

We will look at two of Wang Ao's 8-legged essays, which were later cited in Ch'ing collections as models for the form. In the first, based on a passage in the *Analects* "When the people have enough, how can the ruler alone have too little?" (百姓足，君孰不足), the essay deals with the ruler's responsibilities to provide a livelihood for his people.⁵¹ The second, based on the famous opening passage from the *Analects* "Is it not a joy to have friends come from afar?" (有朋自遠方來，不亦樂乎?), focused on moral cultivation in Tao Learning terms.⁵² Each was copied, printed, and studied by generations of civil examination candidates.⁵³

[1. Break open the topic (*p'o-t'i* 破題)]: 百姓足，君孰不足

When the people below are prosperous, the ruler above will be prosperous.

民即富於下，君自富於上。

[2. Receiving the topic (*ch'eng-t'i* 承題)]:

The wealth of the ruler is stored among the people. If the people are prosperous, why should the ruler alone be poor?

蓋君之富藏於民者也。民即富矣，君豈有獨貧之理哉？

[3. Beginning discussion (*ch'i-chiang* 起講)]:

In giving advice to Duke Ai, Yu Jo said profoundly that the people and the ruler were one.⁵⁴ He implied that the Duke had increased taxation because he lacked resources. To ensure his resources, the Duke should have first satisfied his people.

有若深言君民一體之意以告哀公，蓋謂公之加賦以用之不足也。欲足其用，蓋先足其民乎。

[4. Initial leg (*ch'i-ku* 起股)]:

If one can honestly

tithe one hundred mou with a mind to stay frugal and love the people, and the one-tenth tax is not levied so the people provide his livelihood,

then

what the people would produce would not be for tax levies,
what resources they have would not all be for tax collection,
there would be accumulation and surplus in village households,
and no worries in caring for parents or raising children,
there would be abundant grain and millet in the fields,
and no anxiety about nurturing the living or seeing off the dead.

誠能

百畝而徹，愷存節用愛人之心，
什一而征，不為厲民自養之計，

則

民力所出，不因於征求，
民財所有，不盡於聚斂。
閭閻之內，乃積乃倉，
而所謂仰事俯育者無憂矣。
田野之間，如茨如梁，
而所謂養生送死者無憾矣。

[5. Transition leg (*hsu-ku* 續股)]:

If the people have enough, how can the ruler alone be poor?
百姓既足，君何為而獨貧乎？

[6. Middle leg (*chung-ku* 中股)]:

I know that

The ruler could have everything if it were stored in village households,
with no need to hoard it in his treasury as his goods.

The ruler could use everything if it were placed in the fields,
with no need to accumulate it in his vaults as his possessions.
With unlimited access, why worry that requests would not be honored?
With unlimited resources, why fret over unpreparedness in an
emergency?

吾知

藏之閭閻者，君皆得而有之，
不必歸之府庫而後為吾財也。
畜之田野者，君皆得而用之，
不必積之倉廩而後為吾有也。
取之無窮，何憂乎有求而不得？
用之不竭，何患乎有事而無備？

[7. Later leg (*hou-ku* 後股)]:

Sacrificial animals and ritual grains would be sufficient for religious offerings; jades and silks would be abundant as gifts for tribute and audiences.

Even if insufficient, the people would supply what they have, so what shortage would there be?

Foods and delicacies, beef and drinks would be sufficient for the needs of official guests; carriages and horses, weapons and armor would be sufficient for wartime preparations.

Even if insufficient, the people would respond with what they have, so what shortage would there be?

犧牲粢盛，足以為祭祀之供；玉帛筐篚，足以資朝聘之費。
借曰不足，百姓自有以給之也，其孰與不足乎？

饗飧牢醴，足以供賓客之需；車馬器械，足以備征伐之用。
借曰不足，百姓自有以應之也，其孰與不足乎？

[8. Conclusion (ta-chieh 大結)]:

Oh! Tithing originally was for the benefit of the people, and the sufficiency of the dynasty's resources arose in this way. Why should one raise taxes to seek prosperity?

吁！徹法之立，本以為民，而國之用之足乃由於此，何必加賦以求富哉？

Wang's essay was included in Fang Pao's early Ch'ien-lung era collection of outstanding Ming-Ch'ing 8-legged essays, entitled *Imperially Authorized Essays on the Four Books*. Fang said of this Wang Ao piece: "The levels and sequence are refined and clear, moving from the shallow to the profound. When the meaning of the passage is completed, the essay's form also ends. This shows how our predecessors were truthful, concrete, and showed the way themselves. Those that came later, although their openings and closings, followings and reflections, were brought to completion and included ingenious changes, none could carry on the task."⁵⁵

The second essay on "Is it not a joy to have friends come from afar?" allowed Wang Ao to transmit Ch'eng-Chu views of human commonality (*t'ung-lei* 同類=*p'eng* 朋)⁷⁸ through the voice of Confucius in the *Analects* and celebrate the literati intellectual community. Again, the 8-legged essay grid, far from constricting such views into a lifeless collection of empty words (the usual view of

such essays), permitted Wang Ao to play out the piece as a musician plays out the notes of a required score with virtuoso force and power.⁷⁹

[1. Break open the topic (*p'o-t'i* 破題)]: 有朋自遠方來，不亦樂乎？

Believing in and then studying commonalities, we can know how things are brought to completion.

即同類之信，從而學之，成物可知矣。

[2. Receiving the topic (*ch'eng-t'i* 承題)]:

Study is the way to complete ourselves and to complete things. When friends come from afar and we gather with them, can we not authenticate their accomplishments?

夫學所以成己而成物也。遠方之朋而有以來之，不可以驗其所得乎？

[3. Beginning discussion (*ch'i-chiang* 起講)]:

Moreover, virtue in the world by definition does not stand alone. Our studies contain the impulses of commonality. When after study we reach happiness, then we achieve self-completion. Is this not also the way things are brought to completion?

且天下之德無孤立之理。吾人之學有類應之機。

學而至於說，則所以成己者至矣。豈無所以及物者乎？

[4. Initial leg (*ch'i-ku* 起股)]:

Indeed

There are many in the world who have humbly and earnestly responded to the times. Their thoughts of those enlightened earlier are similar to mine. It is just that they cannot illuminate them and have no way to express the ardor of their faith and commitment.

There are many in the world who bravely follow the Way. Their search for like-minded people is similar to mine. It is just that

they cannot complete this in themselves and lack the heart to motivate themselves to return to the Way.

蓋

天下之遜志時敏者眾矣。其先覺之思猶之吾也。

惟不能自淑斯，無以發其信從之志耳。

天下之勇往從道者多矣。其同志之求猶之吾也。

惟不能自成斯，無以動其歸向之心耳。

[5. Transition leg (*hsu-ku* 續股)]:

Now, to discuss it only in light of study, then

Those who study what I study, and whose ardor for emulation has no thought of distance, come and share the same feelings with me.

Those who say what I say, and who do not leave far behind the sounds of the drum-dance, come and share the same response.

今唯學而說也，則

意氣之所招徠不禦於遠，而學吾之學者，自相感而來焉。

風聲之所鼓舞不遺於遠，而說吾之說者，自相應而來焉。

[6. Middle leg (*chung-ku* 中股)]:

Although living as if fenced off in a far frontier, he can still make light of it if buoyed by the presence of those enlightened earlier and if moved by memories of warm intimacy and the ardor of solidarity.

Although hemmed in by the danger of peaks and gorges, he can still yearn for return if he calls for help from like-minded people, and if he harbors the hope for reunion.

雖封疆之界若有以域之也，然彼方辛先覺之有人，而興親炙之念涉履之勞，固其所輕者矣。

雖山谿之險若有以限之也，然彼方謂同志之多助，而有聚首之思往還之煩，固其所願者矣。

[7. Later leg (*hou-ku* 後股)]:

This is not a matter of my seeking something from them. The goodness of human nature resides in my friend as it does in me. I make sincerity clear for myself. Even those living a hundred generations later will still be moved by this. How much more so those that live in this age!

Nor is it a matter of someone else gaining selfishly from me. The sameness of peoples' minds holds when they are far off just as when they were close by. My sincerity is completed by myself. Even those who lived a hundred generations earlier are still revered as friends. How much more so those that live in this age!

是非吾之有求於彼也。人性之善在朋也，

猶夫己也。吾誠自淑矣。雖在百世之下，猶興起焉，而況生同斯世者乎。

亦非彼之有私於吾也。人心之同其遠也，

猶夫近也。吾誠自成矣。雖在百世之上，將尚友焉。而況生同斯世者乎。

[8. Conclusion (*ta-chieh* 大結)]:

Oh! When study reaches this point,
then it reaches many people,
and one can authenticate the achievement of their self-completion.
Those who were happy with this in the past all have been joyous and pleased. Can a student afford not to apply himself in study?

吁！學至於此，

則即其及人之眾，
而驗其成己之功。

向之說者，有不能不暢然而樂矣。學者可不勉哉。