Selected Bibliography on Ancient Chinese Logic

BIBLIOGRAPHY


   "The paper investigates the philosophical issues concerning language discussed in ancient China, and shows that there is a common linguistic presupposition underlying the discussions across the various schools of thought. The conception of language, which is an integral part of their conception of the world and its relation to man, provides the perspective with which to look at the formulations and solutions of the linguistic issues that characterize the writings of Confucians, the logicians, among others."


   "This is a new attempt at an analysis of classical Chinese (Confucian) ethics which is still inappropriately explained by Western philosophy as a traditional normative ethical system. Special conditions of ancient Chinese anthropogeny, and social and economic development gave rise in this cultural region to an original theory of being, which in modern terminology can be referred to as an ontological model of a fundamental Yin-Yang dialectic of a bipolar and nonhomogeneous synergy of being. This theory of being became a cornerstone for the whole complex of ancient Chinese philosophy, socio-anthropology and ethics."


Vol. III


"In these remarks I explore the possibility of ontological scopes of languages. I suggest that even though the trans-ontological language is the totality of the languages of beings, one must descend from this trans-ontological language to the languages of "things." The authentic whole reality of Tao is only reflected in the unity of the trans-ontological language with the intra-ontological languages of things."

"This is an up-to-date analysis of Kung-sun Lung's thesis "White horse is not horse" and the underlying class logic. Critique is made of the wrong-headedness of the mass-term interpretation (Hansen) and a shallow understanding of classical Chinese grammar in light of modern logic. Neo-mohist canons on identity, separableness and inseparableness are also analyzed for comparison and contrast."


"This is an inquiry into types of philosophical positions on logic as reflected in the implicit and explicit understanding of language and logic in classical Chinese philosophy."


"This is a first attempt ever made to make explicit an underlying Li-Ch'i metaphysics in the texts and symbols of the I Ching."


"In this article I consider the complete writings of Gongsun Long as included in the present day book named "Gongsun Long" I make a critical examinations of all Gongsun Long's arguments and come to a new interpretation of his theory of "Zhi" as meaning and reference in light of contemporary philosophy of logic and language. This study goes far beyond any earlier works on Gongsun Long."


Vol. 1


"A theory of analogic reasoning is established in which concepts are equated with boolean algebras and analogies with homomorphisms. The functional equivalence of analogic reasoning thus defined to propositional logic is shown. Chinese philosophers of the late Chou are shown to have been well acquainted with the rules governing the rigorous use of analogic reasoning."


Two volumes. Translated from Chinese by Derek Bodde.


Translated from Chinese by E. R. Hughes.


"This essay critiques Chad Hansen's "mass noun hypothesis," arguing that though most Classical Chinese nouns do function as mass nouns, this fact does not support the claim that pre-Qin thinkers treat the extensions of common nouns as mereological wholes, nor does it explain why they adopt nominalist semantic theories. The essay shows that early texts explain the use of common nouns by appeal to similarity relations, not mereological relations. However, it further argues that some early texts do characterize the relation between individuals and collections as a mereological relation."


"A. C. Graham's *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics, and Sciences* (1978) is the only Western-language translation of the obscure and textually corrupt chapters of the Mozi that purportedly constitute the foundations of ancient Chinese logic. Graham's presentation and interpretation of this difficult material has been largely accepted by scholars. This article questions the soundness of Graham's reconstruction of these chapters (the so-called "Neo-Mohist Canons"). Upon close examination, problems are revealed in both the structure and the content of the framework Graham uses to interpret the Canons. Without a more reliable framework for interpreting the text, it seems best to remain skeptical about claims that the Canons represent evidence for the study of logic in early China."


With a new introduction and supplementary bibliography by Christopher Fraser.


"It is argued that the three genuine remains of the Chinese sophist Kung-sun Lung (c. 300 b. C.), the "White horse," "Pointing things out" and the "Left and right" dialogue, can for the first time be read as consecutive and coherent when understood in terms, not of class and member, but of whole and part."


"Flew observes that analytic philosophy (a concern with words and language) seems to have no root in Chinese tradition. I suggest it "seems" that way because (a) Chinese philosophers focused on pragmatics rather than semantics; and (b) orthodox interpretations downplay Chinese linguistic theory and could not read the crucial analytic texts until recently. I describe the pragmatic theory of language in those texts and suggest how they enhance our understanding of classical Chinese philosophy."


"Four presupposed philosophical attitudes toward language are taken to characterize the major Schools of the pre-Han period. These are: 1) emotivism, 2) distinction marking -- the view that language and names, in their descriptive function, divide reality (or the Tao) into parts roughly analogous to distributive individuals, 3) conventionalism, and 4) behavioral nominalism -- that most or all "ordinary" thinking consists of entertaining names or strings of names (sentences). No clear reference to abstract ideas, classes, senses, platonic universals, etc., is found in this period nor is any necessary in understanding and interpreting the major thinkers of the period."


"The most famous paradox in Chinese philosophy, Kung-sun Lung's "White horse not horse" has been taken as evidence of Platonism, Aristotelian essentialism, class logic, etc., in ancient Chinese thought. I argue that a nominalistic interpretation utilizing the notion of "stuffs" (mass objects) is a more plausible explanation of the dialogue. It is more coherent internally, more consistent with Kung-sun Lung's other dialogues, and the tradition of Chinese thought which is usually regarded as nominalistic. The interpretation is also strongly suggested by striking parallels between all Chinese classificatory nouns and English mass nouns."


Reprint: 2000


General Editor: Joseph Needham


"The translation and interpretation of the (pre-Han philosophic essay) "Chih Wu Lun" offered by Richard Swain and Cheng Chung-ying is criticized and two serious errors displayed. First, it is shown that their formalization of the essay is logically inconsistent and that a rectification of this defect fails to preserve the logical structure perceived by the authors. Secondly, the English translation is criticized, attention being drawn to a reversal of "implicans" and "implicandum", concluding that on these two formal grounds alone, the author's enterprise wants rethinking."


"Instead of the classical two truths theory of Nagarjuna, Chinese Buddhists came up with three truths: reality as real, as empty and as both (i.e., middle). The essay, one in a series, traces the origin to Chou Yung's essay on three Schools (of two truths). There, Chou set up a School that failed to negate
provisional reality (the real-ist), the School that succeeded (the empty-ist), the School that realized the real as the empty (the middle-ist). All later theorists, Chih-tsang, Chi-tsang and Chih-i were indebted to this essay painstakingly reconstructed here."


"I show that Chu Hsi takes "chih-chich" (extension of knowledge), and "ko-wu" (investigations of things) to be means of discovering moral knowledge. But Wang Yang-ming's "chih-chih" and "ko-wu" are not means to discover moral knowledge, but rather ways of putting knowledge into practice. I argue that the interpretations of Wang Yang-ming by Wing-tsit Chan and Julia Ching confuse Wang's system with Chu Hsi's."


"Semantical instruments of contemporary logic are applied to the analysis of Hui Shih's "Ten propositions" and Kung Sun Lung's discourses "On the white horse", "On hard and white", "On indices and things". The notion of logical interpretation is used to clarify the structure of Hui Shih's argument; coupled with the notion of sorted language, it also allows us to show the logical coherence and common structure of Kung Sun Lung's three discourses."


"In this paper the author advances the thesis that by the late Third century B.C., discussions of the name and actuality/object, iming-shid, relationship by classical Chinese thinkers evidence a shift from nominalist theories of naming to essentialist theories of naming. According to the former, it is man who arbitrarily or conventionally determines which iming should be applied to which ishid. According to the latter, there is a proper or correct correspondence between a given iming and a given ishid, determined, variously, by what is ordained by 'heaven' or by what is 'naturally so'?so of itself' ( izirand)."


"I present an analysis of the ideographic nature and semantic structure of the hexagrams of the "Yijing" ("the book of changes") from the perspective of the philosophy of language. My purpose is twofold: first, i take this as a good case for analysis leading to an understanding of the ideographic semantic structure of an ideographic language like Chinese; second, I take this understanding as a significant aspect in comprehending the "Yijing" philosophy. In the paper, I first examine the ideographic construction of the hexagrams, then suggest an interpretation of the triple ideographic semantic structure, and finally discuss the denotational meaning of the hexagrams in terms of a collective-noun hypothesis."


"Through a comparative case analysis regarding the Chinese language, it is discussed how the structure and functions of a natural language would bear upon the ways in which some philosophical problems are posed and some ontological insights shaped. Disagreeing with Chad Hansen's mass-noun hypothesis, a collective-noun hypothesis is argued for: (1) the denotational semantics and relevant grammatical features of Chinese nouns are like those of collective nouns; (2) their implicit ontology is a mereological ontology of collection-of-individuals with both part-whole and member-class structure; and (3) encouraged and shaped by the folk semantics of Chinese nouns, classical Chinese theorists of language take this kind of mereological nominalism for granted."


Foreword by Donald Davidson.


"The Zhiviulu, chapter 3 of the Gongsunlongzi, attributed to the Sophist Gongsun Long (third century B.C.), is generally interpreted as a theoretical treatise on the relations between words and things. A new reading proceeds from the hypothesis that the Zhiviulu, like the White Horse Treatise, is another logical puzzle. Its theme is the problem of pointing out things that do not exist in the world or, put in modern terms, the problem of negative existentials. The Zhiviulu is a dilemma whose purpose is to show that the pointing that points at things that do not exist points without pointing."
Some evidence and arguments are offered to show that the archaic (classical) Chinese language served as a linguistic vehicle largely because of the pictographic qualities of the characters rather than its being basically a transcription of speech. If natural languages are equated with spoken languages, it follows that classical Chinese is not a natural language. Some implications of this conclusion are then considered: 1) classical Chinese cannot be used as a counterexample to any transformationalist claims about the existence of significant linguistic universals. 2) Chinese philosophers were not hindered in their thought by their language; on the contrary, they were probably twice blessed in having two distinct media by which to convey their views (spoken and written). 3) the structure of classical Chinese suggests the importance of entailment logic for the Chinese, rather than propositional or predicate logic. 4) Wittgenstein's view that we must remain silent in the face of what cannot be said requires a Confucian footnote: perhaps the unsayable can be written in classical Chinese.
provide a coherent interpretation of the logical content of the chapter "bBi ma lun". The analysis based on a new look on the logical function of the negated copula "Fei" yields a reading of the text as being directed toward elucidating the distinction of meta-/object-language and of extension/intension of a concept. This fact could enhance the appreciation of the level of language analysis reached at an early premodern state of Chinese philosophy.


"This article focuses on two questions. One is about the so-called Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, which says that language plays a role in how we perceive and understand the world. To put it strongly: Language determines thought. The other question is more specific. It is about the Chinese language. Is Chinese, with its grammar and its writing system, fundamentally different from Western languages such as Greek, Latin, German, Spanish or English? And does this difference account for cultural differences in perception and understanding? We all live in one world. But individually and culturally, we also live in different worlds. One easily notices this when one lives abroad. What is the role of language in this? What is its influence on perception, thought and culture? I am interested in influences that are due not just to vocabulary (which should be obvious), but, more fundamentally and systematically, to grammar and writing system. Words can easily be added to a language, one by one and step by step, and they do indeed reflect thought and culture. But grammar goes deeper. In what ways it reflects thought and culture is a more difficult but more interesting question, so it seems to me."


"This is an essay about language, thought, and culture in general, and about Ancient Greek and Classical Chinese in particular. It is about the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis and about comparative philosophy, as well as a contribution to the history of ideas. From the language side, it relies on the nineteenth-century German linguist Wilhelm von Humboldt, and from the culture side on the contemporary French sinologist François Jullien. Combining their ideas, substance is given to the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis, and some of Jullien's claims about the historical and political development of Chinese culture are explained. The central claim here is that a certain lack of morphology (a lack of what may be called an abstract and universal "systematic scheme of variation") in the Chinese language invites the user to pay more attention to contexts and be more perceptive of, and open to, change and transformation. A further claim made here is that this leads to more involvement in the world but at the same time demands distance and detour. Toward the end there is a reflection on problems of autonomy and personal identity, self-understanding, politics, and our relation to the world around us."


"The main task of this paper is an exposition of some subtle common traits of Chinese thought through an examination of some major characteristics of the Chinese language. First, the author presents the main structures of the Chinese written characters and some notable syntactical features of the classical Chinese. Second, he exposes some essential characteristics of Chinese thinking as revealed by the nature of the language. In the conclusion, he justifies the thesis that the Chinese language is a language for poetry."


Translated by Shigenori Nagatomo and Jacques Fasan.
"This essay investigates why and how East Asian thought, particularly Chinese thought, has traditionally developed differently from that of Western philosophy by examining the linguistic differences discerned in the Chinese language and Western languages. To accomplish the task, it focuses on the understanding of "being" that relates to the theoretical thinking of the West and the image-thinking of East-Asia, while providing a psychological basis for the latter."


"The Mohist School's logical study focuses mainly on the following inference rule: suppose that N and M are coextensive terms, or N a subset of M; it follows that if a verb can appear in front of N, it can also appear in front of M. That is, if 'VM' then 'VN', where V is some extensional verb. Such an approach to logical inference necessitates the study of logical relations among nouns, verbs, and the relations between these two types of words. Evidence is offered here that the Mohists clearly distinguished extensional verbs from intensional verbs, and that this insight enabled them to say, among other things, that VN does not follow from VM, even in cases where N is M or contained in M, as long as the V in question is an intensional verb."
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