

UNDERSTANDING  
— THE —  
CHINESE  
MIND

THE PHILOSOPHICAL ROOTS

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5 Marginalia Sino-logica<sup>1</sup>

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## Glossary

辯	<i>bian</i>	distinction	<i>shi</i>	approve of
常	<i>chang</i>	constant	<i>shi-bi</i>	this-that
道	<i>dao</i>	way	<i>shi-fei</i>	This/not-this
德	<i>de</i>	virtue	<i>shuo</i>	explanations
刀	<i>dou</i>	knife	<i>tian</i>	heaven
非	<i>fei</i>	reject	<i>wei</i>	deeming
以	<i>yi</i>	with regard to	<i>wen</i>	literature
可	<i>ke</i>	admissible	<i>wen hua</i>	literature changed
利	<i>li</i>	benefit	<i>wu-wei</i>	no deeming
礼	<i>li</i>	ritual	<i>xin</i>	heart, mind
礼樂	<i>li yue</i>	ritual music	<i>xing</i>	conduct
樂	<i>le</i>	pleasure	<i>yan</i>	language
命	<i>ming</i>	command	<i>yue</i>	music
名	<i>ming</i>	names	<i>zhi</i>	Guidance Wisdom
仁	<i>ren</i>	humanity		

*Satyam eva jayate.*<sup>2</sup>

'Truth' will prevail.

This is an exploratory essay in the anthropology of logic. I shall begin with a study of the concept of truth in ancient China, and I shall then proceed to an investigation of some ancient Chinese attempts to construct logically sound arguments. In the process of the discussion I shall also comment on some recent literature on the subject. I shall raise questions such as the following:

Did the ancient Chinese have a semantic concept of truth? Why exactly should we be entitled to assume that they did? How, for example can we be sure that the ancient Chinese did not have a pragmatic way of looking at truth in terms of appropriateness and social usefulness of utterances?

Did the ancient Chinese stress the importance of truthfulness or good faith?

Did the ancient Chinese have a concept of a sentence? What exactly is the evidence that they did? Why can we not say that they simply had names which they applied to objects?

Did the ancient Chinese have attitudes such as belief towards statements? If so, how exactly do we know that they did? And, for example, how can we be sure that when we ascribe to them the belief that 'Socrates smokes' is true, all they do is that they treat Socrates as if he were smoking. In other words: they entertain no attitude towards any proposition, only towards an individual, Socrates.

Did the ancient Chinese have a concept of knowledge? What exactly is our evidence that they did? For example, how can we be sure that when we understand them as knowing that Socrates smokes they successfully treat Socrates as smoking?

Did the ancient Chinese words like 'red' mark a quality, or could it be that Chinese 'adjectives' work quite differently so that the Chinese for 'red' in fact refers to an abstract object consisting of all red objects everywhere, past and present.

Did the ancient Chinese have a concept of a property or quality, or did they manage without such abstract notions?

We need to ask whether the logical workings of the Chinese mind and the grammatical workings of Chinese sentences might not be quite radically different from those our European translations tempt us to make them out to be. Moreover, it is quite conceivable that the nature of the Chinese language may have channelled Chinese thinking in certain ways that Indo-European languages have not channelled Indo-European thinking.

My point of departure will be a detailed discussion of the concept of truth in ancient China.

### The Concept of Semantic Truth in Ancient China

#### *The Semantic Concept 'Is True' Versus the Abstract Concept 'Truth'*

There is a crucial distinction between the question of whether the ancient Chinese did or did not apply semantic truth predicates like 'is true' to sentences on the one hand, and on the other hand, whether they developed, defined, or discussed a theoretical concept of truth. I intend to investigate these two questions separately.

It is far from clear why every culture should have an abstract and theoretical 'hypostatized' concept of truth. Such a theoretical construct is philosophically highly problematic, vastly more problematic than ordinary predicates such as 'is true' which I expect all sorts of cultures to have.

#### *The Semantic Concept of Truth*

To remove some possible doubts, let me briefly indicate as best I can what I take to be the notion of semantic truth. I call a sentence 'p' true exactly if p. I say the sentence 'Snow is white' is true if, and only if, snow is white. This is not a definition of truth, but at least it is a criterion for my use of the expression 'is true' as applied to sentences. There is nothing original about this way of giving a satisfactory criterion for the use of the concept 'is true'. I am simply following a well-known seminal article by Alfred Tarski entitled *Der Wahrheitsbegriff in den formalisierten Sprachen* (1935).

I want to ask whether the ancient Chinese have constructions

or expressions that allow them to apply a properly understood semantic concept of truth to their sentences.

#### *Some Preliminary Remarks on the Concept of Semantic Truth in Ancient China*

At the outset, some rather obvious remarks may be necessary to avoid misunderstandings. Evidently, the ancient Chinese did not have the English noun 'truth'. Nor did they have a word entirely synonymous with the English 'true'.

Further, the ancient Chinese language certainly does not provide one central and standard technical term for truth like the English 'truth' or the Greek *alêtheia*. This is indeed an interesting fact. The ancient Chinese did apparently only have many ways of calling something 'true' with various additional nuances. This, I hasten to add, does not necessarily mean they were not interested in truth. I submit that it would be a little insensitive to accuse Eskimo thinkers of not having a concept of snow, or of taking little interest in snow, because they happen to have so many specific terms to cover the semantic area of snow.

I do believe that the ancient Chinese assigned a place in their scheme of things to the notion of factual truth of sentences which differs in significant respects from what we are used to. The general intellectual climate in ancient China was such that Wang Chong's<sup>a</sup> (AD 27-100) concern for truth for truth's sake, of which we will hear a little more below, was untypical. It was more typical of dominant trends in classical Greek civilisation, and of the later scientific and technological Chinese literature.

Similarly, Later Moist (Mohist) scientific preoccupation with the truth of theoretical statements, for example in optics, was less than typical of the mainstream of ancient Chinese literature that has come down to us, although it certainly bears witness to a high degree of sustained concern with the truth of theoretical statements.

There is no single towering and crucial concept in Chinese that is equivalent to the central Greek concept *alêtheia*. Factual truth (*ran*<sup>b</sup>, *dang*<sup>c</sup>, and so on, Sanskrit *satya*) was not in China lumped together with moral truth (Chinese *dao*<sup>d</sup>, Sanskrit *dharmā*) into one nominalized and then hypostatized concept like *alêtheia*, Truth with a capital T, or *Wahrheit*. There is a profound difference of emphasis between Western and Chinese notions of truth. The Chinese thinkers were preoccupied with the right way (*dao*<sup>d</sup>) of doing things, whereas Western philosophers were more preoc-

cupied with what is true of things. Consider Aristotle's abstract definition:

Thus a person has got it right (*alêtheuei*) who considers that things which are separate are separate and that things which belong together belong together. (*Metaphysics*, 1051, b 3)

A very important question is whether we have statements of this plain theoretical sort in ancient China.

Examine, for example:

We call it 'being straight' to declare something 'this (or, right)' if it is this (or, right), and to declare something 'not-this (or, wrong)' if it is not-this (or, wrong) (*shi wei shi, fei wei fei yue zhi'e*). (Xunzi (Hsün Tzu) 2.12, compare with H. Köster (1967), p. 12)

This passage from Xunzi is difficult. I want to stress two important contrasts with Aristotle here: (a) Aristotle is interested in a formal definition of what it is to be right, whereas Xunzi defines what it is to tell the truth, and (b) Aristotle thinks of the subject term and the predicate term being separate or belonging together whereas Xunzi thinks of a predicate applying or not applying to a thing. Both are profound differences.

For Aristotle the question is one of the theoretical definition of *alêtheuein* 'being right', whereas for Xunzi the problem is the more social definition of *zhi*<sup>1</sup> 'being straight, telling the truth'. For Aristotle the paradigm of a statement is a general statement of the 'All philosophers are humans' or 'All humans are mortal' variety: his paradigm of a proposition essentially relates two terms. For Xunzi, as for all other early Chinese philosophers of language, the main concern is not in this way essentially tied up with a relation between two terms. Chinese philosophers of language were mainly concerned with the relation between names and things.

Comparisons of this kind require detailed philological study of the original classical Greek and the original classical Chinese texts. They do not require any basically adequate philosophical theory of Latin or Greek.<sup>3</sup> They do require that one looks at Greek and Chinese texts from a philosophical perspective.

The relevant texts, however, are not just the strictly 'philosophical' ones (whatever that term would mean in a Chinese context). Consider a narrative passage:

'If she succeeds in this matter you will control the land and have the people as your children. If she does not succeed, then I fear you will lose your

life. If you want her to succeed, why don't you see me?' Yin Chi's father kowtowed and replied: 'It is just as you say (*zheng ru jun yang* lit.: GENUINE BE-LIKE YOU WORD). . . .': *Zhanguo*, no. 494, ed. Chu Tsu-keng, p. 1724)

Yin Ji agrees with Sima Xi's (Ssu-ma Hsi) two conditional statements. His way of speaking suggests that a relation called *ru*<sup>h</sup>, 'be like' can obtain between words and the facts. But this, of course, is far from being a theoretical or 'philosophical' statement.

In an only slightly more 'philosophical' vein we have passages like this:

Kongzi (Confucius) knew that the Way is easy to put into practice, and he said: 'The Book of Songs says: "The enlightenment of the people is very easy." These are not empty words (*fei xu ci ye*).' (*Han Shi Waizhuan*, 5.16; compare with J.R. Hightower, 1951, p. 176)

Does the 'not empty words' not come close to their being true? We shall have to closely investigate matters of this sort.

For the time being, I shall leave aside the Greek (and English) evidence as well as the comparative problems. I shall turn to a detailed study of Chinese thinkers' use of what may appear to be predicates of semantic truth.

### *Some Classical Chinese Terms Connected with the Notion of Semantic Truth*

What, then, were the classical Chinese words that came closest to the semantic concept of 'truth'? As a first orientation I shall simply list these words and try to indicate roughly and in a preliminary way their semantic nuances.

- (a) *shi*: be this, be it, be right
- (b) *fei*: not be this, not be it, be wrong
- (c) *shi*: be solid, be real
- (d) *xu*: be empty, be tenuous, be unreal
- (e) *ran*: be so, be the case
- (f) *fou*: be not so, not be the case
- (g) *you*: have, exist, there is such a state of affairs
- (h) *wu*: lack, not exist, there is no such state of affairs
- (i) *cheng*: be honest, be sincere, be genuinely so
- (j) *xin*: believe, be loyal, be trustworthy, be reliably so
- (k) *wei*: to fake, create artificially, be fake
- (l) *dang*: to fit, to fit the facts

(m) *guo*: to go beyond, to not fit, to not fit the facts  
 (n) *zhen*<sup>u</sup>: be genuine, be genuinely so

(o) *qing*<sup>v</sup>: inherent state, essence, genuine state of affairs  
 (p) *ke*<sup>w</sup>: be able to, be admissible, be logically acceptable

None of these terms corresponds perfectly or exactly with the concept of semantic truth. But then neither does the English word 'true'. (Compare this with 'a true friend'. It is a sobering reflection that 'true' etymologically is related to German *treu* and is thus very much like *xin*<sup>i</sup> and far from being a purely logical term.) We neither expect words in any natural language to be unambiguous, nor do we expect them to correspond exactly to words in a different natural language. None of these words represents 'the concept of truth in ancient China'. But in what follows we shall try to investigate how some of these words were used by Chinese thinkers.

#### *The Notion of Semantic Truth among Ancient Chinese Thinkers*

In the following sections we shall consider some ancient Chinese thinkers and schools of thought. We shall ask ourselves to what extent these thinkers had occasion to employ semantic truth predicates.

#### **Did Kongzi Have a Concept of Truth? Kongzi comments:**

The Master said: 'After a state has been ruled for a hundred years by good men it is possible to get the better of cruelty and to do away with killing. How genuinely adequate (*cheng*<sup>q</sup>) is this saying (*yan*<sup>ia</sup>)!' (*Lunyu* 13.10, compare with Lau (1983), p. 125. Compare also *Lunyu*, 17.4)

Kongzi quotes a sentence, and he comments the sentence by calling it *cheng*<sup>q</sup>. The old commentary says: 'This saying is an old one and Kongzi believed in it (or: held it to be trustworthy) (*shin zhi*<sup>x</sup>).'<sup>4</sup> (Here we have a belief context with a pronominalized sentential object.)

Kongzi commented: 'Is it not so (*ran*<sup>b</sup>) that talent is difficult to find?' (*Lunyu* 8.20, compare with D.C. Lau (1983), p. 75)

I submit that there is a good *prima facie* case to be made for D.C. Lau's translation: 'How true it is that talent is difficult to find.'

From later sources (c. 200 BC) we have the following story about

Kongzi which I quote because it illustrates how semantic truth predicates are commonly ascribed in classical Chinese:

[Yanzi said:] 'When one's entourage is good then each of the officials will find their proper places and good and evil will be properly differentiated.' When Kongzi heard of this he said: 'These words are trustworthy (*ci yan ye xin yi*<sup>y</sup>)! . . .' (*Yanzi Chunqiu* 3, ed. Wu Tse-yü, p. 239 and *Shuoyuan*, 7.37, ed. Chao Shan-i, p. 197)

Suppose I say 'I submit that the claim that classical Chinese had no concept of 'truth' is not trustworthy, that is, it is not to be believed, it is to be rejected, it is to be dismissed. This is not so. The facts are otherwise.' I state this without using the concept 'truth', one might insist. (Although I am certainly mentioning it.) But would this mean I do not here show, by speaking the way I do, that I do have a concept of truth? It seems to me that I do express the notion of semantic truth. I just happen to express the notion of semantic truth in slightly different ways, that is all. The Chinese, it seems, had such different ways of expressing that a sentence was true. Just as Plato sometimes has *orthôs legeis* 'you speak correctly' and at other times *alêthê legeis* and various other locutions which all critically involve a semantic concept of truth. It is the different Chinese locutions that we are exploring in what follows.

#### **Did the Book Mozi (Mo Tzu) Employ a Concept of Semantic Truth?**

Looking at it from the point of view of what you are saying, what everybody calls 'acceptable (*ke*<sup>w</sup>)' need not necessarily obtain (*ran*<sup>b</sup>). (*Mozi* 49.24, compare with Mei (1929), p. 246)

Here the speaker, a ruler, attributes to the listener, Mozi, what one is tempted to construe as a distinction between 'is (subjectively) acceptable (*ke*<sup>w</sup>)', and 'is (objectively) so (*ran*<sup>b</sup>)'. Note that what everybody calls 'acceptable' (*ke*<sup>w</sup>) is a form of words, sentence, or a claim. And that same thing is said to be not necessarily *ran*<sup>b</sup> 'objectively so'. I therefore maintain that *ran*<sup>b</sup> in this passage is pointedly used as a semantic truth predicate.

**Did the Early Daoists Have a Concept of Semantic Truth? In the Laozi (Lao Tzu) we read:**

What the ancients said: 'If one bends one is preserved intact' is surely no empty saying (*xu yu*<sup>z</sup>). (*Laozi*, 22, compare with Lau (1963), p. 35)

Heshang Gong's commentary elaborates:

These are correct words (*zheng yan<sup>6a</sup>*) and not empty words (*xu yan<sup>6b</sup>*) (Compare with E. Erkes (1950), p. 49)

Perhaps 'being not empty' could mean 'has its point', but Heshang Gong's commentary does not take it that way. Calling words 'not empty' is a classical Chinese way of calling them true.<sup>5</sup>

Trustworthy (*xin<sup>7</sup>*) words are not beautiful. Beautiful words are not truthful (*xin<sup>8</sup>*). (*Laozi*, B1, tr. D.C. Lau (1982), p. 117)

Heshang Gong's fascinating commentary leaves little doubt as to how he understands Laozi at this point:

'Truthful words' correspond to the reality concerned (*xin yan zhe ru qi shi ye<sup>9c</sup>*). (Compare with E. Erkes (1950), p. 134)

Do we have an incipient ancient Chinese correspondence theory of truth here? Or did our early commentary radically misunderstand Laozi? Does it present us with a Buddhist interpretation totally alien to the indigenously Chinese ancient tradition and insensitive to introduce the old text through Heshang Gong's commentary<sup>10</sup>?

The *Zhuangzi* (*Chuang Tzu*) states a philosophical thesis and then asks whether it corresponds to the facts.

The disputers of this world all say: 'The finest substance has no form. The greatest thing cannot be encompassed'. Is that the reliably real state of affairs (*shi xin qing hu<sup>11d</sup>*)? (*Zhuangzi*, 17.21, compare A.C. Graham (1981), p. 146)

Here we certainly have a text which is explicitly concerned with the truth of a general statement.

**Did the Later Confucians Have a Concept of Semantic Truth?** In the *Mengzi* (*Mencius*) a certain Xian Qiumeng retells a story which he introduces by *yu yan<sup>12e</sup>* 'the story goes', and then goes on to comment:

I do not know<sup>7</sup> whether this story (*ci yu<sup>12f</sup>*) is genuinely so (*cheng ran<sup>12g</sup>*) (*Mengzi*, 5A4, compare with D.C. Lau (1984), p. 185)<sup>8</sup>

I would therefore translate this as 'is genuinely true'.

In the *Mengzi* a similar question is applied to an explicit philosophical thesis:

'All men can become Yao or Shun. Is there such a state of affairs (*you zhu<sup>13h</sup>*)?' Mengzi replied: 'It is so (*ran<sup>13i</sup>*)'. (*Mengzi*, 6B2, compare D.C. Lau (1984), p. 243)

Book 5A contains an extended series of queries whether certain claims which are explicitly quoted are true or untrue. This series provides crucial and positive evidence on the question of whether the ancient Chinese had a semantic notion of truth.

Xunzi's essay entitled *Discourse on Corrections* (*Zheng Lun<sup>14j</sup>*) consists of another extended series of enquiries whether certain stated claims are true or not. Here is a sample:

The common people who make up theories (*shuo<sup>14k</sup>*) claim: 'Jie and Zhou were in charge of the world. Tang and Wu usurped the throne.' This is not so (*shi bu ran<sup>14l</sup>*). If one thinks that Jie and Zhou once held the formal position of an emperor, that they personally occupied this position, that is so (*ran<sup>14m</sup>*). If one says of the world that was in the hands of Jie and Zhou, that is not so (*bu ran<sup>14n</sup>*). (*Xunzi*, 18.11, compare Köster (1967), p. 225)

*Shi* 'this' refers to the statement or claim which Xunzi has just quoted. The phrase *shi bu ran<sup>14m</sup>* 'such a claim is not true' after a quotation recurs eight times in that chapter alone. In any case, in this passage Xunzi quotes certain claims and rejects them. He even goes on to consider more specific alternative formulations. One of these he finds true, the other untrue. In another place Xunzi addresses the question of whether human nature is good, as follows:

Mencius says: 'Human nature is good.' (I) say: 'This is not the case (*ran<sup>14o</sup>*)'. (*Xunzi*, 23.36, compare Köster (1967), p. 307)

'This (*shi*)' must refer to Mengzi's claim which has just been quoted. In this very chapter Mengzi is quoted four times, and his claims are explicitly rejected (as untrue) four times.

The historical work *Zhangguo* explicitly ascribes truth to words:

Zhang Yi said: '... Chen Zhen will leave Qin and go to Chu. ...' The king said to Chen Zhen: 'I have heard that you wish to leave Qin and go to Chu. Is this true (*Xin hu<sup>15p</sup>*)?' Chen Zhen replied: 'That is so (*ran<sup>15q</sup>*)'. Then Zhang Yi's words were actually trustworthy (*Yi zhi yan guo xin ye<sup>15r</sup>*)? (*Zhangguo*, ed. Chu Tsu-keng, p. 201; compare J.I. Crump (1970), p. 63)

The fascinating chapter 58 of the *Dadai Liji* is difficult to date with confidence (the book stabilised around AD 100 but contains much earlier material). It contains the following passage:

Dan Juli asked Zengzi: 'As for "Heaven is round and Earth is square", is there truly such a state of affairs (*tian yuan er di fang zhe, cheng you zhi hu<sup>as</sup>*)?' Zengzi replied: 'Li, have you heard that this is so?' Dan Juli said 'I, your disciple, have not investigated the matter. That is why I presume to ask.' (*Dadai Liji*, 58, ed. Kao Ming (1975), p. 207)

We need not go into the rest of Zengzi's interesting reply. It suffices to say that we have here a scientific/philosophical thesis the truth of which is queried in an eminently Confucian text. The observation that no one word corresponds exactly to the English 'true' in this passage is inconsequential. In any case, here is a passage where we do have such a word:

Kongzi said: '... You are not the right person.' Zai Wo replied: 'That I am not good enough is genuinely so (*cheng ye<sup>as</sup>*). I respectfully accept orders.' (*Dadai Liji*, 62, ed. Kao Ming (1975), p. 244)

**How Did Han Feizi (Han Fei Tzu) Look upon Truth?** Han Feizi focussed on the distinction between truth and belief. He made a distinction between the factual truth of words on the one hand and psychological attitudes (for example, of belief) on the other.

It is in the nature of words that they are taken to be trustworthy (*xin<sup>b</sup>*) when many people advocate them. Take a thing that is not so (*bu ran zhi wu<sup>ar</sup>*). When ten people maintain it, one has one's doubts. When one hundred people maintain it one thinks it is probably so (*ran<sup>b</sup>*). When one thousand people maintain it, it is incontrovertible. (*Han Feizi*, 48.6.6, compare W.K. Liao (1959), vol. 2, p. 269)<sup>9</sup>

What is this 'thing' (*wu<sup>as</sup>*) that is 'not so'? One cannot maintain facts as such. If one could only maintain facts, one could most certainly never be wrong! The 'thing' must be something like a statement or a claim.

The two master's (Wu Qi and the Lord of Shang) words were fully<sup>10</sup> fitting-the-facts (*yi dang yi<sup>at</sup>*), but Wu Qi was dismembered and the Lord of Shang was pulled to pieces between carts. (*Han Feizi*, 42.2.13, compare W.K. Liao (1959), p. 210. There is a close parallel in *Han Feizi*, 13.3.25.)

Finally, we may mention one of the cases where Han Feizi explicitly rejects an opponent's thesis as untrue:

When the opponent says: 'One has to depend on a sage, then there will be good order', then that is not so (*bu ran yi<sup>au</sup>*). (*Han Feizi*, 40.5.3, compare with W.K. Liao (1959), p. 203)

**Did the Lüshi Chunqiu (Lü Shih Ch'un Ch'iu) Employ a Notion of Semantic Truth?** The *Lüshi Chunqiu* distinguishes factual truth from explanatory truth:

Every thing's being so must necessarily have a reason (*ku<sup>av</sup>*). And when one does not know the reason, then even though what one says fits-the-facts (*dang<sup>c</sup>*), this is the same as ignorance. (*Lüshi Chunqiu*, 9.4, compare R. Wilhelm (1928), p. 111)

This text commonly asks whether a stated claim is true or not:

'When I was the heir apparent I heard that the former kings said: "To be a judge is easy." Is there such a state of affairs (*you zhi hu<sup>aw</sup>*)?' 'That is so (*jan<sup>b</sup>*).' (*Lüshi Chunqiu*, 18.1, compare Wilhelm (1928), p. 291)

The alternation of *ran<sup>b</sup>* 'it is so' with *you zhi hu<sup>aw</sup>* 'is there such a state of affairs?' is important because it indicates that *you<sup>o</sup>* asks about a claim, not a thing or fact. In this case, the claim is a general 'philosophical' one.

But of course semantic truth is not necessarily a philosophical matter at all:

Many words look as if they were not right (*fei<sup>k</sup>*) but turn out to be right (*shi<sup>b</sup>*). Many others look as if they are right (*shi<sup>i</sup>*) but turn out to be not right (*fei<sup>k</sup>*). (*Lüshi Chunqiu*, 22.6, compare R. Wilhelm (1928), p. 401)

The spirit of scientific inquiry in our text is aptly expressed in the following passage:

When you get hold of words you must investigate these. (*Lüshi Chunqiu*, 22.6, compare R. Wilhelm (1928), p. 399)

**Did the Later Moists Have a Technical Term for Semantic Truth?** The Later Moists made a technical term of the very word *dang<sup>c</sup>* which was commonly used for the adequacy or truth of sentences in other early texts. Consider now a typical use of *dang<sup>c</sup>*:

To say 'There is no one who gets it right (*wu sheng<sup>as</sup>*) in disputation' necessarily does not fit the facts (*dang<sup>c</sup>*). (A.C. Graham (1978), B 35)

Here the Moist quotes a claim ('no one gets it right in disputation') and quite properly he finds this claim necessarily factually untrue, since disputation is about contradictions, one of which must be true. A.C. Graham (1978) has shown satisfactorily that Later Moist concerns are neither sociological nor political in this context. Their concern turns out to be, in some fairly modern sense, logical.

The technical Moist term *dang<sup>c</sup>* is carefully distinguished from *ke<sup>w</sup>* 'acceptable, admissible'. Like our 'right' and 'wrong' *ke<sup>w</sup>* may apply both to utterances and to actions, and it is a multivalent term. It so happens that the Moists are concerned with *ke<sup>w</sup>* 'acceptable' as applied to utterances within a logical context.<sup>11</sup>

The distinction between 'assertible' and 'acceptable' is logically crucial. There is no evidence to suggest that the Later Moists were ever guilty of an elementary confusion between these two different notions.<sup>12</sup>

**Did Gongsun Long (Kung-sun Lung) Have a Concept of Logical Truth?**  
Consider now Gongsun Long's famous question:

Is 'A white horse is not a horse' acceptable (*bai ma fei ma ke hu<sup>w</sup>*)? (*Gongsun Longzi*, ch. 2, ed. Luan Hsing (1982), p. 15)

The question is not whether one can assert this sentence. (Of course one can! Gongsun Long is just asserting it!) The question is whether thus asserting it would be acceptable or not. The question is not whether it is morally acceptable, or whether it is socially acceptable (good form), or whether it is pragmatically appropriate to utter such a sentence, although these meanings could be expressed by *ke<sup>w</sup>*. The question is whether it is logically acceptable, whether one can make a logical case for it. The rest of the famous dialogue is indeed about this latter question.

Acceptability (*ke<sup>w</sup>*) is not the same as fitting the facts (*dang<sup>c</sup>*). Something is *ke<sup>w</sup>* 'acceptable, admissible' because it conforms to rules of debate. Something is *dang<sup>c</sup>* 'true, fitting the facts' if it conforms to the reality it describes.

**What Was Wang Chong's (Wang Ch'ung's) Attitude to Truth?** Wang Chong (AD 27-100) explains the purpose of his great work *Lun Heng* as follows:

Again, I was distressed that in fake books and vulgar writings there was so much that was not based on fact and genuine (*bu shi cheng<sup>bn</sup>*). Therefore I wrote the *Lun Heng*. (*Lun Heng*, ch. 85, ed. Zhonghua Shuju (1979) p. 1683, compare Forke (1962), vol. 1, p. 70)

In his afterward, Wang Chong makes it quite explicit that his purpose in writing *Lun Heng* is none other than to refute untrue sentences which he quotes, and to promote truth. Wang Chong is a living refutation of the view that pre-Buddhist Chinese philo-

sophers did not have, or did not place central emphasis on, the notion of the objective truth of sentences. He says:

Explanation and discourse argue about what is so and what is not so (*bian ran fou<sup>bb</sup>*). . . . One discards what is ungentle (*wei<sup>s</sup>*) and retains what is genuine (*zhen<sup>v</sup>*). (*Lun Heng*, ch. 85, ed. Zhonghua Shuju (1979), p. 1690)

*Ran fou<sup>bc</sup>* 'be so, not be so' is an expression that comes close to an abstract notion of truth. When Wang Chong argues about *ran fou<sup>bc</sup>* 'whether it is so or not' it seems to me he is quite precisely arguing about semantic truth. Wang Chong speaks of *zhen<sup>v</sup>* 'genuine' and *wei<sup>s</sup>* 'fake' as applying to claims, statements, or sentences. In any case there would be no such things as ungentle or untruthful facts to reject. If there is no fact, there is nothing (no fact) to reject. One can only reject sentences or statements as untrue, not facts. Are we to assume that by asking whether claims were justified or not, Wang Chong radically departed from pre-Han philosophical tradition? He is indeed a special case. But as we have seen in one sense he seems to continue an earlier line of philosophers as prominent as Mengzi, Xunzi, and Han Feizi. Moreover he was singularly important in the history of science in China.

**Does the *Yinwenzi* Have a Notion of Semantic Truth?** The *Yinwenzi* is a work of some importance for the history of Chinese logic which dates from the beginning of the third century AD. It shows no traces of Buddhist influence. In it we find the following passage:

An old saying goes like this: 'Not knowing is compatible with being a gentleman. Knowledge does not make someone any less of an insignificant person. That a workman is incapable (of things other than those he specializes in) is not incompatible with being skillful. That the gentleman is not knowledgeable is not incompatible with his governing well.' This is true (*ci xin yi<sup>bw</sup>*). (*Yinwenzi*, ed. Li Shixi (1977), p. 14.)

#### *Nominal Notions of Truth in Ancient Chinese Texts*

The nominalized concept of truth is an abstraction from the verbal use. Before we specifically investigate the question whether the Chinese had an abstract notion of truth, we must ask whether they were capable of abstraction, or more specifically whether they had such concepts as that of a quality, a property, or of an attribute.

**Did the Ancient Chinese Have a Concept of a Property?** It is important to realise that the notion of a property may be present even when

there is neither a technical term for 'property', nor a morphological marker (like Greek *-otés* English *-ness*) of the term used to refer to a property. Consider the following Later Moist theoretical statement:

The circularity of a small circle is the same as the circularity of a large circle. (A.C. Graham (1978), p. 474)

The classical Chinese for 'circle' and for 'circularity' is the same: *yuan*<sup>bc</sup>. But it is very clear that if the ancient Chinese understood this sentence at all they must have been able to distinguish between a circle and circularity. (The Later Moist could surely not be taken to refer to the character *yuan*<sup>bc</sup> being present in both phrases.)

But let us look for technical terms for 'property' in classical Chinese. In one of the most remarkable documents of early Daoist theorising, the chapter *Jielao* 'Explaining Laozi' from the book *Han Feizi* (third century BC), the concept of *li*<sup>bf</sup> is extensively used and discussed as a technical term<sup>13</sup>, but as often happens the key term turns out to be impossible to translate satisfactorily. I shall risk the translation 'attribute' for *li*<sup>bf</sup> in its technical usage in the *Jielao*:

Being short or being long, being large or being small, being square or being round, being strong or being brittle, being light or being heavy, being bright or being dark, these are called attributes (*duan chang, da xiao, fang yuan, jian cui, qing zhong, bai hei zhi wei li*<sup>bs</sup>). (Han Feizi, 20.34.16)

Generally, attributes (*li*<sup>bf</sup>) are an apportioning of being square or being round, of being short or being long, of being coarse or being fine, of being strong or being brittle. (Han Feizi, 20.29.2; compare A.C. Graham (1978), p. 429)

We note that *duan chang*<sup>bb</sup> literally: 'being short or being long', or 'length', cannot here refer to short and long things. Neither does *duan chang*<sup>bb</sup> refer to the alternative whether a thing is long or short. *Duan chang*<sup>bb</sup> indicates a dimension.

Moreover, these pairs of concepts are not just arbitrary illustrations or examples of *li*<sup>bf</sup>. They seem deliberately lined up to indicate a range of dimensions or parameters along which physical objects may be said to have attributes: one-dimensional length, three-dimensional size, shape, elasticity/strength, granulation, weight, pigmentation. It is interesting that smell and taste, for ex-

ample, are omitted. On the other hand, Han Feizi provides some further examples of attributes (*li*<sup>bf</sup>) of a different type:

Among the fixed attributes (*ding li*) there are (those of) being persistent or perishing, being dead or living, flourishing or declining. (Han Feizi, 20.29.4)

These attributes (*li*<sup>bf</sup>) of things combine to form one *gestalt*:

Out of the flow and flux things were brought forth. When the things came about they brought forth attributes (*li*<sup>bf</sup>), and these were called the *gestalt* (*xing*). (*Zhuangzi*, 12.39, compare B. Watson (1969), p. 131)

From the *Lüshi Chunqiu* we have an interesting definition of *li* which in the light of the *Jielao* we might try to translate as follows:

Therefore if distinctions do not fit the attributes (*li*) they are false. If knowledge does not fit the attributes (*li*<sup>bf</sup>) it is misleading/fraudulent. Misleading or false people were executed by the former kings. Attributes (*li*<sup>bf</sup>) of things are the ultimate source of being right or being wrong (*shi fei*<sup>bb</sup>). (*Lüshi Chunqiu* 18.4, ed. Ch'en Ch'i-yu p. 1178)<sup>15</sup>

We can paraphrase this as follows: we are right in calling a horse white on the ultimate basis that the attribute 'is white' is present in the horse. Knowledge as well as disputation must be measured against this ultimate standard.

Here is how Han Feizi explains *li*<sup>bf</sup>: 'As for the attributes (*li*<sup>bf</sup>) they bring about the patterning of things.'<sup>15</sup> Han Feizi states the obvious in the theoretical manner of a logician: 'Things have attributes (*li*<sup>bf</sup>).'<sup>17</sup> Again he specifies the obvious in the manner of a logician: 'The ten thousand things each have their different attributes (*wan wu ge yi li*<sup>bs</sup>).'<sup>18</sup>

We have seen that Han Feizi speaks of the 'fixed attributes (*ding li*<sup>bf</sup>)'. We now need to inquire what he means by *ding*<sup>bf</sup> 'fixed' in such contexts. Han Feizi says: 'When the attributes (*li*<sup>bf</sup>) are fixed/distinct it is easy to divide things up (into classes (*lei*<sup>bn</sup>)).'<sup>19</sup> It is only when attributes (*li*<sup>bf</sup>) are fixed that we can distinguish between things, since we must use the attributes (*li*<sup>bf</sup>) of things as our criteria.<sup>20</sup>

It is tempting indeed to maintain that Han Feizi (if indeed he is the author of the *Jielao*) was developing something like the theoretical notion of an attribute or a property. The fact remains significant that this conceptual innovation, if that is what it was, was not taken up by others later. The Chinese could speak of properties when they wished, but usually they did not.

**Did the Ancient Chinese Have an Abstract Notion of Truth?** The problem of nominal concepts of semantic truth is complicated by the fact that there is often little obvious difference between 'truth' as the 'property' of a sentence that makes it true, and 'reality, the facts of the matter'. A recently discovered manuscript from the Mawangdui tomb provides neat evidence of the place the Chinese accorded to truth in their scheme of things:

Only after understanding the correspondence between names and objects, only after exhaustively understanding what is real and what is fake (*qing wei<sup>bn</sup>*) and being free of confusion, can one complete the Way of the emperors and kings. (*Jingfa*, 1976, p. 29.)

As the abstract notion of size is expressed by the pair *da xiao<sup>bn</sup>* 'large/small' in classical Chinese, so the abstract notion of truth is expressed by pairs like *qing fou<sup>bn</sup>* 'what is real and what is fake'. In the text I have just quoted, attaining Truth is described as being dependent upon obtaining truth.

The problem of *shi fei<sup>bn</sup>* 'whether something is right or not' is an important one in ancient Chinese philosophy, just as for Epicurus the *krisis tou orthôs ê mê orthôs* 'the distinction (*bian<sup>bn</sup>*) between what is correct (*shi*) and not correct (*fei<sup>bn</sup>*)' is an important one.<sup>21</sup>

Considering a matter as certain, for Han Feizi, is considering it as certainly true. Throughout his book he emphasizes the need to check the reliability or certainty of what one hears. He speaks of 'deciding the genuine facts of a matter (*cheng<sup>q</sup>*) by checking and comparing'.<sup>22</sup> Han Feizi talks about '... trying to find the genuine facts of a matter (*qiu qi cheng<sup>bn</sup>*)',<sup>23</sup> and recommends 'listening to others' words and trying to find what fits the fact (*qiu qi dang<sup>bn</sup>*)',<sup>24</sup> as well as 'comparing and checking words in order to understand the genuine facts of a matter (*zhi qi cheng<sup>bn</sup>*)'.<sup>25</sup>

The nominal concept of *cheng<sup>q</sup>* 'genuine facts' is not always purely factual, for Han Feizi can also ask:

Whom could one ask to decide the real facts of the case (*cheng<sup>q</sup>*) of the Moists and Confucians? (*Han Feizi* 50.1.31, compare W.K. Liao (1959), vol. 2, p. 298)

Here the question of *cheng<sup>q</sup>* 'genuine facts' clearly involves both factual and moral issues, just as it does in the case of Western concepts of truth.

The importance of semantic truth can be brought out without actually using a noun for 'truth'.

When one gets hold of words one must investigate the truth (*cha<sup>by</sup>*) of these. . . . Hearing something and investigating (*shen<sup>bz</sup>*) it brings good fortune. Hearing something without investigating it is even worse than not hearing it at all. . . . Whenever one hears words one must carefully appraise the person (from whom they come), and one must test (*yan<sup>ca</sup>*) them according to the principles of things (*li<sup>bf</sup>*). (*Liushi Chunqiu* 22.6, compare R. Wilhelm (1928), p. 399)

What more splendid evidence of the scientific spirit and interest in tested truth during pre-Han times can one look for than such programmatic statements?

In Han times *shi<sup>i</sup>* 'solid, real' was commonly nominalized and came to mean something like 'the solid facts of a matter'. Wang Chong, the great philosopher and scientist, writes programmatically:

In scientific discourse (*lun<sup>cb</sup>*) what matters are the solid facts of a matter (*shi<sup>f</sup>*). (*Lun Heng*, ch. 85, tr. A. Forke (1962), vol. 1, p. 73)

I repeat, in his afterword, Wang Chong makes it quite explicit that his purpose in writing the *Lun Heng* is none other than to refute claims that are untrue and thereby to promote truth. He is a living refutation of the view that Chinese philosophers would not place central emphasis on the notion of scientific objective truth.

### Concluding Remarks on the Concept of Truth

I have presented a sampling of the ample philological evidence which suggests that the ancient Chinese philosophers had notions close to that of semantic truth, and that they commonly applied predicates of semantic truth to sentences. My translations may, of course, all be taken to beg the question. But I suggest they should rather be taken to demand a clear answer: how are we to understand the passages I quote without ascribing to the Chinese notions of semantic truth, without offending against what is known about ancient Chinese philology?

**An Alternative Account of Semantic Truth** Professor Hansen argues: 'Chinese philosophy has no concept of truth.' (C. Hansen (1985), p. 492). If I understand him at all, he means by 'concept of truth' just the kind of semantic concept of truth which Tarski has propounded. But having no such concept of truth—far from being taken as a disadvantage, this is described as a mark of ingenious and wise pragmatism. The pre-Buddhist Chinese are credited

with a subtle and workable 'pragmatic' alternative to Western 'Platonic' and 'semantic' approaches to truth.

The (hypo)thesis that 'Chinese philosophy has no concept of truth' is resumed, somewhat surprisingly, as follows: 'The hypothesis that Chinese philosophy seldom employs semantic concepts such as truth, as distinct from pragmatic concepts such as appropriateness of utterance . . .'.<sup>26</sup> In short, we are invited to consider the thesis that the Chinese philosophers seldom used a concept which they did not have!

We read: 'I shall argue that given the structure of doctrines in the philosophical texts of the period, a pragmatic interpretation of classical Chinese is a more explanatorily coherent theory than a semantic (truth-based) alternative.'<sup>27</sup> Unfortunately no clear picture begins to emerge of what exactly this pragmatic interpretation might be like. We are told that 'Chinese philosophers discourse about language in a pragmatic, Confucian way, focusing on social-psychological techniques for shaping inclinations and feelings that direct behaviour in accord with a moral way.'<sup>28</sup> In short: we are asked to believe that pre-Han philosophers generally (also anti-Confucians) talked about language in a 'Confucian way'.

But neither Gongsun Long nor the Later Moists, to name but some opponents of Confucianism, did talk (or 'discourse') about language, focusing on social-psychological techniques, and so on, in a 'Confucian way'. Gongsun Long's frivolous paradoxes and the Later Moists' formalistic arguments (both of which we shall briefly discuss below) had little to do with 'social-psychological techniques'. Contemporary Confucians found these logicians profoundly un-Confucian in their lack of concern for the social and ethical significance of their either frivolous or fruitlessly oversophisticated theories.

Hansen concedes: 'Of course, for Chinese (philosophers and laymen) the truth of a doctrine did make a difference, and, in general, Chinese [*sic*] did *de re* reject false propositions and adopt true ones. However, they did not "use a concept of truth" in philosophizing about what they were doing. Chinese philosophical theories about how to evaluate doctrines do not depend on a distinction that matches our familiar true/false dichotomy.'<sup>29</sup> So the Chinese did, after all, reject false 'propositions' and accept true ones. How, under such circumstances, they can be said to have no concept of truth remains entirely unclear. The solution is supposed to lie in the addition '*de re*'.

*The de re/de dicto Distinction* The distinction between *de re* and *de dicto* is not made clear in Hansen's paper. However, it is easy enough to illustrate in a rough way that is sufficient for our present purposes. Suppose I say 'I am looking for a black cat', then I am either looking for a certain cat (a case of speaking *de re* of a black cat), or I am just looking for anything that satisfies the description 'black cat' (a case of *de dicto*). The opposition disappears when I change the verb in such a sentence. 'Statement' in 'they rejected the statement' does not have both a *de re* and a *de dicto* reading. (As Quine and others are fond of pointing out, assent and dissent are not essentially linked to propositional attitudes.) Only a *de dicto* reading of this sentence is conceivable. The opposition arises only with certain intensional verbs like 'look for' and is basically plain enough. When applied to a highly sensitive philosophical term like 'proposition', and in logically very different contexts as after a verb like 'reject', the distinction *de re/de dicto* becomes highly problematic, to put the matter very mildly. It is far from clear what one would have to do in order to reject a proposition (or statement) *de re* but not *de dicto*.

*The Concept of a Proposition* By rejecting false propositions and adopting true ones, the Chinese would have demonstrated that in a logically crucial sense they did have an operative concept of the predicate 'is true'. Understanding the predicate 'is true' is logically more crucial than understanding the philosophically most problematic nominal construction 'truth'.

Moreover, in expressing judgments on this matter in language, one is inclined to think the ancient Chinese would have employed a way of articulating the notion of truth. For how can the truth of a doctrine make a difference to them, if they 'have no concept or idea of truth at all'?

The matter is not made less complicated by the fact that a 'proposition' is an abstract theoretical concept which the Chinese never came anywhere near to using, let alone defining. By contrast, the notion of a proposition was achieved and carefully defined by the Stoics: *axiōma lekton autoteles apophanton hoson eph' hautōi* 'a proposition is a complete thing that is expressed which is assertoric by itself'.<sup>29</sup> The proposition is conceived very subtly by the ancient Stoics, and generally by philosophers of language in modern times, not as a form of words but as a semantic content that may be expressed by a form of words in certain contexts.

*The Concept of a Propositional Attitude* Intimately connected with the notion of a proposition is that of propositional attitudes like that of belief. We are told 'No single character or conventional string of ancient Chinese corresponds in a straightforward way to "believes that" or "belief that"'. No string or structure is equivalent to the word "believe" or "belief" in the formal sense that it takes sentences or propositions as its object.<sup>30</sup> We need not dwell on, but certainly need to point out, the extraordinary conceptual and categorial confusion concerning the term 'proposition' here. A proposition, not being a form of words, never ever could be the object of a verb (though it could be an object of thought), a fine point which—as we have seen—was already quite plain to the ancient Stoics well before the Christian era, and that is absolutely basic in philosophical logic. In the context of the philosophy of language we are not free to use terms like 'proposition' in its loose non-technical sense. The Stoics have defined the term precisely in order to avoid such conceptual vagueness in the context of philosophy.

But let us not do away with logic. Let us, instead, and from a logical point of view, take a philo-logical look at some pertinent ancient evidence which Hansen does not discuss or mention:

There were some who believed that there had not yet begun to be things (*you yi wei wei shi you wu zhe*<sup>cs</sup>). (*Zhuangzi*, 2.40; compare with A. C. Graham (1983), p. 54)

One might be tempted to interpret the common formula *yi X wei Y*<sup>cd</sup> as 'treat X as a Y'. But examples like the present one are not amenable to such an interpretation. What would the people here referred to be treating as what? Hansen needs to show in detail why we are not entitled to take Zhuangzi to be ascribing a belief to certain people in this particular sentence, and in particular, how we can manage to do so.

There is other evidence:

Then his friends believed that he was ashamed to become Official Recorder (*xin qi xiu wei shi ye*<sup>ce</sup>). (*Lüshi Chunqiu*, 26.6, compare with R. Wilhelm (1928), p. 449. Compare also *Mo Tzu*, 31.5)

The crucial question is this: how are we to take *xin*<sup>r</sup> in this pattern or *xin zhi*<sup>cf</sup> 'believes it'? Hansen nowhere shows that he is aware of sentences of this sort. He needs to show how and why *xin*<sup>r</sup> in these contexts is not what it certainly appears to be to all translators: an

ancient Chinese word for 'believe that'. Until he comes up with a better argued philological solution one is inclined to take *xin*<sup>r</sup> here as a verb such as 'believes that' with a sentential object. If *xin*<sup>r</sup> had as its object a fact, one could never not believe something (*bu xin zhi*<sup>es</sup>) or not consider something as so (*fu ran*<sup>ch</sup>, or *bu yi wei ran*<sup>ei</sup>)?<sup>31</sup> For justified non-belief would then be an attitude to a non-existent fact, an attitude towards strictly nothing. If belief had facts as its object, then there could not be any beliefs that are not based on facts. Belief must be about statements or claims. It is closely connected with the notion of a sentence.

Having heard about this, Confucius said: 'From this point of view people will describe (*wei*<sup>ej</sup>) Zi Chan as inhumane, but I do not believe this (*wu bu xin ye*<sup>ek</sup>).' (*Zuozhuan*, Duke Xiang, 31, *fu* vii, ed. Yang Po-chün, p. 1192, compare Couvreur (1951), vol. 2, p. 578)

What Kongzi has no faith in, here, is explicitly people's description (*wei*<sup>ej</sup>) of Zi Chan as inhumane. Sometimes one is even tempted to take *wei* as a psychological verb meaning 'consider as', as in:

The superior man will maintain Yang Zhen to be less than a man (*Junzi wei Yang Zhen fei ren ye*<sup>el</sup>). (*Zuozhuan*, Duke Xuan, 2.1, ed. Yang Po-chün, p. 652, compare with S. Couvreur (1951), vol. 1, p. 565)

The disposition to say of Yang Zhen that he is less than a man is closely connected to the belief that Yang Zhen is less than a man. In any case *wei*<sup>ej</sup> came to mean 'imagine that' quite regularly in early colloquial Chinese of the fifth century AD, for example in the *Baiyujing*.

*The Theoretical Concept of a Sentence as Opposed to the Practical Ability to Distinguish Sentences from Non-Sentences* Without some operative notion of a declarative sentence or a statement, how could the Chinese (*de re* or otherwise) possibly reject false statements or accept them? If they knew what one might reject or not reject, they surely could tell statements from other things. Otherwise we should have to conclude that they quite literally never knew what they were talking about. They might make such mistakes as rejecting any non-sentential string.

The question whether the ancient Chinese had a technical term for 'sentence' is totally different from the question whether they had sentences. The question whether the ancient Chinese had a technical term for 'sentence' has to do not with Chinese grammatical practice but with Chinese theoretical linguistic conceptual-

isations. A.C. Graham (1978), pp. 480–483 and elsewhere, has argued persuasively that the Later Moists did develop such a technical term, *cí* (misleadingly translated by Graham as ‘proposition’, a translation which he has since regretted).<sup>32</sup>

We read: ‘Thus, Chinese does not so much obscure sentence relations as omit to signal them overtly.’<sup>33</sup> However, a student of Chinese grammar, for example, of nominalization or sentence connectives, must certainly study exactly the ways in which sentence relations were signalled overtly in that language through word order, grammatical particles, and lexical specialization of words. Word order and the occurrence of particles, surely, are overt signals.

We are told: ‘Chinese theories of language did not concentrate on sentences because, simply, classical Chinese sentencehood is not syntactically important.’<sup>34</sup> But on the contrary, the modal particle *yi*<sup>cm</sup> and the ordinary final particle *yi*<sup>cn</sup>, *er yi*<sup>co</sup>, and *er*<sup>cp</sup> as well as *er*<sup>cr</sup> and so on, show the crucial syntactic importance of the sentence in Chinese. They only occur after strings that happen to constitute sentences. To the extent that certain particles are restricted to sentence-final positions they do presuppose an operative notion of the sentence among the writers of classical Chinese.

Wang Chong (AD 27–100) writes:

When written characters express a thought (*yi*<sup>cs</sup>) they make up a sentence (*ju*<sup>cs</sup>). When there are a certain number of sentences (*ju*<sup>ct</sup>) we string together paragraphs (*zhang*<sup>cu</sup>) by means of them. When paragraphs have a certain coherent structure we make chapters (*pian*<sup>cv</sup>) by means of them. (*Lun Heng*, ed. Chunghua shuchü, 1979, p. 1589; compare with Forke (1962), vol. 1, p. 451)

The most common word for sentence in Chinese—as the current ancient Greek *logos*—was rather vague and could refer to all sorts of linguistic entities. The technical term for a sentence as used by the logicians won little general acceptance among writers of classical Chinese. Thus in general the ancient Chinese writers were faced with a range of rather vague terms for ‘sentence’, but upon reflection they were able to identify and define the concept reasonably well.

In the later philological tradition, He Xiu (129–182) refers to the parsing or punctuation of sentences as *ju du*<sup>cw</sup> in the preface to his edition of the *Gongyang Commentary*. The *ju*<sup>ct</sup>, I prefer to think, marks off a sentence, and the *du* a smaller unit.

Gao Yu (*floruit* 205–212) tells us that he learnt to ‘put commas and stops (*ju du*<sup>cw</sup>) and to chant’ when he was young.<sup>35</sup>

Liu Xie (465–562) makes a sequence *zi* ‘character, word’, *ju*<sup>ct</sup> ‘sentence’, *zhang*<sup>cu</sup> ‘paragraph’ and *pian*<sup>cv</sup> ‘chapter’.

When men write literature they make sentences (*ju*<sup>ct</sup>) on the basis of characters (*zi*<sup>cs</sup>), they put together sentences to make paragraphs (*zhang*<sup>cu</sup>), and they put together paragraphs to make chapters (*pian*<sup>cv</sup>). (*Wenxin Diaolong*, ch. 34, ed. Lu K’an-ju and Mou Shih-chin (1981), vol. 2, p. 177. Compare with Vincent Shih (1959), p. 186.)

Yan Zhitui (531–590+) obliges us by describing the function of the (mostly sentence-final) particle *ye*<sup>cy</sup> as follows:

*Ye*<sup>cy</sup> is a word that finishes a sentence and aids punctuation (*zhu ju*<sup>cz</sup>). (*Yanshi Jiaxun*, ch. 17, compare with Teng Ssu-yü (1968), p. 161)

Exactly: that is just what *ye*<sup>cy</sup> does most of the time. And that is why *ye*<sup>cy</sup> is such a useful and ubiquitous particle in classical and literary Chinese.

### The Concept of Truthfulness or Good Faith

The concept of semantic truth which we have discussed so far is entirely different from that of truthfulness or good faith. The idea that the Chinese have their own special notions of truth and truthfulness is not a new one. Some time ago I came across a poem from the journal *Punch* dated 10 April 1858. The song is called *A Chanson for Canton*, and it begins as follows:

JOHN CHINAMAN a rogue is born,

The laws of truth he holds is scorn;

About as great a brute as can

Encumber the Earth is JOHN CHINAMAN.

Now I read in the *Journal of Asian Studies* dated May 1985 the following intellectually more ambitious formulation: ‘Truth-telling and promise-keeping are central elements in a Judeo-Christian-Kantian moral structure.’<sup>36</sup> And further: ‘... “telling the truth” and “keeping promises” are not salient examples of morality in Chinese philosophy.’<sup>37</sup> This is something more than a poetic insult; it is an extremely serious claim about truthfulness or good faith in ancient China. One is surprised to hear such claims about a culture which cultivates such sayings as *yan er wu xin fei junzi*<sup>da</sup> ‘if one speaks without good faith one is not a gentleman’. In any case, I

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Yan Zhitui (531–590+) obliges us by describing the function of the (mostly sentence-final) particle *ye<sup>cs</sup>* as follows:

*Ye<sup>cs</sup>* is a word that finishes a sentence and aids punctuation (*zhu ju<sup>cs</sup>*). (*Yanshi Jiaxun*, ch. 17, compare with Teng Ssu-yü (1968), p. 161)

Exactly: that is just what *ye<sup>cs</sup>* does most of the time. And that is why *ye<sup>cs</sup>* is such a useful and ubiquitous particle in classical and literary Chinese.

### The Concept of Truthfulness or Good Faith

The concept of semantic truth which we have discussed so far is entirely different from that of truthfulness or good faith. The idea that the Chinese have their own special notions of truth and truthfulness is not a new one. Some time ago I came across a poem from the journal *Punch* dated 10 April 1858. The song is called *A Chanson for Canton*, and it begins as follows:

JOHN CHINAMAN a rogue is born,

The laws of truth he holds in scorn;

About as great a brute as can

Encumber the Earth is JOHN CHINAMAN.

Now I read in the *Journal of Asian Studies* dated May 1985 the following intellectually more ambitious formulation: 'Truth-telling and promise-keeping are central elements in a Judeo-Christian-Kantian moral structure.'<sup>36</sup> And further: '... "telling the truth" and "keeping promises" are not salient examples of morality in Chinese philosophy.'<sup>37</sup> This is something more than a poetic insult; it is an extremely serious claim about truthfulness or good faith in ancient China. One is surprised to hear such claims about a culture which cultivates such sayings as *yan er wu xin fei junzi<sup>da</sup>* 'if one speaks without good faith one is not a gentleman'. In any case, I

propose to briefly present some of the abundant philological facts that prove that the ancient Chinese thinkers, like most of us, valued truthfulness and good faith. Kongzi, for one, said:

'I do not see how an untrustworthy (*xin*<sup>r</sup>) man can be acceptable. When a pin is missing in the yoke-bar of a large cart or in the collar-bar of a small cart, how can the cart be expected to go?' (*Lunyu*, 2.22, compare with D.C. Lau (1983), p. 17)

Philology, the science of textual interpretation, is the yoke-bar and the collar-bar of any enquiry into the question of whether the ancient Chinese valued good faith as a salient example of morality or not. Does the ubiquitous and cardinal Confucian virtue of *xin*<sup>r</sup> involve truthfulness and good faith or is it just a matter of faithfulness and loyalty? The answer to this question depends on a close examination of the ancient Chinese texts in which the virtue *xin*<sup>r</sup> is discussed or mentioned, like this one recommending the formula *yan zhong xin*<sup>db</sup> which has since become canonical as describing the Confucian ideal of verbal behaviour:

Zi Zhang asked about proper action (*xing*<sup>dc</sup>). The Master said: 'If in word you are loyal and trustworthy (*yan zhong xin*<sup>db</sup>) and in deed single-minded and reverent, then even in the lands of the barbarians you will act effectively. But if you fail to be conscientious and trustworthy in word or to be single-minded and reverent in deed, then can you be sure of acting effectively even in your own neighbourhood?' (*Lunyu*, 15.6, compare with D.C. Lau (1983), p. 149)

Is *zhong xin*<sup>dd</sup> 'loyalty trustworthiness' a synonym compound? We must look for definitions of *xin*<sup>r</sup>. Here is an early definition:

*Xin* (good faith/trustworthiness) is the words agreeing with the thought. (*Mozi*, I quote the translation in A.C. Graham (1978), p. 276)

Of course, the concept of *yis* 'thought', here, is not unproblematic. Moreover, the dialectical chapters of the *Mozi* are perhaps not representative enough for early Chinese culture. How about the mainstream Confucian Jia Yi (Chia I) (200–168 BC):

If one's promises are effective and one's words correct that is called *xin*<sup>r</sup> (trustworthiness). Xin Shu (*Hsin Shu*), ch. 8, *Dao Shu* (*Tao Shu*), compare with Ch'i Yü-chang (1974), p. 928.<sup>38</sup>

From the earliest times of the codification of Confucian conduct the concept of *xin* has played an important part: in addition to *zhong*<sup>de</sup> 'faithfulness, loyalty' it was (by the earliest commentator)

taken to be one of the *wu xing*<sup>df</sup> 'five forms of conduct' in *Xunzi*, and it was most certainly one of the educationally all-important *wu chang*<sup>eg</sup> 'five constants' that became the focus of attention in early Han times.

The realist philosopher Han Feizi (died 233 BC) did take the notion of good faith seriously enough to declare the following (in what was to become the opening paragraph of his book):

Any minister, if not loyal, must be condemned to death. If what he says be not true (*dang*<sup>e</sup>), he must be condemned to death, too. (*Han Feizi* 1.1.6, I quote the translation in W.K. Liao (1939), vol. 1, p. 1)

Han Feizi is using the term *dang*<sup>e</sup> 'fit the facts' to express an idea that I believe Liao's translation captures well enough. Han Feizi speaks of the importance of telling the truth.<sup>39</sup>

The importance of telling the truth is the subject of innumerable stories. Here is one that is of independent special interest. The state of Sung is besieged by Chu. A certain Hua Yuan of Sung admits to Zi Fan, a spy from Chu, that the situation in Sung is extremely precarious:

'Therefore I am telling you the real situation (*shi yi gao qing yu zhi*<sup>th</sup>)' (*Gong Yang Zhuan*, Duke Xuan, 15)

By telling the truth Hua Yuan wins over Zi Fan, who in turn tells the truth about the situation in Chu. One version of this story comments:

The gentleman will approve their making peace. Hua Yuan told Zi Fan the genuine-situation/truth (*yi cheng gao Zi Fan*<sup>th</sup>). . . The gentleman will approve their telling each other the genuine-situation/truth (*junzi shan qi yi cheng xiang gao*<sup>th</sup>). (*Hanshi Waizhuan*, 2.1)

There is good philological evidence that good faith and promise-keeping was a 'salient' feature in Chinese thinking. The Neo-Confucian Chen Xiang (1159–1223) in his *dictionnaire philosophique* entitled *Beixi Ziyi* (ed. Xinhua shuju, Beijing, 1983) pp. 26–8, clearly distinguishes between *xin*<sup>r</sup> meaning 'be trustworthy, that is in good faith', and *xin*<sup>r</sup> meaning 'be trustworthy, that is undoubtedly true'.

### Argumentation in Ancient China

We have seen that the ancient Chinese had words for semantic truth and for good faith. But did they ever provide arguments that

were intended to logically prove the truth of a conclusion? Do we find strict logical argumentation in ancient China?

As examples of incisive and ingenious argumentation I shall first introduce and explain some remarkable Later Moist arguments which I shall compare with some Chinese Buddhist arguments of the seventh century. Thereafter I shall discuss the 'sophist' Gong-sun Long's famous White Horse Dialogue, concentrating on the social and logical background of the dialogue and some problems of methodology in the interpretation of the text.

#### *Some Late Moist Arguments on Scepticism and Relativism*<sup>40</sup>

The Later Moists defined logical analysis as follows:

Logical analysis (*bian*<sup>bu</sup>) is contending over claims which are the contradictions of each other (*zheng fan*<sup>sh</sup>). Explanation one calling it 'an ox' and the other calling it 'not an ox', that amounts to contending over claims which are the contradictions of each other. (Compare with A.C. Graham (1978), A40)

Contradictories (*fan*) are what cannot be both regarded as unacceptable at the same time. (A.C. Graham (1978), A73)

If one maintains a sentence, one is thereby committed to denying the negation (or rejecting the denial) of what one says. Consequently, refusing to deny any sentences, as the Daoists are fond of doing, simply turns out to be inconsistent:

Canon: To reject denial is inconsistent.

Explained by: he does not reject it.

Explanation: If he does not reject the denial (of his own thesis that denial is to be rejected) then he does not reject denial. No matter whether the rejection is to be rejected or not, this amounts to not rejecting the denial. (A.C. Graham (1978), B79)

Suppose someone maintains that one should reject denial. Then, if he means what he says, the thesis that one should not reject denial should be denied. But if one admits that that thesis should indeed be denied, then one is not really maintaining that one should reject denial: in at least one instance (that is, the thesis in which one rejects denial) one fails to reject denial. One's position is therefore inconsistent.

Let us rephrase the matter more along our usual lines of thinking: suppose someone (the Relativist) maintains the statement P ('For all propositions *s*: *s* is true'). He is then maintaining that 'P is

true'. Now by substituting non-P for *s* in this formula we get 'non-P is true' as a consequence of P. Thus the Relativist is committed to two statements: (a) P is true, and (b) non-P is true. In other words: this special substitution demonstrates that the Relativist is contradicting himself.

Maintaining P implies denying non-P. But denying non-P violates the principle that no sentence is to be denied. Therefore maintaining P is self-contradictory. If he maintains that no statements are to be denied, the Relativist is committed to denying the statement that not all statements are to be denied. He is therefore contradicting himself.

The argument is subtle and incisive, and in this particular instance the text is quite clear and the interpretation seems straightforward.

With stunning persistence the Moist goes on to claim that it makes no difference whether the Relativist is right or wrong in refusing denial. It is not a question of whether the Relativist is right or wrong. The point is whether the Relativist position is self-contradictory or not.

The Moists make an almost identical proof against considering all saying as contradictory:

Canon: To claim that all saying contradicts itself is self-contradictory.

Explained by: his saying (this).

Explanation: To be self-contradictory is to be inadmissible. If these words of the man are admissible, then this is not self-contradictory, and consequently in some cases saying is acceptable. If this man's words are not admissible, then to suppose that it fits the facts is necessarily ill-considered. (A.C. Graham (1978), B71)

The crux in this argument is again the application of a thesis about all statements to that thesis itself. If the Relativist declares his own thesis to be included among the incoherent or contradictory theses which are to be rejected, then he both maintains and rejects his thesis and therefore contradicts himself.

If, on the other hand, he does not include his thesis among the theses which are incoherent and to be rejected, then there is at least one thesis which is coherent and not to be rejected so that the Relativist is again contradicting himself.

Whoever constructed arguments of this sort, we may safely conclude, was a thinker of considerable logical sophistication. He represents an early but advanced logical and scientific subculture of

which, unfortunately, all too few traces have been thought worth handing down in the Chinese tradition.

### *Gongsun Long's White Horse Dialogue*

Gongsun Long was widely considered as flippant by contemporaries like Xunzi. Already Han Feizi has the story, surely inspired by Gongsun Long's stunt of demonstrating that a white horse was not a horse, about a certain 'sophist' Ni Yue:

Ni Yue was a man of Song, and he was the sort of person who was good at disputation. He maintained that *bai ma fei ma ye*<sup>dl</sup> 'WHITE HORSE IS NOT HORSE' and he belonged to the disputers of the Jixia Academy in Qi. Riding a white horse he passed a customs point and he had to pay his horse-tax. (*Han Feizi* 32.13)

At this point I simply wish to outline the argumentative nature of Gongsun Long's text as I see it. As I see it Gongsun Long was not so intellectually advanced that he could pre-empt Lesniewski, but he was perfectly capable of presenting a series of sustained arguments. He was, as his contemporaries were quick to point out, a rather frivolous figure. For he liked to argue for the logical acceptability of a sentence which was plainly untrue, namely that *bai ma fei ma*<sup>dm</sup> 'WHITE HORSE IS-NOT HORSE', a sentence ordinarily understood to mean that white horses were not horses.

As we have seen, people were quick to poke fun at this by imagining someone arguing this point with a customs officer who levies duty on horses. Would Gongsun Long be able to convince such a customs officer? Of course not! But then Gongsun Long only liked to argue his point in a sort of logical game. He was a 'stunt-man of logic'. He said: 'Here is a thesis *bai ma fei ma*. You try to refute it, and I shall defend it.'

How, then, could Gongsun Long defend such a plainly untrue thesis? This is the crucial question, and for once I do have a clear answer. He defended it by using a peculiarity of the ancient Chinese language which makes the sentence *bai ma fei ma*<sup>dm</sup> ambiguous between two interpretations: (a) A white horse is not a horse, and (b) 'White horse' is not (the same as) 'horse'. While the opponent would be furiously attacking the statement on interpretation (a) Gongsun Long would quietly persist in defending his statement under the interpretation (b). That was his trick. It was a simple trick, but it seems to have worked and to have had its comic

effect. After all, Gongsun Long could appear to successfully defend a thesis which was totally outrageous. This is how the (late) first chapter of the *Gongsun Long Zi* introduces the issue:

Gongsun Long and Kong Quan once met in Zhao at the palace of the Lord of Pingyuan. Kong Quan said: 'I have long heard about your noble conduct, and I have wanted to become your disciple. However, I cannot accept your thesis that a white horse is not a horse. Please reject this thesis, and I will beg to become your disciple.'

Gongsun Long replied: 'Your words are self-contradictory. The reason I have made a name for myself is none other than this discourse on the white horse. If you now make me abandon this discourse I have nothing to teach. Moreover, if one wishes to make someone one's master, this is because one's wisdom and learning is not up to his. If now you make me abandon my thesis, this would be first teaching me and then making me your master. First teaching someone and then making him into one's master is self-contradictory. Moreover, that "white horse" is not "horse" is precisely a thesis which Kongzi advocated. I have heard it said that the King of Chu was once wielding his bow Fan-ruo with his (famous) Wang-gui arrows. He was shooting at crocodile and rhinoceros in his (legendary) Yunmeng Park, when he lost an arrow. His ministers were scrambling to collect the arrow, but the King replied: "That is not worthwhile. The King of Chu has lost his bow, and a man from Chu (*Churen*<sup>dm</sup>) will find it. Why go and look for it?"

'When Kongzi heard about this he commented: "The King of Chu may be humane and just, but he is not perfect yet. Surely he should simply have said: 'A man (*ren*<sup>do</sup>) has lost the bow and a man (*ren*<sup>do</sup>) will find it.' What reason is there to bring in the 'Chu'?" In this way Kongzi made a distinction between *Churen*<sup>dm</sup> "a man of Chu" and *ren*<sup>do</sup> "a man".'

'Now to approve Kongzi's distinguishing between *Churen*<sup>dm</sup> "man of Chu" and *ren*<sup>do</sup> "man" but to disapprove of my distinguishing *bai ma*<sup>dp</sup> "white horse" from *ma*<sup>dr</sup> "horse" is self-contradictory.' (*Gongsun Long Zi*, ch. 1, (ed.) Luan Hsing (1982), p. 5)

Kongzi suggests that the King should have said *ren*<sup>do</sup> instead of *Churen*<sup>dm</sup>. There is, so far as I can see, no suggestion that he denies that a Chu man is a man. What the text focuses on is the distinction between *Churen*<sup>dm</sup> and *ren*<sup>do</sup>. *Churen*<sup>dm</sup> and *ren*<sup>do</sup> are not the same. There can be occasions where one should use one rather than the other. That is the issue as it is understood in our text.

On my interpretation, the White Horse Dialogue turns out to contain very subtle reasoning. Take the following example:

If someone is looking for a horse, you can offer him a brown or a black horse. If (on the other hand) he is looking for a white horse, you cannot

offer him a brown or a black horse. Supposing (now) that 'white horse' was nothing other than 'horse'. Then what he would be looking for would be the same thing. And if what he is looking for was the same thing, then the white one would not be different from 'a horse'. But if what he is looking for (in those two cases of 'white horse' versus 'horse') was the same, why should it be that the brown and black horses were acceptable in one case but not in the other? It is evident that the admissible and the inadmissible are not the same as each other. Therefore, since a black or brown horse remains the same, but since one can answer that there is 'horse' and cannot answer that there is 'white horse' this means that the thesis that a white horse is not a horse is conclusively demonstrated to be true.

There is a logical technique in the sophist's arguments which is of special interest to the historian of logic: he seems to apply something like Leibnitz' law of identity which says that if X and Y are identical then one must be able to substitute them for each other in any sentence, *salva veritate*, without this affecting the truth or otherwise of the sentence involved. Thus the sophist reasons that if 'white horse' was the same as 'horse' then 'I am looking for a white horse' should be true under exactly the same circumstances as 'I am looking for a horse'. But this is not so. Therefore, 'white horse' and 'horse' cannot be the same.

Why does the sophist change the example from 'having a white horse' to 'seeking a white horse'? Here again, it does look as if something logically quite subtle may be going on. For 'have an X' counts as what analytical philosophers call an 'extensional context', whereas 'seek an X' creates an intensional context in the relevant sense. The relevant basic idea behind this distinction between extensional and intensional contexts is not hard to explain. If I have a certain horse, and without my knowing about it this horse is deaf, then in every sense of the word I do 'have a deaf horse'. If, on the other hand, I am looking for a certain horse, and without my knowing it this horse happens to be deaf, then—in one psychological sense of 'look for'—I am not looking for a deaf horse, that is, my mental attitude is not towards a horse under the description 'deaf horse'. After all I do not know that the horse is deaf. 'Looking for white horses' is no more 'looking for horses' than 'looking for black swans' is 'looking for swans'. On the other hand it is perfectly true that 'having a white swan' is indeed 'having a swan'. When the sophist changes the example from 'having a white horse' to 'seeking a white horse', I cannot help feeling that he

had a perception of this subtle logical difference between 'having' and 'seeking'.

This, in simple outline, is the logical core of the White Horse Dialogue as I understand it. It is not very logically exciting to a reader familiar with modern philosophy. On the other hand: would one expect anything very logically sophisticated to be propounded at the court of the Duke of Pingyuan?

**Professor C. Hansen on the White Horse Dialogue** I believe Gongsun Long was more congenially and much more adequately understood by men like Xunzi and Han Feizi than by some of his modern interpreters. Consider this modern interpretation:

Then the question, 'Of what is *ma*<sup>dr</sup> "horse" the name?' has a natural answer: the mereological set of horses. 'Horse-stuff' is thus as object (substance or thing-kind) scattered in space-time. . . . As a result, Chinese theories of language tend to treat adjectives as terms denoting mass substantives; for example, red is the stuff that covers apples and the sky at sunset. (C. Hansen (1983), p. 35)

W. V. O. Quine happens to write in one of the most famous chapters of his most famous book:

A further alternative likewise compatible with the same old stimulus meaning (of the word 'gavagai' C.H.) is to take 'gavagai' as a singular term naming the fusion, in Goodman's sense, of all rabbits: that single though discontinuous portion of the spatiotemporal world that consists of rabbits. Thus even the distinction between general and singular terms is independent of stimulus meaning. (W. V. O. Quine (1960), p. 52)

We are asked to believe that by a curious historical coincidence Gongsun Long happened to assume that 'horse' refers to just the sort of spatio-temporally discontinuous abstract object consisting of all horses past, present, and future, scattered through space and time, which Quine mentioned.<sup>41</sup>

The object referred to by the Chinese word *ma*<sup>dr</sup> 'horse' is in Hansen's preliminary formulation called a 'mereological set'. This is a very advanced technical term in mathematics.<sup>42</sup>

Mereology is a subtle and abstract mathematical theory introduced to avoid such notoriously paradoxical logical constructions of sets as the book catalogue of all book catalogues which do not mention themselves. Such a construct, if acceptable, is logically troublesome. One only has to ask oneself whether such a book

catalogue which mentions all book catalogues that do not mention themselves, should or should not mention itself. . . .

Lesniewski designed a part/whole formalism which he called mereology (after Greek *meros*, root *mere-*) in which such sets would come out as syntactically ill-formed. In this way he did by-pass an important set-theoretical problem. For this he is justly famous.

All this is interesting, but it seems to me to have nothing whatever to do with Gongsun Long's thought, unless we find that Gongsun Long (or his contemporaries) speak of discontinuous horse-parts scattered through space and time which they most certainly do not. Even less do they speak of objects consisting of such proper parts as apples and sunsets scattered through space and time or whatever is the 'mereological set' specified to the Chinese mind by *bai*<sup>dq</sup> 'white'.

Our interpretation of Gongsun Long's views must start, we all agree, neither from Quine nor from Goodman or Lesniewski, but from the genuine parts of the *Gongsun Longzi* text as it has come down to us. I find the use of terminology like 'mereology' thoroughly un congenial because if we are to take it seriously its use would constitute a bizarre case of interpretative anachronism. But if we are not supposed to take it seriously in its technical meaning then the term is misapplied: 'mereological set' is a technical term which has only a technical meaning. Loose use of such a technical term is misuse.

Until I find, in pre-Han literature, clear references to anything like mereological sets or to discontinuous objects scattered through space and time I shall consider this concept a very distinctly twentieth-century mathematical construct, not an implicit third century BC idea.

Perhaps it is unreasonable and unfair to focus so much on just one passage in which Hansen introduces his central ideas. Let us now turn to a much more charitable development of Hansen's ideas, that by Professor A.C. Graham.

**Professor A.C. Graham on the White Horse Dialogue** A.C. Graham writes:

Chad Hansen in his *Language and Logic in Ancient China* has opened the first radically new approach to the 'White Horse'. It is an application of his hypothesis that Classical Chinese nouns function like mass nouns rather

than the count nouns of Indo-European languages. (A.C. Graham (1986), p. 196)

We start from one of Hansen's crucial insights, that thinking with mass nouns is in terms of whole and part, of which what for us are class and member are only one variety. (A.C. Graham (1986), p. 199)

We note that A.C. Graham declares the mass noun hypothesis the crucial inspiration for his new interpretation. But for all his enthusiasm he wisely avoids the term 'object' or 'mereological set' for the overall horsey mass. He very appropriately avoids using the concept of 'mereology' at all in interpreting ancient Chinese thought:

But if he (Gongsun Long) is thinking of horse as a mass with discontinuous parts similar in shape, and of white as a mass of discontinuous patches of colour, then for him a white horse is indeed a part of the former mass combined with part of the latter. (A.C. Graham (1986), p. 197f)

Following Hansen, A.C. Graham claims that *ma*<sup>dr</sup> is a mass term. However, *ma*<sup>dr</sup> 'horse' behaves syntactically quite differently from mass nouns like *shui*<sup>ds</sup> 'water' and again from generic nouns like *sheng*<sup>dt</sup> 'domestic animal', not to speak of abstract nouns like *ren*<sup>du</sup> 'benevolence', proper nouns like *Zhongni*<sup>dv</sup> and pronouns like *ci*<sup>dq</sup> 'this item'. Before one can decide whether *ma*<sup>dr</sup> is a mass noun, one surely has to study closely the question of whether there is a distinction between count nouns, generic nouns, and mass nouns among classical Chinese common nouns. Graham nowhere begins to address this problem which is so crucial to his (and Hansen's) case. If classical Chinese does make a distinction between mass nouns and other nouns, then it becomes an empirical and researchable question as to whether *ma* is a mass noun or not. It is only when the mass noun hypothesis is formulated in a specific way so that it can be effectively tested against the facts of classical Chinese, that I begin to be seriously interested in it. In this I follow Thomas Aquinas' advice to the infidels: *Disciplinati autem hominis est tantum de unoquoque fidem capere tentare, quantum natura rei permittit*.<sup>43</sup>

Let me identify some of the diagnostic syntactic conditions that might clarify ancient Chinese distinctions between count nouns, generic nouns, and mass nouns.<sup>44</sup>

*Count Nouns* Count nouns may be quantified not only by *duo*<sup>dx</sup> 'many, much' and *shao*<sup>dy</sup> 'few, little', but also by *shu*<sup>dz</sup> 'a number of', *ge*<sup>ea</sup> 'each', and *jian*<sup>eb</sup> 'each of the objects'. A count noun refers to items that can be counted by numbers immediately preceding the count noun, for example, *san ren*<sup>ec</sup> 'three persons', not 'three kinds of people'. Mass nouns and generic nouns are never quantified by *shu*<sup>dz</sup>, *ge*<sup>ea</sup>, or *jian*<sup>eb</sup>, and as we shall see below they behave differently when counted. We have *bu guo shu ren*<sup>ed</sup> 'no more than a few people'<sup>45</sup>, *ci shu zi*<sup>ej</sup> 'these several men'<sup>46</sup>, *zhi shu wu*<sup>ek</sup> 'these several things'<sup>47</sup>, *ci shu jie*<sup>el</sup> 'these several accomplishments'<sup>48</sup>, *shi shu guo*<sup>em</sup> 'these several states'<sup>49</sup>, *shu kou*<sup>en</sup> 'a home of a number of persons'<sup>50</sup>, *shu shi*<sup>eo</sup> 'a number of generations'<sup>51</sup>. Of course, units of time and other measurements of all sorts are commonly counted with *shu*<sup>dz</sup>, and they are never counted with classifiers.

Some nouns are used both as mass nouns and as count nouns. Thus we have *shu jin*<sup>ep</sup> 'a number of units of money'<sup>52</sup> in spite of the fact that *jin*<sup>eq</sup> is also often used as a mass noun meaning 'metal'. This, I think, is simply a case of lexical ambiguity or possible textual corruption.

Classifiers are count nouns, since we do have *de che shu sheng*<sup>er</sup> GET CART A-NUMBER-OF ITEMS 'get a number of carts'<sup>53</sup>. We can also count them in the same way as ordinary count nouns with a classifier: *ge che san bai liang*<sup>es</sup> WAR-CHARIOTS THREE HUNDRED VEHICULAR-ITEMS, 'three hundred war chariots',<sup>54</sup> not: *san bai liang ge che*<sup>et</sup>. One might at first suspect that the complexity of the phrase may be a motive for the choice of this construction. However, it is also possible to find examples such as *che yi sheng*<sup>eu</sup> VEHICLE ONE VEHICULAR OBJECT, 'one chariot'.<sup>55</sup>

With count nouns like *ma*<sup>dr</sup> we find a construction like *ma san pi*<sup>ev</sup> HORSE THREE ITEMS 'three horses'<sup>56</sup> but never *san pi ma*<sup>ew</sup>, THREE ITEM HORSE. We have *ge zhong er sheng*<sup>ex</sup>, MUSICAL BELL TWO SET, 'two sets of musical bells'<sup>57</sup>, but never *er sheng zhong*<sup>ey</sup>.<sup>58</sup>

Some count nouns are never counted with classifiers in our literature, and we suspect that they could not be either: classifier nouns belong to this group, as well as *ren*<sup>du</sup> 'man' (which may turn out to be a classifier noun: *Shun you chen wu ren*<sup>ez</sup> 'Shun had five ministers'<sup>59</sup> and *yan*<sup>fa</sup> 'word, sentence' (contrast the more general *yu*<sup>fb</sup>, 'talking, speech').

*Generic Nouns* Consider the following pairs of classical Chinese words:

1. *ma*<sup>dr</sup> (count noun) 'horse' versus *sheng*<sup>fc</sup> (generic noun) and *chu*<sup>fd</sup> (generic noun) domestic animal.

2. *ren*<sup>du</sup> (count noun) 'man' versus *min*<sup>fe</sup> (generic noun) 'people'. Unlike count nouns, generic nouns are never modified by *shu*<sup>dz</sup> 'a number of', *ge*<sup>ea</sup> 'each', *jian*<sup>eb</sup> 'each of the objects'. Like count nouns, but unlike mass nouns, generic nouns can be modified by *qun*<sup>ff</sup> 'the whole flock/crowd/lot of', *zhu*<sup>fg</sup> 'the various', *zhong*<sup>fn</sup> 'all the many', *wan*<sup>fh</sup> 'the ten thousand, all', *bai*<sup>fi</sup>, the hundred, all'.

Generic nouns are never counted with classifiers in the manner of mass nouns (*yi bei shu*<sup>fk</sup> 'one cup of water')<sup>60</sup> or in the manner of count nouns (*ma san pi*<sup>ev</sup> 'three horses'). They thus constitute a proper subcategory of nouns in their own right.

The semantics of counting is different in generic nouns and in count nouns. *Liu ma*<sup>fl</sup> will normally mean 'six horses', whereas *wu sheng*<sup>fm</sup> must mean '(the) five kinds of domestic animals' and *liu chu*<sup>fn</sup> must mean 'six kinds of domestic animals'.<sup>61</sup>

*Wu ren*<sup>fo</sup> will always mean 'five men', whereas *wu di*<sup>fp</sup> has to mean 'the five barbarians'.<sup>62</sup> *Wu min*<sup>fr</sup> are 'five kinds of people'<sup>63</sup> and certainly not five individuals of lower rank. Indeed, *min*<sup>fs</sup> are never counted as such, except by unspecific numbers such as *wan*<sup>fh</sup> 'the ten thousand'.<sup>64</sup> *Ci liu ren zhe*<sup>ft</sup> means 'these six individuals (or people)'<sup>65</sup>, whereas a little further on in the same text *ci liu min zhe*<sup>fu</sup> means 'these six kinds of people'.<sup>66</sup> *Min*<sup>fs</sup> 'people' and *ren*<sup>du</sup> 'man' are both very common. The functional and semantic contrast between them is surprisingly sharp and clear in a large body of pre-Han texts. I used to think that *min*<sup>fs</sup> 'people' may occasionally be used as a count noun, but as I have perused the indexes to find instances of this, I have come to change my mind. I would be interested to see pre-Han examples involving *min* as a count noun.

*Ren*<sup>du</sup>, *min*<sup>fs</sup>, and *dj*<sup>sc</sup> refer to humans. But they refer to humans in radically different ways. *Dj*<sup>sc</sup>, 'barbarian', and *min*<sup>fs</sup>, 'people', are generic nouns; *ren*<sup>do</sup> is a count noun.

The distinction between count nouns and generic nouns is, of course, not absolute in Chinese any more than in English. For example, we have the English count noun 'flower', and 'five flowers' would normally be interpreted as 'five individual flowers'. However, if a florist says that he stocks 'five flowers' one naturally concludes from the context that he means kinds of flower. Similar

ly, in the very special context of the *Zhouli*, I found a fascinating similar case involving even our *ma* 'horse', when it speaks of an official *bian liu ma zhi shu*<sup>67</sup> 'distinguishing between those who belong to the six kinds of horse'.<sup>67</sup>

One such isolated (and probably late) example does not force us to abandon the general observation that *ma* 'horse' is a count noun. It does cause us to reflect that the distinction between count nouns and mass nouns (in English as in classical Chinese) is not an absolute one even in the fairly clear cases. But the crucial point in our present context is that there is no evidence whatever that *ma*<sup>dr</sup> is a mass noun.

*Mass Nouns* Compare the following pairs:

1. *dang*<sup>gc</sup> (count noun) 'basket' versus *shu*<sup>stf</sup> (mass noun) 'food'.
2. *shu*<sup>gs</sup> (count noun) 'tree' versus *xin*<sup>gh</sup> (mass noun) 'firewood'.
3. *fu*<sup>gi</sup> (count noun) 'axe' versus *tie*<sup>sl</sup> (mass noun) 'iron'.

With mass nouns we regularly find constructions like *yi bei shu*<sup>tk</sup> ONE CUP WATER 'one cup of water'<sup>68</sup>, *yi dan shu*<sup>sk</sup> ONE BASKET FOOD 'one basket-ful of food'<sup>69</sup>, *yi che xing*<sup>l</sup> ONE CART FIREWOOD 'one cart-load of firewood'<sup>70</sup>, *yi gu tie*<sup>gm</sup> ONE GU-MEASURE IRON 'one gu of iron'<sup>71</sup>. We have:

He takes one plate of meat (*yi dou rou*<sup>gn</sup>) and feeds the knights with the rest. (*Han Feizi*, 34.7.24, compare with W.K. Liao (1959), vol. 2, p. 90) Shu Guyang took a beaker of wine (*yi shang jiu*<sup>gc</sup>) and offered it up. (*Han Feizi*, 10.2.7, compare with W.K. Liao (1939), vol. 1, p. 70)

There may be no explicit number in this sort of construction:

If you leave goblets of wine and platters of meat (*zhi jiu dou jiu*<sup>gp</sup>) in the inner court. . . (*Han Feizi*, 34.29.3, compare with W.K. Liao (1959), vol. 2, p. 113)

The distinction between count nouns, generic nouns, and mass nouns needs much further investigation and refinement. I shall explain it in greater detail in my forthcoming contribution to Joseph Needham's *Science and Civilisation in China*. My preliminary conclusion at this point is that classical Chinese count nouns do not seem to behave like classical Chinese mass nouns. By inherent classical Chinese grammatical criteria *ma*<sup>dr</sup> would appear to be a count noun, capable, perhaps, of functioning as a generic noun under special circumstances, but certainly not as a mass noun.

**Final Methodological Reflections** In principle, of course, we can construe all English references to a horse as references to 'time-

slices' of 'horse-stuff'. And as Quine has shown, we would not risk ever being definitively refuted by any linguistic behaviour of the speakers of English. The indeterminacy of translation applies not only to translation from Chinese into English. It also applies to homophonous 'translation' of a sentence into the same sentence by the same speaker. And as Quine has recently<sup>72</sup> confirmed to me in conversation, the case of an imagined aboriginal language is only a (perhaps ultimately misleading) expository device. The imaginary aboriginal word *gavagai* is quite marginal to Quine's philosophical purpose. The English 'rabbit' raises exactly the same problems for English speakers, only less palpably. Similarly, there is no need to go to classical Chinese in order to demonstrate that those who appear to speak of horses may be construed to be thinking of mereological sets or objects. The English case is good enough to prove this point, and indeed the point has been made many times.

One can refuse to accept any of the ancient Chinese evidence that suggests that the ancient Chinese people entertained such things as mental representations of sentences or sentence meanings (as Hansen appears to do): it will always be possible to say that they just happen to speak or write as if they had such representations.

W.V.O. Quine's remark on translation and 'logicality' may be worth pondering at this point: 'Wanton translation can make natives sound as queer as one pleases. Better translation imposes our logic upon them, and would beg the question of prelogicality if there were a question to beg.'<sup>73</sup>

But instead of ending on this hard-headed and uncompromising note, I prefer to close with some lines attributed to Lucian which I came across as I worked on this conclusion. Here, then, is the last distichon of the epigram *Eis tēn heautou biblon* 'On his own book':

*Ouden en anthrōpoisi dikridon esti noēma  
All 'ho sy thaumazeis, touth' heteroisi qelōs.*<sup>74</sup>

I hope the gentle reader will not take this quotation as expressing the present writer's sympathy for a philosophical position of relativism. It is just that such is life!

## Notes

1. I should like to thank Professor Nathan Sivin for singularly helpful and incisive criticisms of an earlier draft of this paper. I am also grateful to Professor Chad Hansen for useful hints and comments.
2. *Upnishads* 3.1.6, compare with S. Radhakrishnan (1962), p. 688. The adaptation of the translation is my own.
3. If that were required, no one would be entitled to speak of English sentences until a satisfactory theory of English is forthcoming.
4. Compare with *Lanyu*, ed. Liu Pao-nan, vol. 3, p. 89.
5. Conversely, calling a sentence *xu yan*<sup>ab</sup> was a way of indicating that the sentence was false. Compare with *Xunzi*, 18.71.
6. For the dating of Heshang Gong's commentary see Gu Fang (1982), who argues for the third or fourth century AD; and Jin Chunfeng (1983) who provides strong and detailed evidence in support of a Han date.
7. It seems quite impossible to take this sort of *zhi* 'know' to have anything other than a propositional object.
8. For examples of questions concerning truth *you zhi*<sup>ab</sup>? 'is there such a state of affairs?' in *Mengzi* compare with 1B2, 1B8, 2B1, 2B8, 2B9, 5A5, 5A6, 5A7, 5A8, and 6B2.
9. Compare with *Han Feizi*, 30.17, Liao (1939), vol. 1, p. 291 and *Zhangtuo* No. 302, Crump (1970), p. 377.
10. For a systematic treatment of *yi* in early texts see Harbsmeier (1986).
11. Hansen (1985), p. 506 translates *ke*<sup>w</sup> as 'assertible'. This distorts the very precise logical force of *ke*<sup>w</sup>. The Mohist insists that it is *bu ke*<sup>w</sup> to make contradictory statements. (A.C. Graham (1978), p. 71) But as we have seen one can unfortunately very easily make self-contradictory claims. Self-contradictory claims are assertible. The point is that such assertible statements are unacceptable.
12. Such confusion as there is on this point in C. Hansen (1985), p. 506, is not due to the Moists.
13. I count no less than 22 occurrences of *li*<sup>bf</sup> in the *Jielao*.
14. For our interpretation see Liang Chi-Hsiung (1982), vol. 1, p. 159 and also D.C. Lau, 'Taoist Metaphysics in the *Chieh Lao* and Plato's Theory of Forms', *Wen Lin*, 2.
15. Compare R. Wilhelm (1982), p. 301 and A.C. Graham (1978), p. 192 for alternative interpretations of this important definition.
16. *Han Feizi*, 20.27.4. The phrase *cheng wu zhi wen*<sup>bm</sup> is grammatically ambiguous. We could also translate: 'is the pattern which brings about things'. This difference is inconsequential for our present purposes.
17. *Han Feizi*, 20.27.11.
18. *Han Feizi*, 20.27.15. Compare with *Zhuangzi* 25.63.
19. *Han Feizi*, 20.34.17.
20. C. Hansen (1983), p. 31, contrasts Chinese and Western conceptual schemes concerning objects as follows: 'The mind is not regarded as an internal picturing mechanism which represents the individual objects in the world, but as a faculty that discriminates the boundaries of substances or stuffs referred to by names. This "cutting up things" view contrasts strongly with the traditional Platonic philosophical picture of objects which are understood as individuals or particulars which instantiate or "have" properties (universals)'. Neither the crucial book *Han Feizi* nor any of the crucial concepts *xing*<sup>cm</sup>, *qing*<sup>m</sup>, *mao*<sup>bo</sup>, *zhuang*<sup>bp</sup>, *li*<sup>bf</sup> figure in the index of that book. A more systematic discussion of all of these concepts will be found in C. Harbsmeier (forthcoming), subsection 1.4.8. 'The concept of a property'. The concept of subsumption will be discussed in 1.4.9 of the same work.

21. Compare Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum*, X.147, ed. Loeb, vol. 2, p. 670.
22. *Han Feizi*, 47.2.31, contrast the translation in Liao (1959), vol. 2, p. 250.
23. *Han Feizi*, 32.2.20, compare with W.K. Liao (1959), vol. 2, p. 27.
24. *Han Feizi*, 46.6.12, compare with W.K. Liao (1959), vol. 2, p. 247.
25. *Han Feizi*, 48.4.21, compare with W.K. Liao (1959), vol. 2, p. 266.
26. Hansen (1985), p. 514.
27. Hansen (1985), p. 493.
28. Hansen (1985), p. 495.
29. Hansen (1985), p. 491.
29. For a lucid discussion of the concept of a proposition in Stoic logic see Benson Mates, *Stoic Logic* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1961), pp. 27-33.
30. Hansen (1985), p. 500.
31. Similar observations apply to negative epistemic contexts: if knowledge did not have statements as its objects but was a way of treating facts, as we are asked to believe (Hansen (1983), pp. 500ff), then how could one not know whether something were true. Not knowing something would then be a way of treating a non-fact, nothing. If knowledge in ancient Chinese was a skill, then a sentence saying that I do not know X in Chinese would have to be taken to presuppose that the X was true and assert that the speaker has not the skill to reliably recognize this. Compare with Hansen (1983), p. 65.
32. I have not seen any convincing counterarguments to A.C. Graham's account.
33. Hansen (1985), p. 497.
34. Hansen (1985), p. 500.
35. Preface to *Huainanzi*, ed. Liu Wendian, p. 2a.
36. Hansen (1985), p. 515.
37. See note 36. I hasten to confess that I do not have a very precise idea what exactly a 'Judaico-Christian-Kantian moral structure' might be.
38. For a more detailed survey of this important but hitherto unstudied list of 55 definitions of pairs of opposite ethical terms see Needham's vol. 7, part 3 of *Science and Civilization in China*, section 1.2.4: 'The art of definition in traditional China.'
39. Compare Hansen (1985), p. 515, who declares: '... Chinese treat utterances as actions with behavioural consequences, not as conveying information for use in a rational decision process.'
40. My account here is heavily indebted to the monumental and quite indispensable book by A.C. Graham (1978). Though I am in essential agreement with Professor Graham's interpretation, we differ on some significant details.
41. Compare with, incidentally, the remark 'How amusing that Socrates should invent Hare's prescriptive analysis of evaluative discourse.' (Compare with *Times Literary Supplement*, 15 August 1985, p. 881, review of Iris Murdoch, *Acastos*, by Martha Nussbaum.)
42. One might be excused for thinking we should have to read the classical account of mereology by the Polish logician Stanislaw Lesniewski (1886-1939) in E.C. Luschei *The Logical Systems of Lesniewski* (1962), in order to learn what Gongsun Long had in mind. A glance through the simplified account of mereology in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed., vol. 11, pp. 36-7, by Nicholas Rescher will convince most people that this would not be a slight task. Presumably P.M. Simons (1982) offers some welcome extra help.
43. 'A disciplined person will [only] seek such certainty in each thing as the nature of that thing permits.' *Summa Contra Gentiles*, book 1, ch. 3, (ed.), Biblioteca de Autores Cristianos, Madrid (1967), p. 99. Compare with Aristotle, *Ethica Nichomachea*, 1094b.
44. Already Zhang Shizhao (1907) distinguishes between 1. *guyou mingci*<sup>cs</sup>,

proper nouns', 2. *putong mingci*<sup>et</sup> 'generic nouns', 3. *jih mingci*<sup>es</sup> 'collective nouns', 4. *wuzhi mingci*<sup>ch</sup> 'material nouns', and 5. *chouxiang mingci*<sup>ei</sup> 'abstract nouns'. Our present task is to see whether we can establish objective syntactic criteria for setting up a classification of this sort for Classical Chinese.

45. *Zuozhuan*, Duke Ai 12, ed. Legge, p. 836, line 10.  
 46. *Zhuangzi*, 8.21.  
 47. *Zhuangzi*, 23.14.  
 48. *Xunzi*, 7.9, ed. Liang Qixiong, p. 69.  
 49. *Xunzi*, 15.36.  
 50. *Mengzi*, 1A3.  
 51. *Zuozhuan*, Duke Xiang 13, ed. Legge, p. 456, line 7, and Duke Xiang 31, Xi 33, ed. Legge, p. 222, line 12.  
 52. *Zhuangzi*, 1.39.  
 53. *Zhuangzi*, 32.23, compare with B. Watson (1968), p. 356 'four or five carriages'.  
 54. *Mengzi*, 7B4, see also 3B4 and 7B34.  
 55. *Zuozhuan*, Duke Cheng 18.2, compare with S. Couvreur (1951), vol. 2, p. 167.  
 56. *Zuozhuan*, Duke Zhuang, 18.  
 57. *Zuozhuan*, Duke Xiang, 11.10, compare with S. Couvreur (1951), vol. 2, p. 274.  
 58. For details see Wang Li (1980), p. 240ff as well as J.S. Cikoski (1970), p. 101ff.  
 59. *Lunyu*, 8.20.  
 60. For the use of measures with mass nouns see the treatment of mass nouns below.  
 61. *Han Feizi*, 37.13.45. See also 'Take the shit of the five domestic animals (*wu sheng<sup>em</sup>*) and wash yourself in it.' (*Han Feizi*, 31.13.39)  
 62. *Liji*, ed. S. Couvreur (1913), vol. 1, p. 725f, where there are several other relevant examples.  
 63. *Shang Jun Shu*, ch. 6, ed. Gao Heng, p. 66.  
 64. The case of *chen<sup>er</sup>* (count noun) 'minister' versus *li<sup>w</sup>* (generic noun) 'official' is especially interesting and puzzling. *Ci wu chen zhe<sup>ix</sup>* means 'these five ministers' (*Zhuangze*, no. 185, ed. Zhu Zuyong, p. 770), whereas *wu li<sup>iy</sup>* means 'five kinds of officials'. (*Zuozhuan*, Duke Xiang, 25) However, I have found one isolated instance where in fact *li<sup>w</sup>* is used as a count noun. In *Lishi Chunqiu*, 18.8 we find two officials first mentioned as *li er ren<sup>iz</sup>*, OFFICIALS TWO MEN, and then in the end we hear that *er li<sup>is</sup>* 'the two officials' made a report. One needs to study whether *li<sup>w</sup>* is really ambiguous between a generic noun and a count noun reading, or whether this instance is just a stray case motivated by the special context. In any case *wu chen<sup>er</sup>* apparently never has that generic reading.  
 65. *Han Feizi*, 44.2.7 and 44.4.2.  
 66. *Han Feizi*, 46.1.19 and 46.1.39.  
 67. *Zhou Li*, ed. Lin Yin, p. 339.  
 68. *Mengzi* 6A18.  
 69. *Lunyu* 6.11.  
 70. *Mengzi* 6A18. For further examples see J.S. Cikoski (1970), p. 101ff.  
 71. *Zuozhuan*, Duke Zhao 29, fu 5, compare with S. Couvreur (1951), vol. 3, p. 456.  
 72. 14 April 1987.  
 73. W.V.O. Quine (1960), p. 58.  
 74. Translated as:

No single thought that men embrace  
 Can merit have, or pride of place.

For what seems wonderful to these  
 Others deride with mockery.  
 (*Lucian*, vol. 8, tr. M.D. McLeod, Loeb Classical Library, p. 526.)

### Key to Characters

a	王充	aj	說	bs	大小	db	言忠信
b	然	ak	是不然	bt	情否	dc	行
c	當	al	不	bu	婦	dd	忠信
d	道	am	是不然	bv	求其誠	de	忠
e	是謂是、非謂非曰直	an	信乎	bw	求其當	df	五行
f	直	ao	誠之言果信也	bx	知其誠	dg	五常
g	誠如君言	ap	天圓而地方者	by	察	dj	是以告情於子
h	如	aq	誠有之乎	bz	驗	di	以誠告子反
i	非虛辭也	ar	誠也	ca	論	dj	君子善其
j	是	as	不然而物	cb	論	dk	以誠相告
k	非	at	已當矣	cc	有以爲未始	dl	正反
l	實	au	不然而矣	cd	有物者	dm	白馬非馬也
m	虛	av	不然而矣	ce	以X爲Y	dn	白馬非馬
n	否	aw	有之乎	cf	信其羞爲史也	do	楚人
o	有	ax	無勝	cg	信之	dp	白馬
p	無	ay	白馬非馬可乎	ch	不信之	dq	白
q	誠	az	不可	ci	弗然	dr	馬
r	信	ba	不實誠	cj	不以爲然	ds	水
s	僞	bb	辯然否	ck	謂	dt	牲
t	過	bc	然否	cl	吾不信也	du	仁
u	真	bd	此信矣	cm	君子謂羊	dv	仲尼
v	情	be	此信矣	cn	對非人也	dw	此
w	可	bf	理	co	已矣	dx	多
x	信之	bg	短長、大小、方圓、堅脆、輕重、白黑之謂理	cp	而已	dy	少
y	此言也信矣	bh	短長	cr	爾	dz	數
z	虛語	bi	短長	cs	意	ea	各
aa	正言	bj	定理	ct	句	eb	乘
ab	虛言	bk	是非	cu	章	ec	三人
ac	信言者如其實也	bl	萬物各異理	cv	篇	ed	不過數人
ad	是信情乎	bm	定成物之文	cw	句讀	ee	固有名詞
ae	語云	bn	性	cx	字	ef	普通名詞
af	此語	bo	貌	cy	也	eg	集合名詞
ag	誠然	bp	狀	cz	助句	eh	物質名詞
ah	有諸	br	情	da	子	ei	抽象名詞
ai	正論					ej	此數子
						ek	之數物

<i>el</i>	此數節	<i>ez</i>	爵有臣五人	<i>fn</i>	六畜	<i>gc</i>	狄
<i>em</i>	是教國	<i>fa</i>	言語	<i>fo</i>	五人	<i>gd</i>	辨六馬之風
<i>en</i>	教口之家	<i>fb</i>	語	<i>fp</i>	五狄	<i>ge</i>	簞
<i>eo</i>	數世	<i>fc</i>	牲	<i>fr</i>	五民	<i>gf</i>	食
<i>ep</i>	數金	<i>fd</i>	畜	<i>fs</i>	民	<i>gg</i>	樹
<i>er</i>	得車數乘	<i>fe</i>	民	<i>ft</i>	此六人者	<i>gh</i>	薪
<i>es</i>	革車三百兩	<i>ff</i>	群	<i>fu</i>	此六民者	<i>gi</i>	斧
<i>et</i>	三百兩革車	<i>fg</i>	諸	<i>fv</i>	臣	<i>gj</i>	鉄
<i>eu</i>	車一乘	<i>fh</i>	衆	<i>fw</i>	吏	<i>gk</i>	一單食
<i>ev</i>	馬三匹	<i>fi</i>	萬	<i>fx</i>	此五臣	<i>gl</i>	一車薪
<i>ew</i>	三匹馬	<i>fj</i>	百	<i>fy</i>	五吏	<i>gm</i>	一鼓鉄
<i>ex</i>	歌鐘二肆	<i>fk</i>	一杯水	<i>fz</i>	吏二人	<i>gn</i>	一豆肉
<i>ey</i>	二肆歌鐘	<i>fl</i>	六馬	<i>ga</i>	二吏	<i>go</i>	一觴酒
		<i>fm</i>	五牲	<i>gb</i>	五臣	<i>gp</i>	卮酒豆肉

## 6 Chinese Metaphysics as Non-metaphysics: Confucian and Taoist Insights into the Nature of Reality

CHUNG-YING CHENG

As an ultimate conceptual orientation and as a comprehensive explanatory scheme, Western metaphysics originates from a quest for ontological being represented as early as Pythagoras and Parmenides in ancient Greece and as late as Whitehead and Heidegger in modern times.<sup>1</sup> What functions as the mediation for such a quest for ontological being which gives rise to all major metaphysical systems in the Western philosophical tradition has been always an intriguing and challenging question. If we compare and contrast the Greek quest for ontological being (called *einai*) in Western philosophy with the Chinese search for cosmological becoming (called the *dao*) in Chinese philosophy, one important answer derives from the nature of the language in use. Both as a vehicle of thinking and as a form of life, language both represents and makes the initial difference. As a phonetic language, the Greek language is auditorily orientated and tends to present a world of meanings in separation from a world of concrete things. For there is nothing in the phonetic symbols of the Greek language to suggest the presence of sensible objects. This easily leads to conceptual abstractions, certainly more easily than would an image-language such as the Chinese language. The separation of the sensible from the non-sensible can thus become an inherent tendency in the use of a phonetic language just as the cohesion of the sensible with the non-sensible can become an fundamental feature of the use of an image-language. This contrast should highlight the difference between the metaphysical orientation of the Greek quest for ontological being and the metaphysical orientation of the Chinese search for cosmological becoming. This contrast should also explain why Chinese metaphysics is the least metaphysical of all metaphysics or is non-metaphysical in the sense in which Greek, and hence Western metaphysics, is metaphysical, since what is metaphysical in the Western sense is predicated upon