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

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

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

By fate or destiny I mean the notion that there is a set or immutable pattern to the world. It may be understood as (or under the power of) a God or independent of any divine will. At the level of individual agency, a conscious agent is apt to consider the “fate” she is “given” in life, and ask what can be changed and what is unalterable. In this sense, the concept of fate can provide a way to categorize or discriminate what can and cannot be changed. The related epistemological question is foreknowledge: both about what is given (fate) and about what is alterable. Belief in fate (for the non-fatalist) may be closely connected to divination, since divination is based on the premise that fate can be controlled or at least influenced by conscious entities available to human contact.
Fatalism is the belief that events are fixed in advance and unchangeable by human agency. The idea that human action has no influence on events is readily confused with determinism, the doctrine that every event has a cause, either an earlier event or a natural law. Both are thus distinct from the belief in fate. The strong fatalist believes that outcomes are set by what is “given,” with no significant scope for intervention; therefore, she has no practical need for distinguishing which outcomes can be altered. (One can, of course, be fatalistic about some things and not about others.) Nor does the fatalist have a practical epistemological problem; for her, the future, like the past, cannot be undone.

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

In one of the most influential studies of the subject, Fu Sinian 傅斯年 (1896–1951), a student of Hu Shi, articulated five theories from the Eastern Zhou and Warring States: the theory that 明 (“fate”) is fixed (明命論 ming dìng lùn 命定論), the theory that 明 rectifies (明正論 ming zhèng lùn 命正論), the theory of awaiting 明 (四命論 sì míng lùn 俟命論), the theory of 明 as a wheel (明運論 míng yùn lùn 命運論), and the contra-明 theory (非命論 fēi míng lùn 非命論). Fu’s original study and much later scholarship indebted to it attest to the importance of the problem of fate in Warring States thought. Recent studies have also shown its centrality to Han philosophy, especially in the Taixuanjing 太玄經 of Yang Xiong 揚雄 and in the Lunheng 論衡 of Wang Chong 王充. Fu’s original terms also have been reinvented in the process of translation: 明命 as predeterminism, 明正 as moral determinism, 明運 as fatalism, and 非命 as anti-fatalism. Such formulations do not tend to reveal contexts in which concepts of fate, fatalism, and necessity arose, the problems they were intended to address, the “work” they were intended to do, the systems of metaphors of which they were elements, and the systems of beliefs and practices toward which they stood in relations of contrast or opposition.

The present essay is a brief and comparative historical overview of the semantic fields of “fate” in Classical Greece and pre-Buddhist China. It is intended as a pre-amble to a more extended comparative treatment of interrelated complexes of concepts of fate, fortune, luck, and chance in ancient China and Greece—the two “Classical” cultures that have, in many ways, come to define East and West. The first two sections describe key elements in the Chinese semantic field from the Warring States and the Han and in the reinvention of the earlier lexicon in contemporary Chinese terms for such entirely modern concepts as risk, randomness, and (statistical) chance. I deliberately avoid Buddhist language because it warrants separate study. My account of the Greek semantic field focuses on Homer and the Διος Βουλῆ, on Parmenides and the problem of fate and necessity, on Plato and the role of δαιμόνια, and on a very brief treatment of the “On Fate” topos in Hellenistic Greece. In the third section I attempt a very brief comparative metaphorology; met-
aphors for the action of fate included command, division or allotment, and wheel or
cycles of change.\textsuperscript{13}

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

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

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

The theory that \textit{ming} is fixed held that the command of heaven was something that was
fixed and could not be altered. This was understood in different ways. The common
people took it to mean that \textit{ming} could be completed and secured but not gotten rid of.
The learned took it to mean that \textit{its} substance could not easily be changed or pro-
tected.\textsuperscript{15}

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

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

The theory that \textit{ming} rectifies held that the affections of heaven were not constant, and
that conduct towards others could bring down good fortune or calamity.\textsuperscript{16}

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

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

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5. Fate as subject to random chance, luck, fortune, et cetera.

6. Fate as predictable, whether construed as necessity, mechanical cycles, or the operation of laws of nature.

7. The problem of transpersonal versus individual destiny.

8. Explicit denial of “fate” or “fatalism,” whatever that is taken to mean.

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

The Chinese Semantic Field

The earliest written records in China are the Shang dynasty oracle-bone inscriptions. These nonnarrative divination records present the records of the reading of oracle-bone “cracks.” Shang divination covered a wide variety of subject matter: sacrifice, military campaigns, hunting, excursions, calendrics, agriculture, weather, illness, childbirth, dreams, construction, tribute, and requests for divine or ancestral approval and assistance. The oracle-bone inscriptions use the graph 令, command or decree, in two arguably distinct senses: (1) command or decree and (2) the noun 明, possibly the name of a deity. There is no separate graph for these two distinct concepts; they are separated through context. Although 明 became the key term for fate or destiny, it always retained its close links with 令 and command.

In some inscriptions, 明 was associated with the high god 迪 who has the preeminent power to issue commands. In the expression 迪明, “the decree of Di,” 明 may have been the name of a deity to whom divinations were addressed.

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

Ming 明 in the Zhou and Warring States

In the late Zhou and Warring States we find both a broader semantic field for words concerned with fate, fatalism, and destiny and an increasingly complex range of
concepts associated (and debated) with the word *ming*. The difficulties of the term *ming* are not simply problems of translation. There was no consensus on how to define the term, and rival thinkers tended to use it in different meanings, even within the same text. *Ming* also occurs in binomes that amplify or specify its meaning. Here are some of the most important Zhou and Warring States uses of *ming*, both singly and in compounds. Some are widely discussed in the scholarly literature; others are less well known.

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

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

死生有命也，富贵在天
Life and death have their *ming*: wealth and honor reside in Heaven. (*Analects* 12.5, *Zixia* quoting a saying he has heard)

死生意也
Life and death are decreed. (*Zhuangzi* 6 : 241)

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

1. *Ming* commanded

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

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

有命自天，命此文王
There was a mandate from heaven; it mandated this King Wen in Zhou, in the capital, and the female successor a girl from Shen. (*Mao* 236)

This passage also makes it clear that the decree worked through both men and women. In a passage in the *Documents*, the Duke of Zhou tells Prince Shi that, even though the Shang dynasty has lost the Mandate, he dare not rest assured of the mandate of the Lord on High (Shang Di *ming* 上帝命) because:
Heaven’s mandate is not easy [to preserve]; Heaven is hard to depend on.\(^3\)

The attitude toward \textit{ming} in the \textit{Analects} is a subject of considerable disagreement. Confucius seems to have believed in it, at least in early life:\(^3\)

\begin{quote}
君子有三畏: 天命畏人言
A junzi fears three things: the Mandate of Heaven, great persons, and the words of sages. (\textit{Analects} 16.8)
\end{quote}

2. \textit{Ming} ab initio

(a) \textit{Shou ming} 寿命, a “\textit{ming} of longevity” or its opposite, early death. This phrase is associated with the meaning of \textit{ming} as life span (discussed above).\(^3\)

(b) \textit{Xing ming} 性命, (human) nature and fate, as the two overlapping factors that together determine life’s course.\(^3\) This term is particularly prevalent in the \textit{Zhuangzi} (sixty instances) and the \textit{Lunheng} (twenty-seven instances). It also appears in the \textit{Lunyu} (2.4 and 9.18), the \textit{Huainanzi} (fourteen instances), and the \textit{Lü Shi chunqiu} (twelve instances). It does not occur in the \textit{Mengzi}.

3. Choosing \textit{ming}

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

(a) \textit{An ming} 安命, resting in \textit{ming}, or \textit{an ming shun ming} 安命順命, resting in conformity with \textit{ming}. Tang Junyi associates these phrases with the \textit{Zhuangzi}, but neither occurs in that text.\(^3\) \textit{An ming} does occur in the \textit{Baopuzi}.\(^4\)

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

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

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

\begin{quote}
昊天有成命, 二后受之
Great Heaven has complete mandate; two sovereigns received it. Cheng Wang dared not be easy; mom and night he laid its ground. (Mao 271)
\end{quote}
(c) *Da ming* 達命, grasping hold of *ming*. According to the *Zhuangzi*, fate is in part a matter of strategy, and the wise assess their times and decide how to act: those of penetrating insight do not trouble about what knowledge cannot remedy: 38

達大命数神
達小命数運

to grasp great *ming* is true conformity;
to grasp small *ming* is happenstance. (*Zhuangzi* 30: 1059)

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

復命揺作而以天為師，人則從而命之。
Sages who return to *ming* and take heaven as their teacher become models for others. (*Zhuangzi* 25: 880)

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

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

莫非命也，順受其正。人物之生，吉凶禍福，皆天所命。
There is nothing that is not *ming* and one receives and conforms to one’s own correct [one]. Good and bad fortune, prosperity or grief, in human life all these are as heaven decrees. (*Mengzi* 7A2)

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

夫此順命，以成其賢者也
conforms to *ming* and thereby preserves his authentic singularity. (*Xunzi* 3/30)

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

聖且者，達於情而遂於命也。
Sages are those who penetrate into true form and follow according to *ming*. (*Zhuangzi* 14: 507)

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

4. Moral *ming*

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

(a) *Shou ming* 受命数, receiving the decree. Sometimes this formulation refers both to the receipt of a (human) command (e.g., at *Zhuangzi* 4: 153), but at other times it clearly refers to the decrees of fate: 40
Of those who receive their *ming* from earth, the pine and cypress stand alone; winter and summer they are fresh and green. Of those who receive their *ming* from heaven, Yao and Shun stand alone; they have the luck to be able to regulate their own lives. (*Zhuangzi* 5:193)

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

5. Chance and *ming*

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

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

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

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時命大譁。當時命而大行乎天下
The fate of times was terribly wrong. Had time and *ming* been right, they might have done great deeds in the world. (*Zhuangzi* 16:555)
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According to Confucius and Xunzi (quoting *Analects* 12.5):

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遇不遇者，時也；死生者，命也。
Meeting with success or failure are matters of the time; life and death are matters of *ming*.
(Xunzi 28/39)
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In the *Lienü zhuan* biography of the Daughter of Wu, wife of Ling of Zhao, King Wuling of Zhao dreams of a girl who sings of a beautiful woman not yet born:

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命兮命兮，逢天時而生
Oh Ming, O Ming, when she meets the time of Heaven she will be born.42
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In these, and in later Han examples, both personal and dynastic destiny are linked with the times and *shi* 時, timeliness, doing the right thing at the right time.43
6. Predictable ming

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

7. Transpersonal ming

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

天有大命，人有大命
Heaven has a great ming; humanity has a great ming.46

(b) Xiao ming 小命, or “small ming.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. Contra-ming

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

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

[執]有命非命也，非執有命非命也
[The doctrine that] ming exists is not ming, but to reject the doctrine that ming exists is to reject [the reality of] ming. (Mozi 46/20–21)49

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

知其所終，若之何其無命也？
知其所始，若之何其有命也？
Since we do not know the end of things, how can we say they have no ming? Since we do not know the beginning of things, how can we say they have ming? (Zhuangzi 27: 958)50

Other Terms

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

(a) Fen 分 were “allotments,” identified with ming and variously understood as life span, longevity, prosperity, or specific individual destiny, to be used and cherished, including by the force of human effort:
The formless had allotments [fēn] but they were still not divided out, and they called them ming. (Zhuangzi 12:424)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Han Accounts of Ming

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

The problem of fate reemerges as an important issue in Han debates, especially in the thought of Yang Xiong and Wang Chong. 56 Wang devotes some eighteen chapters of the Lunheng to variants of the claim that all or most aspects of human life are determined at birth. 57 Wang Chong’s targets were, on the one hand, the divina-
tion practices of his own time and, on the other, the Confucian moralism of both his own and earlier times, specifically the concept of moral ming, as described by both Warring States texts and Han Confucians. An example of the latter is Ban Biao, who argued in the Han shu treatise “On the Destiny of Kings” (Wang ming lun 王命論) that heaven selected upright rulers, specifically the Han founder Gaozu 漢高祖, for their virtue, by means of tian ming. Wang’s attack on moral ming introduces new categorizations of kinds of fate and places a new emphasis on the role of chance as a factor in the outcome of human life. His arguments are not entirely consistent; they tend to cohere within, but not always between, chapters.

My purpose here is not to present a unified view of ming in the Lunheng, but rather to show how he extended the discourse on fate. Wang Chong held that the unfolding of ming in both physical and political life was determined at three levels: the personal level of inborn nature and endowment, the interpersonal level of chance encounters, and the transpersonal level of time and common destiny. Wang distinguished three kinds of ming: favorable, neutral, and adverse. He argued that ming was not determined by a superhuman power and could not be changed (or predicted) by ethical behavior.

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

有死生壽夭之命，亦有貴賤貧富之命。

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

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

是故才高行厚，未可保其必富貴；智淺德薄，未可信其必貧賤。或時才高行厚，命惡，窮而不進；知淺德薄，命善，進而退縮。故夫蓋事知愚，操行清濁，性與才也；仕宦貴賤，治亂貧富，命與時也。

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

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

廢時失務，欲望富貴，不可得也；雖云有命，當須索之。

they go against the opportune moment and lose the matter at hand; they hope for wealth and honor but cannot obtain it. Although they say that ming exists, they think that they have to search for it. (Lunheng 3, p. 26)
The notions of a *ming* of longevity (shou ming) and the importance of the times (shi) will be familiar from the last section.

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

夫性與命異，或性善而命惡，或性惡而命善。操行善惡者，性也；禍福吉凶者，命也。

Now *xing* and *ming* may be at odds. In some cases, the *xing* is good but the *ming* is bad; in others, the *xing* is bad but the *ming* is good. Deliberate conduct and good and bad deeds are matters of *xing*; prosperity and good and bad auspice are matters of *ming*. (Lunheng 6, p. 51)

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

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

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

A *Hierarchy of mings*. A third level at which fate acted was the transpersonal level of the times (shi) or fate held in common (da ming, da yun 大運). Wang’s “Meaning of Fate” (“Ming yi” 命義) chapter begins with a disagreement between Mohists and Ruists over whether the time of death is subject to *ming*. The argu-
ment is not whether ming exists, but whether or not human life spans are subject to it. Both sides make arguments that are interestingly quantitative. The Mohists cite cases of mass death, through war, epidemic, and natural catastrophe; they argue that so many people cannot have had the same ming. The Confucian response is also “statistical”: in light of the total population, these numbers are not impossibly large. They argue that, out of the total population, individuals with the same ming were inexorably drawn to those unfortunate locales. The next set of arguments claims that an improbably large number of lowborn people experience elevation of their fortunes.

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

**故國命勝人命，壽命勝祿命。**

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

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

**故言“有命”，命則性也。**

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

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

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

**“正命”謂本業之自得吉也**

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

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

**“隨命”者，努力操行而吉福至，蠱慣推欲凶禍到**

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

Contrary ming, on the other hand, is irreparable:

**“遭命”者，行善得惡**

In the case of zao ming, conduct is good and results are bad. (Lunheng 6, p. 50)
The combination of xing and ming presents a complex calculus that is very far from predestination by either xing or ming. The one exception seems to be adverse fate, against which there is no recourse. Wang goes on to address cases of persons with good natures but bad lives, people who should have obtained the benefits of contingent ming but achieved the disasters of contrary ming. He argues that contingent and contrary ming are mutually exclusive. He also introduces “three natures” (san xing 三性) that correspond to the three ming. A person of standard xing spontaneously has the five (constant) virtues 五常 from birth. Consequent xing follows the natures of the father and mother. This consideration leads Wang Chong to emphasize the importance of caution during pregnancy and to advocate strictures on the activities of pregnant women.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Note on Divination

Conspicuously absent from the foregoing (and following) discussion is a detailed account of the language and practice of Greek and Chinese divination and other mantic techniques. Relevant religious practices included divination by various methods, the interpretation of signs (dreams, omens, anomalies, etc.), and the efforts of specialists (oracles, mediums, etc.) to ascertain divine commands. A central problem in both traditions was mantic access: who had access to this information and these techniques? Some techniques for mantic access focused on shamanism, including the activities of Chinese wu shaman and other shaman officials and mediums, probably including practitioners at the popular level. Other techniques concerned the interpretation of omens, including dreams and other signs and prodigies. In contrast to the passive receipt of omens, specific divination methods...
allowed the diviner actively to seek answers and ascertain (or direct) the will of specific deities. Some techniques of prediction and divination were based on the “reading” of the clouds and stars, the \textit{Yi jing} and milfoil divination, and the use of daybooks such as those unearthed in the tombs at Shuihudi to determine auspicious times for events such as marriages and campaigns.\textsuperscript{78} Techniques for the prediction of individual destiny included physiognomy (including by mothers of their children), the interpretation of dreams and anomalies in nature, geomantic techniques such as \textit{feng shui}, horoscopes, divination boards, and the manipulation of personal names to avoid adverse fate.\textsuperscript{79} This range of beliefs and practices is also an important part of Chinese discourses on fate and fatalism, both early and late.

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

\textbf{A Note on Women’s Fate}

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

\textbf{The Greek Semantic Field}

Greek accounts of fate fall into two fairly distinct historical strata, before and after the fourth century B.C.E.\textsuperscript{83} Pre-fourth-century texts, beginning with Homer, describe “fate” in several fairly distinct terms and metaphors: (1) \textit{moira} or \textit{ai/C2 sa}, transparent metaphors of division, lots or portions of destiny, death, or of allotted life span. Over time these were replaced by (2) metaphors of spinning and binding, in which fate is a thread spun about the “spindle” of each life. In later works, \textit{moira} increasingly becomes personified as the “Spinners,” the Three Fates or \textit{Moiραι}. (3) Misfortune was attributed to \textit{διωκόνες}, who variously gave out misfortune or guided individual destinies. (4) There was the problem of the relation of fate and the gods, most specifically to the will of Zeus, king and most powerful of the gods.\textsuperscript{84} To these we may add (5) the appearances of the Moirai or Fates as objects of cults as birth goddesses (Hesiod, Pausanius, etc.; in Latin, the Parcae [“childbearing”] were equivalent to the Moirai). (6) After the fourth century, fate was viewed as the principle that ruled both the world overall and the lives of individuals, expressed by the term \textit{εἰμαρμένη}. 

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

**Fate in Homer**

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

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

Its opposite was ὄμορος, ὄμορος, or ὄμωρος, to be bereft of a thing, unfortunate, or to be without a lot or share. Demosthenes refers to a piece of land as “no man’s land” (ἄμωρός).86 Similarly, to be ὄμορία (or ὄμωρία) was to be “fate-less” in the sense of having no portion, for example in the statement that Zeus well knows

> μοῖραν τ’ ὄμωρίην τε καταδηνητῶν ἄνθρώπων
> the portions and bereftness of mortals. (*Od.* 20.76)

For the most part, moira occupied a place apart from social status, the share of wealth, rank, and privilege that results from birth, although *Iliad* 3 describes Agamemnon as “born of good moira and happy in [the protection of] a daimon” μοιρηγενές, ὀλβιώδαιμον (*Il.* 3.182).
Nor did moira result from the “just deserts” of virtuous or unvirtuous action (topos 4). It referred rather to sudden reversals and situations that threaten the order decreed by the gods (topos 5). As Hector boasts to Andromache, no man can kill him prematurely because fate is a power that cannot be gainsaid by god or man:

οὐ γάρ τις μ’ ὑπὲρ οἰσαν ἀνήρ Αἰδί προϊόψει μοῖραν δ’ οὐ τινὰ φημι πεφυγμένον ἐμεναι ἄνδρων,
No man will hurl me to Hades beyond my portion, but fate I say no one of mankind can flee. (Il. 6.487–489)

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

μὴ καὶ ὑπὲρ μοίραν δόμον Αἴδου εἰσαφίκη
est, beyond fate, you go down to the house of Hades. (Il. 20.336)

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

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

In all these instances, it is noteworthy that moira does not seem to be linked either to divination (attempts to understand and perhaps conform to a fated future) or to metis μῆτις (the skills and wiles that Greek society so prized for dealing with unpredictable and rapidly shifting situations). Metis, it appears, was not used to thwart the decrees of fate.
(c) The Διὸς βουλή or “Plan of Zeus,” the relation of fate to the will of Zeus, king and most powerful of the gods (topos 1). Homer never resolves the question of the relation of moira to the will of the gods, and they coexist ambiguously.\(^8^9\) Human affairs “lie on the knees of the gods” (*Odyssey* 1.267). The “destructive plan of the gods” θεῶν ἀλλὰς δία βουλάς causes the suffering of Oedipus (*Od.* 11.276), and “the will of the gods” θεῶν ἱστητι causes the death of Patroklos (*Iliad* 19.9), the toils of Odysseus (*Od.* 7.214), and the Trojan War (*Od.* 12.190 and 17.119). Yet the gods acknowledge a fate beyond their power to alter. For example, Poseidon grudgingly acknowledges that it is Odysseus’ aisa to escape death (*Od.* 5.288 ff.).

While fate appears not to be a problem for the gods in general, it poses a more particular, and also unresolved, problem for the plan of Zeus (Διὸς βουλή). As king of the gods, Zeus is more powerful than all the other gods combined, and his will has a unique status. The beginning of the *Iliad* makes it clear that the will of Zeus is brought to completion with the sack of Troy. In the *Odyssey*, Zeus is more accommodating to the will of the other gods, for example in the return of Odysseus. Nevertheless, Zeus has no more power than the other gods to determine the span of an individual life (topos 2). Zeus, as the “steward of war for mankind” (*Iliad* 19.224), may weigh the fates of antagonists in battle and may even attempt to defer the moira of a hero in battle (*Iliad* 16.431–443 and 22.167–181), but his will inevitably and seamlessly conforms to the fate of that individual. As Terence Irwin points out, Zeus and the fates point to two distinct notions of (partial) order within the Homeric universe: the impersonal, inexorable, amoral (and usually inscrutable) order of the fates (topos 6) and the intelligent, moral, justice-based rulership of Zeus (topos 1).\(^9^0\) The moralizing retrospective accounts of Hesiod, Pindar, and Aeschylus (topos 4) linked the power of the Moirai with the government of Zeus and led to the worship of Zeus as Μοιραγέτης, “leader of the Moirai,” in the fifth century B.C.E.

(d) Δαιμόνες. Psychopompic daimons or guides of the soul (from the root da-

δαίω, δατίσμα, to divide, especially to cut up portions of meat, in sacrifice) variously gave out misfortune or guided individual destinies. Daimons were originally “sharers” who shared out allotments to humankind (topos 1). As such they are linked to the metaphor of apportionment that underlines the terms moira and aisa. Like them, they were powers beyond human will, older than the anthropomorphic Olympian gods and incomprehensible, δαιμόνιος (topos 6).\(^9^1\) They are not major presences in Homer, where they usually cause illness (*Od.* 5.396) and such misfortunes as Odysseus’ imprisonment on Ogygia:

> ἄλλα ἐμὲ τὸν ἰστὴτον ἤγαγε δαιμών  
> only my unhappy self did the daimon lead to her hearth. (*Od.* 7.248)\(^9^2\)

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

(e) Fate personified and the metaphor of spinning. Fate was personified as several goddesses, who were linked to notions of destiny (topos 2), punishment, retri-
bution, and justice (topos 6), typically revealed by oracles, omens, prodigies, and signs. They also pose the problem of the relation of fate and the gods: Themis or Δίκη (Justice), Ανάγκη (Necessity), Μοίρα (Fate), and the Μοῖραι (Three Fates). The Three fates were variously represented as handmaidens of Δίκη and as the “Spin-ners” of human destinies. The Moirai appear infrequently in Homer as three figures who spin the thread of destiny around each individual. Alkinoos describes the fates as “Heavy Spinners” Κλωθές when he speaks of the unusual destiny (αίσα) of Odysseus, who, once he returns safely to Ithaka,

πείσται ἀσσα οἱ αἰσσα κατά Κλωθής τε βαρείας γενομένω νήσσατο λίνῳ, ὅτε μιν τίκε μήπτη
will bear as much as his destiny and the Heavy Spinners spun for him at birth with thread,
when his mother bore him. (Od. 7.197)

This “spinning” takes place primarily at birth (topos 2), but also at marriage (Od. 4.207), where the Moirai could be bearers of good fortune and, in some accounts, sing for the bridal couple. In Homer, the gods are also “spinners” of fate. In Iliad 24 “the gods spun life thus for afflicted mortals” (ὤς γὰρ ἐπεκλῶσαντο θεοὶ δειλοÏ¬σι βροτοÏ¬σι) (Il. 24.525). The Odyssey begins when “the gods had spun for him his return home” (τῷ οἱ ἐπεκλῶσαντο θεοὶ οἰκόνθε νέεςθαι) (Od. 1.17). The gods spun the destruction of Troy (Od. 3.208), the fate of Odysseus (Od. 11.139), and his beggar persona (Od. 16.64).

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

Parmenides

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

κρατερή γὰρ Ἀνάγκη πείρατος ἐν δεσμοῖσιν ἔχει, τό μιν ἄμφις ἔργηκε
For strong Ananke holds it in bonds of chain that binds it all around. (Parmenides frag. 8, lines 30–31)

οὐδὲν γὰρ ἄθιν ἢ ἄστα ἄλλο πάρξε τοῦ ἐόντος, ἐπεὶ τό γε Μοῖρ ἐπέδησεν οὐλον ἀκήνητον τ’ ἐμμεναι.
For [there is] nothing [that] exists or will exist other than what is, since Moira has fettered it so as to be whole and immovable. (Parm. frag. 8, lines 36–38)

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

In the poem of Parmenides, it is a beneficent daimon who guides the possibly shamanic journey of a young man toward the discovery of truth.
The mares that bear me as far as my heart aspires sent me on, when once they set me on the much-spoken road of the daimon. (Parm. frag. 1, lines 1–3)

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

χαίρε, ἵπποι ταῖ μὲ φέρουσιν, δόσον τῷ ἐπὶ θυμὸς ἰκάνοι, πέμπτον, ἐπεὶ μ’ ἐς ὅδὸν βῆσαν πολύφημον ἄγουσαι δαίμονος

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

ἡ γάρ εἰσθήτα μου μαντική ἢ τοῦ δαίμονίου ἐν μὲν τῷ πρόσθεν χρόνῳ παύα πάνυ πυκνῇ ἡν ἤ καὶ πάνυ ἐπὶ συμφρασμένη, εἴ τι μέλλουμι μὴ ὀρθῶς πράξαν.

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

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

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

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

> μανθάνω, ὦ Σόκρατες διὶ δὴ σὺ τὸ δαιμόνιον φῆς σαυτῷ ἐκάστοτε γίγνεσθαι. Socrates, it is because you say that something daimonic is always in attendance upon you. (*Euth.* 3b)

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

> ἕνιοις μὲν τὸ γιγανόμενον μοι δαιμόνιον ἀποκωλύει συνεῖναι, ἕνιοις δὲ ἔξι, with some, the daimonic [presence] comes and forbids me to associate, with others, it permits it. (*Thet.* 151a)

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

> λέγεται δὲ οὕτως, ὡς ἄρα πελευτήρια ἐκάστων ὁ ἐκάστων δαιμόνιον, ὀσπὲρ ἐμνυτα εἶληξε, οὕτως ὠγειν ἐπικεῖεται ἐξ ἐκ τὸν τόπων, οἳ δὲ τοὺς συλλεγέντας δια-δικασσαμένους ἐσ.

It is said that, when each person dies, the *daimon* of each, who had charge of him while he was alive, this same one tries to lead him to a certain place. (*Phaedo* 107d)

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

> ἐπείδαι ἅρκον καὶ τετελευτηκότες εἰς τὸν τόπον οἳ ὁ δαίμον ἐκάστον κομίζει when the dead come to the place to which the *daimon* leads each. (*Phaedo* 113d)

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

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

Surviving accounts refer to the views of Epicurus (341–270 B.C.E.), the skeptic Carneades (214–129 B.C.E.), and several figures associated with the Stoa:
its founder Zeno of Citium (335–263), Boethus of Sidon (second century B.C.E.),
Posidonius (135–51 B.C.E.), and Epictetus (ca. 55–135 C.E.). Lost texts are attributed
to the Platonist Plutarch (first century C.E.), Tertullian (second century C.E.), and
second-century Peripatetics and Stoics. There were also fourth-century Christian
works titled "Against Fate" by Gregory of Nyssa and Diodorus of Tarsus.

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

Root Metaphors

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

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

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

The specific association of fate with inevitable change seems particular to pre-Buddhist Chinese accounts, where ming includes life span, wealth, and fortune in explicitly changing times. Fate in this sense may apply to individuals, families, nations, empires, or polities. By contrast, Parmenides uses fate as a metaphor for the specifically unchanging and immobile nature of “what-is.” Other Greek thinkers associated change with the action of fate (in association with justice, necessity, and retribution), but in rhetorical and intellectual contexts very different from the Chinese. Anaximander describes a balance between coming into and passing out of being based on necessity and mutual “penalty and retribution” δίκη καὶ τίτις, but it is based not on fate but on “the assessment of time” κατὰ τὴν τοῦ χρόνου τάξιν. Heraclitus speaks of all things “undergoing alteration” ἀλλοιώται and even of the sun being subject to the retribution of the Fates, the handmaidens of Dike, but his focus is the integrity of the order of nature and the physical world.

References to the action of fate or justice became part of the rhetoric of appeals to Nature φύσις, expressed in legal and moral language that appealed to a wide range of Greeks of the fifth-century B.C.E. These were used to justify diverse positions. Pre-Buddhist Chinese accounts, by contrast, include but do not emphasize notions of causality and constancy in nature.

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

This preliminary evidence from Chinese and Greek suggests some common notions of fate, but very different attitudes toward fatalism. Pre-Buddhist Chinese accounts combine acceptance of fate with strong anti-fatalism and well-developed notions of strategy or maneuvering room within its decrees. Life span may be fated, but within it free will reigns. Change and resilience are the order of the day and open to human strategy and ingenuity. A wide range of texts stress the importance of
timeliness (shì) and configuration or “setup” (shì 計) in response to one’s times and to one’s fate. Thus, longevity and good auspice were fated and unknowable, but could be cherished and cultivated through knowledge and sagacity. In this sense, both the Zhuangzi and the Xunzi take “strategic” attitudes toward omnipresent ming. Greek accounts of fate contain a significant fatalist element. Greek fates were variously personified: as Moira, the Moirai, the power of Themis or Dike, the will of Zeus, or the activity of daimons. These divinities alternatively held fate in their power and coexisted with an autonomous “fate” beyond their control. The decrees and commands of these divinities and divine agencies were consistently portrayed as fixed, binding, and inexorable.

Notes

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


3 – Greene 1944; Cornford 1957; Dietrich 1965; Doyle 1984.


5 – This complex topic is the subject of another forthcoming paper.


8 – Chen 1994a, 1994b, 1997b.


12 – Chen 1994a, pp. 4–5.


15 – Fu 1952, p. 114.

16 – Ibid., p. 115.


20 – Di presided over lesser gods and royal ancestors and was responsible for the welfare of the Shang kingdom. See Poo 1998, p. 224 n. 37.

21 – For example, 貞: 不惟帝命作我田 (Yao 6746.1) in Yao and Xiao 1989, p. 127b. Other examples of nominal uses of ling = ming occur at Yao 6928.1 zheng, 14295.1, and 34146.1. In Xia Lu’s interpretation (1980, p. 86) of the inscription 貞: 業子令(命) (Yao 1239.1) Di-sacrifice is offered not to Si Ming, the Director of Destinies who is accorded the power of fate in Zhou sources, but to another god named Ming. See also Ding 1988, p. 203.


23 – For a particularly lucid presentation of this combination see Smith 1991, pp. 13–14.

24 – Some of those presented here are taken from a series of papers between 1957 and 1962, originally published in Chinese and later published in English in Philosophy East and West. Tang Junyi used nine verb-object compounds to identify pre-Qin doctrines of ming that, in his view, all originated in the Zhou religion of the Odes and Documents. They are: (1) the “understanding ming” of Confucius, (2) the Mohist “against ming,” (3) Mengzi’s “establishing ming,” (4) Zhuangzi’s “resting in ming,” (5) the “Returning to ming” in the Laozi and Zhuangzi, (6) Xunzi’s “controlling” or “causing ming,” (7) Zou Yan’s “omen of receiving ming,” (8) the Zhong yong’s “what heaven has decreed is called nature” 天命之謂性, and (9) the “arriving at [awareness of] ming” 至於命 in the Xici commentary to the Changes (49/Shuo/1). See Tang 1957, pp. 1–2, and Tang 1962, pp. 196–197. He does not identify specific passages or elaborate their contexts, and at least one of them is probably periphrastic.

26 – Translations are my own unless otherwise specified. Throughout, I use the terms ming, fate, decree, and mandate in both the nominal and verbal senses for ming to avoid a kind of crypto-fatalism.


28 – Several strips in the excavations from Baoshan recommend divinations and sacrifice to Si Ming. See Baoshan Chujian, strips 212–215, 236–238, and 242–244. Si Ming also appears as an authority over life and death in a text discovered in a Qin tomb in Gansu. Here, the resurrection of a man named Tan was granted when Tan’s master argued to Si Ming that Tan did not deserve to die for a minor offense. See Peng 1991; Poo 1998, p. 66; He 1989; Li Xueqin 1990; Harper 1994.

29 – See Li Ling 1990, p. 84.

30 – See Mori 1971, pp. 7–22. The girl from Shen was the wife of Wen Wang and mother of Wu Wang. Her life story appears in the Lienü zhuan in the “Three Mothers of the Zhou” (juan 1, story 6). For discussion of the trope of female virtue in the rise and fall of dynasties see Raphals 1998, pp. 11–26, 29.


32 – Fu Sinian argues that some Lunyu references to ming mean tian ming (2.4, 6.10, 9.1, 12.5, 14.36, 16.8, and 20.3). Fu resolves the inconsistency by arguing that Confucius initially believed in the Mandate of Heaven, but rejected it in later in life, after his own failures. See Fu 1952, pp. 32b–33a, and 331.

33 – Cf. Zhuangzi 29:998. This phrase is particularly prevalent in the Zhuangzi (ten instances), the Taiping jing (sixteen instances), and the Lunheng (thirteen instances) (searches were conducted using Scripta Sinica).

34 – Xunzi 15/60. The term still retains the sense of being in a desperate hurry.

35 – Ruan Yuan, “Xingming guxun” (Fu 1952; Mori 1971).

36 – Tang 1962, pp. 196–197 (English), and Tang 1957, p. 1 (Chinese), respectively. These phrases may be periphrastic for later Daoist notions of “resting in ming” (an ming), since this phrase does not appear in the Zhuangzi.

37 – Baopuzi, juan 11, p. 177.

38 – Zhuangzi 19:630.

39 – The passage continues: someone who understands ming does not stand under a wall that is about to collapse. Yang Xiong takes up this example in the Fa yan (6:17). Wang Chong discusses “standard ming” in detail (discussed below).

40 – Zou Yan’s “omen of receiving ming” 受命之符 is also an example of shou ming.
41 – Mozi 31/62.
42 – Lienü zhuan, juan 7, story 13, p. 7:10a.
43 – Zhuangzi 17:596; Han Feizi 8:122; Huainanzi, pp. 333, 376; Lü Shi chunqiu, juan 4.1, p. 186; Shuo yuan 1:10b.
44 – Xunzi 16/23. This is quite distinct from Tang Junyi’s reference to Xunzi’s “controlling” or “causing ming” in note 24, above.
45 – Other understandings of the term included understanding or obeying either the orders of a ruler or the “orders” of heaven-decreed nature. See Nylan 1993, p. 35 n. 92; Mori 1971, pp. 35–41; Kanaya 1986, pp. 136–166.
46 – Han Feizi 8:121.
47 – Chunqiu fanlu 11.1, p. 283.
48 – Ning Chen (Chen 1997b) has used the notions of transpersonal and individual ming as a way to resolve the internal inconsistencies in the Mengzi.
49 – C. Graham 1978, pp. 489–490. The Lü Shi chunqiu chapter “Living Out One’s Lot” (“jin shu” 監數) provides an apt example of this argument. It describes how sages use the knowledge of yin and yang to understand what benefits the myriad creatures and helps them to live out their allotted life spans, without either augmenting or cutting them off (Lü Shi chunqiu 3.2).
50 – The translation of this passage depends on whether we read 其所終 and 其所始 as referring to the cycles of heaven and earth described earlier in the passage or to the span of human lives. I have taken it in the former sense. In the latter sense the passage would read: “Since we do not know our ends, how can we say we are not fated [to die]; since we do not know how we began, how can we say we are fated?”
52 – Zhuangzi 14:532.
53 – Ibid., 5:212.
54 – The semantic range of shi includes both static and dynamic elements, which Jullien respectively calls disposition (position, circumstances) and the more instrumental dispositif (power, potential), elegantly rendered by Janet Lloyd as “setup.” See Jullien 1995, p. 11.
56 – For the problem of fate in the Taixuanjing, see Nylan 1993.
58 – For a more complex view of Han Confucianism, see Nylan 1999.
59 – Han shu 100A, 4207–4212.

60 – This point is argued persuasively in Nylan 1997.

61 – This analysis is indebted to Loewe 1978, pp. 681–682, 701–702, 780–783.


63 – Forke’s translation is misleading because it inserts a notion of predestination that is not in the text. Later in the chapter he translates ming pin 命貧—literally, someone with a ming of poverty—as “in the case of a person predestined for poverty” (Forke 1962, 1:49).

64 – Forke 1962, 1:130 ff.

65 – 王者一受呪，內以為性，外以為體 (Lunheng 12, p. 126).

66 – Ibid., p. 128.


69 – Other examples of arbitrariness include: from which pore a sore breaks out, which insect the spider traps, which fish are caught in the net, who gets caught, the response to calamity, and being crushed by a wall or river bank collapse.


71 – Lunheng 6, pp. 49–50. Forke (1962, 1:138–139) translates these as “natural,” “concomitant,” and “adverse.”


75 – Ibid., p. 424.

76 – The Gujin tushu jicheng (yishu 藝術, vol. 47, pp. 5681–7854) contains biographical entries for diviners under the categories of: oracle bones and milfoil stalks (bushi 卜筮), astrology (xingming 性命), physiognomy (xiangshu 相術), geomancy (kanyu 坦呪), and computational arts (shushu 數術).


79 – For accounts of later techniques for the management of fate see Chao 1946; Smith 1991; Topley 1973; Yuan 1919, 1926, 1947.

80 – Halliday 1913; Vernant 1974.

81 – Lunheng 3, p. 20.
82 – Conference on Excavated Texts, Sponsored by the Luce Foundation, Dartmouth College and Beijing University, Beijing, 18–21 August 2000.


84 – These include Themis or Dike (in addition to their later roles as deities of Justice and Punishment, Dike is associated with an orderly flow of time, as is Moira with the orderly division of space) and ἀνάγκη (Necessity), revealed by oracles, omens, prodigies, and signs.

85 – For Parmenides' dates see Guthrie 1962–1981, vol. 2, pp. 1–2, based on Plato's (Parm. 127a–c) description of a meeting between the old Parmenides and the young Socrates. For the inquiry concerning nature see Lloyd 1987, pp. 1–4, 38–49. Conspicuously absent from this preliminary study are medical and other scientific works. For a discussion of fate as an area of speculation that offers “some of the greatest problems for, or the maximum resistance to, any scientific takeover,” see Lloyd 1987, pp. 4, 38–49. As Lloyd points out, much of the discourse on prediction in medicine and astronomy concerned prognosis of the course of disease or the prediction of the positions of the sun, moon, and planets. These predictions did not significantly involve the operative notions of fate.


87 – Of the 101 instances of μοιρα in the Iliad and the Odyssey, only one is in the phrase huper moiran. Uper aisan occurs five times out of forty instances of aisa.


89 – For example, Il. 1.5; Od. 11.297.


91 – Greene 1944, p. 12.

92 – Cf. Il. 9.600 and Od. 3.166, 5.396, 12.295.

93 – For example, at the marriage of Peleus and Thetis and Zeus and Themis.

94 – Parmenides also wrote in Homeric hexameter and began his poem, in the Homeric manner, with a claim for divine inspiration.

95 – Guthrie considers the daimon to be Helios, the sun; Austin takes her as “the goddess.”


98 – Amand 1945; Cioffiari 1935.
99 – Kirk and Raven 103; Diehls and Kranz 12A9.

100 – Kirk and Raven 207, 229; Diehls and Kranz 22B90, 94.

101 – According to Greene (1944, p. 228), these included naïve individualists, super-patriots (in defense of the state’s right to exist), democrats (in defense of the status quo), aristocrats (in defense of a reactionary coup), and the Athenian empire itself (in defense of the conscription of Melian neutrals).

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