Traditions of Controversy

Edited by Marcelo Dascal and Han-liang Chang

Tel Aviv University / National Taiwan University

Controversies may be particularly prominent in one or another culture. Yet, there is hardly any culture where they do not exist. This book assumes that the practice of controversy, along with its theorization, constitutes – in each of the cultures and disciplines where it develops – a tradition. Whether there are enough shared elements in these traditions to consider them as, fundamentally, universal or not is something that can only be determined on the basis of a rich sample of controversies and theorizations thereof belonging to different traditions. This is what this volume provides to the reader. By presenting side by side controversies from the East and from the West, from the ancient past up to the present, from different domains of scholarship and action, the reader is in a position not only to admire the widespread nature, role, and richness of the phenomenon, but also to begin to evaluate its variety as well as universality. While the editors have purposefully avoided comparative studies of traditions of controversy, in order to focus on each tradition so to speak from its practitioners' point of view, some of the chapters take a bird's eye view and exemplify how such studies can be systematically conducted. In a world that is globalizing itself at a fast pace, the awareness of the multiplicity of traditions of controversy is fundamental for ensuring both that the integration of the various perspectives is harmonious and that each one of them is granted its place in a plural universe.

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Controversies (CVS)

Controversies includes studies in the theory of controversy or any of its salient aspects, studies of the history of controversy forms and their evolution, case-studies of particular historical or current controversies in any field or period, edited collections of documents of a given controversy or a family of related controversies, and other controversy-focused books. The series will also act as a forum for 'agenda-setting' debates, where prominent discussants of current controversial issues will take part. Since controversy involves necessarily dialogue, manuscripts focusing exclusively on one position will not be considered.

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Introduction

Crossing borderlines

Traditions, disciplines, and controversies

Marcelo Dascal and Han-liang Chang

This volume has grown out of a conference held in Taipei on 21st – 23rd July 2005 under the aegis of the International Association for the Study of Controversy. It was the first time that a IASC gathering took place outside its entrenched geographical context of Europe, so the conference was appropriately called 'Controversy East and West'. Among other implications, one might assume that this conference and its subsequent publication ought to be related to the trendy theme of inter-cultural dialogue – a much-abused appropriation of linguistic pragmatics and qualitative leap away from the very concept and mechanism of 'controversy'. However, what seems to be may turn out not to be the case. In a strong sense, the conference did succeed in providing a forum for scholars from various cultural backgrounds and scientific disciplines to address the kinds of controversy with which they are currently involved; yet, given the system-specificity of each participant's tradition, discipline, and historical period of interest, little border-crossing or even trespassing was explicitly ventured, although, as we shall see, some interesting across-borderlines dialogue did take place.

In the pages that follow, we explore a number of issues a volume like this raises, especially regarding the alleged obstacles to dialogue and controversy across cultural, disciplinary and historical borderlines and the conflict between tradition and innovation apparently inherent in the phrase 'tradition of controversy'. First of all, however, we ought to explain why the original conference title, 'Controversy East and West', has given way to 'Traditions of Controversy'. We have found the present title more comprehensive and capable of accommodating specific controversies which either do not fall into the binary pair East *and* West, or cannot be accommodated by the Procrustean bed East *versus* West. The volume comprises, among other things, period-specific controversies as well as ancient culture- and tradition-specific controversies which defy the relatively modern notion of East and/versus

West. One may find it difficult to label the Talmudic dialectic tradition of the five first centuries AD (Chapter 2) as well as the much older Sumerian literary genre of dispute dialogues (Chapter 3) and the ancient Chinese tradition of controversy (Chapters 4, 5) either 'East' or 'West'. Not only because these traditions had long existed before the *east* and *west* opposition acquired its geopolitical sense, but mainly because traditions – especially intellectual ones – are the kind of thing that are both older and more resilient than the comparatively ephemeral historical vicissitudes that rule the contexts wherein they arise and operate. Having said so, we are aware that this may be a weak argument because one always projects one's knowledge onto the historical past and therefore christens it accordingly.

Furthermore, we have found that all the contributions fall squarely into one of the two broad categories of tradition and discipline. A glance at the Table of Contents will reveal how these two concepts crisscross and overlap, with increasing velocity after the Renaissance, and how the majority of the chapters are oriented towards one category or the other, or both. An interesting example is provided by Geoffrey Lloyd, whose essay opens the volume. Whilst empirically the author's broad cultural data cover the polemical traditions of ancient China and Greece – with brief references to other traditions, the essay serves, theoretically, as a critique of the novel discipline of controversy studies, especially of the taxonomy developed by Marcelo Dascal. As Lloyd sees it, the claimed universality of typology is constantly questioned by local modalities. In terms of chronology, the primacy of Lloyd's raw material may be antedated by Simonetta Ponchia's Sumerian tradition, but with its polemical thrust, the essay sets the dialogic and critical tone underlying the volume.

The Lloyd-Dascal discussion calls to mind Ferdinand de Saussure's dichotomy between the synchronic versus the diachronic dimensions in the study of language, but both authors are aware of the limitations of this binary opposition, for they lay stress on the complementary interrelations between an historical-evolutionary and a systematic-typological approach to the analysis of controversies. In fact, none of the chapters in this volume opts for one extremity in this as well as in other dichotomies that are usually invoked in research on controversies; nor does any of them embrace a naïve version of eclecticism.

All the chapters display an awareness of controversy as a universal pragmatic phenomenon, present in all cultures, but it is precisely what this implies that divides the authors. For instance, regarding cultural relativism, Ben-Menahem sees differently from Lloyd. To be sure, both address the specifics of one or more traditions and practices of controversy. But they proceed in opposed directions – the latter, say, 'top down' and the former, 'bottom up'. Lloyd sets up a grid, comprising a series of research interrogations in terms of which one should be able to discern the culture-specificity of a tradition or practice of controversy. Ben-Menahem, on

the other hand, after assuming that the practice of controversy as exercised in the Talmud is a Jewish counterpart of a "cross-cultural concept", proceeds to investigate the details of this practice and its underlying assumptions employing only its inherent, so to speak home made concepts; the universal perspective remains in the offing, as a mere possibility, which allows him to invite the reader "to relate the concepts that appear in the halakhic sources to more general philosophical categories". Neither Lloyd nor Ben Menahem is, of course, guilty of failing to be 'empirical' enough in approaching their object of inquiry. Quite on the contrary, their descriptions and analyses of the traditions of controversy they investigate are as 'thick' as they should be, according to Clifford Geertz's advice (1983). The question, rather, is the perennial problem of finding the proper balance between the uniqueness of 'data' and the universal or 'cross-cultural' categories that in one way or another shape them in the analyst's mind. This is a conflict of perspectives that highlights the controversial nature of the 'cross-cultural' drive, of which our dreams are made of – a conflict present in all the chapters of this volume.

To the extent that East and West never really meet – with due respect to the yet-unborn North and South polarity in our globalized system – one may feel more at home with his/her own tradition and therefore adhere to it inadvertently. Thus, Adelino Cattani (Chapter 6) chooses to venture a historiography of controversy in the West, and sets as his task "to sketch an overall analysis of some of the most relevant historical ideas of controversy, to see (1) when and why controversy was considered a source of pleasure, joy and entertainment; (2) when and why controversy became a dialectical path to the truth, a maieutic tool, a disputation exercise and an educational practice; (3) when and why controversy was labeled as conflict, contest or combat". But, one might ask, do all traditions of controversy face similar questions? Doesn't the coziness of the womb of one's own tradition raise virtually insurmountable barriers to cross-traditions controversy, comparison and even to the apparently simpler achievement of cross-culture dialogue? Not necessarily, as demonstrated by Chaoqun Xie's discussion of Western controversies about politeness (Chapter 13), where he plays the role of a vigorous participant in these debates, rather than that of an outsider who merely observes and reports.

The late Russo-Estonian semiotician Juri Lotman identifies dialogue as one of the mechanisms of cultural evolution (Lotman 2001; see also Dascal 2003). Through a facile linguistic turn, one could substitute the Latinate *controversy* for the Greek *dialogue* without changing much of Lotman's tenet. At first glance, it may look strange that in this introduction to a volume devoted to traditions of controversy one should evoke Lotman and, through the verbal shift, Cicero. But the reference is no accident.

The basic discursive situation involves two interlocutors who take turns in making meaningful utterances in order to communicate for certain pragmatic purposes.

This discursive situation is proper to serve as a model for other forms of more complicated and sophisticated communication. It is often expanded to cover all kinds of exchange, not only of information, and the interlocutors are not restricted to the basic two individuals. In fact, one should perhaps say that the interlocutors are always already embedded in and saturated with 'others', insofar as they embrace or belong to traditions and cultures, as well as to schools of thought and ideologies which, when in a relation of opposition, are at the source of controversies.

According to Lotman, dialogue is characterized by the discreteness of language and the asymmetry of communication. Since the interlocutors alternate in give-and-take, each is capable of articulating only his or her discrete share of discourse, perhaps only one tiny fraction at a time. The discreteness is constituted not only by moments of articulation, but also by moments of silence because when one locutor speaks, the other has to remain silent and becomes temporarily an allocutor whose job it is to decode the message s/he receives. Since natural language is by nature unstable and subject to the caprice of temporality, the information flow is often asymmetrical and perfect communication is thus impossible. Since natural language is the primary modeling system, on top of which lies the secondary modeling system of culture, the phenomenon of interpreting culture becomes all the more difficult. This is especially the case in cross-cultural communication because each of the two parties involved has its own definition of culture, its own boundaries of the legitimate texts that constitute culture as well as exclude the so-called non-culture.

As 'other' cultures are inevitably present in a culture's historical evolution, they are in fact part and parcel of a culture's dialogue with itself or, in Lotman's words, of its auto-communication. Lotman projects the dialogic discreteness onto the history of a culture, where the interlocutors cease to be the indigenous versus the exogenous, because both have already been fused as historical products. Instead, they are viewed as historical moments which engage each other in dialogue, performing the semiotic task of the infinite process of encoding and decoding. An example is the dialogue between a turbulent, productive moment and its relatively calm and inert-looking but fully saturated following moment. Thus, the auto-communication of a culture, no longer a self-sufficient entity in itself, becomes the Gadamerian self-dialogue, the fusion of horizons, which characterizes cultural hermeneutics. This is perhaps another fruitful way to conceive the 'cross-cultural' dialogue that pervades this volume.

As if driven by a dynamics of its own, the volume acquired a historical – sometimes meta-historical (e.g., Chapters 14, 15) – dimension that extends significantly the notions of tradition, cross-cultural dialogue, and controversy. While some of the chapters deal with current, discipline-related traditions of controversy (e.g., Chapters 11–13), others discuss past traditions belonging to different periods and domains (e.g., Chapters 2–5, 7–10), and still others undertake to link past and

present in a variety of ways (e.g., Chapters 1, 6, 14, 15). On reflection, it turns out that, regardless of their particular focus, all these chapters are engaged in some way in a cross-borderline dialogue – be these borders disciplinary, historical, geographical, or cultural. Furthermore, they reveal an implicit, sometimes controversy-generating dialectical relationship between the old and the new, the ancient and the modern – a phenomenon that is worth further consideration.

Francis Bacon was among the first to point it out:

> [W]hile antiquity envieth there should be new additions, and novelty cannot be content to add but it must deface.
> *Antiquitas saeculi juventus mundi*, 'what we call antiquity is the youth of the world'. These times are the ancient times, when the world is ancient, and not those which we account ancient *ordine retrograde*, by a computation backward from ourselves (Bacon 1974: 32, 33).

Arthur Johnston glosses this as follows:.

> The idea that 'the present time is the real antiquity' is to be found also in Vives, Bruno, Gilbert, and Galileo. The effectiveness of this paradox, in Bacon's argument, depends upon the inference that the authority accorded to 'antiquity' (i.e., the classical ages) should be transferred to the new 'antiquity' (i.e., the present). In II Esdras 14:10 we read 'the world has lost its youth, and the time is growing old' (Bacon 1974: 257).

But the issue is not merely terminological, as it might *prima facie* seem to be in the light to the *topos* Bacon employs. It has to do with a major controversy in Bacon's time – the so-called *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* which marked, in Europe, the rift with the Renaissance that ultimately led to the birth of 'Modernity' and 'science' as we practice it today, and did not subside until the late Enlightenment. Bacon, along with Descartes, was one of the leaders of the Modernity Party in this quarrel, and his argument addresses the issue of wherefrom does 'novelty' spring and how can one avoid its crushing by unduly privileging the authority of the 'knowledge' presumably accumulated through centuries. He and his fellow 'moderns' also questioned, as is well known, the value of such accumulated 'traditional knowledge' and sought to develop methods that would ensure the production of reliable new and true knowledge. Among other things, for Bacon and his followers, this required particular attention to logic (the creation of a new, non-Aristotelian logical toolbox, a new *organon*) and language (including the development of a specially designed scientific language, with carefully defined terms, free of the imprecision and equivocations underlying the intuitive, traditional names natural languages gave to things, which yield the numerous mistakes he dubs 'idols of the market'). No doubt the 'semantic-etymological exercise' Bacon performs in his attempt to redress or redefine the meanings of the terms 'young' and 'ancient' or 'new' and

'old', which bears traces of his logic-linguistic concerns, should be seen as a move in his campaign in the attack of the 'moderns' against the 'ancients'.

Other such moves in the same war, including the manipulation of tendentious metaphors, name-calling, and undisguised insults – which show to what extent this quarrel was indeed perceived by the disputants as a war – can be observed in the late 16th century controversy between Nizoli and Maioraggio (Chapter 9). Just as Bacon, Descartes, and their opponents, the participants in this earlier battle in this war ultimately focused on whether the source of knowledge should primarily be considered to be a frozen tradition, or, instead, the creative power of the mind at any moment in history. What was at stake was, in fact, the very possibility of 'revolt' against an entrenched tradition whose 'style' of thinking, which privileged commentary over invention and preferred keeping to what had proven through generations to be sure ground over what might turn out to be nothing but ungrounded, adventurous risk.

A major intellectual revolt like that of the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, in which the very tradition upon which is based a culture or a discipline is called into question, seems however to be paradoxical. For in fact it calls into question the basis upon which rests the very possibility of controversy in a culture or discipline – those discursive 'traditions of controversy' this book undertakes to identify, describe and analyze.[1] Indeed, the paradox in such cases as the *Querelle* seems unsolvable except through the unexplained emergence of a new tradition, including new standards of criticism, of rationality and of controversy – the kind of process the early Kuhn (1962) would presumably agree to call a 'revolution'.

Fortunately, not all controversies are clashes of such a magnitude that the victory of one contender requires the suppression of the framework that grants meaning to the activity of debating itself. It is perhaps safe to affirm that most controversies, instead, take place within identifiable traditions of controversy, whose rules and permissible moves they follow. Otherwise, it would make no sense to speak of traditions of controversy, the historiography of such traditions would have to appeal to quite problematic types of explanation, the very notion of controversy would be questionable, and controversies' presumable role in the evolution of cultures and of knowledge would be highly doubtful.

It is generally assumed, for instance, that most scientific controversies are resolved by decision procedures agreed by the members of the 'scientific community' (and therefore by the contenders), which allow to determine methodically and friendly which position is the correct one. Therefore, the points of discord can be resolved without breach of tradition or clash between the contenders involved, and a relatively smooth 'growth of knowledge' is thus assured.[2] In domains other than science, such as theology and philosophy, although strictly speaking no decision procedure is in general available, argumentation and negotiation can

nevertheless sometimes yield a conciliation of the opposite positions in a controversy, thus – again – avoiding breach of tradition and abrupt shifts. Leibniz's 'Art of Controversies' represented a sustained effort on his part to developing the tools needed for dealing with controversies in this 'softer' way. He even tried to apply it to major and lengthy conflicts such as the Protestant-Catholic schism, mentioned in Chapter 15, and the *Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*.[3]

These examples suggest that traditions in general, and traditions of controversy in particular, are sturdier than one might think: They either have a solid structure that doesn't break down easily under rebellion or their egoist 'memes' are able to find and exploit well intentioned agents who end up keeping them alive and kicking within the victorious, allegedly new tradition. In our times, this version of the paradox has been voiced by Erwin Panofsky (1944) and Paul de Man (1981). While 'modern style' (*maniera moderna*) is none other than 'good old style' (*buona maniera antica*) (Panofsky 1944: 203), the rhetoric of modernity ironically reveals an unconscious obsession with the unbearable burden of the past, to which the modernist turns a blind eye. The only way to overcome paradox, it would seem, is denying altogether the possibility of escaping from the grip of past traditions and giving up dreams of creating radically new traditions or a tradition-free (i.e., 'grand narrative'-free, in post-modern jargon) condition of radical freedom.

The careful examination of particular controversies and of the traditions of controversy wherein they take place, however, does not necessarily lead to this pessimistic conclusion. The fact that a controversy is, essentially, a confrontation between *opposed* positions on a given issue presupposes that there is in the underlying tradition some degree of freedom allowing for the formulation and defense of these opposed views – a freedom so well exploited by the Talmud sages. The higher this degree, the broader and deeper is the possible range of opposition, i.e., the more radical is the possible difference between the positions. On the other hand, what we have been calling 'positions' are usually rather complex conglomerates of components, which can eventually be rearranged or recombined innovatively, especially when the components are borrowed from both sides in the controversy. This includes the 'rediscovery' of ideas and models developed in the past that somehow never made it to become 'mainstream' in the tradition and may be recovered and used, under later pressing circumstances, as capable of helping not only to solve intellectual controversies but also political conflicts (Chapter 15). All of these processes can lead to innovation precisely by virtue of the fact that the pressure of controversy demands the full exploitation of their potential in order to overcome the underlying tensions that controversies reveal and highlight. In this respect controversies should be viewed as both the trigger and the engine of a process of using innovatively, sometimes in a quite radical way, the totality of

intellectual and other resources, past and present, that we can mobilize, regardless of the tradition these resources come from.

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Notes

1. The so-called 'Great Debate' in China is quite similar in this respect to the *Querelle*. The many contenders in that debate employ the strategy of disqualifying their opponents' language, manners, arguments, and contribution to knowledge – in short, their tradition. The disqualification is usually presented comparatively, the standards of the opponent being argued to be valueless if compared to the superior standards either of an earlier tradition (which one should restore and preserve) or else of the newly proposed one (which should replace the older tradition). For an analysis of one key component of the Grand Debate, see Chang's Chapter 4.

2. For an analysis of examples of this and other kinds of European scientific controversies in the 17th and 18th centuries, see Dascal (1998).

3. See Leibniz (2006); for an example of Leibniz's conciliatory strategy, see Marras' Chapter 9.

PART 1

Ancient traditions

East and West

CHAPTER 4

Persuasion in the Pre-Qin China

The Great Debate revisited

Han-liang Chang

1 Introduction

This essay attempts to present a major controversy in classical Chinese intellectual history, commonly called the Great Debate on *ming* (name) and *shi* (substance), and to interpret that debate in the light of the contention between logic and rhetoric, similar to the one that has characterized Western philosophy since Plato's early dialogue *The Gorgias*. The English rendition of the "Great Debate", being at once accurate but imperfect, is so popular that its source is hardly traceable. The added qualification of "great" suggests the importance of the issue, but the word *debate* unfortunately fails to transmit the double denotation of "differentiation" and "debate", imposed on the homophone by modern usage.[1] Thanks to contemporary scholars like Chmielewski (1962–1969), Graham (1989), Defoort (1997), Chang (1998, 2003), Lu (1998), Reding (2004), Cui (2004), we have become aware of the contention of logic and rhetoric and, to a lesser extent, the relation between logic and grammar suggested by these ancient texts. For instance, when Chmielewski points out that "in early Chinese philosophical texts we generally have to do with *persuasion* rather than demonstration" (1963: 92), his frame of reference is no doubt the classical opposition of rhetoric to logic outlined by Aristotle.[2] Another source of confusion results from the translation of *bian* into *debate*, which gives one the mistaken impression that those who were involved in the event were actual interlocutors performing speech acts. This philological knowledge may serve as a reminder that our analysis has already been contaminated by language's historical corruption and its cross-cultural dissemination. However, the confusion of *bian* as "differentiation" and *bian* as "debate" serves paradoxically to elucidate the inherent and necessary relation between semantics and pragmatics.

2   *Zixue* in the Pre-Qin China

The Debate took place in the Pre-Qin (Chin) China, that is, before the first empire – the Qin Empire, which was founded in 221 B.C. It was enacted by the exchanges among groups and generations of literati/intellectuals called *zi* (Elder or Sage), as in the suffix of such names as Mozi (ca. 476–390 B.C.), Xunzi (ca. 313–238 B.C.), Zhuangzi (369–286 B.C.), etc., over a period of three hundred years. Studies devoted to the doctrines and writings of *zi* are called *zixue* (knowledge of the Sages), and they constitute one of the four major divisions of classical learning, the other three being *jing* (the Confucian Canons), *shi* (Orthodox Histories), and *ji* (Authorial Collections). The substance of the *zi* writings is close to that of philosophy in the West; therefore, *zixue* is sometimes called *zhexue* (philosophy) (Tan 1978: 61).

There are two important characteristics of the controversy over *ming* (name) and *shi* (substance or "actuality") (Makeham 1994). First of all, because of the long time-span in which the controversy took place, and because of the historical distance which makes documentation of names and events difficult and sometimes dubious, the people who were involved in this debate, except in rare cases, could not have possibly been acquaintances, nor could they have been contemporaries actually engaged in immediate speech interaction. Thus all the extralingual and paralingual features essential to discourse as a speech interaction or the concrete manifestation of language are absent. This lack of immediate *tête-à-tête* contact is highlighted by a second characteristic, namely, the fact that none of these Sages (*zi*) could have authored the writings attributed to them. These were recorded and compiled by their disciples and by later scholars, sometimes as late as the Han Dynasty in the second century, and the respectable appellation of *zi* also serves to indicate the fact that their writings were posthumously published. I have termed this phenomenon of controversy among people of different generations as "controvert the dead" (Chang 2001). Because of their posthumous publication, quite a few of those *zi* writings have been regarded, maybe justifiably so, as apocryphal. It is not my intention here to address this thorny issue of apocrypha because the authenticity of this or that text bears little relevance to the nature and validity of the controversy.

Regarding the origin of *zi* and *zixue*, there is little consensus either, though the following points are generally accepted. Firstly, *zi* is a respectable appellation accorded to their master by disciples of later generations. Secondly, extant materials indicate that there were two oldest interpretations regarding their origins. According to the Daoist (Taoist) master Zhuangzi in the chapter "Tianxia" (The Social World) of his collected writings, the so-called "Sages" can be traced to various philosophical schools in ancient times ("*gu zi dao shu*" [ancient knowledge], i.e., before the time of the Warring-States Period, ca. 475–221 B.C.). But according to

the orthodox historian Ban Gu (32–92 A.D.) in his *Hanshu yiwenzhi* (Art and literature corpus of the *History of Han*), these Sages were descendants of *wangguan* (courtier-scholars) who lost their official jobs and went into the business of private teaching. Although Ban derived his material from his predecessors the Liu father (Liu Xiang, ca. 77–76 B.C.) and son (Liu Xin, 50 B.C.-20 A.D.), it is from his text that the expression *zhuzi* (Several Sages) have come down to us. Thirdly, the flourishing of contending schools in the Warring-States Period bears witness to the social change and political turmoil of the time, the rise of liberal thinking, private education, and wide circulation of books (Tan 1978: 72–73).

With so many rival schools of "philosophers" proposing and propounding their theories and praxes, and oftentimes vying for official recognition and political gain, it is only natural that they should run into conflict, which manifests itself most explicitly in their polemics. In the following pages, I shall first outline the nature of such polemics, and then focus my discussion on one particular issue, which relates to the Sages' different conceptualizations of language and its representational functions. This will bring us to the Chinese version of the "nominalist" versus "realist" debate on name and substance (Graham 1989: 82–83).

3   Three leading controversialists

Among the philosophers engaged in verbal fencing, three are particularly worth mentioning, the Daoist Zhuangzi, the Confucianists Xunzi and Mengzi (better known to the West as Mencius, ca. 372–289 B.C.), and the anonymous members of the Mohist school or the Later Mohists. Zhuangzi was probably the first philosopher to launch a critique on the other schools, followed by Xunzi and Mengzi (Ji 1998: 14–15). Chronologically, one should start with Zhuangzi for his overall critique of his contemporaries in the chapter entitled "Tianxia", and then move to Xunzi who attacks the twelve Sages of the time. However, it is Mengzi who is especially eloquent in expressing the moral urgency of disputation and the way in which disputation serves to fashion a person. Therefore, I shall begin with the well-known dialogue between Mengzi and his disciple Gongduzi, and then move on to Xunzi and Zhuangzi.

4   Mengzi's *Apologia*

Asked by his disciple why he is so fond of disputing, Mengzi comes to his self-defense in the following passage. I am quoting from the Scottish Sinologist James

Legge's (1815–1897) "archaic" translation from the late nineteenth century and have put in brackets the current standardized *pinyin* Latinization for Chinese names.

> The disciple Kung-tu [Gongdu] said to Mencius [Mengzi], "Master, the people beyond our school all speak of you as being fond of disputing. I venture to ask whether it be so". Mencius replied, "Indeed, I am not fond of disputing, but I am compelled to do it" (Legge 1973: 278–279).

Mengzi then explains why he is fond of disputing. As a worthy disciple of Confucius, Mengzi laments the disintegration of political and social orders in the Warring-States Period. He observes, "After the death of Yao and Shun [two ancient sage rulers], the principles that mark sages fell into decay"; "corrupt speakings and oppressive deeds became more rife"; "unemployed scholars indulge in unreasonable discussions" (280). These include two most popular theoreticians, Yang Zhu [Yangzi, fl. late 5th-century B.C.] and Modi [Mozi, ca. 476–390 B.C.], whose words "fill the country". And, continues Mengzi, "*If you listen to people's discourses … you will find that* they have adopted the views either of Yang or of Mo" (282). "If the principles of Yang and Mo be not stopped, and the principles of Confucius not set forth, then those perverse speakings will delude the people, and stop up *the path* of benevolence and righteousness" (283). Mengzi admits to being "alarmed by these things", and sets upon himself the task of defending "the doctrines of the former sages, and to oppose Yang and Mo" (283). He says:

> I drive away their licentious expressions, so that such perverse speakers may not be able to show themselves … I also wish to rectify men's hearts, and to put an end to those perverse doctrines, to oppose their one-sided actions and banish away their licentious expressions; – and thus to carry on the work of the three sages. Do I do so because I am fond of disputing? I am compelled to do it (Legge 1973: 283–284).

One has to situate Mengzi's *apologia pro vita sua* in the context of the afore-mentioned conflicts of philosophical doctrines. Mengzi's primary target, as the text shows, is the contending Mo and Yang schools. His strategy is argumentation by authority, and his excuse the championship of the lost orthodox tradition, as he says rather self-righteously: "When sages shall rise up again, they will not change my words" (283). That tradition is based on the political order of rectification of names, whereby kings, courtiers, fathers and sons enter into a well-governed, unbroken chain of political and familial filiations.

5   Xunzi contra twelve philosophers

In the same manner as Mengzi criticizes Yangzi and Mozi for using "licentious expressions" to transmit "perverse doctrines", another follower of Confucius, Xunzi, inveighs against his contemporaries' abuse of language by "embellishing aberrant doctrines, and decorating devious statements". His critique is directed at the twelve Sages (*shierzi*), in an essay that has been translated as "Contra twelve philosophers" (Knoblock 1988), reminiscent of the post-Hellenistic disputational tradition made popular by Sextus Empiricus and the Stoics. Xunzi's criticism represents one of the positions regarding the use of language in philosophical and political argumentation. According to Xunzi (Wang 1955), all the twelve people, including Confucius's followers Zisi (484-402 B.C.) and Mengzi, excel in persuasion, and "their arguments are well-grounded, and their speeches make good sense, so that they can deceive the ignorant and beguile the crowd" (my translation). In John Knoblock's more elegant rendition, it reads "Some of what they advocate has a rational basis, and their statements have perfect logic, enough indeed to deceive and mislead the ignorant masses" (1988, 1: 223).

It may look strange why this kind of sound persuasion, with "a rational basis" and "perfect logic", is not acceptable. Such statements cannot but transmit truth arrived at through logical reasoning. Let us examine how Xunzi criticizes the twelve philosophers. Earlier he opens the chapter by passing his overall evaluation on the use of language by these philosophers. Knoblock renders this as:

> Some men of the present generation cloak pernicious persuasions in beautiful language and present elegantly composed but treacherous doctrines and so create disorder and anarchy in the world. Such men are personally insidious and ostentatious, conceited and vulgar, yet they spread through the whole world their confused ignorance of wherein lies the distinction between right and wrong and between order and anarchy (222–223).

Isn't what Xunzi criticizes exactly the concern of rhetoric where the logical truthclaim is suspended, as in the case of Gorgias and other sophists?

Xunzi divides the twelve philosophers he counters into six groups: (1) Tuo Xiao and Wei Mou; (2) Chen Zhong and Shi Qiou; (3) Modi (Mozi) and Song Yan; (4) Shen Dao and Tian Pian; (5) Hui Shi and Deng Xi; (6) Zisi and Meng Ke (Mengzi), but he does not label them by school names, these being a later invention by the Grand Historian.[3] What do the twelve philosophers have in common, apart from their excellence in language's social use? Xunzi does not seem to detect any problem in his faulting their use of "beautiful language" for "pernicious persuasions"; "elegant composition" for "treacherous doctrines". The twelve philosophers' doctrines on physical indulgence, repression of human emotions and innate

nature, economy and frugality, their ignorance of gradations of rank and status, their lacking "a classical norm for the state or to fix social distinctions" and "guiding rules or ordering norms for government" (Knoblock 1988, 1: 224), not understanding the guiding principles of the Confucian model – none of these drawbacks diminish their illocutionary and perlocutionary forces. These are ethical and political issues rather than linguistic ones, revealing an assumption that beautiful language has to be morally good and politically correct, or, in short, that there is an inherent agreement between name and substance.

Therefore the heart of the matter lies in ethical considerations rather than rhetorical ones – for rhetoric is at the service of ethics, a fact none of the philosophers of the time would openly deny. This insistence on the politicized moral intent in language use, or more exactly, at the expense of language, underlies in fact the criticism of the Confucianists Mengzi and Xunzi though they have been regarded as representing two opposing camps amongst the followers of the Sage. There is no surprise that the late dialectician Gongsun Longzi (fl. 257 B.C.?) should become the common target of the Later Mohists, Xunzi, and his contemporary Zhuangzi.[4] Their dispute centers on the relationship between name as *signans* and what it represents, i.e., its *signatum*, an issue to which we shall return after our survey of Zhuangzi.

6   Zhuangzi and the Mohists on differentiation

Whereas Mengzi targets the two extreme versions of utilitarianism popularized by Mozi and Yangzi, and Xunzi criticizes all his fellow-philosophers, Zhuangzi's practice is not unlike Xunzi's when he launches a shooting spree on all the other schools. In the chapter "Tianxia", the last chapter of the book attributed to him, Master Zhuang begins by giving a survey of the current intellectual climate.

> Many are the men in the world who apply themselves to doctrines and policies, and each believes he has something that cannot be improved upon [...] The men of the world all follow their own desires and make these their "doctrine". How sad! – the hundred schools going on and on instead of turning back, fated never to join again (Watson 1968: 362, 364).

Then he blames the followers of Mozi, who indulge in futile verbal games like the famous "hard-white" and "difference-sameness" sophisms and answer each other with contradictory phrases that do not match (367).

As spokesmen of two dominant philosophical schools, Zhuangzi and Mozi differ in many aspects. Particularly relevant to our concern here are their opposing views about argumentation. It is not easy to reconstruct the chronology of their exchanges though it can be established by textual evidence that the debate on the

nature and function of argumentation was between the Daoist philosopher and Mozi's disciples. Throughout his writings, Zhuang as doxographer often alludes to the contention of Confucianism and Mohism.[5]

In "Qiwulun" or "Discussion on Making All Things Equal", the second chapter of *Zhuangzi*, the philosopher succinctly represents their polemics.

> When the Way relies on little accomplishments and words rely on vain show, then we have the rights and wrongs of the Confucianists and the Moists [Mohists]. What one calls right the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong the other calls right. But if we want to right their wrongs and wrong their rights, then the best thing to use is *clarity [ming]*" (Watson 1968: 39; transliteration and emphasis added).

With the English translation, it seems Zhuangzi is suggesting a third party as the arbitrator. This is, however, not the case. The mediaeval annotator Guo Xiang (252–312 A.D.) questions the very possibility of a "clarified" supra-truth beyond the interlocutors' positions and suggests a total erasure of truths through the two sides' double negations of pros and cons (Guo 1975: 65). Towards the end of the same discourse, Zhuang picks up the adage again:

> A state in which "this" and "that" no longer find their opposites is called the hinge of the Way. When the hinge is fitted into the socket, it can respond endlessly. Its right then is a single endlessness and its wrong too is a single endlessness. So, I say, the best thing to use is clarity (Watson 1968: 40).

Here the cryptic "clarity" can be glossed by Zhuangzi's refutation of Gongsun Longzi's famous arguments of *zhiwu* (On Pointing at Things) and *baima* (On White Horse). Zhuang illustrates the principle of "clarity" by commenting on Gongsun's sophisms:

> To use an attribute to show that attributes are not attributes is not as good as using a non-attribute to show that attributes are not attributes. To use a horse to show that a horse is not a horse is not as good as using a non-horse to show that a horse is not a horse. Heaven and earth are one attribute; the ten thousand things are one horse (Watson 1968: 40).

The allusions are to the two paradoxes popularized by Gongsun Longzi. The first one asserts, in the transliterated Chinese original, *"wu mo fei zhi èr zhi fei zhi"* ("all things [concepts] are indicated [appellated], but indication [appellation] itself cannot be indicated [or the indicator itself is not what is indicated]"; my translation). And the second paradox – perhaps the more famous one – states, *"bai ma fei ma"* (*"white horse* is not *horse*"; my translation). This is not the occasion to disambiguate Gongsun Longzi's puzzles. Much has been done in this regard (Chang 1998). The important thing is that the kind of epistemological enquiry into the nature of things based on differentiation is in diametrical opposition to that of

Zhuangzi's. The latter's basic idea is to dismiss differentiation from our knowledge. Zhuang's refutation of Gongsun may sound banal because of its tautological argument and the writer's failure to comprehend, perhaps intentionally, Gongsun's distinction between object-language and meta-language.

7   Zhuangzi and the Mohists on disputation

There is no accident that it is in the same chapter where Zhuangzi refutes his contemporary Mohists and rhetoricians (alternatively called logicians or dialecticians) that he voices his position against argumentation or debate. The statement is so famous that it is worth quoting in length.

> Suppose you and I have had an argument. If you have beaten me instead of my beating you, then are you necessarily right and am I necessarily wrong? If I have beaten you instead of your beating me, then am I necessarily right and are you necessarily wrong? Is one of us right and the other wrong? Are both of us right or are both of us wrong? If you and I don't know the answer, then other people are bound to be even more in the dark. Whom shall we get to decide what is right? Shall we get someone who agrees with you to decide? But if he already agrees with you, how can he decide fairly? Shall we get someone who agrees with me? But if he already agrees with me, how can he decide? Shall we get someone who disagrees with both of us? But if he already disagrees with both of us, how can he decide? Shall we get someone who agrees with both of us? But if he already agrees with both of us, how can he decide? Obviously, then, neither you nor I nor anyone else can decide for each other. Shall we wait for still another person? (Watson 1968: 48).

The statement revealing Zhuangzi's idealist agnosticism can be construed as a direct response to Mozi and his disciples. The latter's comments on debate are scattered mainly in chapter 40, "The Upper Canon", and chapter 45, "The Small Pick" of the *Mojing* (Sun 2002; Li 1996). Mozi defines *bian* or disputation as "contending over claims which are the converse of each other", and asserts that "winning in disputation is fitting the fact" (Graham 1978: 318). These characteristically elliptical and cryptic remarks are annotated as follows.

> [*Bian*]: One calling it "ox" and the other "non-ox" is "contending over claims which are the converse of each other". Such being the case they do not both fit the fact; and if they do not both fit, necessarily one of them does not fit (not like fitting "dog") (Graham 1978: 318).

A disputation can be established only when the two parties are not talking about the same thing in different names, e.g., there being no dispute between calling an animal *gou* (dog) and calling it *quan* (whelp), and when the two parties are not talking about different things in different names, e.g., there being no dispute between calling an animal *niu* (ox) and calling another *ma* (horse). Reding (2004) describes this situation in terms of the principle of non-contradiction. If we go back to the Chinese original, we may venture a less cryptic interpretation. "*Bian* refers to competition (*zheng*) between two opposite claims (*bi*), and it's only right that one side wins [and the winner of the dispute has the valid argument]" (Li 1996: 289; my translation). This text is glossed with the following notes.

> An example of *bian* is as follows: One party claims an animal to be "ox"; the other "not ox" [or "non-ox"]. This illustrates *zheng bi* (competition between or disputation over opposite claims). It's impossible that both sides' claims are right. That not both claims are right means one claim is not right. The wrong claim is just like claiming an ox to be a dog (Li 1996: 289; my translation).

It is not my intention to challenge Graham's reading, given, amongst other things, the well known difficulty of *Mojing*'s language. Apparently, the Mohist stance suggests, firstly, a common ground for debate, and then the possibility of transcendental arbitration. Both concepts – the existence of a common ground and the possibility of arbitration – are based on the assumption of language's "objective cognitive content" (Reding 2004: 20; cf. Zhu 1988: 54ff); in other words, *ming* and *shi* correspondence. Reding explains the above instance in terms of the impossibility of contradiction and identifies the similar mechanism underlying Zhuangzi's relativism regarding debate cited above (2004: 19–20). There was indeed no contradiction if by this one meant, literally, "self-contradiction" or "paradox": a person making at once two contrary statements, or a *doxa* plus another *doxa*. One could say there is no paradox of contradiction in the Mohist example, but this does not lead to the conclusion that there is no controversy when two parties engage in language disputation. *Dictio* or *versus* – What's in a name (or a line)?

8   From differentiation (*bian*) to disputation (bian)

In Chapter two of *Zhuangzi*, the Daoist master criticizes the futile differentiation/disputation (*bian*) between Confucianists and Mohists. This is the passage where he denounces disputation, which, strangely but logically, begins with differentiation of values.

> Words [*yan*] are not just wind [*cui*]. Words have something to say. But if what they have to say is not fixed, then do they really say something? Or do they say nothing? People suppose that words are different from the peeps of baby birds [*gou yin*], but is there any difference [*bian*], or isn't there? What does the Way [*Dao*]

rely upon, that we have true and false? What do words rely upon, that we have right [*shi*] and wrong [*fei*]? How can the Way go away and not exist? How can words exist and not be acceptable? When the Way relies on little accomplishments and words rely on vain show, then we have the rights and wrongs of the Confucians and the Moists. What one calls right the other calls wrong; what one calls wrong the other calls right (Watson 1968: 39; transliteration added).

This passage will lead to our subsequent discussion of Zhuangzi's critique of his contemporary rhetoricians, in particular his close friend Hui Shi and the sophist Gongsun Long.

Confused as it first seems, the passage nevertheless contains an implicit proto-linguistic or proto-semiotic theory, a theory not incompatible with that held by the Mohists mentioned above. Several points can be made in this regard. Firstly, language has to make sense, and secondly its ultimate value closes on the transcendental signified *Dao* (Way). Whilst *cui* (wind) and *gou yin* (peeps of baby birds) also make sounds, *yan* (speech) as linguistic sign is characterized by its double articulation in sound (signifier) and sense (signified). On top of this basic signification that involves the phonic and semantic aspects of language is the higher metaphysical level that manifests *Dao*. Furthermore, human speech is not only restricted to the first-order of semiosis, i.e., signification, but also covers the second-order of semiosis which is none other than communication – discussion, debate, disputation – or its failure. It is at this point that semantic differentiation gives rise to, or gives way to, pragmatic disputation. This transformation is particularly conspicuous in Zhuangzi's rejoinders to his fellow-logicians and rhetoricians.

Criticizing his logician friend Hui Shi, Zhuangzi has this to say, "Hui Shih had many devices and his writings would fill five carriages. But his doctrines were jumbled and perverse and his words wide off the mark" (Watson 1968: 374). A bosom friend of Zhuang's, but not short of his ridicule, Hui Shi is well known for his sophisms, such as "The southern region has no limit and yet has a limit" and "I set off for Yueh today and arrived there yesterday". Others include: "Heaven is as low as earth; mountains and marshes are on the same level"; "The sun at noon is the sun setting"; "The thing born is the thing dying". Zhuangzi comments: "With sayings such as these, Hui Shih tried to introduce a more magnanimous view of the world and to enlighten the rhetoricians" (Watson 1968: 375). The latter happily responded with other similar absurdities. Zhuang has identified and listed twenty-one of them. Examples are: "Fire is not hot"; "Mountains come out of the mouth"; "Wheels never touch the ground"; "Pointing to it never gets to it; if it got to it, there would be no separation"; "The flying bird's shadow never moves"; "No matter how swift the barbed arrow, there are times when it is neither moving nor at rest"; "A dog is not a canine"; "A yellow horse and a black cow make three"; "The orphan colt never had a mother"; "Take a pole one foot long, cut away half of it

every day, and at the end of ten thousand generations there will still be some left" (Watson 1968: 375–376).

Zhuangzi singles out two prominent dialecticians, Huan Tuan and Gongsun Long, for his criticism. According to Zhuang, "Dazzling men's minds, unsettling their views, they could outdo others in talking, but could not make them submit in their minds – such were the limitations of the rhetoricians". But "Hui Shih day after day used the knowledge he had in his debates with others, deliberately thinking up ways to astonish the rhetoricians of the world" (Watson 1968: 376).

Most of the afore-mentioned sophisms remind one of Zeno's paradoxes, e.g., "Achilles and the tortoise" and "the flying arrow", and hence may sound familiar to Western readers. Their origins can hardly be traced, because they are also found in the Mohist Canons and other texts. Suffice it to say that these commonplaces are reflective of philosophers' general interest in logic and language, and they join to construct an intertextual and discursive space for disputation.

As if to display his literary talent and mastery of the verbal art, Zhuangzi makes free use of all the available dramatic devices in his representations of Hui Shi and Gongsun Long, not short of logical fallacies and violation of cooperative principles, if gauged as real life situations. This forces us to reflect on the extent to which conventions of writing and constraints of genre interfere with speech pragmatics. In fact, many of the sophistic debates of the time are embedded in the popular genre of philosophical dialogue (Chang 2003). This is not a stylistic privilege of Zhuangzi's, but a commonplace shared by many others, including Mengzi and Gongsun Long. For instance, four chapters of the surviving six attributed to Gongsun Long are written in dialogue form, whether or not the interlocutors are identifiable historical personages is another matter. In Zhuangzi's refutation against Gongsun, the latter is now alluded to in passing as an a-personal third party (Benveniste 1971), now dramatized as an interlocutor engaged in verbal exchange with another person. Rhetoricians like Zhuangzi must have found dialogue a ready-made strategy to exercise their power of persuasion.

9   *Ming* and *Shi*: Conjunction or disjunction?

As has been pointed out, most of the sophisms lampooned by Zhuangzi boil down to some basic semantic and cognitive issues. The paradoxes "A dog [*gou*] is not a canine [*quan*]" and "The orphan colt [*gu ju*] never had a mother" clearly suggest that the logicians entertain their audiences by playing on the confusion of the linguistic sign's functives of signifier and signified and its external reference. In other words, what is at issue here is the distinction between (or debate on) word and object, or name and substance (*ming shi zhi bian*). It was so popular in the logical

writings of the time that it came to be confused with the later Daoist appellation of *Xin ming* (form/name) in the Han Dynasty. The debate involves almost all the Pre-Qin philosophical schools because, like the philosophical traditions of other civilizations, naming seems to be a fundamental and universal concern. Laozi (fl. sixth century B.C.) begins by stressing the dialectics of namelessness and naming as the birth of the (human) universe; Confucius (551–479 B.C.) and his disciples are all in favor of rectifying names. Following Confucius's famous statement of rectification of (political) names as a prerequisite for everything, Xunzi and Lu Buwei (ca. 290–235 B.C.) have each composed a treatise entitled *"Zhengming"* (rectification of names). It is interesting to note that in Lu's treatise the author devotes much space to the dialectician Yinwenzi (ca. 360–280 B.C.) and alludes to the latter's lost book entitled *Mingshu* (Book of names). The same Yinwenzi is the subject matter of another portrait by his dialectician follower Gongsun Long.

From the perspective of modern logical semantics and semiotics, much of the discussion is confused and needs logical clarification and semiotic re-articulation. For instance, the semantic range of *ming* is too broad to be functional. Suffice it to cite the usages of three philosophers who are particularly concerned with the issue, Mozi, Xunzi and Yinwenzi. Mozi's classification of names is quite well known. These are *daming, leiming*, and *siming* (Sun, Y. 2002, 15: 429), which can be respectively translated as "comprehensive name" ("unrestricted name"), "classifying name" and "proper name" ("private name") (Chmielewski 1962: 18; Graham 1978: 325). Whilst *daming* refers to the name of any thing or object, *leiming* to that of a class of things or objects, such as *ma* for *horse*, *siming* to the proper name of a person or place, Yinwenzi makes the distinction among *ming wu zhi ming* (names of things), *hui yu zhi ming* (names in praise or blame), and *kuang wei zhi ming* (names for description). Xunzi calls them, respectively, *sanming* (random names), *xingming* (legal names), *jueming* (rank names), and *wenming* (embellished names) (Sun 1994: 153). Xunzi has traced these names to the Pre-Confucian Three Dynasties, the vanished Golden Age ruled by Sage Kings. It is then that the foundation for nomenclature was laid and any kind of deviation in language would confound that canonized system.

I have elsewhere discussed the possibility of semantic and semiotic remodeling of this debate (Chang 1998). A logico-semantic remodeling of the discourse of *Zhengming* would make it possible for us to reread the concept as a problem of definitional logic, which is a pre-condition for a correct axiomatic-deductive, synthetic reasoning. From the logical point of view, the discussion of a dialectician like Gongsun Long involves the reasoning procedure from the definitional, to the propositional, and to the inferential logic. With this, the paradox of *"bai ma fei ma"* ("white horse" is not "horse") can be easily disambiguated and rationalized by the type-token relation. But a semiotic modeling would more effectively solve the

famous paradox because its analysis of the referring relation of sign-functives starts by suspending sign's referentiality. The issue is no longer logico-semantic. I believe a more adequate approach to such sophisms would be semiotic.

Gongsun Long is notorious for his insistence on clear distinction and explicit formalization of names. This has incited the joint attack of his fellow-logicians, including Xunzi, Zhuangzi, and the Later Mohists. In the chapter of "Xiaoqu" (the Small Pick) of the Mohist Canons, the author refutes Gongsun by asserting that "A white horse is a horse, and riding a white horse is riding a horse" (Li 1996: 378; my translation). This kind of rather simplistic distinction between type and token fails to articulate the more subtle semiotic mapping of the relationship between signifier and signified, or *signans* and *signatum*. From a different persuasion, Xunzi asserts that a true master (*junzi*) surely knows the difference between hardness and whiteness, thickness and non-thickness, but he has other concerns than indulging in dialectics.

Zhuangzi launches his critique of Gongsun Long on several occasions. As we have shown, the Daoist metaphysician is not interested in the linguistic sign as relating signifier and signified, but in the sign's referent. For him, any enquiry into the nuance of a sign's constituents can be criticized as "devious argument for hardness and whiteness and treacherous explication of sameness and difference" (Guo 1975: 359; my translation). Zhuangzi's argument is both evasive and simplistic: before language can be abolished, one should be content with its referential function.

This can be evidenced by his comment on the white horse argument. He challenges Gongsun Long to the effect: "To use a horse to show that a horse is not a horse is not as good as using a non-horse to show that a horse is not a horse" (Watson 1968: 40). This refutation has little force because "A horse is not a non-horse" is just like "A white horse is a horse", both being analytic discourse based on tautological implicates, whereas "A white horse is not a horse" is mystical discourse based on contradictory implicates. The original Chinese *"bai ma fei ma"* contains a semiotic dimension, which cannot be represented by English unless it's de-grammatized. The two signs "white horse" and "horse" linked by the negative copula can never be equated because of the differentiation in their sign-functives, be the referring relationship one of the Saussurian signifier/signified or the Peircean qualisign/sinsign. Ironically, in his treatise on *ming* and *shi* ("Mingshilun") (Gao and Lin 1996: 212–215), Gongsun Long asserts: "What is *ming*? It is used to name *shi*. Knowing this *ming* does not refer to this *shi*, and knowing this *shi* is not available here, one should not use this *ming*. Knowing that *ming* does not correspond to that *shi*, and knowing that *shi* is not available here, one should not use that *ming*" (214; my translation). Here Gongsun Long, Zhuangzi, Xunzi and the Later Mohists seem to concur in their shared belief in *ming* and *shi* correspondence.

10   Conclusion

There is a touch of irony in Zhuangzi's rather harsh criticism of Gongsun Long. He criticizes the latter for lacking respect for language's referential function, and for concealing speech by rhetoric. Whilst Gongsun Long, motivated by his belief in differentiation, has suspended language's referential function, Zhuang does exactly the same thing, but through other strategies to blur distinctions. He has recourse to pompous, highly imaginative writing. As a rhetorician, he is no less good than the dialectician at "employing paradoxical explanations, terms for vastness, expressions for infinity" (Guo 1975: 1098; my translation). All those involved in the Great Debate participate in a prolonged language game, and their polemical discourse only serves to highlight and reiterate the failure in communication because each disputer encodes his language in one way, but decodes others' in another.

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Notes

1.   The Chinese word for *bian* in its original form is double denotative; it means at once *debate* and *distinction*, but two different words (graphic forms or graphemic signifiers) are used for the two senses (signifieds) in modern Chinese. However, the semantic differentiation and identification denoted by the original form are important to our understanding of the complex rela-

tionship between semantics and pragmatics, i.e., clarifying nuances of meaning and engaging in debate.

2.   Whilst Aristotle begins his *The Art of Rhetoric* with the statement "Rhetoric is the counterpart of dialectic" (1991: 66), he subsumes the enthymeme or "rhetorical demonstration" under dialectic and stresses its difference from "logical syllogisms" (68, [*Topics*]).

3.   It must be noted that there were no school titles in the Pre-Qin China. This practice is due to the Grand Historian, Sima Qian, who grouped the Pre-Qin *zis* into six schools, i.e., Yin-Yang, Confucian, Mohist, Nominalist, Legalist, and Daoist, in the first century B.C.

4.   Here, again, a precise chronology is impossible. Graham points out: "There is a chronological difficulty about taking Chuang-tzu to be directly criticising Kung-sun Lung, who was a client of the Lord of P'ing-yüan (died 251 B.C.)" (1989: 179). Books like Qian Mu (1935) may help to clarify factual points of contact or the lack of them, but positivism fails to account for textualized (i.e., fictionalized) events and has little explanatory power for the philosophical issues involved.

5.   To the supposedly older Mohist Canons or *Jing* are appended Commentaries on Canons or *Jingshuo*, presumably by the Later Mohists. Amongst the seventy-one chapters of extant Mohist writings, only six deal explicitly and almost exclusively with logic and language. They are (1) the Upper Canons (*Jingshang*); (2) the Lower Canons (*Jingxia*); (3) Commentaries on the Upper Canons (*Jingshuoshang*); (4) Commentaries on the Lower Canons (*Jingshuoxia*); (5) the Great Pick (*Daqu*); and (6) the Small Pick (*Xiaoqu*). Partly due to the shared critical commonplaces, these texts can be read intertextually as rejoinders to other philosophers' discussions of linguistic and logical concepts. These and many other sophistic texts join to form an intertextual space where opinions crisscross and interact, which complicate the problems of chronology and authenticity of authorship.

CHAPTER 5

'In proper form'

Xunzi's theory of *xinger*

Peng Yi

1

This paper will deal with the term "form" in Xunzi (ca. 313–238 B.C.) in order to bring out the thinker's polemical stance on human nature that will affect later debates in Chinese intellectual history well into the dawn of the modern age. While a constant battle of books rages around central questions such as the inherent good or evil of human nature (*xingshan* or *xinger*), ritual principles (*li*), names or terms (*ming*), and desire or needs (*yu*), it is perhaps within reason that this term unaffiliated to any hermeneutic tradition should receive little or no attention as to its role in shaping the direction of the controversies. But I wish to demonstrate in what follows that the question of form is related to the proper or due form of debate and will become the site of much controversy in the early Qing period where the discussions surrounding human nature actually hark back to Xunzi's polemic on the basis of form. Most importantly, the motif is linked to the confrontation between paradigms at the time of crisis.

One of the major aims of Bryan W. Van Norden's "Mengzi and Xunzi: Two views of human agency" is to clarify the underlying reason of Xunzi's proposition that human nature is evil. To put it simply at this stage, the conclusion he reached in connection with Mengzi is that Xunzi needs to differentiate himself unequivocally both from Mengzi and a shadowy third, Gaozi, who basically considers human nature as morally neutral and thereby implying a voluntarism that defeats Xunzi's emphasis on the demanding work of cultivation (Van Norden 2002: 127). Based on Van Norden's analysis, we can take a closer look at the beginning of an extended and complicated dialogue between Mengzi and Gaozi (in the example