，所以最终便能“光被四表，格于上下”。尧之所以能够实现“格

① 朱熹：《论语集注》，《四书章句集注》，北京：中华书局，1983年，第94页。

② 朱熹：《论语集注》，《四书章句集注》，第65页。

③ “今陛下躬行大孝，鉴三王，建周道，兼文武”（《史记·平津侯主父列传》），“监三王”（《汉书·公孙弘传》），是“监”“鉴”通假之例证。

④ 朱熹：《论语集注》，《四书章句集注》，第59页。

⑤ 朱熹：《论语集注》，《四书章句集注》，第107页。

于上下”，则在于他把“格”切实地转换成了一系列实践活动：“克明俊德，以亲九族；九族既睦，平章百姓；百姓昭明，协和万邦，黎民于变时雍。”^①在这里，显而易见的是，“克明俊德”即是“修身”，即是“明明德”；“以亲九族”即是“齐家”；“平章百姓”即是“治国”，即是“亲民”；“协和万邦”即是“平天下”，即是“止于至善”。从《尚书》关于尧的记载来看，正是“克明俊德”成就了“尧之为君”之所以为“大”，但“大”的根源在天，“唯天为大”；尧为君之“大”，在“则之”而已，故所谓“克明俊德”，正是则天之“大”的根本途径与方式。由此可知，至少从尧开始，法天道以立人道，依循天道的本原秩序而将之转变为人道的现实秩序，即被确立为政治唯一可靠的根本法则。尧命羲和，“钦若昊天，历象日月星辰，敬授人时”，其意也正是《论语》的“天之历数在尔躬，允执其中”之意。“天之历数”是“天时”，而转为人的行为之所凭依的准则，即是“人时”。“天时”是“人时”之合理性、正当性、合法性的全部根据，而“天时”的真实存在也只能依凭“人时”来加以实现，换言之，“天道”借“人道”而开明，“人道”因“天道”而崇高，是所谓“天人合一”之说。

这一天人观念的建立，就其实质而言，是为人的现实活动本身确立了合理性的终极根据。日常的生产、生活行为是如此，政治的行为活动就更是如此，都是必须以天道（基于天之历数的观审而领悟出来的天地之运的实在性及其秩序性）为其合理性的终极根据的，简言之，天道即是现实世界一切万物的存在本原，是包括人在内的一切万物展开其全部存在的秩序本原，是人介入世界活动且之所以能达成其目的的理性本原，是人的全部生存过程之所以具备意义的价值本原。这一天人观念，在此后就成为中国文化中以天一地一人一神为整体架构的人道世界的结构核心。最重要的，就天道而言，它既是存在的本体，又是价值的本体，是存在与价值之所以同一的终极根据。这一点同时就意味着：凡合乎天道的，不仅其存在是真实的，并且是具有本原意义与价值的。真实性是意义与价值的保证，或者直接说，真实性本身即是第一价值。天道的实在性，是指不论它如何运动以及处于何种状态，它总是自为的、真实的、合理的、有序的，它的当前状态即是其存在的真实相状，它总是“唯变所适”的。正因此故，天道自身的实在状态便总是大中至正的。大中至正既是天道之实相，同时也是价值之本原。

“中”的本初含义是指天道之“正”的状态，人基于天道之“中”的体认与领悟而把它恰当地、真实地实现出来，也即是把天道之“中”转化成了人道之“中”，正是在这一转化过程中，人道因“中”的实现而同时获得了意义与价值。正是在这一意义上，“允执其中”或“允执厥中”，成了古圣先王实现其王道的“秘诀”。我要强调的是，“中”的意义是包括真实、正直、正义、公正、恰当、适宜等在内的，或者所有这些词语，在特定语境中，它们其实均为同义语。

尧“钦明文思安安，允恭克让”，他能真实体知天道而“允执其中”，终能实现“协和万邦”，使黎民的行为皆归于中正。他把政权移交给舜，是因为舜的“浚哲文明，温恭允塞”，舜非但稽于天道以建立人道，且以制作礼乐，使“神人以和”，“允执其中”显然是他之所以能实现“庶绩咸熙”的根本原因。禹继舜，其实现天下之治的原则没有改变，“允迪厥德，谟明弼谐”（《尚书·皋陶谟》）被奉为第一原则^②，大意也即是要真实地、恰当地把得自于天道的“德”引导出来，从而谋划出一个清楚明白的足以辅成和谐局面的方案。“慎厥身，修思永，惇叙九族，庶明励翼，迓可远在兹”^③（《尚书·皋陶

① 孙星衍：《尧典上》，《尚书今古文注疏》卷一，陈抗、盛冬铃点校，北京：中华书局，1986年，第6—9页。

② 这两句司马迁《夏本纪》引作“信其道德，谟明辅和”，义更清晰。参见孙星衍：《皋陶谟上》，《尚书今古文注疏》卷二，陈抗、盛冬铃点校，第77页。

③ 郑玄注：“次序九族而亲之，以众明作羽翼之臣，此政由近可以及远也。”孙星衍认为这里的意思，是“皋陶为禹言谨身睦族，贵近附助，则道德可以自近及远也”（孙星衍：《皋陶谟上》，《尚书今古文注疏》卷二，陈抗、盛冬铃点校，第77页）。

谟》),便是这一“大谋”的大概,从中显然可见,修身—齐家—亲民—平治天下,仍然是根本方略。大中至正也仍然是根本价值,“宽而栗,柔而立,愿而恭,乱而敬,扰而毅,直而温,简而廉,刚而塞,强而义”^①,正是关于“中”的独特阐释。为确保大中至正这一本原价值的普遍实现,于是便诉诸制度建设,“天叙有典,敕我五典五惇哉!天秩有礼,自我五礼有庸哉!同寅协恭和衷哉!天命有德,五服五章哉!天讨有罪,五刑五用哉”。可见礼乐刑政作为制度的总体施設已然初具规模,唯以此制度为依据,才可能实现“政事懋哉懋哉”^②。

汤伐夏,他讲得很明确,“非台小子敢行称乱”,而是因为“有夏多罪,天命殛之”,“予畏上帝,不敢不正”。“正”即是“中”。“夏氏有罪”,甚至于将中正之价值委弃于地,商汤伐之,正是为了重新追回大中至正这一根本价值。盘庚迁殷,“民不适有居”,诸侯大臣不肯迁往新邑,于是盘庚提出警告:“汝分猷念以相从,各设中于乃心。”不要存有异心异谋,而要顺从,各设中于汝心。我要特别强调的是,“设中于乃心”,正是“忠”之本义。“忠”为会意字,实即是“正心”。唯有持心于大中至正,才可能在经验上实现出“中”的价值,这就是所谓“允执其中”的实义。因此在我看来,“设中于乃心”,即是“正心”;“正心”作为一种心灵状态,即是“忠”;保持并把这一“正心”的状态体现出来,落实到生活过程之中,即是“允执其中”;“允执其中”是实现大中至正之本原价值的唯一方式。盘庚在要求“各设中于乃心”之后,便强调唯此方能“式敷明德,永肩一心”,也即是把大中至正的“明德”实现出来,“施实德于民”^③,从而实现天道之本原的至善。

周继商而起,武王因“我不知其彝伦攸叙”而请教箕子,于是箕子为陈“洪范九畴”,其中居于“九畴”之中的“第五”,即是“皇极”,这本身便表明“皇极”在“九畴”当中是居中的,具有根本的重要性。“皇”字的解释虽有歧义^④,但以“极”为“中”,实为古来之通释。^⑤极者,中也,故“建极”即是“立中”,是将大中至正树立为天下之准则,而不是将君主作为天下的准则;大中至正为天下的准则,则大中至正的实现,便是为天下所共享的公共价值的实现。故唯“皇极”之建,大中至正之道显现于天下,庶民才“无有淫朋”“无有比德”,“无偏无陂,遵王之义;无有作好,遵王之道;无有作恶,遵王之路。无偏无党,王道荡荡;无党无偏,王道平平;无反无侧,王道正直”。一切皆由“中”出,一切皆回归于“中”,是即所谓“会其有极,归其有极”。平平正直、无偏无陂、浩浩荡荡之“王道”的实现,即是大中至正这一天之下公共价值的公开实现,故后世称之为“大道之行也,天下为公”。

① 孙星衍:《皋陶谟上》,《尚书今古文注疏》卷二,陈抗、盛冬铃点校,第80页。

② 孙星衍:《皋陶谟上》,《尚书今古文注疏》卷二,陈抗、盛冬铃点校,第86—87页。在这里,“礼”作为“天叙”“天秩”的意思是非常清楚的,因此毫无疑问的是,礼作为制度,在观念上即被认为是对于“天叙”“天秩”的人道转换,是“天工人其代之”的重要内容之一,故礼的实义,即在于以人而合天。所谓“懋哉懋哉”“庶绩咸熙”的全部政绩,都是必须凭借“礼”的制度才可能实现的。“五礼有庸”一句,则正是《论语》有子所谓“礼之用和为贵”之所本。

③ 孙星衍:《盘庚》,《尚书今古文注疏》卷六,陈抗、盛冬铃点校,第227页。

④ “五,皇极:皇建其有极”(《尚书·洪范》),孔安国传:“大中之道,大立其有中,谓行九畴之义。”则“皇极”即“大中”之意,故孔颖达疏曰:“皇,大也;极,中也。施政教,治下民,当使大得其中,无有邪僻,故演之云:大中者,人君为民之主,当大自立其有中之道,以施教于民。”(阮元校刻:《尚书正义》,《十三经注疏》,北京:中华书局,1980年,第189页)到了南宋,盖朱子首发“皇”为“君”之义,其《皇极辨》曰:“《洛书》九数而五居中,《洪范》九畴而皇极居五,故自孔氏传训‘皇极’为‘大中’,而诸儒皆祖其说。余独尝以经之文义语脉求之,而有以知其必不然也。盖皇者,君之称也;极者,至极之义,标准之名,常在物之中央,而四外望之以取正焉者也。”[朱熹:《晦庵先生朱文公文集》卷七十二,《朱子全书》(第24册),朱杰人、严佐之、刘永翔主编,上海:上海古籍出版社,2002年,第3453—3454页]这样一来,“皇极”就成了“君主为天下极则”之义。朱熹之说,后世宗之者多。窃以为朱熹释“皇”为“君主”尚可接受,然以“极”为“至极”“标准”,而破除“中”义,实则甚为有害。但这里显然不宜展开这一话题,且俟诸异日。

⑤ “极”的本义是屋脊,所谓栋梁。《说文解字》:“极,栋也。从木,亟声。”段玉裁注:“今俗语皆呼栋为梁也。……引伸之义,凡至高至远皆谓之极。”《说文解字》:“栋,极也。”段玉裁注:“极者,谓屋至高之处。”(段玉裁:《说文解字段注》,成都:成都古籍书店,1981年,第268页上)极、栋互训,为屋至高之处,故有“极端”“极至”之义;更重要的是,栋梁必居中而正,故为中正之义。

基于以上简略的文献考察,我们基本上可以得出几点肯定性结论。第一,中国文化自尧舜以来,的确已经确立起原天道以立人道这一根本观念,确认天道为人的行为合理性的终极来源。而以人合天之所以可能,则是因为人的确从天那里禀受了“明德”,“明德”即是天人交相合一的关捩之处,它既是天道本身之大中至正的体现,又是人道之所以可能为大中至正的根据,“允执其中”即是实现天人共在、共享、共有之大中至正之本原价值的根本手段与方法。基于人本身之本质实在性的这一理解与领悟,原天道以立人道,或曰法天立极,同时便被转化为关于政治的普遍理念。第二,包括政治制度在内的社会公共生活的制度体系,作为共同体之公共生活的秩序规范,它既是以天道秩序为其本原性依据的,又是以人道秩序的实现为其基本目的的,而在根本上,则是为了确保大中至正这一本原性价值的实现,是大中至正之价值实现的制度保障。由此我们可以看到,从尧、舜至西周,确保人道之普遍价值得以实现出来的制度设施的确是渐次凸显的,或者说,把天道秩序转换为人道法则、确保大中至正之本原价值得以实现出来的制度建设,是存在一个由粗疏而渐臻细密、渐趋完备的显化过程的。至于西周,以礼乐文明为典范的制度建设遂达于极致,以其“郁郁乎文”而度越前代。

尽管西周制度之“文”是超越前代的,但其制度之质则仍与尧舜以来一脉相承。“承天之道以治人之情”^①,仍然是西周礼乐制度之所以建立的根本目的。因此在礼乐制度的整体建构之中,天道仍然被确认为人道本原,仍然是现实政治合理与否的根本判准,大中至正作为价值本原,也仍然是西周礼制试图达成的价值目的。换句话说,“经礼三百、曲礼三千”,不论其形式如何多样,其现实性上的目的都是一致的,即是要实现出“中”的价值本身。孔子认为,“敬而不中礼谓之野,恭而不中礼谓之给,勇而不中礼谓之逆”,唯“中”才使敬、恭、勇呈现为如其所标识的价值本身,子贡曾对此表示不解,所以“越席而对曰:‘敢问将何以为此中者也?’子曰:‘礼乎,礼!夫礼,所以制中也’”^②。毋庸置疑的是,礼作为共同体之公共生活的“制度综合”,它是以人道秩序的还原为现实途径,而以“中”的实现为价值目的的。“礼所以制中也”,正表明“中”的价值实现是以礼的制度来作为保证的。

由以上简述大抵可见,尧舜以来,经历夏、商、周三代,中国文化逐渐形成了关于人的存在的本质理解、关于人道生存秩序的本质理解、关于存在价值的本原意识,并且为人道秩序及其本原价值之实现建构了逐渐趋于完备的实际制度。三代制度虽然不必全同,但贯穿于其中的人道精神以及以大中至正为价值本原的价值意识则是同一的,一切制度设施都在于实现这一价值的同一性,这一本原性目的也同样是同一的,所以孔子说:“斯民也,三代之所以直道而行也。”^③“直道而行”,即是行于中正之谓。三代之民之所以可能“直道而行”,正在于“直道而行”以实现大中至正这一价值本原或本原价值,不仅是得到制度的切实保障的,并且本来就是制度之所以建构的目的。

由此我们表明以下观点:基于尧、舜以来的文明积累,到了西周时期,中国文化达到了郁勃繁兴的独特高度。这一独特的文明高度,就其形式外观而言,集中体现在基于社会共同体之公共生活而实现了“郁郁乎文”的全面制度建设。“礼乐文明”成为中国文化制度文明的典范。“礼乐文明”展开了中国文化所理解的人道世界,它是天一地一人一神共在的世界,是存在与价值同一的世界。作为“制度综合”^④,“礼乐文明”将天一地一人一神联结为一个有机的整体而使之呈现为一个人道的世界,它既

① 朱彬:《礼运》,《礼记训纂》卷九,饶钦农点校,北京:中华书局,1996年,第333页。

② 朱彬:《仲尼燕居》,《礼记训纂》卷二十八,饶钦农点校,第746页。

③ 朱熹:《论语集注》,《四书章句集注》,第166页。

④ 我把西周的“礼乐文明”表述为关于人的现实存在的“制度综合”(institutional complex),详见董平:《秩序与和谐:礼乐制度与行为正义》,《浙江社会科学》2022年第9期。

是生活的共同体，又是道德的共同体。穿过这一制度外观而深入于其内在的观念—价值结构，则可以清楚地发现，人的本质实在性本原于天道，因而人的现实生存秩序（人道）也必然以天道秩序为其本原，正是礼乐制度得以建立起来的根本理念。“明德”作为天人交相合一的关键之处，既是人道秩序之所从出，又是全部人道价值之所以可能的基原。大中至正即为“明德”本体，因而礼乐制度本身不仅是人道秩序的充分体现，同时也是大中至正之根本人道价值得以实现出来的制度保证。“明德”展开为人道秩序实现了和谐。

政治制度居于礼乐文明制度整体建构的核心，自天子以至于庶人，都是被纳入于礼乐制度的规范体系之内的。这就表明，社会的整体管理不是某一个人意志的完成，而是公共制度的实现。制度的公共性要求它在表达形式上的公开性，礼乐使制度的公开性达于极致，也使制度所实现价值的公共性、共享性达于极致，由此而带来的则是普遍的公共秩序与和谐。正因此故，以礼乐为典范的公共制度使社会成为个体实现其生存及其价值的基本场域。生存本身所展开的生命秩序，作为生命的原在形态，是一切人道价值之所以可能的的基本前提。因此，包括仁、义、礼、智、信在内的全部人道价值，是被纳入生命本原秩序得以实现的基本架构之中的，正是在这一意义上，“不违农时”“富民”“亲民”等等才被阐释为统治者的最高道德。但就个体而言，“明德”是被作为个体生命的终极实在来加以肯定的，它既是“生”的本原，也是“德”的本原。由于生性不二，“生”的过程必须体现为“性”的展开或实现过程；由于性德同一，所以“生”的有序展开同时要求必须是“德”的有序实现。显而易见，基于“生性不二”与“性德同一”之领悟的个体生存过程，即是个体存在及其价值在现实性上实现其同一性的过程。在这一意义上，“礼所以制中也”，正是礼的制度确保了个体在其日常生活之中存在与价值之同一性的实现。

对以上叙述略加概括，我试图表明：（1）中国文化有其本原的关于人及其存在的真实领悟，这一点集中体现于“明德”；“明德”的实在状况是呈现为“大中至正”的，故中正即是“明德”的实相。（2）“明德”的实在，在个体那里，即是“性”，“性”展开为现实的生存过程即是“生”，所以我把它概括为“生性不二”；“明德”本源于天，是经验世界中的一切道德（伦理）之所以可能的根据，故“生性不二”的实际呈现即是“性德同一”。（3）社会（包括家庭）是个体实现其存在与价值同一，也即“生性不二”“性德同一”的现实场域；确保每一个体都能实现其本原性生存，社会（家庭）作为由个体所共构的共同体，必须对这一点做出承诺，而其承诺的方式即是公共制度体系的建立。（4）制度体系本身的合理性在于充分地实现人本身的完整存在，因此以天道为其合理性的终极本原；制度实现了天道秩序向人的现实生活秩序的转变，故谓之“人道”。（5）这一人道的制度体系之建立，就其可追溯的源头而言，盖源起于尧、舜，而大成于西周。西周的礼乐文明制度是这一人道的公共秩序法则达于极致的典范。礼的制度是个体在生活场域中实现其“明德”的制度保证。

尤其重要的是，孔子“祖述尧舜，宪章文武”，正是经过孔子对于西周的重新发现与重新阐释，礼乐文明不仅成为中国制度文明的典范，并且以此为基原而形成了中国文化的经典文本体系。没有人会否认，“六经”是中国文化之根本政治理念、社会理想、道德理性、价值观念、生活方式、生命情调的集中体现，从而构筑起了中国文化的独特精神世界；同样没有人会否认，“六经”作为一个完整的文本体系，正是以尧舜以来直至西周的制度文明为其核心基础的。基于以上理由，我们把中国文化的“轴心期”定位在西周时期，完全是合乎历史事实的。任何一个稍微熟悉中国文化史的人都不会否认，“六经”的传承史及其解释史，实质上即为中国文化展开其精神生命的独特方式。每当时代陷入文化困

境，人们总是能从“六经”那里汲取精神源泉，为其时代别开生面而实现文化精神与价值的更生与绵延。正是“六经”在不同时代的创造性阐释，实现了中国文化之精神世界的博厚高明与悠久无疆。

三、“后轴心时代”的思想多元表述^[8]

公元前771年，西周解体，这是中国历史上最重要的事件之一。被雅斯贝斯确认为“轴心期”的公元前800年—公元前200年，相当于中国的春秋战国时代。但按照我的观点，到了这一时期，中国事实上已经历过制度文明的辉煌，而走向了“轴心期”文明的终结。然而，正如王纲解纽而国自为政一样，以礼乐为典范的制度体系、秩序规范、价值理念、伦理法则等等，也随王政制度之解体而丧失其体系化价值，时代因此而转进入自由思想家的时代。

我把春秋战国时代视为中国的自由思想家的时代，并在历史性连绵的意义上，将它阐释为中国突破“轴心期”之后步入思想上的多元格局，对不同价值进行多维探索并试图实现体系化重建的时代。正是经过春秋战国这一自由思想家的时代，以诸子学说为代表的思想体系的多元格局得以形成，并且总是成为后世思想赖以资取的源泉。尽管如此，我仍然试图表明，诸子表现形态的多样性，并不足以全然掩盖其内在原生问题关切的同一性。窃以为这一内在于诸子思想本身的原生问题，就是西周解体这一事实本身。诸子思想实质上都是以西周解体这一具有重大转折性的政治—历史事件为基本背景的，礼乐文明作为社会公共制度所实现的秩序与和谐，成为他们的共同记忆，他们不仅都内在地表达了各自关于这一重大事件的观点，并且在理论上都试图走向全局性的制度重建，我认为这正是总体上看诸子无不关注政治的根本原因，也是中国文化缘何以“古”为其价值理想的重要原因。我更要强调的是，西周的王政体制虽然解体，但必以天道为人道之所从出，凭借人道的秩序规范来体现天道的崇高，把人群的公共生活展开为秩序与和谐。一句话，社会人群的公共生活必须体现出“道”的本原性秩序，天下有道，则实在是诸子所共同的基础理念与价值指向。简单地说，诸子不同的思想体系，根本上都可以视为“道”的重建方式。就此而言，则诸子思想面貌的多样性，正是中国文化走出“轴心期”的统一之后实现其自身绵延的方式。从历史的“后见之明”来看，这种“一致而百虑”的多样性，正是中国文化之所以具有宏大的开放性与包容性，并且能在坚持自身文化主体性的基础上，对外来文化进行同化与重构的根本原因。

《汉书·艺文志》有著名的“诸子出于王官说”，即所谓“儒家者流，盖出于司徒之官”，“道家者流，盖出于史官”，“阴阳家者流，盖出于羲和之官”，“法家者流，盖出于理官”，“墨家者流，盖出于清庙之守”云云。我们大可不必全信《汉书·艺文志》的“诸子出于王官”之说^①，但我同时认为，由于西周解体是诸子学派出现的共同背景，试图对西周“王道”进行重新建构则是诸子的共同目的，因此在某种意义上，认为他们有一个共同的统一起源也并非不可。就此而言，则《汉书·艺文志》“诸子皆起于王道既微，诸侯力政”之说，窃以为是完全符合事实的。基于源起的统一性，《汉书·艺文志》进一步认为：“其言虽殊，辟犹水火，相灭亦相生也；仁之与义，敬之与和，相反而皆相成也。《易》曰‘天

^① 关于这一问题，现代学术史上曾有过非常激烈的讨论。章太炎先生在《诸子学略说》中肯定了“诸子出于王官”的说法，随即胡适撰《诸子不出于王官论》，对太炎的观点提出批评，顾颉刚等“古史辨派”大抵赞同胡适的观点。最近中国社科院陈静教授认为，刘歆、班固的“诸子出于王官论”，“并非追溯诸子的历史起源，而是在统一文化的背景下安顿彼此相异的诸子思想并定位其意义”，“因此，即使诸子就先秦史实而言并不出于王官，也否定不了汉代的‘诸子出于王官’说，因为这是两个问题”。某种意义上代表了关于这一老问题的新见解。详见陈静：《大一统观念下的“诸子出于王官”说》，《哲学动态》2022年第2期。

下同归而殊途，一致而百虑’，今异家者各推所长，穷知究虑，以明其指，虽有蔽短，合其要归，亦六经之支与流裔。”虽其言说显得颇为囫圇，但究其详意，却正揭示了这一自由思想家时代的基本面貌，虽言人人殊，实质上却贯穿着某种统一主题，比如都蕴含着以社会政治为中心的秩序建构与价值建构的共同关切。其实早在撰写《老子研读》时我就指出：“我一向所坚持的观点，是西周王政制度的崩解乃是春秋诸子所共同面临的基本时代语境，重建制度的秩序而‘超出混战’，则是自春秋以至战国诸子思想的共同关切，虽诸子的思想面貌各不相同，但其中是存在着文化内涵上的内在统一性的。‘道’的寻求是贯穿于春秋诸子思潮之中的一个公共话题。”^①诚然，西周王政制度在事实上的解体，正是诸子蜂起的根本时代原因，《庄子·天下》篇谓诸子皆“一曲之士”，“察焉以自好”，“判天地之美，析万物之理”，于是乎“道术将为天下裂”，那么反过去说，“道术”是曾经有其整全未裂而体现为“天地之纯”的时代的，所以说：“古之人其备乎！配神明，醇天地，育万物，和天下，泽及百姓，明于本数，系于末度，六通四辟，小大精粗，其运无乎不在。其明而在数度者，旧法世传之史尚多有之，其在于《诗》《书》《礼》《乐》者，邹鲁之士、搢绅先生多能明之。”^②这里的“邹鲁之士、搢绅先生”，窃以为其实即是孔子。以孔子为代表的儒家得先代道法之大备，看来这一点是同时被儒家、道家所肯认的。儒家是尧、舜以来直至西周而至于完备的制度规范、价值体系、文明理念的完整继承者。西周“郁郁乎文”的人道秩序是制度所实现的，这从根源上决定了儒家必然寄天下文明的理想于公共制度建设，这既是儒家关注现实政治的真正原因，也是儒家的个体总是试图投身于“为政”的思想根源。在“为政以德”的一般倡导之下，以个体心身一元的完整性与统一性出现于社会公共领域的全部交往场域，便必然成为儒家关于个体全人格体现的本质要求，并且这一人格要求是同时被清楚明白地确认为“为政”的必要条件的，正因此故，个体的“修身”成为“为政”的必要前提，“为政”成为“明德”的实现方式。尽管儒家对作为社会公共生活制度的礼乐文明持有最为清晰而美好的记忆，但“轴心期”的辉煌已然过去，处于“无道”的世界，个体能做且又最值得做的，便是为自我的现实生活立法，把曾经的礼乐文明制度转换为个体的心灵秩序，通过心灵秩序的行为转化，来实现社会共同体之公共生活秩序的重建。窃以为这一点在孔、孟、荀那里其实都是一致的，只不过孔子在强调心灵秩序之自我奠基并将之转换为统一的生活态度与方式的同时^③，强调了社会作为生活共同体之公共制度建设的重要性与必要性，这只能是通过“为政”来实现的，因此政治活动的根本任务即是实现制度的公共建设，通过制度的公开实践来实现包括道德伦理价值在内的全部生活价值。充分强调道不仅是个体心灵秩序的根本依据，并且也必须是社会公共生活制度的根本依据，正是儒家最为重要的根本思想特征。儒家也因此而成为以西周礼乐文明制度为核心的“轴心期”文化的典范继承者及其价值体现者。

但以老子为代表的道家则与此不同。如若按照《史记》的记载，通常被认为著“言道德之意五千余言”的老聃，原是周代的“守藏室之史”，他对西周的制度辉煌比孔子有更直接的体会，而对其全面崩塌所带来的价值失落也有更为清晰的洞察，因此似乎便不再寄希望于政治制度的公共建设，或者把道作为“一”的原始同一性转换为生活规范的“琐碎”，因为在他看来，把绝对实在者之“道”的本原实在性转换为公共制度，哪怕做得再精致，本质上也都是对道之“一”的支离与割裂，在现实性上是必不可免地陷入不可自拔的困境，在《老子研读》中，我把老子所特别阐明的这种困境称之为“价值逆转”。正是基于“价值逆转”的直接洞达，老子似乎站到了儒家的对立面，否定伦理道德公开制度化

① “超出混战”是罗曼·罗兰语。详见董平：《老子研读》，北京：中华书局，2015年，第6页。

② 郭庆藩：《天下》，《庄子集释》卷十下，王孝鱼点校，北京：中华书局，1981年，第1067页。

③ 我认为这一点最显著地体现于“志于道，据于德，依于仁，游于艺”的整体阐释。见朱熹：《论语集注》，《四书章句集注》，第94页。

的意义与价值，所谓“天下皆知善之为善斯不善矣”。但我同时强调，老子所否定的其实是把道转换为制度的做法，而实质上并不否定由道所标志的价值本身，包括仁义礼智在内。正因此故，老子同样始终保持了对政治秩序进行重建的深切愿望，所谓“无为而无不为”，正体现为其根本的政治原则。由老子所引导出来的道作为存在的绝对性及其价值的绝对性，到了庄子那里，倒是发生了观行上的真正转变，道被更为直接地转换成了个体存在的本原法则。在庄子那里，个体是能够通过其精神实质上的与道同一，而直接实现出道的绝对价值及其崇高的超越性，而不必非要借助于人的群体生活的制度设置才能实现出道的绝对性价值。由于道的存在是无限广域的，因此在庄子那里，正是这一无限广域的存在场，使个体的存在超越了其类的界限而转进入宇宙万物一体圆成的自由之境。

至于墨家，虽然孟子之后力主“距杨墨”，甚至认为“杨墨之道不息，孔子之道不著，是邪说诬民，充塞仁义也。仁义充塞，则率兽食人，人将相食”^①，真可谓危言耸听！若仔细想来，所谓“杨朱为我，拔一毛以利天下不为”“墨子兼爱，摩顶放踵利天下为之”，他们的主张虽与儒家不同，但真还不至于势同水火。就墨子而言，他与儒家的最大差异，其实是关于仁义实践之起点各有不同的预置而已。儒家坚持仁义必从亲亲始，也即必须把家庭作为仁义实践的初始场域，而墨子坚持人既然是在社会人群当中使自己成为人的，那么就必须把人的社会性本质贯彻到底，落实于社会存在的公共性之中，而不必讲究所谓父慈子孝为本。后世关于儒墨相同的最著名论说，应当来自于韩愈，“儒墨同是尧舜，同非桀纣，同修身正心以治天下国家”，表明他们的理论目的是全然一致的，既然如此，那么儒墨之间的相互非难，就不是来自于其学说本身，而是其后学的夸大其词，“余以为辩生于末学，各务售其师之说，非二师之道本然也”；既然其学说之同是基本实况，那么儒墨就必能相须为用，“孔子必用墨子，墨子必用孔子。不相用，不足为孔墨”^②。韩愈尽管关于儒墨之同的见解是卓越的，但所谓“不相用不足为孔墨”的观点却是不切实际的。这其中的根本原因，除了上面我说的墨子关于仁义实践的初始场域与人的生命成长实际状况不相符合以外，在理论上，墨子不同的主要理论之间实有其内在的逻辑冲突，如既谓“天志”真实存在便不应“非命”，既须“明鬼”便不应“节葬”，王充早就指明了这一点，认为汉代以来之所以儒传而墨废，是因为“儒之道义可为，而墨之法议难从”，何以故？“墨家薄葬、右鬼，道乖相反，违其实，宜以难从也。”^③这样看来，墨子实质上是堕入了另一种意义上的功利主义：只要能为社会补偏救弊，哪怕牺牲理论自身的完整性也在所不辞。不过这样我们正可以从中看出，根源于西周解体而试图重整社会生活的公共秩序，试图通过个体仁义的实践来导出公共伦理与社会道德，如韩愈所说的“修身正心以治天下国家”，确乎为儒墨之所同。

法家的出现在战国中后期，实以商君、韩非为典型代表。虽然法家思想也可谓渊源有自并且体系完备，但我仍然认为，就国家治理观点的体系化表达而言，法家实在是儒学的一种蜕变形式。处于战国中晚期，西周礼乐制度的回归事实上已经不可能了，所以当儒、道、墨诸家皆在不同意义上主张“法古”，法家则断然提出“不法古”的主张。商鞅说：“圣人不法古，不修今。法古则后于时，修今者塞于势。周不法商，夏不法虞，三代异势而皆可以王。”^④“不法古”看似为“更法”的合理性张本，实则割断了历史的绵延，否定了历史本身作为行为合理性之借鉴的价值。法家颇有傲视古今的气概，恐与这种历史观有莫大关系。既然历史是可以割断的，治国既无须“法古”，也不必“修今”，那么治国实

① 朱熹：《孟子集注》，《四书章句集注》，272页。

② 韩愈：《读墨子》，《韩昌黎文集校注》，马其昶校注，马茂元整理，上海：上海古籍出版社，1986年，第40页。

③ 黄晖：《案书篇》，《论衡校释》卷二十九，北京：中华书局，1990年，第1161页。

④ 蒋礼鸿：《开塞》，《商君书锥指》卷二，北京：中华书局，1986年，第53—54页。

质上就成为统治者纯粹功利的个人行为，正是这一点决定了法家眼中的统治者或君主不可能与群臣共享政治理念，遑论一般民众！臣与民都是统治的对象，只不过有层次差别而已。商鞅说：“国之所以治者三：一曰法，二曰信，三曰权。法者，君臣之所共操也；信者，君臣之所共立也；权者，君之所独制也。”^①显而易见，在法家那里，“治国”被清楚明白地转换成了“治臣”“治民”，所以“权”是一定不能丢失且必须牢牢把握的，是君之所“独制”的，即所谓“专权”。如果商鞅的“法”“信”还保留了些许所谓君臣“共操”“共立”之意的话，那么到了韩非那里，连这一点共性也彻底丧失了。韩非关于治国、治天下的根本大计，所谓法、术、势而已。“法”以其公开性治民，“术”以其隐秘性治臣，“势”则是事实上可以操弄“法”“术”的权力。“君执柄以处势，故令行禁止。柄者，杀生之制也；势者，胜众之资也。”^②正是经过法家的这一“发展”，治国成了君主个人操持权力的活动。尽管法家与儒家有种种同异，在此也无法详述，但我必须指明的一点是，在儒家那里，天下之治是通过社会公共生活的秩序化来体现的，而秩序化本身则是礼的制度规范的结果；由于礼的制度体系具有公开性，因此不论是天子还是庶民，都必须公开地、恰当地履行其名分；天子必须成为循礼的典范，而不具有超越于礼之制度的特权。儒家所坚持的政治活动的制度化及其公开性、公共性、共享性，被法家消解殆尽，而使政治活动蜕变为统治者保持其特权的“主术”。韩非子同时还接过老子“无为而无不为”之说，却将其意义表述为君无为而臣无不为，于是构想了“中央集权”体制，即所谓“事在四方，要在中央，圣人执要，四方来效”^③。“圣人执要”，即是君主居于“中央”而集中掌握控制四方的权力，“四方来效”则是由集权所实现的对于四方掌控的结果。在韩非那里，这正是君主可能实现治国、治天下的根本有效方式。

上面所略及的儒、墨、道、法四家，我视之为自由思想家时代最为显著与重要的四大学派，代表了诸子时代所达成的最高思想成就，也是中国文化走出“轴心期”之后，基于西周王政解体这一重大政治事件的反思与批判，试图实现与政治制度以及一般意义上的公共生活秩序重建之不同方式的体系化思考。他们事实上构成了此后中国思想发展的基本底色。就本文的研究主旨而言，我这里更要指出的是，诸多不同的关于如何重建社会公共秩序的思想探索，不论其表面上以及事实上的差别有多大，贯穿于其中的“道”“圣人”“天下”等理念的共性（尽管其实际意义可能各不相同），正在某种程度上提示了诸子思想从诞生之根源的同一性。按我个人的理解，诸子思想从诞生的同一性根源，即是已然解构了的西周制度。礼乐制度虽已解体，但这一制度曾经实现了天下大治的辉煌，是中国的“轴心期”文明给后世留下最为巨大的公共遗产。诸子思想的不同表达形式，就其实质而言，不论对“先王”及其制度是赞颂还是批评，都是对于这一公共思想—文化遗产的不同继承方式。正因如此，诸子在不同面向与维度上所做的关于秩序重建的思考，同样成为此后文化建构必须资取的思想源泉。

四、突破“轴心期”的制度重建之路^[10]

西周王政体制的解体，除上面约略所及的思想多元重构的面向以外，某种意义上更为直接而又对此后的全部历史影响最为深重的，显然体现在政治制度的重建。“轴心期”解构之后的中国制度重建

① 蒋礼鸿：《修权》，《商君书锥指》卷三，第82页。

② 韩非子：《八经》，王先慎：《韩非子集解》卷十八，钟哲点校，北京：中华书局，1998年，第431页。

③ 韩非子：《扬权》，王先慎：《韩非子集解》卷二，钟哲点校，第44页。

之路，呈现出颇为曲折的历史过程。

齐宣王问曰：“齐桓、晋文之事可得闻乎？”孟子对曰：“仲尼之徒无道桓、文之事者，是以后世无传焉，臣未之闻也。”^①孟子或许是把“王”“霸”全然置于对立面的第一人。孟子处于战国中晚期，“王道”经历了长久的“价值沉淀”而愈加显得醇厚，愈加映衬出现实世界之无道的浇薄，所以孟子说：“五霸者，三王之罪人也。今之诸侯，五霸之罪人也。”^②尽管孟子对现实施行批判的初衷无疑是大中至正的，但他似乎把战国时代愈演愈烈的无道状况归因于“五霸”，而得出“五霸”为“三王”之罪人，今之诸侯又为“五霸”之罪人的结论。我要大胆地指出，孟子这一归因是未必然的，而他所谓“仲尼之徒无道桓、文之事者”，则是全然不符合实际的。但正是在孟子的引导之下，这一讲法就成为儒家的“惯例”，如荀子说：“仲尼之门人，五尺之竖子言羞称乎五伯，是何也？曰：然，彼诚可羞称也！齐桓，五伯之盛者也。”^③董仲舒是主张“仁人者正其道不谋其利，修其理不急其功”的，所以也说“仲尼之门，五尺之童子，言羞称五伯，为其诈以成功，苟为而已也，故不足称于大君子之门”^④。儒家因此也就有了“王霸之辨”的传统，“尊王贱霸”则体现为一种清晰的价值选择。

然而事实上，齐桓、晋文之事，尤其是前者，曾极为孔子所重视，“仲尼之徒无道桓、文之事者”不是事实。孔子曾明确表达过他关于齐桓、晋文的总观点：“晋文公谲而不正，齐桓公正而不谲。”^⑤齐桓公之“正而不谲”，很大程度上是与管仲有关的，因此在《论语》中，孔子与弟子有过多次关于管仲的讨论。《论语·八佾》：“子曰：‘管仲之器小哉！’或曰：‘管仲俭乎？’曰：‘管氏有三归，官事不摄，焉得俭？’然则管仲知礼乎？’曰：‘邦君树塞门，管氏亦树塞门。邦君为两君之好，有反坫，管氏亦有反坫。管氏而知礼，孰不知礼？’”^⑥管仲“器小”、生活奢侈而不俭、不知礼，这样的管仲，应当是距离孔子所说的“仁”很遥远的，但是孔子却肯定管仲是个仁人。《论语·宪问》：“子路曰：‘桓公杀公子纠，召忽死之，管仲不死，曰：未仁乎！’子曰：‘桓公九合诸侯，不以兵车，管仲之力也。如其仁！如其仁！’”“子贡曰：‘管仲非仁者与！桓公杀公子纠，不能死，又相之。’子曰：‘管仲相桓公，霸诸侯，一匡天下，民到于今受其赐。微管仲，吾其被发左衽矣！岂若匹夫匹妇之为谅也？自经于沟渎而莫之知也。’”^⑦孔子关于管仲“如其仁”的肯定，实为其超出流俗的非凡卓越之见。齐桓公“九合诸侯，一匡天下”，体现了“尊王攘夷”这一基本文化主题，保持了华夏文明传承的统一性，使“中国”所体现的文化与价值得以绵延，从而使西周礼乐制度所体现的王道精神得以赓续，而避免使“中国”变为“夷狄”，所以说“民到于今受其赐”。“微管仲，吾其被发左衽矣”，正是对管仲保持了华夏文化传承统绪之历史功绩的充分肯定，而亦正是在这一意义上，管仲“如其仁，如其仁”。孔子之所以谓管仲“器小”，朱熹的解释倒是很能够说明问题：“器小，言其不知圣贤大学之道，故局量褊浅、规模卑狭，不能正身修德以致主于王道。”^⑧换句话说，管仲在当时应有条件重新实现对于西周礼乐制度的重建，使王道重现于天下，而不应只局限于“霸”。不过以历史的“后见之明”来看，管仲事实上还未来得及实现由“霸”而向“王”的转变。

① 朱熹：《孟子集注》，《四书章句集注》，第207页。

② 朱熹：《孟子集注》，《四书章句集注》，第343页。

③ 荀子：《仲尼篇第七》，王先谦：《荀子集解》卷三，沈啸寰、王星贤点校，北京：中华书局，1988年，第105—106页。

④ 苏舆：《春秋繁露义证》卷九，钟哲点校，北京：中华书局，1992年，第268页。

⑤ 朱熹：《论语集注》，《四书章句集注》，第153页。

⑥ 朱熹：《论语集注》，《四书章句集注》，第67页。

⑦ 朱熹：《论语集注》，《四书章句集注》，第153页。

⑧ 朱熹：《论语集注》，《四书章句集注》，第67页。

齐桓公或管仲的时代，是王政崩解而霸政初起之时，最为典型地体现了“霸政”的实际状况。霸者，把也，把持之意。窃以为“霸”这一名称就清楚地包含了这一政治形态的“临时”性质，它清楚地传达了这样一种信息，即当王政趋于解体之际，为免于天下分崩离析而权且为之把持。把持的资本则在于国富兵强，至少在管仲那里，通过国富兵强而实现“霸”，继而由“霸”而转向“王”，终究实现“道”，这一政治思路是清晰的。“仓廩实则知礼节，衣食足则知荣辱”，是他关于民众日常生活状况的总判断；而由此也显然可见，“仓廩实”“衣食足”不过是“知礼节”“知荣辱”的途径与方法，唯“知礼节”“知荣辱”才是目的。正因如此，管仲清晰阐明，唯礼义廉耻四者才是治国之“四维”，“守国之度，在饬四维”，“四维不张，国乃灭亡”^①。“四维”为“守国之度”，也即“四维”是实现国家政治的基本法则，由此同样显然可见，管仲的治国理念其实与西周凭借礼乐制度而实现天下和平并无不同，只不过因“王纲解纽”，需要先行实现富国强兵以把持天下，进而转向重整“王纲”，重现“王道”而已。管仲是完全继承了西周礼乐制度之下的“亲民”理念的，认为“政之所兴在顺民心，政之所废在逆民心”^②，所以真正能实现天下之治的，不是君主，而是“道”。所谓政治，不过是以“道”导民所达成的状态，故曰：“道也者，上之所以导民也。”^③“治民有常道，而生财有常法。道也者，万物之要也。……故君一国者，其道君之也；王天下者，其道王之也。大王天下，小君一国，其道临之也。”^④管仲的这些关于政治的观念，窃以为全然与西周制度相合，这也许正是孔子之所以谓“齐桓公正而不谲”的缘故。按照我个人的观点，由管仲所实施的“霸政”，其实是在“王政”崩解之际，试图通过富国强兵以把持天下，进而重整制度，再度实现如西周那样的制度辉煌。简言之，管仲意义上的“霸”，乃是“王”的一种权宜形式，它们根本的政治目的是一致的。正是在这一意义上，不能把“霸政”视为“王政”的背叛，而应视为对“王政”进行挽救的权变形式，由“霸”是可以达于“王”的。就本文的论旨而言，管仲的“霸政”，则代表了西周制度解体之后，对于如何重建制度的第一期探索。

随着管仲与齐桓公的去世，齐国的“霸政”随之失败。由“霸”而之“王”成了一种“遥远”的想望，其“富国强兵”的权宜却为各国所效法，由此而转向愈演愈烈的“争霸”。“霸”的原始含义在“争霸”的过程中发生了巨大改变，因此也在观念上走向与“王”的对立。秦王嬴政最终实现了天下一统，成为“霸”在后世的代表，也似乎验证了“霸”的现实有效性。但特别值得关注的是，秦的统一不是尧舜以来所谓“王道”的胜利，不是以“从周”为志向的儒学的胜利，而是以商君、韩非为代表的法家思想的胜利。“郡县制”取代“封建制”，单从政治制度的整体建置而言，确实是一次另辟蹊径的转折，而不体现为历史统一性绵延意义上的“因革损益”，因此它实质上乃是对西周“王政”的抛弃，是与礼乐制度实现决裂的形式。秦为“水德”的确认表明，秦始皇是自以为周的克制者的，“始皇推终始五德之传，以为周得火德，秦代周德，从所不胜。方今水德之始”（《史记·秦始皇本纪》），而所谓“皇帝”的自拟称号也表明，他自以为做到了“海内为郡县，法令由一统，自上古以来未尝有，五帝所不及”（《史记·秦始皇本纪》），故司马迁论之，而谓“始皇自以为功过五帝，地广三王，而羞与之侔”（《史记·秦始皇本纪》）。虽然邹衍的“五德终始说”往往被今天的人们认为不过是“谈天衍”的夸夸其谈而已，但当战国秦汉之际，它实际上代表了一种历史的观念或“历史哲学”，虚妄学说背后所体现的历

① 管子：《牧民》，黎翔凤：《管子校注》卷一，梁运华整理，北京：中华书局，2004年，第3页。按：“饬”，通行本作“饰”。俞樾曰：“礼义廉耻非由修饰，‘饰’当读为饬。”（参见郭沫若、闻一多、许维通：《管子集校》，北京：科学出版社，1956年，第3页）

② 管子：《牧民》，黎翔凤：《管子校注》卷一，梁运华整理，第13页。

③ 管子：《君臣上》，黎翔凤：《管子校注》卷十，梁运华整理，第551页。

④ 管子：《君臣上》，黎翔凤：《管子校注》卷十，梁运华整理，第563页。

史观念却是真实的。正是基于这一历史观念，秦始皇清楚明白地宣示：他是周制的克制者、战胜者、颠覆者，故凡周制之所倡导，皆为秦制之所反对，甚至为防止“处士横议”而“箝语烧书”（《汉书·异姓诸侯王表》），“燔灭文章，以愚黔首”（《汉书·艺文志》），是即所谓“焚书坑儒”。孔安国云：“及秦始皇灭先代典籍，焚书坑儒，天下学士逃难解散。”^①“焚书坑儒”是一个具有重大文化象征意义的事件，它所传达的信息是清楚的：秦始皇不仅在政治制度上，并且在思想文化上皆为西周的颠覆者，他由此而开创了新历史。尧舜以来所建立、至西周而趋于完备的礼乐制度及其所代表的文明与文化价值理念，皆因秦制的建立及其毁灭先代典籍的实际行为而发生了传承意义上的历史性断裂。^②

嬴政希望由他所新创的这一体制能传之无穷，“朕为始皇帝，后世以计数，二世、三世至于万世，传之无穷”（《史记·秦始皇本纪》）。但事实上，秦朝统一不过十几年之后，即因陈胜、吴广的起义而覆灭。继而起的汉，如何界定它与秦朝的关系，成为当时一项特别的政治任务。所谓“汉承秦制”，主要是指对于郡县制的沿袭以树立君主权威，正所谓“汉承秦制，改立郡县，主有专己之威，臣无百年之柄”（《后汉书·班彪列传》），而不是就汉对于秦的政治历史关系而言。要厘清这一关系，就当时的“历史哲学”而论，则应明确汉居于何德。但正是在这一问题上，汉代有过多次反复。顾颉刚先生说：“当汉高帝成功之后，他自以为始立黑帝祠而居于水德。这不知道他是否因秦的国祚太短而不承认为一德，要使自己直接了周，还是有别的用意？到文帝时，有人出来反对，说汉革秦命，应以土德代水德，丞相张苍就驳道，‘河决金堤，就是汉为水德的符应’。此后虽因种种原因，改为土德，又改为火德，但在汉初的四十余年是坐定了水德的。”^③按照我个人的理解，汉究竟属于何德，前后出现的水德、土德、火德等不同说法，其实正是汉代本身与周、秦之政治历史关系的自我认知出现反复变化的体现。

与前代的政治历史关系，作为一种观念意识，显然会直接表达于现实的政治决策乃至制度之中，而成为意识形态的一部分。汉初的实际情况不可能主动承续西周的礼乐文明制度，更不可能采取

① 阮元校刻：《尚书正义》，《十三经注疏》，第115页。

② 今人似乎更多地认同秦朝的郡县制，认为郡县制体现了“公”，而西周封建制则是“私”的体现。窃以为这或许是以今日观念回望历史而产生的一种“联想性”误会。西周封建虽以宗法为基础，但礼乐文明制度的施行，“其旨则在纳上下于道德，而合天子、诸侯、卿、大夫、士、庶民以成一道德之团体”（王国维语），正因此故，社会（或天下）治理的实现是依赖于礼乐制度的公共性与公开性的。最显著的一点，天子不仅被纳入于制度之中，并且他被要求必须成为制度执行的典范，他并不具有超越于制度之外的特权。正是在礼乐文明制度的共相管理之下，“天下和平”一方面可以说是礼乐制度所实现的结果，另一方面也可以说是天子与诸侯共治天下所实现的结果。而在秦制之下，郡县的设置虽未必体现“宗法”，但郡县的管理者皆由中央（皇帝）委派，实质上正是以天下为一人之私产，“视天下为莫大之产业”（黄宗羲语）的表现。故秦制虽号为“法治”，实则仅以“法”治民，而作为郡县管理者的官僚阶层实质上并不在“法”的体制之内，而受制于皇帝之“术”。“法”以公开治民，“术”以潜御群臣，而皇帝则专“法”“术”二者之“势”，他既不受“法”的束缚，也不受“术”的约束，却拥有操弄“法”“术”的特权（“势”），是为“专制”。与此相对，西周的制度“礼乐刑政”四者兼备，所谓天下大治或共同体之公共生活秩序的普遍实现，需要天子、诸侯以及民众的共相参与，因此在以礼乐制度为政的观念之下，必以“明德”“亲民”为尚，一道德而美风俗，则成为一种政治的理想状态。而在秦制的所谓“郡县”之下，民仅仅被视为“治”的对象，政治被简单地归结为对于民众的治理。商鞅甚至说：“民胜法国乱，法胜民兵强。故曰：以良民治必乱至削，以奸民治必治至强。”（蒋礼鸿：《说民》，《商君书锥指》卷二，第36页）公开认为要视民为“奸民”才能达到“治至强”的目的，这在儒家那里是完全不可能的。礼乐制度具有将包括天子、民众在内的社会共同体的全体成员皆纳入制度体系的普遍性，清楚传达了制度的公开性与公共性，窃以为反而更具有现代意义上的法制精神，因此也更加具有值得尊重的现代性。

③ 顾颉刚：《汉代学术史略》，北京：东方出版社，1996年，第3—4页。按：《史记·封禅书》中记载，汉高帝曾斩大蛇，是为白帝之子，而杀者赤帝子。刘邦立为汉王，则以十月为岁首，旗帜尚赤，则似以火德自居。平项籍之后，入关，见秦时“上帝祠”有青、赤、黄、白四帝，无黑帝，刘邦曰：“吾知之矣，乃待我而具五也。”于是立黑帝祠。至此，则汉显然又以水德自居。汉文帝十三年（前167），鲁人公孙臣上书，认为：“始秦得水德，今汉受之，推终始传，则汉当土德。”这是从“土克水”的“相克”关系来推导汉当为土德，但丞相张苍以为“汉乃水德之始，故河决金堤，其符也”。两年之后，即汉文帝十五年（前165），黄龙见于成纪县，文帝召公孙臣，拜为博士，差点就要改正朔、易服色，居于土德了，但又因事而耽搁。稍后贾谊也提出，汉代秦当以土德王，色尚黄，数用五（《史记·屈原贾生列传》），也未被采信。直到汉武帝时，西汉为土德才算确定下来。但王莽时，又把汉改为火德。

儒学以为政治理念。^①刘邦极度蔑视儒生，见儒生辄痛骂，甚至于取儒冠而溲溺其中，这些极端行为不只是其所谓性格粗豪的体现，并且在我看来，足以表明他实际上正为秦制之意识形态的“无意识”的继承者。正因此故，刘邦实际上是既没有继承周制的主观意愿，同样也没有改革秦制的主观愿望。因此在政制上、法律上、观念上，以及一般价值形态上的因循，成为刘邦时代的最显著特征。

因循的另一方面是尽可能实现社会整体局势的安稳，而这也促成了“无为而治”思想的兴起，由此而催动黄老之学的流行。黄老道家思想成为惠帝之后，尤其是文帝、景帝时期的主流思想形态，实为当时国家意识形态的集中体现。“文景之治”的实现，在某种意义与程度上证明了崇尚自然无为的道家学说，确实是可以作为政治的主导思想并达成其对于社会进行有效治理之目的。不过当时的实际情形是，自高祖以来，经惠帝、吕后、文帝、景帝，虽然社会渐趋稳定，秦制严苛的文化政策有所松动，思想渐趋自由，文景时期物质财富的增量也达到了惊人的程度，但汉朝本身的自我历史定位始终未明，政治的意识形态并未确立，社会的一般价值规范体系仍付之阙如。正如班固所说，到了武帝时，“汉兴六十余载，海内艾安，府库充实，而四夷未宾，制度多阙”（《汉书·公孙弘卜式兒宽传》），这正是武帝“罢黜百家”而重启周政的实际背景，班固对此论述甚详：“汉承百王之弊，高祖拨乱反正，文、景务在养民，至于稽古礼文之事，犹多阙焉。孝武初立，卓然罢黜百家，表章六经，遂畴咨海内，举其俊茂，与之立功。兴太学，修郊祀，改正朔，定历数，协音律，作诗乐，建封禪，礼百神，绍周后，号令文章，焕焉可述。后嗣得遵洪业，而有三代之风。”（《汉书·武帝纪》）

“轴心期”之后为实现制度突破所经历的种种曲折，至此告一段落，也可以说已经基本完成了。春秋初期齐桓公、管仲的“霸政”，试图以国富兵强为现实凭据而实现对于天下的把持，继而转进入天下公共秩序之重建，重现西周王道的制度辉煌，但随着管仲与桓公的去世，由“霸”而转进于“王”的制度重建之路瞬间成为历史陈迹，只为“春秋一梦”而已。嬴政实现天下统一的指导思想是商、韩法家之说，郡县制既在法家思想指导之下得以建立，同样也成为贯彻法家主张最为得力的制度，它与西周的礼乐制度全不相侔，因此秦制的建立，事实上造成了文明绵延意义上的历史断裂。汉初为休养生息而因循秦制，由此而推助了黄老之学的流行，成为当时以因循为基调的格局之下的基本政治理念，虽然有“文景之治”的巨大成就，但汉朝自身的政治历史定位并未真正明确。武帝时定汉为“土德”，在历史观念上算是厘清了与秦的边界，于是一反秦制之所为，“罢黜百家”，“诸不在六艺之科、孔子之术者，皆绝其道，勿使并进”（《汉书·董仲舒传》），儒学自此成为构造国家意识形态的核心。正是在这一意义上，汉武帝时代对于儒学的尊崇，立五经于学官，实质上乃是汉朝实现了对于自我政治一历史地位的重新衡定，秦制被超越，而实现了在为政理念以及社会价值体系上对于西周礼乐制度的重新接续。有趣的是，到了西汉末，关于汉代之“德”的问题再起波澜。刘向、刘歆重新解释出了五行之生德的一面，于是周被重新衡定的木德，木生火，故汉为火德；这一观点曾被王莽利用为篡汉的舆论工具，但王莽败后，汉为火德之说仍然被保存了下来。在这一火德的传统中，秦被挤入“闰统”，而汉则直接于周后。我更想表明的是，“五德终始”之说虽然荒谬不经，但由它所透露出来的历史观念却是重要的。汉为火德的最终确立，实质上是基于秦制的历史性反思以及汉代的政治实践，要求重归西周的礼乐文明制度，以之为政治之根本价值理念的历史潮流的体现。儒学之登上政治舞台，成为意识形态的结构中心，成为社会在舆论上所倡导的公共价值体系，是经由历史淘汰、鉴别、抉择的结果。

^① 众所周知的一个重要原因，是刘邦本人的粗俗及其对于儒学的蔑视。如《史记·酈生陆贾列传》载：“沛公不好儒，诸客冠儒冠来者，沛公辄解其冠，溲溺其中。与人言，常大骂。”陆贾曾因在刘邦面前讽诵诗书而遭到刘邦的痛骂：“陆生时时前说，称《诗》《书》，高帝骂之曰：‘乃公居马上而得之，安事《诗》《书》？’陆生曰：‘居马上得之，宁可以马上治之乎？且汤、武逆取而以顺守之，文武并用，长久之术也。’”

然而,很坦率地说,秦制虽然在“五德终始”的历史解释中被克服了、超越了,被归入“闰统”了,但它事实上并没有退出政治制度的历史舞台。史载,尚在东宫的汉元帝“柔仁好儒,见宣帝所用多文法吏,以刑名绳下,大臣杨恽、盖宽饶等坐刺讥辞语为罪而诛”,于是借“侍燕”之机,从容言曰:“陛下持刑太深,宜用儒生”,而汉宣帝作色曰:“汉家自有制度,本以霸王道杂之,奈何纯任德教,用周政乎!”(《汉书·元帝纪》)所谓“霸王道杂之”,“霸”实指秦制,而“王”则是周制,两相杂糅,是为“汉制”。这一“霸王道杂之”体现在具体的行政建置上,则是以“封建”来安顿皇族以及所谓有功之臣,而对“天下”则行“郡县”。事实表明,这两种性质全然不同之制度的强行捏合,几乎不可避免地存在着制度隐患,却为后代部分王朝所效法。同样的,为适应这种“霸王道杂之”的制度安排,儒学虽然在显著的意义上被标榜为政治制度所依据的观念体系,并且为政治所应实现的价值形态,但在这一显著面向的底层,以法、术、势为核心的法家之学,毕竟更能迎合统治者的个人私欲,也因此而从未从古代的政治意识形态中消退。

五、结论^[13]

基于本文的以上论述,谨简述基本结论如次。

1. 虽然雅斯贝斯的“轴心期”理论对史学界影响巨大,它的确在很大程度上揭示了人类文明某种可能的、跨区域边界的共性,但雅氏所厘定的“轴心期”(公元前800年—公元前200年)并不合乎中国历史文明进展之实况,中国文化的“轴心时代”是西周(公元前1046年—公元前771年)。西周充分体现了尧、舜以来之文化理念及其价值的历史绵延。礼乐文明作为体系完备的“制度综合”,是原天道以彰显人道、人为自我生活立法的典型明证,是“自然法”与“社会法”在人的现实生存境况中达成其相互统一的典型明证。正由于天道被转换成了人道,故天道至上的存在性是通过人的实践活动来显化并证成的;正由于人道的活动是至上天道的转换形态,故人道秩序及其意义与价值是由天道来保证的,并也因此而具有不可逾越的神圣性。礼作为制度即是这一意义上的“天人合一”的产物。因此在社会共同体之中,它具有统摄全部公共生活规范的普遍性,是包括天子在内的社会共同体所有成员得以公开表达并实现其言论、行为之正当性的制度保证,因此也是大中至正之社会公义与人道价值的制度保证。在这一意义上,西周是以社会的公共制度来确保人的存在及其价值实现的,堪为制度文明的典范。西周解体之后,孔子“祖述尧舜,宪章文武”,自觉地接续、保存了尧舜以来直至西周通过制度而被显化出来的、以天人之道同一为基础的价值体系,西周礼乐也因此代表了儒学理想的、充分体现了人道价值的政治制度建构。以“六经”为骨干的经典体系,实质上即是中国“轴心文明”之制度与价值的文本载体。在“六经”义理的历史展开之中,西周成为一个永远值得回溯的对象,它总能提供现实政治与人道状况的理想参照,而为现实困境的解除与文化理念的更新提供内源性动力。

2. 西周解体,也即“轴心文明”终结,这一独特“事件”成为思想与时代相碰撞而激发起一系列思想探索与制度实践的现实原因。实际上,正是这一系列的思想表达与制度重建,构成了“轴心文明”终结之后,试图通过“轴心文明”之价值重建以实现历史性突破的基本景象。诸子百家的出现总体上都是对西周解体或“轴心文明”终结这一重大事件的理论反思与思想回应,并为政治制度重建提供策略。政治制度的探索性重建,则事实上展开为一系列的政治实践活动。春秋早期以齐桓公、管仲为代表的“霸政”,是西周“王政”崩解之后的一种“替代性”的权宜形式,其思路是由“霸”而转进于

“王”，以实现“轴心文明”之制度与价值的继承性重建。它虽然失败了，却正代表了“后轴心时代”政治制度探索的第一阶段。秦始皇的统一，结束了思想上“百家争鸣”的多元格局，法家学说成为政治的主导意识，单纯的“霸政”赢得了天下，因此也就最为显著地标志了与“轴心文明”的疏离乃至于断裂。汉初以因循为主调，实际上又使黄老道家之学成为国家意识形态，成为特定历史阶段当中的政治主导思想。汉武帝“罢黜百家”，在观念上实现了“轴心文明”的价值回归，儒学也因此而成为国家政治主导性的观念体系。尽管如此，秦代之后的中国古代社会，“霸王道杂之”才是制度结构的真实状况，实际上没有任何一个朝代的政治制度按照儒家的学说来建构，也没有任何一个时代真正实现了礼乐文明制度及其价值理念。

3. 政治制度上的“霸王道杂之”，与公开舆论上的“孝治天下”或以儒学为社会的政治与价值理念，这两者之间一直存在着某种诡谲的紧张关系。政治制度的建立及其实际运作方式既非全然以儒学为根据，而有其“内在逻辑”，但在公开舆论上，儒学却被悬为最高的政治理念，于是在现实性上，儒学站到了政治的背后，成为现实政治的合法的监督者、反思者与批判者。它总是抱持着“轴心文明”的制度理念与价值理念，以之为现实生活的理想准则，以之为圣人之道之楷模，而对现实政治及时代风气进行权衡，进行批判性反思，或在事实上进行纠偏。正是在这一意义上，儒学成为尧、舜以来圣人之道之信仰者，成为舆论上所倡导的社会公共价值的坚持者与监护者，也因此而成为民族文化主体性的承担者与体现者，并在此后的全部历史过程中，为捍卫中国文化主体性而筑就了坚实的“价值屏障”，从而确保了以“轴心文明”为原点的中国文化价值的历史绵延。这就是中国在“轴心期”之后，经过一系列的思想与制度上的“突破”，唯一真正坚持了“轴心文明”之制度理想及其价值理念的儒学所终究达成的历史命运。

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China's 'Axial Civilization' and Its Breakthroughs*

Dong Ping**

Abstract: This paper presents a critical reflection on the concept of the “axial period” and argues that China’s axial period was the Western Zhou dynasty rather than the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods. The reason is that the Western Zhou civilization of ritual and music epitomized the institutionalization of the value system that had been passed down through the ancient ages since Yao and Shun. After the decline of the Western Zhou dynasty, Chinese culture underwent considerable intellectual and institutional transformations. However, it was not until the reign of Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty in the mid-second century BCE that the relationship between the social thought of the time and the Western Zhou “axial civilization” began to realign. After multiple breakthroughs in thought and institutions in the post-axial era, Confucianism took center stage in the political ideology of ancient Chinese society as a defender and guardian of the values of “axial civilization,” and played a significant role in supervising and criticizing realpolitik. Throughout the continuous development of Confucianism, the main form of Chinese culture gradually took shape and evolved into a unique value system.

Keywords: Karl Jaspers, Axial Age, axial civilizations, Western Zhou Dynasty, culture of ritual and music

A Reappraisal of the Axial Age Concept [Refer to page 4 for Chinese. Similarly hereinafter]

As is well known, German philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883–1969) put forth the concept of the “Axial Age” in his seminal work on history and philosophy titled *The Origin and Goal of History*. He argued that there was a historical axis, or turning point, around 500 BCE, along with the intellectual and spiritual developments between 800 BCE and 200 BCE. During this period, sages and philosophers laid the solid foundation for their own civilizations in China, India, and the West. Although these sages and philosophers came from three different regions of ancient Eurasia, there existed between them remarkable similarities in terms of the problems they aimed to solve, their consciousness of being as a whole, and an awareness of their own limitations.

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** Dong Ping is Qiushi distinguished professor and doctoral supervisor of Zhejiang University. E-mail: pingdong@zju.edu.cn

Jaspers's principal concept of the Axial Age has received widespread acclaim from historians and philosophers in China because this concept reassured Chinese academics that China would finally be considered by the West to be on a par with the other great civilizations during the axial period. Undoubtedly, Jaspers's academic vision and epistemic horizon are monumental because he could examine the universality of "history" and "world history" from the vantage point of the twentieth century. Under the circumstances, Jaspers underlined the strange fact that China, India, and the West—three different regions across Eurasia with no awareness of one another at the time—shared a general consciousness in their sense of problems, the foundation of human civilization and history, and the possibility of sharing their developmental results.

However, when Jaspers put forth the concept of the Axial Age, he had no intention of underlining the pluralistic origins of human "history." Instead, his real intention in acknowledging China, India, and the West's concurrent arrival at the beginning of human "history" was to negate the historicity of ancient Chinese and Indian "history" and reaffirm the significance of Western civilization during the axial period, which represented the final "goal" of the universal history of the entire world. Jaspers's concept of the axial period and his narrative of world history are undoubtedly Eurocentric, even if he half-heartedly acknowledged the plural origins of human history. From Jaspers's perspective, the Western concepts of religion and politics are the unified origin of historical meaning, while science and technology are the modern symbols of this unity. In other words, humankind across different regions would necessarily be unified with the West, regardless of whether they had experienced the axial period or not.¹

Based on the above reappraisal of Jaspers's concept of the Axial Age, I argue that, on the one hand, the concept is groundbreaking as it adds new insights to the historical narrative of human civilizations. On the other hand, however, Jaspers's hypothesis on the universalizing nature of science and technology as the unity of history as a whole negates the existence of inter-civilizational existence and thus forecloses the inevitable differences in philosophies, habits of thinking, lifestyles, values, and social customs. It was against this backdrop that the British historian Arnold J. Toynbee (1889–1975), based on his observation of various forms of ancient civilizations and cultures in the East and West, posited that East Asian civilization, or to be precise, the Chinese civilization could become the future unifier of the world.² Based on a similar vision for the unity of the history of the globe, Samuel P. Huntington (1927–2008) put forth his famous thesis about the clash of civilizations during the 1990s, which is more conscious of treating various ancient civilizations and their origins on an equal footing than that of Jaspers. Ironically, Francis Fukuyama, a student of Huntington, deviated from his teacher's theory and instead resorted

- 1 Jaspers attached great importance to the continuity of the West, "The cultural continuity of the West was never lost, notwithstanding extraordinary ruptures, destructions and apparently total decay," see Karl Jaspers, *The Origin and Goal of History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953), 59. As a result, the Middle Ages spanning over a thousand years was not a major concern for Jaspers's historical narrative. In other words, the seemingly "extraordinary ruptures" of the West did not deter Jaspers from making the thesis of the cultural continuity of the West.
- 2 Toynbee also envisioned a future of "global unity," but he believed that with the emergence of science and technology represented by atomic power, it was difficult to unify the vast parts of the earth by relying on conventional warfare. Instead, he predicted that it seemed improbable that the United States, Europe, and Soviet Union would be able to give political unity to the world as a whole. Instead, Toynbee foresaw that "Eastern Asia preserves a number of historical assets that may enable it to become the geographical and cultural axis for the unification of the whole world." Toynbee also argued, "For nearly twenty-two centuries . . . a unitary Chinese government has held hundreds of millions of people together politically. . . . Perhaps it is China's destiny now to give political unity and peace not just to half but all the world." Ikeda agreed with Toynbee that the Chinese-style unity might have significance and emphasized that "we must give serious consideration to devising a system that provides stability and peace" and "support a system in which all kinds of people can participate on an equal footing," see Arnold Toynbee and Daisaku Ikeda, *Choose Life: A Dialogue* (London: Oxford University Press, 1976), 224, 231–233.

to Jaspers's postulate that the advent of modern science and technology in the West marked the beginning of the second axial period and the gradual transition to the end of history.

This paper argues that the "axial period" of Chinese culture is not the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods (770–221 BCE) but the Western Zhou dynasty (1046–771 BCE), which laid the institutional foundation of Chinese politics, culture, and moral and ethical values. In a word, the Western Zhou dynasty made a profound and long-lasting impact on the entire historical process of Chinese civilization.

The Western Zhou: The Axial Period of Chinese Civilization ^[7]

Confucius discovered the unique characteristics and significance of the Western Zhou dynasty as a system, a civilization, and a cultural value. The system of ritual and music of the Western Zhou dynasty provided a solid foundation for the classic texts, ethical values, and cultural ideals of Confucianism. What Confucius meant by "following the Zhou" is essentially "following civilization," in other words, the ultimate core of human civilization formed throughout the historical process of China's axial period.

The history of the Xia (ca. 2070–1600 BCE), Shang (1600–1046 BCE), and Zhou dynasties and their heritage as discovered and narrated by Confucius did not just begin with the Xia dynasty but can be traced back to long before the Xia, namely to the period of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors. Although there are numerous legends and myths concerning this mythological period that cannot be verified by historical records, they should still be treated as the collective memory of the nation, which reflect the "value reality" of national culture and constitute the "historical epic" of the Chinese nation. By recounting and passing down the legend of the Three Sovereigns and Five Emperors, Chinese people reinforced their self-consciousness of the country; expressed their worldview and understanding of spiritual beings, mountains, and rivers; followed the trajectory of their ancestors in marching toward civilization; and explained the fundamental principles and values that took shape in real life. This is how the origin of the country and the formation of a shared life transformed into collective memory. By the time of Yao 尧 and Shun 舜, the concept of institutionalizing shared community governance had already been clearly established based on the gradual formation of an ancient Chinese community. Moreover, the principle for the institutionalization of community governance had also been articulated, that is, emulating the Way of Heaven to establish the Way of Humanity and fathoming the Way of Heaven to regulate the laws of humanity.

The Way of Heaven is instantiated by the Way of Humanity, while the Way of Humanity is elevated by the Way of Heaven. From this point on, the unity of heaven and humanity in Chinese culture became the core of the human world consisting of heaven, earth, human, and spiritual beings. In essence, the concept of heaven and humanity laid the ultimate foundation for the legitimacy of human beings' daily activities. The everyday production, conduct in life, and political activities of human beings must all take the Way of Heaven as the ultimate basis for their legitimacy. In short, the Way of Heaven is the origin of the existence of all things in the real world, the origin of order for all things and human beings to verify their presence, the origin of rationality for human beings to partake in social activities and achieve their goals, and the origin of value for making the whole process of human existence meaningful.

The unity of heaven and humanity also means that all things that are in line with the Way of Heaven are not only real but also have intrinsic meaning and value. Authenticity guarantees

significance and value, or rather, authenticity itself is the primary value. The reality of the Way of Heaven means that no matter how it moves and what stage it is at, it is always being-for-itself, real, reasonable, and orderly. Its current stage is synonymous with its existence, and it is constantly adapting to changes. Because of this, the real state of the Way of Heaven itself is *dazhong zhizheng* 大中至正 (great centrality and uprightness).³ From the period of Yao and Shun to the Western Zhou dynasty, it took a long time for the universal value of the Way of Humanity to be institutionalized and realized. In other words, the transformation from the Way of Heaven into the Way of Humanity to realize the original value of *dazhong zhizheng* was a gradual process of attaining refinement and perfection from coarseness.

As for the Western Zhou dynasty, the institutionalization of ritual and music civilization gradually reached its apex, which surpassed the previous dynasties with its flourishing culture. Although the cultural system of the Western Zhou dynasty surpassed its predecessors, it was passed down in accordance with that of Yao and Shun. According to the “Evolutions of Ritual” [礼运] in the *Book of Rites*, “[A]ncient kings sought to take up the Way of Heaven to regulate the feelings of men.” This means that the Way of Heaven was the rationale behind the established ritual system of the Western Zhou. As an institutional complex,⁴ the system of ritual and music combined heaven, earth, humans, and spiritual beings into an organic whole and presented it as a world of humanity, which was not only a shared community of life but also a shared community of ethics. When we examine the internal conceptual structure and value system of this institutional complex through the lens of its external institutions, we can discover that the essential reality of human beings was derived from the Way of Heaven. As a result, the order of human beings’ existence (the Way of Humanity) must also be based on the order of the Way of Heaven. In other words, the Way of Heaven was the fundamental concept on which the system of ritual and music was established.

The political system was at the core of the overall construction of the civilization of ritual and music. From the emperor to the ordinary people, all should be included in the governing system of ritual and music, meaning that overall governance in society could not be achieved by the will of a specific individual but only by a public institution. The public nature of this institution requires an open and transparent form of public expression. The system of ritual and music guarantees the transparency and openness of the public institution and also maximizes the value and accessibility realized by the public institution. Under such circumstances, universal public order and harmony can be achieved. For this reason, a public institution epitomized by ritual and music makes society the primary field for individuals to realize their existence and its value. The order of life unfolded by existence itself, as the original form of life, is the basic premise for the possibility of all humane values. Therefore, all humane values, including benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness, are integrated into and realized by the original order of life as its basic structure. It is in this sense that “not interfering with the seasons of agriculture,” “enriching the people,” and “loving the people” are considered the highest callings of the ruler.

3 *Dazhong zhizheng* 大中至正 is both the reality of the Way of Heaven and the origin of value. The original meaning of *zhong* refers to the uprightness of the Way of Heaven, which human beings can properly and truly realize based on consciousness and comprehension of the Way of Heaven. In other words, by transforming the uprightness of the Way of Heaven into the uprightness of the Way of Humanity, the latter acquires its ultimate significance and value. It is in this sense that “holding fast to impartiality” was the secret for the ancient sage kings to realize their kingly Way. The present author wants to emphasize that the meaning of *zhong* includes truth, uprightness, justice, integrity, fairness, and appropriateness. In a specific context, these terms are interchangeable.

4 The present author defines the Western Zhou civilization of ritual and music as an institutional complex, that is, a complex of human beings’ existence in real life. See Dong Ping 董平, “Order and Harmony: The System of Ritual and Music and Behavioral Justice” [秩序与和谐: 礼乐制度与行为正义], *Zhejiang Social Sciences* [浙江社会科学], no. 9 (2022): 111–121, 160.

But as far as the individual is concerned, “manifesting one’s bright virtue” is considered the highest calling in individual life. It is the original form of both life and virtue. Because of the unity of life and inherent nature, the journey of life must be unfolded and realized by inherent nature; because of the unity of inherent nature and virtue, the orderly evolution of life must also be the orderly realization of virtue. Individual existence based on the comprehension of “the unity of life and inherent nature” and “the unity of inherent nature and virtue” is the process of realizing the identity and value of individual existence in reality. In this sense, the doctrine that “the ceremonial rules define and determine the due mean” (*Book of Rites*, “Zhongni at Home at Ease” [仲尼燕居]) is how the ritual system ensures the realization of the unity of an individual’s existence and value in daily life.

Confucius “handed down the doctrines of Yao and Shun, as if they had been his ancestors, and elegantly displayed the regulations of King Wen and King Wu, taking them as his model” (*Doctrine of the Mean*). In other words, it was through Confucius’s rediscovery and reinterpretation of the Western Zhou dynasty that the system of ritual and music not only became a model for Chinese institutions but also laid a solid foundation for the classic texts of Chinese culture. No one will deny that the Six Classics are a crystallization of the political concepts, social ideals, moral philosophy, values, lifestyle, and life attitudes of Chinese culture, thus building the unique spiritual world of Chinese culture. Similarly, no one will deny that the Six Classics, as a complete textual system, are based on the core of the institutional civilization passed down from Yao and Shun to the Western Zhou dynasty. As a result, the axial period of Chinese culture during the Western Zhou dynasty was entirely in accordance with historical facts.

Intellectual Pluralism in the Post–Axial Period^[13]

The collapse of the Western Zhou dynasty in 771 BCE is one of the most significant events in Chinese history. Jaspers identified the period from 800 to 200 BCE as the axial period, which corresponds to the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods in China. But the present author argues that by this time China had already experienced the glory of institutional civilization and was approaching the end of its Axial Age civilization. The reason for this is that during the Eastern Zhou, the cardinal principles of the sage kings gradually dissolved, and individual princely states carried out their own policies, institutions, order norms, and value systems. In addition, the ethics based on ritual and music also lost their significance alongside the dissolution of kingly rule. From this point on, China entered the age of free thinkers.

The present author defines the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods as an era of free thinkers in China, a time when China broke with the axial period and entered into diverse patterns of thought, and an age of exploring ethics and philosophies from different perspectives to restore social order. Thanks to this era of free thinkers, an intellectual pluralism with various schools of thought took shape, which became a source of thought for later generations. Nevertheless, the original problems inherent in the hundred schools of thought can be traced back to the decline of the Western Zhou dynasty, a major politico–historical turning point. The civilization of ritual and music as the public institution of society became a collective memory of various thinkers and philosophers during the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods, who openly expressed individual understandings of this institution and aimed to find theoretical support to restore social order. As a result, philosophers of the hundred schools of thought all attached great importance to politics, and Chinese civilization always looked to the past for models and truth. Looking for the

Way was a shared concept and value of various thinkers, whose different schools of thought are essentially different ways to restore the Way. In this regard, the diversity of the hundred schools of thought can be viewed as how Chinese culture endeavored to continue after it left behind the unity of the axial period.⁵

Confucianism fully inherited the comprehensive institutions, value system, and civilizational concepts from Yao and Shun to the Western Zhou dynasty. These comprehensive institutions guaranteed the flourishing, humane cultural order of the Western Zhou dynasty and determined that Confucianism carry out the ideal of universal civilization by constructing public institutions. As a result, Confucianism attached great importance to politics in real life, and its individual disciples were always devoted to governmental affairs. Adhering to the Confucian direction of “governing by means of virtue” (*Analects* 2:1), the integrity and unity of the individual’s mind and body in the social and public spheres became the essential requirement for the individual’s whole and impeccable personality as well as the necessary condition for engaging in politics. Under these circumstances, the self-cultivation of individuals became an essential prerequisite for engaging in politics, and engaging in politics became the way to manifest one’s bright virtue. The emphasis on the Way became not only the fundamental basis of an individual’s order of mind, but also the fundamental basis of public and social institutions, which is the essential characteristic of Confucianism as a school of thought.

But Daoism, represented by Laozi, differed from Confucianism. From the perspective of Laozi, to convert the truth of the Way into a tangible public institution, no matter how refined it could be, is to fragmentize and separate the “oneness” of the Way, which will make one fall into an inescapable cycle in reality. In *Interpretation of the Laozi* [老子研读], the present author defines this predicament discovered by Laozi as a reversal of value.⁶ Based on the direct expression of the reversal of value, Laozi seemingly stood on the opposite side of Confucianism because he denied the meaning and value of the institutionalization of ethics and morality. But at the same time, the present author contends that Laozi denied only the practice of converting the Way into an institution and not the intrinsic value of the Way, including benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom. As a result, Laozi maintained a similar desire to restore political order. The so-called “doing nothing while nothing remains undone” is Laozi’s fundamental political principle. Nevertheless, the Way defined as the absoluteness of existence and the absoluteness of value by Laozi was epistemologically transformed by Zhuangzi into the original principle of individual existence.

As for the Mohists, although their views differed from those of Confucianism, they were not fundamentally incompatible. As far as Mozi was concerned, the major difference between him and Confucianism was their different presuppositions about the starting point of the practice of benevolence and righteousness. Confucius insisted that benevolence and righteousness must begin with parents; that is, the family must be the initial field for the practice of benevolence and righteousness. Mozi, by contrast, insisted that since people make themselves human beings in society, they must carry out their social nature and existence in public and thus need not confine themselves to the narrow circle of benevolent father and filial son. However, Confucianism and Mohism could reach a consensus that public ethics and social morality were derived from the practice of individual benevolence and righteousness.

5 In hindsight, this diversity within the unity of the hundred schools of thought is the reason for the openness and inclusivity of Chinese culture and why it is able to maintain its own cultural subjectivity by assimilating and reconstructing other civilizations and cultures.

6 Dong Ping, *Interpretation of the Laozi* [老子研读] (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2015).

Legalism appeared in the middle and late Warring States period, with Lord Shang (ca. 390–338 BCE) and Han Fei 韩非 (ca. 280–233 BCE) as representative thinkers. As a systematic expression of views on state governance, Legalism can be considered a transformation from Confucianism. During the late Warring States period, it was impossible that the ritual and music system of the Western Zhou dynasty could be restored. Therefore, when Confucianism, Daoism, and Mohism advocated emulating the past from different perspectives, Legalism put forward the idea of “not emulating the past.” Lord Shang used “not emulating the past” as the rationale behind “changing the law,” which cut off the continuation of history and denied the value of history itself as a source of legitimacy. Because history can be cut off, there was no need to “emulate the past” or “revise the present” in state governance, and thus state governance became a purely utilitarian personal action of the ruler. Under these circumstances, Legalists asserted that rulers could not implement shared governance with ministers, let alone ordinary people. Legalism thus transformed governance into governing the ministers and the people, so power must not be lost but held in the rulers’ hands, and it was thus regarded as autocratic. Han Fei defined law, technique, and power as follows. Law referred to governing the people with open institutions, technique referred to governing ministers with secret tactics, and power referred to the authority to manipulate laws and techniques. In other words, governance became the ruler’s exercise of his individual power. At the same time, Han Fei appropriated Laozi’s theory of “doing nothing while nothing remains undone” and reinterpreted it as the ruler doing nothing while the ministers do everything, which laid the foundation for a centralized bureaucratic system as a fundamental and effective way for a ruler to govern the country and the world.

The present author contends that Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism, and Legalism were the most prominent four schools in the age of free thinkers, for they represented the highest intellectual achievements in the era of the hundred schools of thought. After China stepped out of the axial period, these four schools strived to restore social order and reinstate political institutions through deep reflection and systemic criticism of the dissolution of the kingly rule of the Western Zhou. These schools laid a solid foundation for the development of Chinese intellectual thought. No matter how these four schools differed from each other internally and externally, what they had in common were shared concepts such as “the Way,” “the sage,” and “all under heaven.” Although different schools had different interpretations of these concepts, the hundred schools of thought all had their common origin in the ritual system of the Western Zhou. In other words, this ritual system, albeit dissolved, marked the culmination of achieving the glory of universal governance and thus bequeathed an invaluable legacy of China’s axial period to future generations. The different expressions of the hundred schools of thought, whether they praised or criticized previous kings and their systems, should be considered as various ways of inheriting the public thought and cultural heritage of China’s axial age.

The Reestablishment of Institutions in the Post–Axial Period ^[16]

The dissolution of kingly rule in the Western Zhou dynasty had the most direct and profound impact on the entire history of China, especially in reinstating political institutions. The road to the reinstatement of institutions after the demise of the axial period was a historical process full of turbulence and upheavals.

Mencius may be the first thinker who completely opposed “king” and “hegemon.” He seemed to attribute the abandonment of the kingly rule in the Warring States period to the

rise of five hegemonies (Duke Huan of Qi, Duke Wen of Jin, Duke Mu of Qin, Duke Xiang of Song, and Duke Zhuang of Chu) and concluded that the five hegemonies were sinners against the three sage kings (Yu, Tang, and King Wen), while his contemporary feudal lords were sinners against the five hegemonies. The present author argues that Mencius's conclusions are not entirely correct, and his assertion that "None of the disciples of Confucius spoke about the affairs of Duke Huan of Qi and Duke Wen of Jin" (*Mencius* 1A:7) was detached from the reality of the time. However, Mencius's judgment eventually became the precondition of Confucianism when it came to political affairs during the Eastern Zhou. Therefore, Confucianism handed down the tradition of "distinguishing kings and hegemonies," and "respecting kings and despising hegemonies" became a clear value judgment.

The era of Duke Huan of Qi (r. 685–643 BCE) or Guan Zhong 管仲 (d. 645 BCE) witnessed the beginning of the dissolution of kingly rule and the rise of hegemonies. The Chinese term *ba* 霸 (hegemon) means to control. The present author contends that the original meaning of this term had a strong connotation of temporary control of political institutions and thus conveyed a clear message that hegemonies with money and an army could run a provisional government to prevent the chaos caused by the dissolution of kingly rule. In Guan Zhong's view, achieving hegemony through enriching the country and strengthening the armed forces would pave the way for kingly rule, which would, in turn, achieve the Way. Guan Zhong's idea of governance was in accordance with the realization of universal peace through the ritual system during the Western Zhou. The major difference between the two, however, was that Guan Zhong attached great importance to a wealthy state and strong army in order to reinstate kingly rule and restore the Way given that the ritual system of the Western Zhou had disintegrated. In other words, Guan Zhong fully inherited the concept of "loving the people" under the ritual system of the Western Zhou dynasty and believed that it was not the monarch but the Way that could achieve universal rule. So-called "governance" is a state achieved by guiding the people through the Way. From Guan Zhong's perspective, rule by hegemonies was a makeshift stage of kingly rule. Their fundamental political goals were the same as long as the rule of hegemonies would transition to kingly rule. The present author contends that the hegemonic rule of Guan Zhong represented the first phase of experimenting with reinstating political institutions after the dissolution of the ritual system of the Western Zhou.

As Guan Zhong and Duke Huan of Qi successively passed away, the State of Qi's hegemony disappeared accordingly. Consequently, the progress from hegemonic rule to kingly rule became a distant dream. But on the other hand, other states keenly learned from the expedient measures developed by Guan Zhong and the Duke to make a state powerful and prosperous. Thus, competition for hegemonic rule grew even more violent. At the same time, the concept of hegemonic rule and the ideal of kingly rule were increasingly opposed to each other. Ying Zheng 嬴政 (r. 221–210 BCE), the leader of the State of Qin, finally unified the whole of China. The present author holds that Ying Zheng's work might be the greatest epitome of hegemonic rule, as it corroborated the realistic effectiveness of hegemonic rule. In terms of the overall establishment of a political system, the State of Qin's substituting the system of prefectures and counties for the old system of enfeoffment was indeed an unconventional turn, which was not reform in the sense of the continuity of historical unity, but essentially the abandonment of the Western Zhou's kingly rule and a rupture with the established ritual system. Although Zou Yan's 邹衍 (ca. 305–240 BCE) theory of the transmutation of the Five Virtues is, at present, treated as the empty talk of a talkative philosopher, Zou's theory actually represented an idea about history or a philosophy of history during the transition from the Warring States era to the Qin (221–206 BCE) and Han (206 BCE–220 CE) dynasties. In other words, what the seemingly empty

theory of Zou embodied was a true idea of history. It was based on this idea of history that the assertion that the Qin was endowed with the virtue of water indicated that, as the Qin restrained, beat, and overthrew the system of the Western Zhou, the Qin system opposed whatever the system of Western Zhou advocated. The Qin's alleged brutal crackdown on the ancient Confucian classics, which had a very significant symbolic meaning, was a sign that the First Emperor of Qin had created a new chapter of history by toppling not only the political system but also the thought and culture of the Western Zhou. The ritual system and civilizational and cultural values represented by this system, all of which had been established since the time of Yao and Shun and completed in the Western Zhou, were greeted by a historical, successional rupture attributed to the Qin's creation of its own system and elimination of ancient classics.

The Qin was succeeded by the Han dynasty, and how to define its relation to the Qin was a special political task. The popular idea that Han followed the Qin system mainly refers to its establishing the sovereign's authority by adopting the system of prefectures and counties rather than the politico-historical interrelationship of the Han and Qin. The Han repeatedly addressed this issue, claiming that it was endowed with the virtue of water, virtue of earth, or virtue of fire. This demonstrated that the Han's own perception of its politico-historical relation to the Zhou and Qin changed many times.

Obviously, the politico-historical relation to a previous dynasty, an idea or consciousness, was directly articulated through real political decisions and institutions and thus became an integral part of ideology. In the early Han's true conditions, it was impossible for the new dynasty to take great initiative in carrying forward the established ritual system of the Western Zhou, let alone allowing Confucianism to be a guide for governance. In fact, Liu Bang 刘邦 (r. 206–195 BCE), the founding emperor of the Han, was an unconscious successor of the ideology based on the Qin system. Therefore, the conservative conformity with the Qin in politics, law, ideology, and general values was the most remarkable characteristic of Liu's time.

The other aspect of the above-mentioned conservative conformity was the endeavor made to stabilize the entire society. In doing so, the concept of governance by non-action emerged and helped the teachings of the Yellow Emperor and Laozi (hereinafter referred to as the Huang-Lao teaching) gain wide popularity. Before long, the Daoist Huang-Lao teaching was able to play a dominant role in the intellectual world of Emperor Hui (r. 194–188 BCE), Emperor Wen (r. 179–157 BCE), and Emperor Jing (r. 156–141 BCE) in particular. This teaching itself was actually an intensive embodiment of the state ideology at the time. The realization of the renowned "Wen-Jing governance," to some extent, proved that Daoism adoring spontaneity and non-action could indeed become the guiding political thought through which an effective administration of the society could be fulfilled. Nevertheless, what really happened in the early Han was that the Han's own perception of its status in history was not yet unambiguous, a political ideology had not yet been established, and a social system of general values had not yet been created, even though since the reign of Liu Bang, the national leaders, such as Emperor Hui, Empress Lü (r. 187–180 BCE), Emperor Wen, and Emperor Jing, successfully stabilized the society, loosened the Qin's rigid cultural policy, made the intellectual world more free, and especially accumulated an amazing amount of material wealth in the reigns of Wen and Jing. It was under such circumstances that Emperor Wu (r. 140–87 BCE) began to reshuffle all existing intellectual schools and reinstate the system of (the Western) Zhou.

The vicissitudes that took place in the effort to make an institutional breakthrough after the axial period thus basically ended. In other words, this breakthrough had been

almost completed. Emperor Wu decided that the Han was endowed with the virtue of earth, through which a clear line was drawn between the Han and the Qin in terms of the basic idea of history. As a consequence, the Han was resolutely against the Qin system in selecting Confucianism as the core component of state ideology. It was in this sense that the efforts including the veneration of Confucianism and teaching the Confucian Five Classics in the imperial academy in Emperor Wu's reign were by nature the Han's ideological reconstruction of its own politico-historical status. Consequently, the Han surpassed the Qin system and accomplished reinstating the Western Zhou's basic system in reconstructing its own idea of governance and system of social values. In the late Western Han (206 BCE–25 CE), the Han discussed its own virtue again. Liu Xiang 刘向 (ca. 77–6 BCE) and Liu Xin 刘歆 (d. 23) reinterpreted the virtues begotten in the transmutation of the Five Elements. According to this reinterpretation, as the Zhou was endowed with the virtue of wood, which begot fire, the Han must have the virtue of fire. However, this point of view was used by Wang Mang 王莽 (45 BCE–23 CE) to usurp imperial power. Later, although Wang finally failed, the idea that Han was endowed with the virtue of fire was preserved and gathered momentum. As this idea was gradually established, the Qin was thus treated as a false sovereign and the Han became the direct successor of the (Western) Zhou. Essentially, all these gave voice to the historical trend in which the Han, on the basis of the political practice and critical reexamination of the Qin system, required that the well-established system of the Western Zhou be reinstated and taken as the most fundamental political value.

However, although the system of the Qin was restrained, overcome, and even denounced as false in the historical interpretation based on the endless transmutation of the Five Virtues, the system itself did not completely retreat from history. Emperor Xuan's (r. 73–49 BCE) unity of hegemonic rule and kingly rule blended the Qin-style hegemonic rule with the Western Zhou's kingly rule. The system of the Han was exactly characterized by this blend/unity. The Han's blend was embodied in the specific reconstruction of the administrative system, that is, the enfeoffment system applied to the royal family members and meritorious founding ministers, and the prefecture-county system applied to the entire country. But it was factually proven that the forced conflation of two systems that were essentially different from each other would almost inevitably make existing institutions treacherous. Unfortunately, this practice was followed by later dynasties. Similarly, in order to adapt itself to the institutional arrangement characterized by a blend of hegemonic rule and kingly rule, Confucianism had no alternative but to keep such a bottom that it was built on core Legalistic teachings such as the trinity of law, technique, and power, more effectively pandered to the private desires of rulers, and never disappeared in the ancient Chinese political ideology, even though Confucianism itself was remarkably paraded as the most basic intellectual system underlying the political institutions and as the value that must be realized through politics.

Concluding Remarks ^[21]

The present author, making his conclusions based on the above analyses, holds:

First, although the Jaspersian theory of the axial age does exert great influence on the study of history and, to a great extent, sheds light on the possible transregional commonness of human civilization, the axial age alleged by Jaspers himself is actually not in accordance with the true evolution of the historical Chinese civilization. In a word, the axial period of China was none other than the Western Zhou, which fully embodied the historical

continuity and extension of the cultural ideas and values since the time of Yao and Shun. The Western Zhou civilization, which externally manifested as the well-established system of ritual and music, was a complete institutional complex typifying not only the endeavor to demonstrate the Way of Humanity through exploring the origin of the Heavenly Way and lead humanity to create their own rules of life, but also the mutual unity of natural law and social law in real living conditions. Precisely because the Heavenly Way transforms into the Way of Humanity, the existential supremacy of the Heavenly Way is manifested and proven by human practice. Precisely because the Way of Humanity is a transformation of the Heavenly Way, the significance and value of human order is guaranteed by the Heavenly Way and therefore, the human order is sacred and inviolable. Ritual as an institution is created by the “unity of heaven and humanity” in this sense. Thus, in the social community, the order of humanity assumes a normative universality, which reigns over the entirety of public life and institutionally safeguards the rights of all members of the social community, including the Son of Heaven, to speak publicly, and the legitimacy of their words and deeds. Moreover, the order of humanity is the institutional guarantee of incomparably impartial social justice and human values. In this sense, the Western Zhou did ensure human existence and the realization of human values through public social institutions. It set an example of institutional civilization. After the disintegration of the Western Zhou, Confucius did his best to advocate the practice in which the doctrines set up by Yao and Shun should be venerated and carried forward, and the regulations formulated by King Wen and King Wu treated as fine models and followed. Confucius consciously preserved and extended the system of values that was based on the unity of the Ways of Heaven and Humanity and embodied in the institutions since the time spanning from the time of Yao and Shun to the Western Zhou. Thus, it can be concluded that the Western Zhou’s well-established system of ritual and music perfectly epitomized the ideal Confucian political system articulating completely human values. The system of classics with the Six Classics as the backbone is actually the textual carrier of the institutions and values of the Chinese civilization in the axial age. In history, wherein the basic theories were embedded in the Confucian classics, the Western Zhou was always an object worthy of remembrance, an ideal reference illuminating the real situation of politics and humanity, and an immanent dynamo eliminating real difficulties and renewing thought and culture.

Second, a unique event, which referred to the disintegration of the Western Zhou, or the end of Chinese axial civilization, was the realistic reason why there was a series of intellectual explorations and institutional practices since the confrontation between thought and the times. In fact, these intellectual articulations and institutional reconstructions were exactly the basic components of the scenario in which the values of the axial civilization were tentatively reconstructed to realize a historic breakthrough after the end of the axial civilization. Overall, the emergence of a great number of intellectual schools was a theoretical reflection on and an intellectual response to the very significant event known as the end of the axial civilization, as well as being an effort to prepare the strategies for political reconstruction. The tentative reconstruction of the political system was actually a series of practical political activities. In the early Spring and Autumn period, the hegemonic rule represented by Duke Huan of Qi and Guan Zhong was substitutive political expediency after the end of the Western Zhou’s kingly rule. The idea underlying this rule was that hegemonic rule could proceed to kingly rule, so as to fulfill the successive reconstruction of the systems and values of the axial civilization. Although the State of Qi’s program finally failed, this endeavor was exactly the epitome of the first phase of political exploration in the post-axial period. The grand unification achieved by the First Emperor of Qin put an end to the highly diversified ideology and unleashed the doctrines of the Legalist School

as the dominant political thinking. The victory of simplified hegemonic rule marked a detachment from and even rupture with the axial civilization. The early Han, due to the rise of conservative conformity with the Qin system, actually turned the Huang–Lao Daoist teaching into a state ideology and allowed it to play a guiding role in the politics of a specific historical period. Emperor Wu's reshuffling all existing intellectual schools, ideologically realized the return of the axial civilization and, as a consequence, Confucianism became the leading political thought. Even so, in the ancient Chinese society since the end of the Qin, the blend of hegemonic rule and kingly rule was the true state of the institutional structure, and in fact, neither was governance reconstructed in accordance with Confucian doctrines in any dynasty, nor could the Western Zhou-style system and its values be really fulfilled in any period.

Third, there was always a strange tension between the politico–institutional blend of hegemonic rule and kingly rule and the public advocacy of rule by filial piety (or, Confucianism as the society's basic idea of politics and value). Although the establishment of the political system and its actual way of operation were not entirely based on Confucianism, and the system itself had its own internal logic, Confucianism was still praised as the highest political ideal in public opinion. Therefore, realistically, Confucianism became the legitimate supervisor, rethinker, and critic standing behind real politics. To be specific, Confucianism always adhered to the institutional concepts and ideas of the values of the axial civilization and treated them as the ideal standards of real life and paragons of the Way of sages. Moreover, in the face of real politics and the general mood of the time, Confucianism appraised them, critically rethought them, and rectified them in accordance with facts. It is in this sense that Confucians are believers in the Way of sages, adherers and guardians of public social values, and people who assume responsibility for the subjectivity of national culture and embody it. In the whole of history since the end of China's axial period, in defending the subjectivity of the Chinese culture, Confucians built a strong, protective wall of values and ensured that the values of Chinese culture could historically continue from the original point of the axial civilization. Therein lies exactly the historical destiny of Confucianism, which is the only entity adhering to the institutional ideals and value concepts of the axial civilization in the flow of intellectual and institutional breakthroughs made in post–axial China.

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*Translated by Wang Luman**

* Wang Luman is professor of history from ShanghaiTech University.