

be sure of the graphs for certain key terms—such as *guoshi*, which the author translates as “national right.”

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Ding Yuanzhi 丁原植. *Wenzi xin lun* 文子新論 (New perspectives on the *Wenzi*). Taipei: Wan Juan Lou, 1999. 398 pp. Paperback NT \$600, ISBN 957-739-239-3.

Ding Yuanzhi. *Wenzi ziliao tansuo* 《文子》資料探索 (Exploration of the *Wenzi* materials). Taipei: Wan Juan Lou, 1999. 621 pp. Paperback NT \$800, ISBN 957-739-232-6.

Ding Yuanzhi. *Huainanzi yu Wenzi kaobian* 《淮南子》與《文子》考辨 (Examination of the *Huainanzi* and *Wenzi*). Taipei: Wan Juan Lou, 1999. 652 pp. Paperback NT \$800, ISBN 957-739-228-2.

Through the ages, only a small number of scholars have ventured a study of the *Wenzi* 文子, a politico-philosophical text ascribed to a disciple of Laozi 老子. The *Wenzi*, composed more than two thousand years ago, underwent major revisions in the third or fourth century C.E., after which the original version was no longer transmitted. Much of the content of the revised and transmitted version can be found in other texts, most notably in the *Huainanzi* 淮南子. In fact, almost 80 percent of the transmitted *Wenzi* corresponds to the *Huainanzi*. From the eighth century onward, this unusual phenomenon made the vast majority of scholars, who favored the historical priority of the latter, reject the former on account of its alleged plagiarism. However, general scholarly disinterest in the *Wenzi* abruptly ended in 1973, when a fragmentary bamboo copy of the original text was discovered in a Han dynasty tomb (dated 56 B.C.E.) in Dingzhou 定州, Hebei Province. This spectacular archeological discovery sparked renewed interest in the *Wenzi*, mainly among Chinese and Japanese scholars—a trend that is clear from a recent bibliography of contemporary research on Han philosophers, which lists more

than forty articles on the *Wenzi* published in the past two decades alone (Chen 1998, pp. 449–452). Each of these articles, however, focuses on one aspect of the *Wenzi* only. Aware of the need for an overarching study, Fu Jen University professor Ding Yuanzhi embarked on his *Wenzi* project in 1995. Less than five years later, the project was concluded with the publication of three books, totaling over sixteen hundred pages. These three volumes are interdependent, and yet each one has a distinct focus; they can be read as separate entities, and they will be reviewed accordingly.

*Wenzi xin lun (New perspectives on the Wenzi)*

The first of the three volumes—their preferred order indicated by Ding Yuanzhi himself in the Preface—is an in-depth study of the *Wenzi*, in five chapters.

In chapter 1, Ding discusses *Wenzi* the philosopher and *Wenzi* the text. He first quotes several ancient works that mention a certain “*Wenzi*,” and then summarizes speculations by scholars of the past on the historical identity of this wise man. One of his conclusions is that *Wenzi* was indeed a disciple, or at least a later follower, of *Laozi*, and that he played an important role in the development of *Laozi*’s thought. As to the text, Ding discusses issues such as the status of the bamboo manuscript of the *Wenzi*, the transmission of the received *Wenzi*, and the relationship between the transmitted *Wenzi* and the *Huainanzi*.

Chapter 2 is devoted to the Dingzhou *Wenzi* manuscript, which, unlike the transmitted *Wenzi*, appears to have consisted entirely of dialogues. Ding first outlines the relationship between the bamboo fragments and the received text, then elaborates on the philosophy of the original *Wenzi*, that is, of the hypothetical *Urtext* of the *Wenzi* of which the Dingzhou manuscript is the only surviving copy to date. Two interesting features of this chapter are: (1) Ding’s tentative and daring reconstruction of a section of the original *Wenzi* (p. 34), and (2) the rearrangement of the Dingzhou bamboo strips according to philosophical concepts, including “governing the world,” “the way of the ruler,” and “learning” (pp. 50–56). These features offer a first glimpse of what a dialogue in the original *Wenzi* may have looked like and show the reader the text’s original concerns.

In chapter 3 Ding elaborates on the relationship between the *Wenzi* and the *Laozi*, which is shown by the fact that 169 (out of 186) sections of the received *Wenzi* start with the phrase “*Laozi* said” 老子曰 and that fifty-two sections actually cite the *Daodejing* 道德經. After a detailed discussion of these citations, Ding evaluates *Wenzi*’s position in the exegesis of *Laozi*’s thought and concludes that he developed it in a “humanitarian” 人文 direction. To put it differently, *Wenzi* reinterprets his master’s thought by making the people the focal point of the ruler’s government.

Chapter 4 is divided into two parts. The first deals with pre-Qin material incorporated into the received *Wenzi*. This material includes quotations and para-

phrases of the *Mengzi* 孟子 and *Guanzi* 管子, explanations of sixteen *Yijing* 易經 hexagrams, and elaborations by what Ding calls “the school of Wenzi” on the theory of *xingming* 形名 (forms and names). In the second part, Ding discusses the relationship between the *Wenzi*, *Huainanzi*, and *Liuzi* 劉子, the latter a text presumably written by Liu Zhou 劉晝 (ca. 516–557). The *Liuzi* contains many sections similar to both the *Huainanzi* and *Wenzi* and is thus of great importance to our understanding of the editing and transmission process of these texts.

The last chapter, titled “The *Wenzi* and the Development of Pre-Qin Philosophy,” contains four essays explaining pre-Qin philosophical concepts and the *Wenzi*’s treatment of them. The first three concepts under discussion are *daoyuan* 道原 (the origin of the way), *jingcheng* 精誠 (pure sincerity), and *ziran* 自然 (spontaneity), all of which are chapter titles in the received *Wenzi*. The book ends with a general essay on the differences between the Chinese concept of *yuzhou* 宇宙 (space-time) and the Western idea of “cosmos,” in which Ding dismisses *yuzhou lun* 宇宙論 as an inappropriate translation for the term “cosmology.”

*New Perspectives on the Wenzi* is an overarching study, for it treats numerous issues and problems concerning the *Wenzi*. It is not, however, a systematic treatise. Sections 2.1 and 2.3, for example, first appeared as articles in the journal *Zhexue yu wenhua* 哲學與文化 and are incorporated into the book in virtually unchanged form. Also, the two parts of chapter 4 are unrelated, and the concluding section of the book has nothing to do with the *Wenzi*, other than that this text, according to Ding, was the first to explain the terms *yu* (space) and *zhou* (time) (p. 341).

Another demerit of this volume—partly due to its heterogeneous nature—is the redundant repetition of statements and ideas: for example, that *Wenzi* developed Laozi’s thought in a “humanitarian” direction (e.g., Preface, pp. 9, 47, 75, 77–94, 197, 203), and that *Wenzi* was an important pre-Qin philosopher (e.g., Preface, pp. 9, 22, 337). Ding’s casual tone indicates that he regards these as unquestionably true. In fact, two aspects of the latter statement, echoed by many present-day *Wenzi* specialists, can be called into question.

First, *Wenzi*’s status as an *important* philosopher remains questionable. If the importance of a thinker can be determined empirically by establishing the number of his disciples and readers, both supporters and opponents, then Confucius, for instance, may justly be called an important thinker: he is known to have had many disciples; he inspired a multitude of people (including *Mengzi* and *Xunzi* 荀子) and was ridiculed by others (*Zhuangzi* 莊子). Of *Wenzi*, on the other hand, little is known, and only a handful of people in the Han and pre-Han period mention him or his work (Ding, *Wenzi xin lun*, pp. 3–5). A related problem is whether *Wenzi* was a *pre-Qin* philosopher, as Ding and the vast majority of *Wenzi* scholars maintain. The earliest surviving source that mentions *Wenzi* and quotes his work is the *Hanfeizi* 韓非子 (chapters 23, 30, and 33). However, Han

Fei (ca. 280–233 B.C.E.) lived at the very end of the Warring States period, and many chapters of the work that carries his name were arguably written several decades after his death (Brooks 1994, pp. 17–26). Moreover, the *Wenzi* phrases quoted in the *Hanfeizi* correspond neither to the Dingzhou *Wenzi* nor to the received text. Obviously, both the relationship of the *Hanfeizi* to the *Wenzi* and the dating of the latter merit more careful attention.

In chapter 1, Ding offers a detailed outline of the composition of the received *Wenzi*, claiming that it consists of: (1) original *Wenzi* material, (2) *Laozi* exegesis by the *Wenzi* school, (3) ancient proverbs and sayings, (4) “an alternative *Huainanzi* version” 淮南子別本, (5) “external *Wenzi* material” 文子外編, and (6) material from other pre-Qin works. Questions arise with regard to categories (4) and (5), which have hitherto not been commonly used in *Wenzi* scholarship. According to Ding, at one time various editions of the *Huainanzi* circulated in society. One became the standard transmitted *Huainanzi*, while another concise version was incorporated into the received *Wenzi*. The relevant passages in the *Wenzi* are referred to as an “alternative *Huainanzi* version.” Ding regards these passages as ancient and authentic *Huainanzi* material. The “external *Wenzi* material” involves the retainers at the court of Liu An 劉安, who freely refer to the writings of the pre-Qin masters for the compilation of the *Huainanzi*. After Liu An committed suicide and his scholars fled, this reference material, Ding claims, was spread and transmitted among the people. These texts did not make it into the transmitted version of Liu An’s work, but some were copied into the *Wenzi*. Ding refers to this as “external *Wenzi* material.” The frequency with which Ding employs both self-coined labels is less than justified by their actual value. Although they are used throughout his work, we have no way of knowing whether these historical events actually took place or whether this actually was how all this material ended up in the *Wenzi*. More importantly, these labels are overused. Certain portions of the *Wenzi*, which Ding says belong to an authentic “alternative *Huainanzi* version,” instead seem to be concise (and sometimes even incomplete or illogical) copies of a later version of the *Huainanzi*. In other words, these terms have little added value, and maintain the presentation of the *Wenzi*–*Huainanzi* relationship as more complex than it really is.

#### *Wenzi ziliao tansuo (Exploration of the Wenzi materials)*

The second part of Ding Yuanzhi’s *Wenzi* research constitutes a complete modern edition of the *Wenzi*. This volume is a welcome addition to Li Dingsheng and Xu Huijun’s edition (1988), which has served as the standard modern edition of the *Wenzi* for over a decade.

The strength of Li and Xu’s work lies in its innumerable footnotes, offering explanations of difficult passages, alternative readings of characters in the various *Wenzi* editions, and references to similar phrases in other ancient philosophical

texts. These references are plentiful for texts that are only sporadically cited in the *Wenzi*, for example the *Mengzi*, the *Guanzi*, and the *Xunzi*. For the *Huainanzi*, a text closely related to the *Wenzi*, Li and Xu provide no more than an occasional note saying “the *Huainanzi* has *x*” or “*x* reads *y* in the *Huainanzi*.” Given the intimate relationship between both texts, this is far from sufficient.

A thorough understanding of the complex *Wenzi*–*Huainanzi* relationship requires a complete survey of their parallel passages. The cumbersome task of scrutinizing both lengthy treatises in the search for parallels was first performed by Barbara Kandel (1974, pp. 323–332). Appended to her work is a long list of references to passages in the *Huainanzi* with references to the matching *Wenzi* passage placed alongside. In Ding’s volume, Ding does not merely list references of corresponding passages; he brings the actual text of these passages together and makes each the subject of detailed analysis.

*Exploration of the Wenzi Materials* consists of twelve chapters, corresponding to the chapters in the received *Wenzi*. Each chapter is prefaced by an introduction in which Ding explains its title and briefly outlines its philosophy. Footnotes, the main feature of Li and Xu’s edition, are kept to a minimum. Instead, most *Wenzi* sections are followed by the author’s “Exploration of Related Material” 相關資料尋索 and “Analysis and Explanation” 探析與解說.

Quoted under the heading of “Exploration of Related Material” are passages from other texts related to the *Wenzi* section under scrutiny, for example the *Huainanzi*, the *Lüshi chunqiu* 呂氏春秋, the *Laozi*, the *Liezi* 列子, and, of course, the Dingzhou *Wenzi*. Each *Huainanzi* passage contains punctuation marks (including braces, brackets, and quotation marks) and different fonts. These tools allow the reader to see at a glance which phrases also appear in the *Wenzi* section and what character variations exist between both related pieces of text. The “Analysis and Explanation” contains Ding’s meticulous examination of the preceding *Wenzi* section. Here Ding explains the differences between the *Wenzi* and related material, points out mistakes in the text, and discusses its philosophical ideas in detail. Equipped with the information in the “Exploration of Related Material” and “Analysis and Explanation,” readers are led through this at times difficult-to-understand treatise. When problems appear, they can check how the passage appears in other works, or turn to Ding’s insightful information for help.

*Huainanzi yu Wenzi kaobian* (*Examination of the Huainanzi and Wenzi*)

The Ding Yuanzhi trilogy is concluded by his *Examination of the Huainanzi and Wenzi*. This volume is a reverse image of the preceding one: it contains a modern *Huainanzi* edition with the corresponding text of the *Wenzi* (and other works) included with each passage.

Each chapter starts with Liu An’s description of its purport (as provided in “Outline of Essentials,” the postface to his work), Gao You’s 高誘 interpretation

of the chapter title, and Ding Yuanzhi's explanation of the gist of the chapter. Sections and passages are also furnished with Ding's outline of their general meaning. One of the main aims of this volume is to show that, as Ding puts it, "the received *Huainanzi* material in itself contains serious problems" (Preface). He points out and explains these, mainly textual, problems, thus producing a critical modern edition of the *Huainanzi*. As a critical edition, this book contributes to the thriving international scholarship on the *Huainanzi*, but it has its disadvantages.

The layout of the second volume is clear: each section starts with the text of the *Wenzi*, followed by corresponding material from the *Huainanzi* (and other texts), and ends with Ding's analysis of the section. The structure of the third volume, on the other hand, is less clear: the main text (*Huainanzi*) and corresponding material (*Wenzi*) are not separated. Individual passages contain only the *Huainanzi* text, interwoven with *Wenzi* variations and textual notes. In other words, in the *Huainanzi* passages, *Wenzi* material and textual notes are put between brackets or shown through the use of different fonts and font sizes. Due to the lack of a clear structure, these tools, the forte of the second volume, vitiate the clarity of the third.

Does the world need a new, modern edition of the *Huainanzi*? There are several richly annotated modern editions, some with Modern Chinese translations. And Ding's work is not a complete *Huainanzi*, since chapters 3, 4, 5, and 21 of the *Huainanzi*, unrelated to the *Wenzi*, are not included.

Basically, what Ding proves is that the *Huainanzi* has a turbulent textual history and that the text in its received form is not the same as the one that was presented to Emperor Wu in 139 B.C.E. Given that the *Wenzi*'s textual history is equally unclear, Ding claims that it is wrong to make simple statements about the *Wenzi*–*Huainanzi* relationship—that is, who copied whom—based on a comparison of the received editions of both texts. He certainly has a point, but the question is whether it should take a 652-page book to show this.

### *Concluding Remarks*

While one may find fault with some of the claims made in Ding Yuanzhi's first volume, this does not alter the fact that it is an outstanding study. It is impressive in that it at once treats a broad range of issues concerning the *Wenzi* and discusses each in great detail. The only other work that is similarly embracing is that by Barbara Kandel.

Those who are looking for a good modern edition of the *Huainanzi* need not consider the third volume. This volume is mainly useful for *Huainanzi* specialists aspiring to check how certain passages appear in other writings. Translators of the *Huainanzi*, for instance, often use the *Wenzi* variant on those occasions when the

*Huainanzi* is incomprehensible or corrupt. The third volume greatly facilitates this kind of work.

The second volume is undoubtedly the most valuable of the three. It will be of great help to *Wenzi* or *Huainanzi* scholars trying to understand the complex relationship between the two treatises. Beyond that, Ding's meticulous scrutiny of both texts and the neat presentation of these efforts serves as a model for other Chinese philosophical works (e.g., the *Lüshi chunqiu*) that also contain many passages traceable in other sources. It can only be hoped that these works will one day appear in a modern edition as clear and easy to use as this one.

In sum, Ding Yuanzhi's monumental work may have its flaws, but it is a veritable milestone in *Wenzi* scholarship.

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