Controversy over Language:
Towards Pre-Qin Semiotics

Han-liang Chang

Controversy over Language:
Towards Pre-Qin Semiotics

Han-liang Chang

ABSTRACT

Semiotic thinking in general can be born when people become aware of the discrepancy and tension among different uses of language. This awareness and its expression are often enacted dramatically in the controversy of discourse. The discursive polemics in Pre-Qin China centers around the contention of logic and rhetoric, quite similar to the fortune of the trivi- in the medieval West.

Traditionally known as the Great Debate on Name and Substance, the controversy should be understood as a phenomenon of language pragmatics. Those who participate in the Debate fail to communicate with one another because there is a discrepancy between encoding and decoding. Their polemics helps to create a textual space that includes the hidden agenda of semiotics.

KEY WORDS

FORWORD

This special issue on Chinese Semiotics has grown out of my research project on the History of Semiotics as well as a postgraduate course I have taught at National Taiwan University and Charles University in Prague. The project, which began in 1991 with a preliminary enquiry into the concepts of the sign according to St. Augustine (354-430), Pseudo-Dionysus (<u>fl. ca</u>. 500), and their Chinese counterparts, can be regarded as a contribution to what Umberto Eco proposed in 1983 as a world history of semiotics. To that extent, this joint venture partakes in semioticians' general subscription to the paradigm shift towards historiography since the mid 1970's, in response, perhaps, to the prevailing Post- structuraIist crisis of the sign (Eco, 1984, 14).

The essays in this collection primarily center around the great controversy over language pragmatics in the Pre-Qin era and its aftermath. Although the contributors were all my students in different times, where method and madness are concerned, they have all outwitted my rhetorical connoisseurship and, in T. S. Eliot's words, "I no *longer pretend that I am learned" and I am not necessarily it miglior fabbro. The volume then is dedicated to them.*

A history of semiotics which goes beyond the narrow confines of the birth, growth, and if demise of the discipline after Charles Sanders Peirce (1839-1914) or Ferdinand de Saussure (1857-1913) can only be read as an invention. In its dreams of the unacknowledged and indeed untraceable origins of semiotics, this history maps cultural values revisited and transferred. Such a historiography inevitably poses severe challenges for itself. First, it raises the logical question of class: whether semiotics is an open concept or a closed one. To answer the question, one needs to define semiotics. But as soon as one defines it, one has closed the concept. But if one opts for an open concept in that anything goes, it would be difficult to talk about semiotics in a systematic or even sensible way. The dilemma is thus: one needs a working and workable definition which is precise enough to give the discipline some recognisable identity, but open and flexible enough to accommodate its changing shape in various culture-specific contexts. Second, as the positivistic-minded historian would argue, semiotics as a discipline arising at the turn of the century is itself a historical product, and as such, it cannot be appropriated for further historical and cultural projections. Finally, it can be argued that semiotics, being basically a synchronic system science, writing its historiography is self-defeating for it would not only require incompatible historical imagination but also need to address the thorny issue of the dialectics of synchrony versus diachrony.

These are precisely the questions one can raise about Eco's proposals for a history of semiotics (1983). To make his world history of semiotics possible, Eco, following Roman Jakobson (1985, 2: 199218), compromises with a definition as broad as the following: any system that deals with *relation de renvoi* (relation of referral) of signs, including, to be sure, the linguistic sign. It should be pointed out that Jakobson, though casually alluding to *aliquid stat pro aliquo,* in fact bases his definition on linguistic opposition and equivalence. This may give rise to the question whether referral should be operated intra-systemically only or it can be also operated inter-systemically. This is a crucial point not yet satisfactorily addressed by semioticians.

Eco makes a tripartition amongst writers who can be said to have contributed to his world history of semiotics. His checklist runs the gamut from "explicit" theories of signs, like those of Peirce, through "repressed" theories abstractable from writings by his fellow pragmatists like John Dewey, and finally to the so-called "encyclopedic semiotic practices," including The Bible, Charles Baudelaire, and James Joyce. The flexibility of his definition enables Eco to establish semiotics as a master code, an interdisciplinary discipline (Eco prefers the term disciplinary interdiscipline) (1978) which is capable of subsuming all branches of human knowledge.

One may certainly question the logicality of Eco's tripartition. For one thing, it fails to explain why and how our "re-reading of the whole history of philosophy and maybe of many other disciplines" (80) in terms of the meta-language of (or, that is) semiotics is not sufficient to blur the distinctions, if at all, amongst object-languages. For another, such a semiotic projection would, no doubt, make a "repressed" theory "explicit," and a practice theoretical.

In Eco's provisionary chart, which by no means aims to be exhaustive, one

finds "Indian grammarians" and "Other Oriental theories" (83) under the heading of "Explicit Theories," and "Pound and Fenollosa (ideograms)" (88) under that of "Semiotic Practices." According to this classification, the dialecticians who were involved in the great debate (distinction) on name and substance (　) in the fourth-third centuries B.C. can be attributed to the first category, for, authors therein, "having explicitly recognized the existence of a sign-relationship in language and/or in many non-verbal human activities, outlined a general theory of signs or even foresaw the development of such a theory as a crucial node for human sciences"(79) .

With probably the only exception of Gongsun Long 　　(fl. 257 B.C.), none of the philosophers had outlined a theory of signs, in the way, say, St. Augustine was to do some seven centuries later; but they were all keenly aware of the relationship between name and substance, a topic which needs rearticulation in logical semantic s (cf. Chmielewski, 1962-69, Cheng, 1965, 1987, Rieman, 1980, Hansen, 1983), and, for our interest, in semiotics. The writers who spring to mind, in addition to Gongsun Long, include the Mohists (ca. 4th-3rd centuries B.C.), and to a lesser degree Zhuangzi 　　(ca. 4th-3rd centuries B.C.). The latter's case is ambiguous rather than dubious because of the multifarious nature of his writing. The text of *Zhuangzi* is susceptible to infinite semiotic encoding and decoding, as we shall see in the analyses that follow. For example, in his discussion of such concepts as *chongyan* 　　(repeated speech), *zhiyan* 　　(rambling speech), *yuyan* 　　(quoted speech), Zhuangzi is no doubt a language thinker, whilst much of his writing can be read, more appropriately, as practices of literary semiotics.

A semiotic text *par excellence is* arguably *Yijing* 　　[The canon of change]. The author(s) and commentators of *Yi,* insofar as they are concerned with the structure and function of the book's sign system, qualify as bona fide semioticians even according to the "restricted hypothesis." Whilst the text of *Zhuangzi* as creative writing provides space for semiotic performance, those who comment on the base-texts of *Sanxuan* 　　[the three mysteries] in the Six Dynasties have actually produced meta-texts with their exegeses and are therefore semioticians of "moderate hypothesis." On the other hand, Liu Xie's 　　(ca. 465-522) *Wenxin Diaolong* 　　　　(The literary mind and the carving of dragons) opens with a theoretical elaboration on the concept of *yi* 　　(change) and *xiang* 　 (resemblance) in *Yijing* in relation to literary creation. Thus along with the chapter entitled *Yuandao* 　　[On the origin of Dao], the whole book can be read as a text of literary semiotics. The relationship between *Yying* and *Wenxin Diaolong* goes beyond literary indebtedness; more importantly, it shows how the non-verbal graphemic signs can be invested on different levels of semantics for social uses. No other text better shows this linguistic turn than the controversial *Xici zhuan* 　　　　[Commentary on appended phrases]. The generation of the verbal sign is well articulated in the first chapter of *Wenxin Diaolong,* which indicates an unmistakable link with Yijing. *A* glance of the first two chapters will show how the meta-language of literary criticism can be as figural and rhetorical as the object-language of

literature. This is probably the most distinctive feature of the Chinese critical language. It culminates in the *ars poetica* of Sikong Tu (837-908) which epitomises Chinese literati's praxis of intertextuality.

Such enumeration of authors and texts would provide a long list whose merits can be assessed only when individual cases are subjected to rigorous scrutiny for their theoretical implications. Before returning later to some of the cited texts for sample analyses, it is necessary to give a theoretical account why certain texts are relevant to our concerted effort, and how these texts can be grouped, and according to what criteria. There is no accident that the historical period known as Xian Qin (Pre-Qin) has been singled out as an embryonic stage of Chinese semiotic thinking, comparable to the late Roman period and early Middle Ages. I am aware of the historical vagueness and looseness of this period concept, but it is not my intention, in inventing *ex nihilo* the early history of semiotics, to be historically accurate, and the version of history I present can only be a product of hermeneutics.

My research project is based on the assumption that in the West "semiotics" rises from the tension among three language-related disciplines in the late Roman period, as outlined by Martianus Capella (fl. 410-39) and Boethius (ca. 480-524) (Chang 1996, 1998). These disciplines-grammar, logic, and rhetoric-are later collectively known as the trivium. The possible influence of its later Scholastic formulation on Peircian semiotics (semeiotic) has already been well documented (Deely 1985, Perreiah 1989, Liszka 1996, Chang 1998). Similarly, but in the non-disciplinary sense, semiotic thinking in general can be born when people become aware of the discrepancy and tension among different uses of language, as is suggested by Paul de Man (1979). This awareness and its expression are often enacted dramatically in what the Israeli philosopher Marcelo Dascal describes as the controversy of discourse (1990, 1996). I believe that the discursive polemics in Pre-Qin China centers around the contention of logic and rhetoric, quite similar to the fortune of the trivium in the mediaeval West.

Dascal (1996) identifies scientific controversies as a mechanism of the evolution of philosophy. The postulate of philosophical history as a series of controversies, in the manner of Kuhnian paradigm shifts, is sufficient to displace versions of historiography based on empirical facts. Thus an alternative version of the Pre-Qin history could be articulated in terms of the controversies it involves. One such controversy is the great debate over name and substance which, registering Mencius (ca. 372-289 B.C.), Xunzi , Zhuangzi, Gongsun Long, and the Mohists in a large polemical discourse (Dascal, 1996, 9), has been much discussed throughout history, and often in relation to political philosophy.' Traditional readings aside, modernist scholars at the turn of the century, such as Zhang Taiyan (1738-1801) and Hu Shi (1891-1962), were more interested in the logical implications of the debate. It happened to be the time of intellectual turmoil when various schools of Western "logic" were being introduced into China under the name of *Mingxue* (the science of name), named interestingly after Mingjia (the school of name) or Xingmingjia

(the school of form and name).

Judging from this last instance of travelling theory, we can understand why the Polish sinologist Janusz Chmielewski describes Chinese philosophy as "persuasive" rather than "demonstrative" (1962). The terminology he uses clearly indicates the logician's attempt at remodelling Pre-Qin philosophy in terms of a descriptive meta-language used for that time-honoured debate between rhetoric and logic in the West. The debate, which begins with Aristotle's writings on logic (i.e., the three texts that constitute the organon) and rhetoric (e.g., *Topics),* has continued throughout the ages, now pronounced, now muffled; it has received renewed critical attention, especially by American neo-pragmatists, over the last two decades. One is reminded, amongst other things, of the distinction between two critical models of "demonstration" and "persuasion" which Stanley Fish makes (1980) in line with the Aristotlian tradition (Aristotle, 1984, 1:167).[2]

This opposition between logic and rhetoric gets a linguistic turn in de Man's celebrated essay "Semiology and Rhetoric" where the author casts new light on the issue by situating it in mediaeval liberal arts education system (1979) and by introducing the role of the as-yet non-existent discipline of semiotics. According to de Man, amongst the three language-focussed disciplines that constitute the trivium, logic is closer than grammar and rhetoric to the quadrivium that accounts for the mediaeval scholar's knowledge of the world. Here he seems to be suggesting a new spectrum of relationships among the seven arts, based on their truth-claims or their transitivity to the world under investigation, and that rhetoric, with the signified truth bracketed, standing at one extreme of the spectrum, is less "transitive" than any other disciplines. I believe de Man's attempt at reconstructing semiology in the trivium has opened up a line of enquiry into the possibility of semiotics in relation to the six arts required of a Confucian scholar in ancient China, or at any rate in the Pre-Qin philosophers' dispute on the relationship between logic and rhetoric.

If an analogy may be drawn with classical and mediaeval training of trivium in the West, where rhetoric mediates and subverts grammar and logic amongst the three sciences of language, one would see that the rhetorical method introduced by Gongsun Long and actually practised by all writers, especially Zhuangzi, has enfeebled the other organon of dialectic promoted by the Mohists. And furthermore, as I hope to persuade in the following pages, the logical critique with which Zhuangzi, Xunzi, and the Mohists use to abuse Gongsun Long can be turned ironically against their own programmes of writing. Such sociolinguistic reflexions might give rise to a narrative why the logical school which modern Chinese pragmatists like Hu Shi endorse has never really thrived in China.

Chinese philosophers in the fourth century B.C. could not have been aware of their Greek contemporaries, nor possibly anticipated the neo-rhetoricians like Fish and de Man. In fact, I have taken my cue anachronistically from de Man's writing as the point of departure for my enquiry into the Chinese concepts of sign in relation to language. I can envisage two criticisms. First, that point of departure may prove to be a historical *faux pas* once we step into the education system described in *Zhouli*   [the book of rituals in Zhou dy-

nasty].[3]Second, interesting as the parallelism may seem, it fails to paint the whole picture of early semiotic thinking in China; for example, it will leave out *Yijing,* which deals explicitly with both verbal and non-verbal signs in a more systematic way than *Zhouli.*

Against the first criticism, I would like to suggest that indeed a tension between rhetoric and logic can be detected in the writings of the Chinese dialecticians, who are curiously but logically conscious of the nature and functions of the linguistic sign. And as our object of enquiry is semiotics, our model and meta-language semiotic, these texts cannot be interpreted otherwise than being semiotic. In the present context, there seems to be no way and no sense of getting out of such interpretative circle.

My response to the second criticism is more complex. To begin with, it may seem at first glance that not all semiotic thinking is necessarily inspired by the tension between logic and rhetoric, and registered in a polemical discourse, nor is all semiotic thinking of linguistic nature. But semiotics, as I see it, is a systematic investigation into the nature and functions of signs, including both "natural" and "artificial" ones-a dated and provisional dichotomy started by St. Augustine (1958, 34), and the signs it deals with are always already textualised, and as such, cannot even be labelled "natural." This textualised feature is true to the sign as a representation (e.g., the Peircian representamen +object+ interpretant), as a manifest indication from which inferences about something latent can be made, and as a verbal or non-verbal gesture produced with the intention of communication. I am not talking, though I could be, about the brute fact that all the classical Chinese texts are written. Rather, my assumption is that semiotics is a meta-language which provides a model, i.e., an abstract, hypothetical construct, to represent, indeed to encode and decode, the object-language. That meta-language is oftentimes linguistic because of language's double articulation as interpreting and interpreted systems (Benveniste 1981). Thus, the seemingly puzzling case of the *Yijing* in relation to logic and rhetoric would be made clear. First of all, the non-verbal sign system follows its own simple "logic" of binarism, and that simple system is contaminated by the rhetoric of *xici* (appended phrases). So from the beginning the two formulations of logic and rhetoric have been at work. More disciplinarily, I would suggest that *Y4ing* begins as a semiotic practice, and the dispute among Han scholars' on the primacy of sign *(yixiang)* or sense *(yili)* can be construed as another theatrical scene in the history of philosophical controversies, especially after Wang Bi's (226-249) commentary in the third century.

The cluster of texts which I shall deal with is represented by the dialecticians' polemical discourse. I shall begin with Gongsun Long and then focus on *Zhuangzi* not only because its author participates in the debate with the dialecticians, in which he curiously sides with the Confucians and the Mohists, but also because the distinct literariness, the rhetorical flair, of his text identifies it to be a typical counterdiscourse of the logical position which he holds in his criticism of Gongsun Long.' My main interest in Zhuangzi lies in his special use of the linguistic sign-i.e., his special signification-which renders

communication impossible. My task will be reading *Zhuangzi* as an instance of literary semiotics, and examining how a semiotic reading more explicitly, hence more powerfully, elucidates the author(s)' philosophy.

The great debate over name and substance is already a commonplace in Pre-Qin philosophy. Chronologically, it does not begin with Gongsun Long, but his text may serve to highlight the language issues involved.[5] This text has suffered from a curious fortune in history, and the history of its depreciation is a reminder of the need of constant unlearning and rereading. For example, a logico-semantic remodelling of the discourse of *zhengming* 1Γ_~?, (Rectification of names) would make it possible for us to reread the concept as a problem of definitional logic, which is a pre-condition for a correct axio-matic-deductive, synthetic reasoning (Strawson, 1971). From a logical point of view, the dialectician's discussion involves the reasoning procedure from the definitional, to the propositional, and to the inferential logic (Epstein 1990). The following is a testing case.

White is [a] colour. [What we call *white is* what we use to name [a] colour.] (definition and proposition)

Colour is not form [body]. [What we use to name colour is not what we use to name form.] (inference)

Therefore, [the name] *white horse is* not [the name] *horse.* (inference)

The definition in question here is obviously a formal one instead of a functional one in that <u>class h(wh)</u> and that the bodily form rather than whiteness is a necessary condition. I have italicised a word *(horse)* or a phrase *(while horse)* to name that word or phrase, or any linguistic unit. When 1 say *"Prague* has six letters" I mean the word *Prague,* but not the city Prague has six letters. Sometimes a confusion results if one does not make clear whether one uses a word to name itself as word or to refer to its meaning. Apparently, Gongsun Long here is talking about the word *white* and the word *horse,* taking full advantage of the language's flexibility.

To disambiguate Gongsun Long's language, one may provisionally render the expression   into English, a language which more relies on grammatical morphemes and words, such as number and articles. There can be several English translations, but the grammatically and logically acceptable (A) ones may not be the appropriate ones.

1 A white horse is a horse. (A)
2 The white horse is a horse. (A)
3 White horses are horses. (A)

4 White horse is horse. (UA) [Ungrammatical]
5 White horse is not horse.(UA) [Ungrammatical]
6 A white horse is not a horse. (UA) [Grammatical but not true because h(wh)]
7 White horse is not horse. (A)

Ordinary English grammar demands that a common noun in singular form, which stands for an object, be governed by a definite or indefinite article *the* or *a,* and that a plural form be accordingly indicated. Therefore, 1,2,3 are all grammatical, acceptable, and *meaningful,* and 4, 5 and 6 either ungrammatical and unacceptable (UA) or grammatical but unacceptable.

How can one make 6 acceptable? Very easy. One can simply de-semanticise the sentence by making it not meaningful (i.e., referential), in the same way one makes *Prague* not a city, but *a name. So* the italicisation which turns 6 into *7* serves to de-semanticise, unsex, decolour, de-form, etc. that poor dear little horse, as Gongsun Long did marvellously more than 2,000 years ago. Incidentally, Chinese has the advantage rather than the disadvantage of not having articles. What's more, it has the advantage of not having declension. This may explain why dozens of critics have fallen victim to that *"White horse is* not *horse. "*

Following traditional arguments, one could describe Gongsun Long's articulation of the ungrammatical (in English) and illogical (in definitional logic) sentence *7* as addressing purely name but not substance. But how does he do it? Why, he does it *semiolically.* The chapter opens with the sentence:

("Is the statement `*White horse is* not *horse'* acceptable?). What is being dealt with here is not that the real "white horse" is or isn't a "horse," but the statement consisting of two terms and one copula *"White horse is* not *horse."* If one follows de Man's advice to read the sentence "literally" (i.e., semaotically rather than semantically), then the statement is correct because *white horse* contains two signifiers and two signifieds, or, in Peircian terms, a qualisign plus a sinsign.[6] Therefore, the logical problems of definition and proposition give way to semiotics.

This kind of semiotic analysis is capable of solving many other "semantic" problems in *Gongsun Long.* One such case is the semiotic recoding of the logical problem of intension (connotation) and extension (denotation) of *jian* and *bai* (hardness and whiteness) in *shi* (stone) in terms of the triadic relation between qualisign, sinsign, and legisign, the basis of which is biologically causal, hence indexical in the truest sense (i.e., *shi* [see] and *fu* [touch]). The original passage reads:

Seeing it does not get its hardness, but gets its whiteness. Therefore, there is no hardness. Touching it does not get its whiteness, but gets its hardness. Getting its hardness does not prove there is whiteness.

Another case is the celebrated argument in *Zhiwu lun*   . Let me first quote a few examples of logical rereading of the statement that opens the chapter: "wu mo fei zhi er zhi fei zhi"   .

1. No thing is without class, but classes themselves are without classes. [classes being `what is pointed to' by particular things] (Chmielewski, 1962)
2. a. Not one is (that which is) not the pointing to a par
      ticular thing by a name.
   b. Not one is (that which is) not the meaning of a name.
      (Kao & Obenchain, 1975)

Apparently, both point to semantic problems of important order. Chmielewski's rendering follows modern logicians' discussion of the paradox of class-membership (e.g., Russell, 1937, 110 ff), and Kao and Obenchain's, more interestingly for our purpose, alludes to that of the semantics of denotation instead of naming (Lyons, 1977, I: 206ff). His translation will lead to our alternative readings based on semiotic recoding:

3. Every object [concept] is signified [by a signifier], but this [act of] signification is not signified [in the way that the object is signified].
4. Every object [and/or concept] is indicated, but the indicator itself is not what is indicated.

The significance of translations 3 and 4 can be seen only when put in the contexts of Saussurian semiology and Peircian semeiotic. We shall renounce 3 because of the interference of wu   as object which should be exterior to the sign. Unless we are allowed to conflate the two, it would be better to substitute "concept" for "object." Translations 1, 2, and 3 show that Gongsun Long is aware of the fact that class and member do not belong to the same order, as *white horse* (white horse) is not *horse* (horse), and that semiosis is a process that will continue beyond the closure of a sign.

But more significant is the idea of pointing or indicating. *Zhi* which refers at once to the act of indicating and the vehicle by which the act is performed, namely the index finger, as suggested by the graphemic sign of *hand*. Now this mode of signification covers a broad semantic field of indexicality (Sebeok, 1991, 129), the members of which include index, index finger. pointing, ostension, deixis, symptom, cue, clue, track, trail, designation, and, above all, Peirce's second type of sign, a physiologically causal or directive sign, which is essential to speech. One could add Gongsun Long and Mozi to the list of philosophers of language and linguists (Sebeok, 140).

Peirce: indexical sign (index)
Russell: ego-centric particulars
Nelson Goodman: indicator
Hans Reichenbach: token-reflexive word

Gongsun Long: *zhi*
Mozi: jiu

As far as language pragmatics is concerned, the most popular indexical sign is to be sure deixis. It is not only a grammatical element, such as the demonstratives, but also a discursive register showing "the way in which interlocutors anchor what they talk about to the spatiotemporal context of their utterance" (Sebeok 141). The discursive situation is a pre-requisite of rhetorical persuasion. This is probably where Zhuangzi excels among all the Pre-Qin rhetors because of his scene-setting device in fables and parables, which I shall pursue later.

Gongsun Long's argument for differentiation is refuted by the Mohists, Xunzi, and Zhuangzi. In the chapter of *Xiaoqu*   (Small pick), the author, supposedly one of Mozi's disciples known as *Mozhe*   or *Biemo*   , asserts that "A white horse is a horse, and riding a white horse is riding a horse" (   ). Clearly the issue addressed here is different from that in *Gongsun Long* despite the Mohists' subtle distinctions among language modalities. Xunzi presents an interesting case. He believes a true master *Yunzi)* surely knows the difference between hardness and whiteness, thickness and non-thickness, but he has other concerns than being indulged in dialectics (   ) *(Xunzi, Juan 1, 20).* Zhuangzi launches his critique on several occasions. He refers to Gongsun Long in *Qiwu lun*   (on equalising things), *Qiushui*   (Autumn flood), *Quqie*   (Breaking the casket), *Tianxia*   (The world), and his fellow dialectician Huizi in *Xiaoyao you*   (Rambling) and many other locations (Guo Qingfan   , *1975).* In fact, we owe to *Zhuangzi* for preserving many otherwise lost references to the dialecticians.

In the chapter *Quqie* where Zhuangzi condemns knowledge in general and rhetoric in particular, the author has this to say, "

" Before *Gongsun Long* was "rediscovered," so to speak, *zhi* and *ma* had been glossed mainly within *Zhuangzi 's* context without reference to its source. Thus they mean respectively "finger" and "lot [in a draw game]" (Guo Xiang   , *1962, Juan 1, 15,* Guo Qingfan, *69).* The text can be accord-ingly rendered as: "Rather than saying that his finger is not my finger. why don't we say that his finger is not a non-finger? Rather than saying that a horse is not a horse, why don't we say that a horse is not a non-horse?" The argument is simple: It is an assertion through double negation. What then is the problem of this translation in such a text on language, or, more precisely, on the futility of language! Again, Zhuangzi is not interested in the linguistic sign as relating signifier and signified, but in the sign's referent. Any enquiry into the nuance of a sign's constituents can be criticised as "devious argument for hardness and whiteness and treacherous

explication of sameness and difference" (   ) (Guo Qingfan, 1975, 359). Before language can be completely thrown out, one should be content with its referential function. That's why in *Zhi beiyou* *(*Zhi's rambling), the phonic and graphemic distinctions of three words can be blurred because of their identical reference.

(zhou, plan, xian-the three words have different names *[ming],* but they mean the same, because they point to the same concept [shi].) Zhuangzi would not accept the idea that the sign-functives of signifier and signified will put the three words' identification into question.

This is probably the basis of his argument in *Qiwu lun.* The last quotation which identifies three dialectal equivalents by virtue of their shared *Bedeutung* at the expense of *Sinn* (Frege, 1980) is, however, from *Zhi beiyou* of *Waipian* (The outside chapters). The text is a typical scene-setting (i.e., the use of dramatisation) of *Zhuangzi* which we have seen in *Gongsun Long.*

> Master Dongguo asked Master Zhuang, "Where is Dao?"
> Zhuang replied, "It's everywhere."
> Dongguo pushed, "You've got to identify it."
> Zhuang said, "It's in ants."
> Dongguo asked, "Why is it so low?"
> Zhuang said, `It's in weeds."
> Dongguo asked, "Why is it even lower?"
> Zhuang said, "It's in bricks."
> Dongguo asked, "Why is it even lower?"
> Zhuang said, "It's in excrement and urine."

The reasoning is deductive-hypothetical. If Dao is everywhere, then it is found in ants, weeds, bricks, and excrement and urine. It really has little to do with name (ants, weeds. etc.) and substance, for the substance of the name *ant* is the graphemic and phonic materiality in which the name is embedded; it is not even the concept of ant, let alone Dao. Ants, weeds, bricks, etc. can be equated only bier virtue of their being subject to the identical relationship between name and referent, and that relationship can be extended to a non-referential concept of Dao only through a qualitative metaphysical leap. Nor can semiotic recoding provide a solution. The sign of ants consists of its signifier, both phonemically and graphemically, and its signified concept of ants. And how the concept of ants can in turn serve as another signifier for the signified Dao or the Dao that is beyond signification is still unanswered. Just as *zhou, xian, plan* cannot be equated bier their non-referential semantics, ants, weeds, bricks, excrement and urine are not subject to mutual substitution.

This logical and semantic impasse is bypassed in the immediatelier following text. Zhuangzi has Wushi　　　(Non-beginning) say:

> Dao cannot be heard, and what is heard is not Dao; Dao cannot be seen, and what is seen is not Dao; Dao cannot be spoken about, and what is spoken about is not Dao. Don't you know that what is embodied is not body? Therefore, Dao cannot be named.

How do we reconcile these two contradictory propositions in Zhuangzi's argument? A possible solution would be negative meta-physics. As Dao is an unnamable totality, it cannot be named, and any designation is at best but a metonymy which is interchangeable with other metonymies (e.g., excrement is ants in the Great Chain of Being!). This perhaps explains Zhuangzi's proposal for speechlessness *(wuyan　　)* and the linguistic irony in which he is caught up. Charles Morris distinguishes between formal analytic and mystical discourses. The proposition "The white horse is a horse" is based on analytic (tautological) implicates," just like the mathematical discourse 2+2=4, whereas the proposition "The white horse is not a horse" is based on contradictory implicates, and is an instance of what Morris terms "mystical discourse" (Morris, 1985, 187). One could say the latter is an example of rhetoric and semiotics in the lexical rather than formal sense of the word.

Mystical discourse does not amount to mysticism though the latter can be encoded in the same way as the former. Unlike Xunzi's moralistic and the Mohists' utilitarian criticisms of Gongsun Long, Zhuangzi's is generally taken to be based on his scepticism of language and belief in mystical transcendence. However, there is a possibility that language and transcendence, if at all, are mutually dependent rather than exclusive. The displacement of ants, weeds, bricks, and excrement and urine is made possible only because the linguistic signs which represent them are subject to the paradigmatic substitution of semantic elements, and their capacity of gaining a "marvellous" access (i.e., through analytic implicates) and being denied an access (i.e., through contradictory implicates) to that mysterious nonentity of Dao precisely because Dao is *a nominalis in absentia, i.e.,* a noun without referent and reference. In other words, Dao has to fulfill the condition of being a categorematic word in the syntagm to qualify for semantic substitution. This is more easily done than said because of classical Chinese's telegraphic and non-declension nature.

The following text from *Xiaoyao you* uses the same host-guest dialogue device which puts Zhuangzi and Huizi, Gongsun's fellow dialectician, in the positions of interlocutors. Huizi, the Chancellor in We], opens the dialogue by asking Zhuang the use of two things.

Master Hui told Master Zhuang, "King of Wei had given me some seeds of big gourd, and I had them sown and grown. Now the fruit was as large as five stones. I tried to use the gourd to contain water, but it was too heavy to carry; I halved it to serve as dippers, but they were too shallow to contain much. You can't say it was not big enough, but I had found it so useless that I smashed it. Master Zhuang said, " ... Now you had a gourd of five stones. Why didn't you make a wine bowl out of it, so that with it you could wander about in rivers and lakes (outside public life)? Your mind is not liberated, so you worry about the gourd's lack of use.

Master Hui told Master Zhuang, "There is a big tree in my yard which is called *shu (Ailanthus altissinza).* Its trunk is too cankerous and its branches too twisted to be useful in construction and carpentry. Left on the road, it was ignored by carpenters. Everybody agrees that your rhetoric is pompous and useless." Master Zhuang said, " ... Now you are worried that your tree is useless. Why don't you plant it in `Erehwon,' in the land of no where, in wilderness, so that you can idle by its side and repose beneath it? Thus like all useless things it has no danger of being harmed. What's the worry then? "

In the texts, the dialectician turned politician is concerned about material gain and utilitarianism, whereas Zhuangzi poses as a Daoist recluse. Through an interpretant shaped and governed by the ideology he subscribes to, each perceives the material signs of gourd and tree entering into a series of metaphorical substitutions. Thus the seeds of gourd are transformed respectively into water container or dippers and wine bowl, and the tree into wood material and means of repose. This metaphorisation is realised by a semic element "wood" shared by all the signs. Thus metaphor and metonymy are mutually generated and combined in the two narrative syntagms. Whilst Huizi's semiosis ends in social and political use, Zhuangzi's in non-use, and indeed in spiritual transport.

The above texts show how Zhuangzi's epistemology is semiotically encoded, in language rather than beyond language. His nonconformist ideology is encoded firstly in the primary system of "natural language" and then in the secondary system of genre, e.g., such registers as the host-guest dialogue and hyperbolic fables. Its articulation is then the particularised literary

semiotics *of Zhuangzi.*

The first quotation above has omitted a fable which is inserted into Zhuang and Hui's dialogue as "reported speech." Thus the discursive situation involving the interlocutors is much more complicated than it appears here and will result in different levels of identification in literary communication. Let me give one last example before I close the discussion of *Zhuangzi.*

> Jian Wu told Lian Shu, "I have talked with Jie Yu. His speech is so exaggerated and does not correspond to reality; it rambles away and fails to return to the topic. 1 was so appalled by his words which seem to be as far-fetched as the galaxy, as separated as the inner courtyard from the road outside, in short, so contrary to human nature." Lian Shu asked, "What did he say then?" [Jian Wu replied] "`In yonder distant Guye [or, Miaoguye] mountain, there lives a godly man. His skin and flesh are like ice and snow; his gracefulness like that of a virgin. He eats no five grains, but takes in only wind and dew. When he moves, he rides clouds and drives a dragon to wander around beyond the four seas. When he stills, his concentrated spirit frees lives from diseases and plague and brings harvests.' I think he lied and don't believe a word." Lian Shu said, "Right! A blind man cannot tell blue from white; nor a deaf man distinguish bells from drums. Are blindness and deafness limited to our body only? One can be blind and deaf in his intelligence as well. Are you not aware that Jie Yu's words were directed at you? . . . "

This passage adequately demonstrates the role which signs, especially indexical signs, play in human cognition. The audible, the visible, and the utterable are all based on the materiality of human body, without which one is unable to perceive, to hear, and to utter. There is an indexical causality from the sensible to the intelligible, and finally to the intellectual-a phenomenon long recognised by the Stoics and elaborated by St. Augustine. The following diagram illustrates this corporeal semiosis.

	sensation	*perception*	*conception*
		(body)	(intellect)
visual		colours	symbol
+/-			
(the blind)			
auditory		sounds (bells & drums)	
+/-			
(the deaf)			

,

sign   linguistic sign
(primary system)

meaning

allegory and fable
(secondary system)

Furthermore, the signification process which is activated mainly by indexical signs, is enacted in the Jakobsonian discursive situation of communication of *Zhuke lunnan,* where Jian Wu and Lian Shu initially play the roles of addresser and addressee, but later change their roles when the reported speech is inserted. In the insertion, Jie Yu becomes the addresser and Jian Wu the addressee.

message
Addresser ———————— Addressee
Jian Wu   code   Lian Shu
Addresser —— Addressee
Jie Yu   Jian Wu
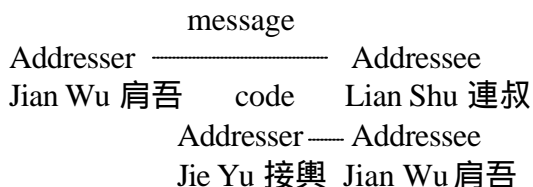
Note that the narrative chronology is broken by Jian Wu's reported speech of Jie Yu. Thus the addressee Jian Wu becomes the addresser who reports to the second addressee Lian Shu. Jie Yu's code is incomprehensible to Jian Wu, but can be decoded by Lian Shu. Why? Does it not serve the poetic function rather than the referential func tion? Is not this imaginative language, which is encoded in rhetorical figures (metaphors, similes, personifications, hyperboles, etc.), quo-tations, allusions, animal fables and parables, typically Zhuangzi's own language *(Zhuang yu*   *)?* As his self-portrait shows in *Tianxia, the rhetor is good at "employing paradoxical explanations,* terms for vastness, expressions for infinity" (*). Isn't it the same language of the dialecticians whom he* criticises because their "speech [is concealed] by rhetoric" (   )*(Qiwu lun)?*

This last example is of no small significance if it is put in the context of the controversy of language pragmatics of the time, which has bedevilled everyone involved. Gongsun Long, Zhuangzi, Xunzi, the Mohists-they all participate in that language game. Whilst Zhuangzi foregrounds the poetic

function of his own rhetoric, he charges Gongsun Long for not paying due respect to language's referential function. Thus the polemical discourse reiterates the failure in communication because each participant encodes his language in one way but decodes others' in another. With or without a language the *ory, they have created, through their dispute over language use, a* textual space that includes the hidden agenda of semiotics, whose ultimate concern is human communication.

NOTES

[1] *Dascal (1996) outlines a typology of polemical exchanges,* consisting of three "ideal" types: discussion, dispute, and controversy, on the basis of the following four criteria: (1) the scope of the disagreement; (2) the kind of content involved in it; (3) the presumed means for solving the disagreement; and (4) the ends pursued by the contenders. The great debate on name and substance falls more appropriately into the category of dispute rather than controversy because the divergence therein is grounded in the contenders' incompatible language beliefs, because there is no possible solution to the dispute, and because their exchange, especially that of Zhuangzi at Gongsun Long and Hui Shi   runs into heavy sarcasm, and is therefore more rhetorical than logical.

On the other hand, one could say the debate began as a dispute, but as the logico-linguistic issue went out of focus without ever being solved or resolved, and was superseded by the politico-ideological issue dear to the Confucianists, the extended dispute became a controversy.

[2] Obviously Fish sides with the "persuasive" rhetorician. The lo *cus classicus* is Aristotle's *Topics* where the author distinguishes between demonstrative and dialectical deductions. In the former, reasoning proceeds from "true and primitive" premises, and in the latter, from "reputable opinions." The latter should be distinguished from "contentious" deduction which "starts from opinions that seem to be reputable, but are not really such . . . " (1984, 1:167). Thus demonstration and contention correspond to logic and rhetoric respectively. A more recent sequel is supplied by Dascal (1997) in his erudite survey of Western methodologies. He makes the distinction between two types of critiques: the first is the decontextualised logical model, the second the more contextualised causal mode. While the first suffers from empirical inadequacy, the second from explanatory inadequacy, both having dispensed with the critic. However, it can be argued that once the critic is reinstated, the distinction between the two models will be blurred, and logic can only give way to rhetoric.

[3] In the absence of grammar in ancient China, rhetoric and logic remain the two discursive procedures which might have given rise to semiotics. This disciplinary approach which has appropriated the trivium is not entirely ungrounded. In ancient China, following the tradition of the nobility, a Confucian   Ru is supposed to master six arts. The first four belong to the general category of ritualistic, while the remaining two refer to more elementary training of writing and computus. If the sestrivium is compared with its Western

counterpart of septrivium, then *shu'* (writing) falls into the category of trivium, *shu⁴* (numbering) and *yue* (music) into the quadrivium. What about the remaining more practical arts? In the late Middle Ages, the seven arts have been expanded; or one could say some of the practical arts in Greece have been reinstituted. William of Conches, for one, remaps scholastic knowledge. It includes eloquence (the trivium) and wisdom, the latter including the theoretical quadrivium and the practical ethics, economics, and politics (Mclnerny, 1983, 270).

It makes no sense trying to draw, if possible at all, a correspondence between the two educational systems, but clearly there is an analogy between the trivium and the lower status of *shu'*, where language plays a major role, and that between *shu⁴* (and arithmetic which serves as the foundation of the quadrivium. The role played by *shu'* and *shu⁴* is in fact ancillary to that of the ritualistic disciplines in that with their system-specific autonomy writing and number are more removed from the world of social praxis. Further on this, see Chang (1996).

[4]The dating of Gongsun Long remains controversial. Chapter I of the surviving text identifies the author as a *shi* (scholarcourtier) specialising in rhetoric in the State of Zhao (325-228B.C.)(

. . .   ). The chapter, which is entitled *Jifu* (Collection of footprints), comprises two narratives in which Gongsun Long is referred to as the third person, as can be seen from the two Chinese quotes above that open the narratives. The two anecdotes then serve as two indexical signs for the signified object of Gongsun Long. According to traditional scholars, textual and stylistic details suggest that this chapter was a later work. There are a couple of references to Gongsun Long in Sima Qian's (ca. 145-?) *Shiji* (Histories). Zhuang*zi's Qiushui* (Autumn flood) records a satire on Gongsun Long. As the *Waipian* (Outside chapters) have been interpreted as writings by Zhuangzi's followers, it is possible that Gongsun Long was a contemporary of Prince Mou of the State of Wei (327225 B.C.), with whom the former engages in a dispute, rather than a generation younger than Confucius.

[5] Gongsun Long's text was first recorded in *Hanshu yiwenzhi* (Records of art and literature in *History of Han)* as containing fourteen chapters. The present text with six-chapter division is probably a survivor from the early Tang Dynasty. It is interesting to note that chapters 2, 4, 5, which are respectively entitled *Baima* (White horse), *Tongbian* (Understanding change), and *Jianbai* (On hardness and whiteness), are in dialogue form, observing the generic convention of *Dakewen* (A response to a guest's queries) or *Zhuke lunnan* (A host-guest dialogue), not unlike the Platonic dialogues. As the name suggests, usually the dialogue is opened by the guest. This "dialogical structure" is a stylistic register of the polemical discourse which often appears in philosophical controversies. But

Dascal (1996) suggests that the use of dramatis personae does not qualify such texts to be genuinely dialogical. The point is how one defines dialogism. Dascal's use confines it to actual disputative discursive situations in pragmatics. On the other hand, if dialogism is by necessity an inherent feature of discourse, i.e., language in social use, then even the two other chapters, *Zhiwu* (Pointing at things) and *Mingshi* (On name and substance), which read as monological arguments, can be dialogical in the Bakhtinian sense.

[6] Frege (1980) would say the sense *(Sinne)* of *white horse* and *horse* vary though their meanings *(Bedeutungen)* overlap.

WORKS CITED

Aristotle. *The Complete Works of Aristotle.* The Revised Oxford Translation. Ed. Jonathan Barnes. 2 vols. Bollingen Series 71. 2. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984.

Augustine, Saint, Aurelius. *On Christian Doctrine.* Trans. D.W. Robertson, Jr. Indianapolis and New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958.

Benveniste, Emile. "The Semiology of Language." Trans. Genette Ashby and Adelaide Russo. *Semiotica,* Special supplement. (1981): 5-23.

Chang, Han-liang. "Semiotics and Liberal Arts Education." In *The Search for A New Alphabet: Literary Studies in a Changing World.* Ed. Harald Hendrix, Joost Kloek, Sophie Levie, Will Van Peer. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1996. 49-52.

. "The Rise of Semiotics and the Liberal Arts: Reading Martianus Capella's *The Marriage of Philology and Mercury." Mnemosyne: A Journal of Classical Studies* 51.4 (1998). Forthcoming.

Cheng, Chung-ying. "Inquiries into Classical Chinese Logic." *Philosophy East and West* 15.3-4 (1965): 195-216.

."Logic and Language in Chinese Philosophy." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 14.3 (1987): 285-308.

Chmielewski, Janusz. "Notes on Early Chinese Logic (I)." *Rocznik Orientaklistyczny* 26.1 (1962): 7-21.

Dascal, Marcelo. "Critique Without Critics." *Science in Context 10.1* (1997): 39-62.

."Epistemology, Controversies, and Pragmatics." Unpublished English translation of: "Epistemologia, controversias, y pragmatics." *Isegora 12* (1995): 8-43.

. "The Controversy about Ideas and the Idea of Controversy." In *Provo: Attraverso la Nozione di Prova/Dimonstrazione.* Ed. Fernando Gil. Milano: Jaca Book, 1990. 61-100.

. "Types of Polemics and Types of Polemical Moves." In *Dialogue Analysis VI.* Proceedings of the 6th International Conference on Dialogue Analysis, "Dialogue in the Heart of Europe," Prague, 1996. Ed. Cmejrkova, S., Hoffmannova, J., Mullerova, 0., and Svetla, J. Tubingen: Max Niemeyer. Forthcoming.

Deely, John. "Semiotic and the Liberal Arts." *New Scholasticism 64* (1985): 296-322.

de Man, Paul. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust.* New Haven: Yale UP, 1979.

Eco, Umberto. "Proposals for a History of Semiotics." *Semiotics Unfolding.* Proceedings of the Second Congress of the International Association for Semiotics. 3 vols. Ed. Tasso Barbe. Berlin: Mouton, 1983. 1:75-89.

——. "Semiotics: A discipline or an Interdisciplinary Method?" In *Sight, Sound, and Sense.* Ed. Thomas A. Sebeok. Advances in Semiotics. Bloomington and London: Indiana UP, 1978. 73-83.

——. *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language.* London: Macmillan, 1984.

Epstein, Richard L. *The Semantic Foundations of Logic: Volume 1, Propositional Logic.* Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990.

Frege, Gottlob. *Translations from the Philosophical Writings of Gottlob Frege.* Ed. Peter Geach and Max Black. 3rd ed. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980.

Gongsun Long   . *Gongsun Longzi yi juan*   [Gongsun Longzi]. *Wenyuange siku quanshu*   . Reprint. Taibei: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1983. Vol. 848.

Hansen, Chad. *Language and Logic in Ancient China.* Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1983.

Hearne, James. "Formal Treatment of the *Chih Wu Lun." Journal of Chinese Philosophy* 12 (1985): 419-27.

Jakobson, Roman. *Selected Writings.* 8 vols. The Hague: Mouton, 1971. Berlin, New York, and Amsterdam: Mouton, 1985.

Kao, Kung-yi, and Diane Obenchain, "Kung-sun Lung's *Chih Wu Lun* and the Semantics of Reference and Predication." *Journal of Chinese Philosophy 2* (1975): 285-324.

Liszka, James Jakob. A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana UP, 1996.

Liu, Xie   . *Wenxin Diaolong shi juan*   (The Literary Mind and the Carving of Dragon). Sibu congkan zhengbian   99. Taibei: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1979.

Lyons, John. *Semantics.* 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1977.

Mclnerny, Ralph. "Beyond the Liberal Arts." In *The Seven Liberal Arts in the Middle Ages.* Ed. David L. Wagner. Bloomington:Indiana UP, 1983. 248-72.

Morris, Charles. "Signs and the Act." In *Semiotics: An Introductory Anthology.* Ed. Robert Innis. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1985. 178-89.

Mo Zhai   . *Mozi shiwu juan*   [Writings of Mozi]
   Yingyin Wenyuange siku quanshu   . Reprint. Taibei: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1983. Vol. 848.

Peirce, Charles Sanders. *The Collected Papers of Charles Sanders Peirce.* Ed. Charles Hartshorne, Paul Weiss, and Arthurs W. Burks. 8 vols. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1935-66.

Perreiah, Alan R. "Peirce's Semeiotic and Scholastic Logic." *Transactions of the*

    Charles S. Peirce Society 25.1 (1989): 41-9.

Rieman, Fred. "Kung-sun Lung, Designated Things and Logic." *Philosophy East and West* 30.3 (1980): 305-19

Russell, Bertrand. *The Principles of Mathematics.* 2nd ed. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1937.

Sebeok, Thomas *A. A Sign Is Just a Sign.* Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991.

Strawson, P.F. *Logico-Linguistic Papers.* London: Methuen, 1971.

Wang, Bi　　, ed. *Zhouyi*　　[The canon of change]. In *Sibucongkan zhengbian*　　99. Reprint. Taibei: Shangwu Yinshuguan, 1979.

Xun Kuang　　. *Xunzi jijie*　　[Collected annotations of *Xunzi*]. Ed. Wang Xianqian　　. Reprint. Banqiao: Yiwen Yinshuguan, 1977.

Zhuang Zhou　　. *Zhuangzi jishi*　　[Collected annotations of *Zhuangzi*]. Ed. Guo Qingfan　　. Reprint. Tainan: Weiyi shuye Zhongxin, 1975.

    . *Zhuangzi Guo Xiang zhu*　　[Guo Xiang's annotation of *Zhuangzi*]. Ed. Guo Xiang　　. Reprint. Taibei: Xinxing Shuju, 1962.