THE POWER OF WORDS IN EARLY CHINESE PHILOSOPHY:
HOW TO CALL OR NOT TO CALL SOMETHING IS THE QUESTION

Wednesday, March 29, 7:30 PM
Jonsson Performance Hall, Free

BIOPGRAPHICAL SKETCH
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ABSTRACT
There seems to be a remarkable agreement on a variety of issues among early Chinese masters of all nominations. The condemnation of regicide and chaos, for instance, is largely shared, and so is the positive appreciation of loyalty and filial piety. Hidden under this veil of apparent agreement, there exists however an omnifarious layer of lively disagreements among and even within master-texts on what one calls, and consequently evaluates as regicide, chaos, loyalty or piety. By only looking for obvious and explicit types of disagreement, one risks to miss out on the ongoing controversies and different stances in these underlying debates. An analysis of the argumentative strategies in terms of how to call things introduces a novel approach to China’s early philosophy, its intellectual history, and even contemporary politics. This presentation focuses upon two particularly interesting points: first, some major evolutions that have taken place in Chinese history under the cover of apparently unchanged ideology; and second, the intellectual suspension created by masters who rejected the then current understanding of a term without providing an alternative.