Special Theme
Introduction: Philosophical Language and Logic in Later Mohism
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(1) The Focus of the Special Theme

In the current version of *Mozi* (墨子), there are six special chapters on knowledge, language, logic, ethics, politics and science. They include "Canon I (or A)" (Jing-shang 經上) and "Canon Explanation I (or A)" (Jing-shuo-shang 經說上), "Canon II (or B)" (jing-xia 經下) and "Canon Explanation II (or B)" (Jing-shuo-xia 經說下), and "Major Illustrations" (Da-qu 大取) and "Minor Illustrations" (Xiao-qu 小取). Later scholars give the names "*Mohist Canons*" (墨經) for the first four chapters (in a wide sense, it also includes the last two.) and "*Mohist Dialectical Chapters*" (墨辯) for all the six. The content of these six chapters indicates that the later Mohists follow Mozi's cognitive spirit in dealing with ethical and socio-political issues and, most importantly, apply an analytic approach to investigate philosophical problems, especially, in knowledge, language and logic.

In this special theme, we have four articles which deal with a set of related topics, i.e., definitions, names, truth and reasoning, in Later Mohism. In terms of philosophical language, different ideas of naming and different definitions of names and other linguistic entities can be used to express different theses in philosophy. For example, based on Chad Hansen's bold and provocative hypothesis of mass nouns in his interpretation of ancient Chinese philosophy, ancient Chinese thinkers can be understood as expressing their ideas without count terms and their language is unlikely used to theorize the distinction between names and a series of terms, on the one side, and sentences and that-clauses, on the other. If this interpretation is right, the theoretical consequence is that, in general, ancient Chinese philosophers' language cannot be used to motivate a similar kind of philosophy in the West and, in particular, their philosophical language is unlikely used to express the concepts of semantic truth and propositional attitude. Hansen's idea is interesting and influential. It is not only because he makes an alternative interpretation for ancient Chinese philosophy, but also because his idea can invite discussion into further deep level of understanding of ancient Chinese philosophy. In this special theme, some of the articles enter into in-depth discussions with him and provide different views on the philosophical language of Later Mohism.

It is a historical fact that the non-inflected language of Chinese is different from

the inflected one of English and there is no similar Aristotelian logic in ancient China. But, does ancient Chinese philosophy have reasoning with validity which can be formulated into the argument form of modern Western logic? This question seems in some sense similar to the following question: Does ancient Chinese language can be explained in terms of generative grammar though there is no similar Chomskian linguistics in ancient China? Although almost all scholars agree that, of course, there are valid arguments in ancient Chinese philosophy, some are skeptical of the view that ancient Chinese thinkers have the semantic notion of truth and the syntactic notion of sentence in their theory both of which are recognized as essential for forming arguments with validity. As we know, Later Mohism can be understood by most scholars as an exception which tends to theorize their philosophical arguments with an analytic language. In this special theme, some of the essays will argue that there are a kind of semantic notion of truth and a schematic idea of argument explicitly or implicitly expressed in the text of Later Mohism. Moreover, the names and definitions used in the text also indicate that the language of ancient Chinese philosophy is significantly comparable to that of Western philosophy. In conclusion, in contrast with Marcel Granet, Joseph Needham and Angust Graham's view, it seems that the difference between Chinese and Western philosophy is not in essence but in degree, not incommensurable but comparable, especially in relation to Later Mohism, and perhaps, also for the School of Names.

(2) Definition

As we know, in Western philosophy, Anselm's "Ontological Proof" for the existence of God cannot be elaborated without his definition of "God," Kant's "transcendental deduction" of categories cannot be formed without his definition of "united experience," and Russell's logistic program cannot be established without a set-theoretical definition of "number." It is obvious that definitions often play a key role in making a philosophical thesis and argument. In ancient Chinese philosophy, thinkers seldom explicitly use definitions as a tool to build up their theory. Later Mohism may be one of the few exceptions in this regard. In this special theme, Thierry Lucas in his "Definitions in the Upper Part of the Mohist Canons" gives a clear and salient picture of the later Mohists' systematic use of definitions in making their theories of practical or pragmatic philosophy. Some of the most important findings in this article are that, without circularity, the later Mohists systematically organize their concepts in a hierarchical order, and they use some undefined terms, such as *ran* (然 to be so), *de* (得 to obtain), *ming* (明 illumination), *zuo* (作 to initiate) and *wei* (為 to act), as the very basic concepts to build up a long chain of

definitions for forming their background ideas.

According to Lucas, "definitions rarely appear isolated but come in organized systems which should first be evaluated as a whole." He mentions that it is the normal case in mathematics, biological sciences and judicial sciences. In legal discourse, for example, it is obvious that all items of law are required to be organized in a consistent way and each term should be strictly defined in the system. Different definitions of "murder" would lead to different legal arguments and sentences. According to some definitions, an essential element of this crime is the agent's knowledge of the consequences of the action committed, while other definitions only require that the agent is aware of his acts. Changing or modifying a definition allows one to support different types of conclusions based on the same evidence.[1]

Jerry Fodor and others argue against the popular view that some informally valid arguments can be explained formally as supplemented with an implicit premise of definition. To use Robert Brandom's example, from "Pittsburgh is to the West of Philadelphia" to "Philadelphia is to the East of Pittsburgh," we can find some hidden premises to elaborate a full-fledged argument of validity. However, Wilfrid Sellars and Brandom claim that the validity of a material inference is not dependent on formal rules. Both think that logical syntax is not necessary for the justification of informal arguments; Brandom even maintains that the material inference has primacy in logical thinking. Some other philosophers do not agree with this kind of view. They think that definitions or meaning postulates (of which definitions could be regarded as a special case) play an important role in bridging the gap between formal and informal inferences. This disagreement of views is still an on-going issue of debate.[2]

However, it seems obvious that definitions or meaning postulates have often been used in the Mohists' arguments for their philosophical theses and against other schools' views, especially against Confucians' views. As we all know, Mozi defines "*yi*" (義 righteous) to make the argument against the action of *bu-yi* (不義 unrighteous) and defines "*zhu*" (誅 execution) to make the argument against the thesis based on "*gong*" (攻 attack). In addition to Lucas's example, I would like to mention one more example to illustrate this point. Mozi and the later Mohists think that "*ren*" (仁 benevolence) means love and is a motivational word. In comparison with "*ren-ai*" (仁愛 benevolent love), "*jian-ai*" (兼愛 universal love) does not mean love only; it is defined as including *ren* and *yi*. (Jian-ai B6) In other words, it is constituted of the moral feeling and intention of love, and the moral deliberation and production of benefit. For the later Mohists, especially, it is a dynamic term about a kind of

intentional action which cannot be identified as mere inner or mere outer. (Canon Explanation B75) If one has a subjective idea that music benefits his son and has a wish to have music for his son, he does definitely love his son; but if one has a subjective idea that music benefits his son and has an action to get music for his son, he does not benefit his son. (Major Illustrations) (以樂為利其子而為其子欲之，愛其子也；以樂為利其子而為其子求之，非利其子也。) Mozi does not agree with the Confucian idea of music in social function. He thinks that the subjective belief of having benefit in music does not match the objective action of having benefit in using music. In contrast, the deliberated intention of having benefit in diminishing music can be materialized in action in principle if a collective effort has made. So the later Mohists follow Mozi to claim that, "*Xiao*: [In intention] one takes his parents as his duty; in ability, he is able to benefit them. But it does not necessarily obtain the benefit (or succeed in behavior)." (Canon Explanation A13) (孝：以親為芬〔分〕，而能能利親。不必得。) and that, "*Lu*: by means of one's intelligence one seeks something, but does not necessarily obtain/find it." (Canon Explanation A4) (慮也者，以其知有求也，而不必得之。) In this regard, the basic concept of "*de*" (obtain/find) in defining or explaining "*lu*" (deliberation) and "*xiao*" (filial piety) plays an important role in the Mohists' argument for their dissatisfaction of the Confucian subjective idea of morality, including *ren* and *xiao*.

(3) Names

In dealing with borrowing names, the later Mohists express their view in Canon B8. Graham translates it and its explanation as follows:

Canon B8: Borrowing is necessarily illegitimate. Explanation: "It is not so." Explanation B8: What is borrowed for this cannot be this; otherwise it would not be borrowed. Borrowing "crane" for "dog" is like surnaming it "Crane."

Graham follows Tan Jie-fu (譚戒甫) to interpret Canon B8 as the topic on metaphorical naming. If the act of borrowing name can be treated as metaphorical naming, it seems to mean that, besides conventional naming with collective acceptance, without metaphorical base anything cannot be named by any name in borrowing names. So Graham thinks that the later Mohists would naturally object to the assumption that anything can be named anything, used in the Qi-wu-lun (齊物論 Discourse on Equalizing Things) of *Zhuangzi* (莊子) to discredit all dialectics.[3]

With special focus on Canon B8, Dan Robins in his "Names, Cranes, and the Later Mohists" makes further investigation into the problem of personal names and tries to explain the later Mohists' view on naming in contrast with the current views in the Western philosophy of language. According to contemporary Western descriptivist theory of reference, proper names are regarded as having a Fregean Sinn or sense and can be treated as shorthand for a description or a cluster of descriptions. On the other hand, based on contemporary Western causal theory of reference, proper names are understood as having no sense and a description related to a name can be used to fix its reference only. Although there is great disagreement between these two theories, the Fregean sense still plays some role in both theories: it is either regarded as the meaning of the name or as a medium to fix the object named. It seems that Robins wants to use the personal name, generally, and the linkage name "Crane," particularly, to explain the different way of naming in the classical Chinese theory of reference. He thinks that the later Mohists take our ability to use language to be grounded in our ability to distinguish between kinds on the basis of manifest similarities and differences among things. Proper names, however, do not work this way. The later Mohists distinguish what they call personal names from names for kinds. But unlike the contemporary Western philosophers of language, they do not go on to inquire how the meaning of a proper name can associate it with just one thing. Instead, they take proper names, and lineage names, in particular, to exemplify the general possibility of borrowing a word for one kind of thing, and using it to refer to something else. In alignment with Graham, Robins guests that they are probably responding in part to views like those presented in the Qi-wu-lun of *Zhuangzi*, according to which possibility of using any word to refer to anything threatens the stability of language quite generally. Proper names serve the Mohists' purposes because even when proper names borrow from words with existing uses, arguably they do not undermine those uses.

If my understanding is right, Robins seems to treat "Crane" as a stock example of shared clan names which are both different from private names for individuals and general names for kinds. That is, the former can be used to refer to one bearer while the latter can be used to pick out a kind. To use his own words, that is, "The later Mohists distinguish personal names from kind names, and the implication is that our use of personal names does not divide people into similarity-based kinds." However, when we borrow a general name for a kind (here the example is "*huo*" (霍) (=鶴 *he*) as a shared clan name (here the example is "Huo" as a clan name (*shi* 氏)), the clan name is neither used to refer to one thing nor used to pick out a kind through the similarity and difference among things of the kind. So, the Freagean sense seems play

no role in this case of borrowing names. Nevertheless, the act of "borrowing 'crane' for a dog" (狗假霍 *guo jia huo*) seems different from that of "borrowing 'crane' for a clan" (氏霍 *shi huo*). It is because the former is about borrowing a general name of a kind or a kind of things for another kind or another kind of things while the latter is about borrowing a general name of a kind or a kind of things for a clan or lineage. Why the later Mohists assert that they are similar (猶 *you*)? Both Graham and Robins seem to provide no explanation for this difference.

Robins thinks that "we could say more if we had a better idea of what sort of case the Mohists intend with their example of dogs borrowing 'crane'," or if we had discovered further texts of Later Mohism. Although he makes his conclusion humbly, I think he has already provided detailed evidence from the current text in explaining the salient picture of the loaned names. Nevertheless, the issues including in what sense borrowing names are metaphorical and by what base to distinguish borrowing names for a kind from those for a clan still need further study.

(4)   Truth

In Chris Fraser's "Truth in Mohist Dialectics," he adopts Brandom's prosentential theory of truth to explain the semantic notion of truth used in the text of Later Mohism. He agrees with Hansen that the three standards are not criteria of truth, specifically, but of a more general notion of the correct *dao*. But he argues that this pragmatic inclination does not preclude the later Mohists using utterances with semantic truth.

Fraser follows Brandom to suggest that it is an anaphoric prosentence-forming operator (such as "is true") that can be applied to any term that is a sentence nominalization (*say*, "That snow is white is true") or that identifies a sentence token to form a "prosentence" (*say*, "It is true" or "That is true") with that token as its antecedent (*say*, "Snow is white"). The prosentence can be used with assertoric force to endorse an assertion expressed by the antecedent sentence, as when someone asserts "'Snow is white' is true."

Here I would like to add two points which seem to be related to the idea of prosentential theory. The first point is that this idea of anaphoric reference is also held by Davidson with respect to the problem of propositional attitude. Davidson thinks that in an indirect discourse, a that-clause can be paraphrased as a pair of paratactic sentences in which the complementizer or subordinating conjunction "that" can be

regarded as a demonstrative pronoun which has the function of referring back to the antecedent sentence.[4]

The second point is that, although there is no clear example of that-clause in classical Chinese as defined in modern Western grammar, there are functional equivalents in the ancient text. This is also related to the idea of anaphoric reference. For example, in classical Chinese, the following examples in the *Mencius* (孟子) show a similar kind of anaphoric reference:

> I have heard that: a ruler does not injure his people with that wherewith he nourishes them. (Liang-hui-wang II: 22)
> (吾聞之也：君子不以其所以養人者害人。)

> Those who do not fail to keep themselves are able to serve their parents. I have heard that. (Li-lou I: 19)
> (不失其身而能事其親者，吾聞之矣。)

> I have heard [that] the chief of the West knows well how to nourish the old. (Jin-xin II: 22)(Li-lou I: 13)
> (吾聞西伯善養老者。)

Here, the word "*zhi*" (之 that/this) in the first sentence is used to demonstrate the sentence followed; "*zhi*" in the second sentence is used to refer back to the antecedent sentence. In the third sentence, there is an ellipsis of "*zhi*." However, it can be transformed into a sentence which is embedded with the *zhi*-construction just like the structure of the first sentence. That is, the structure of the third sentence "I have heard [zero form of *that*] S" can be transformed into the structure of the first sentence "I have heard *that*: S." In other words, the transformed sentence, "I have heard that: the chief of the West knows well how to nourish the old." (吾聞之也：西伯善養老者), is not only grammatically acceptable, but also of the same meaning of the original sentence. In addition to these two forms of indirect speech, there is a form of direct speech in the ancient text. That is, "I have heard *zhi* (that), *yue* (said): 'S'." (吾聞之曰：「S」) This kind of transformation can be found in the *Analects* (論語), *Zhuangzi* and other ancient texts.[5]

Based on some solid textual evidence, Fraser argues that the three standards (三表 *san-biao*) are indeed most likely criteria of some broader notion of correctness in distinguishing *shi-fei* (是非 right/wrong, this/not this). In contrast with Hansen's sharp

demarcation between the Western semantic notion of truth and the Mohists' pragmatic notion of correctness, he suggests that the three standards are not concerned with pragmatic or normative issues *as opposed to* semantic or descriptive ones. "Rather, they are probably working with a more fundamental notion of correct distinction drawing that covers both." He concludes that, "a focus on pragmatics - how words are used - need not exclude a concern with semantic issue … Indeed, the two cannot be divorced, since semantic content partly determines pragmatic force, while pragmatic force can in turn affect semantic content." In other words, the criteria as a set play a dual role in determining the semantic content and pragmatic use of words of an utterance.

(5) Reasoning

In Yiu-ming Fung's "A Logical Perspective on the Parallelism in Later Mohism," he tries to explain the informal inference of parallelism in Later Mohism as embedded with a schematic mechanism which can be used to check validity and is in accordance with the decision procedure of Western formal logic though, in terms of perspective, the former idea is semantic cum pragmatic oriented while the latter is formal or syntactic oriented.

Graham is right to say that the parallelism in Later Mohism is about the deduction of sentences. However, he does not provide any explanation of the procedure implicitly expressed in the *Mohist Dialectical Chapters* for testing the valid kind of inference of parallelism. Chad Hansen is not satisfied with Graham's interpretation and explanation of the parallelism. Hansen thinks that the examples of parallelism in the text are not plausibly treated as inference of deductive forms since the Later Mohists are at pains to show that they can "go wrong."

Based on this destructive view and his mass-like interpretation of the paralleling language, Hansen interprets the tone of Xiao-qu as being defeatist. He thinks that the later Mohists' language is capricious, arbitrary, and merely conventional. On the contrary, in Fung's article, he disagree with Hansen to attribute to the later Mohists a view of linguistic skepticism in the sense that they can be understood as believing the unstability of language and thus rejecting the validity of logical inference.

In this article, Fung tries to provide a logical analysis of the paralleling inference in the *Mohist Dialectical Chapters* and a constructive rather than defeatist interpretation of parallelism in Xiao-qu and other relevant chapters. At the

methodology level, he will demonstrate that the Chinese thinkers, including the later Mohists, are less logical and syntactic sensibility and not interested in what Rudolf Carnap called the "formal mode of speech" and argue that they tend to express their ideas in the "material mode of speech" which may help them build up their semantic and pragmatic sensibility in philosophical thinking, especially in the thinking of parallelism.

The later Mohists' idea of reasoning seems to be similar to Brandom's view on the material inference. Brandom follows Sellars who thinks that the correctness of some informal inferences essentially involve the conceptual contents of its premises and conclusions. Sellars calls this kind of inference "material inference." For example, the inference from "Pittsburgh is to the West of Philadelphia" to "Philadelphia is to the East of Pittsburgh" and that from "Lightning is seen now" to "Thunder will be heard soon" are of such kind. They are good material inferences, according to Brandom, not because their correctness is based on formal norm or standard, but because it is rooted in the content of their nonlogical vocabulary.

One who disagrees with Brandom would treat "material inference" or "nonformal inference" as a skipped from of formal deductive inference. If a child does not know why we make inference in this material way, we have to make explicit the hidden definition, meaning postulate or description of the semantic content which is crucial for the validity of the inference. In other words, this hidden content can be identified as a kind of knowledge in our Background in Searle's sense. For example, in response to the request for going to movies tonight, the statement that, "I have exam tomorrow morning" entails that, "I cannot go to the movies tonight." For almost all of us, as an adult, we would not ask why the answer is a rejection of the request. However, if it is a request of a child of three years old, s/he would definitely ask the question. In this situation, the agent in response has to explain the why question. S/he may say that, "In general, if one has exam tomorrow morning, then one cannot go to the movies tonight." Or, more in details, "If one has exam tomorrow morning, then s/he has to sleep early tonight; and if s/he has to sleep early tonight, then s/he cannot go to the movies tonight." The understanding of these conditional knowledge described by the general statements are embedded in most mature people's background though they are not grasped by a child of three years old. If we make the descriptions, meaning postulates or definitions explicit, we will also transform the material inference into a formal one. To validate Brandom's example of inference, i.e., from "Pittsburgh is to the West of Philadelphia" to "Philadelphia is to the East of Pittsburgh," after reflection, we recognize that there must be some embedded knowledge of direction in our

Background. After further reflection, we also know that this background knowledge can be regarded as a missing or hidden part of a formal argument to transform the above material inference. Coming back to the later Mohists' theory of inference, I think we should not treat their paralleling inference as a kind of material inference in the sense that their validity is not dependent on formal rules but semantic content, as claimed by Brandom. Rather, the validity of their paralleling inference depends on some paradigmatic examples with comparison with some anomalies. This mechanism seems like a model theory of checking correctness and is in accordance with the decision procedure based on formal rules. In this regard, the informal inference of parallelism in Later Mohism has no primacy in comparison with formal reasoning. Instead, they are hand in hand together.

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[1] Fabrizio Macagno, "Definitions in Law," *Bulletin suisse de linguistique appliquée*, 2010, Centre de linguistique appliquée, N° spécial (2010/2), 200.

[2] See J. A. Fodor, M. F. Garrett, E. C. T. Walker and C. H. Parkes, "Against Definitions," *Cognition* 8 (1980), 263-367 and David Pitt, "In Defense of Definitions," *Philosophical Psychology* 12: 2 (1999), 139-159.

[3] A. C. Graham, "The Logic of the Mohist 'Hsiao-ch'ü'," *T'oung Pao*, Second Series, Vol. 51, Livr. 1 (1964), 14-5.

[4] I think Davidson's idea of paratactic construction is not only theoretically appropriate, but also in accordance with the development of the Present English from the Old English and Middle English. As indicated by many historical linguists of English, the complementizer (or subordinating conjunction) "that" is derived from the demonstrative "pæt" through a process of grammaticalization. See Joseph M. Williams, *Origins of the English Language* (New York: The Free Press, 1975), 248. Also see Heine and Kuteva, *World Lexicon of Grammaticalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 106f. In classical Chinese language, there is also a similar kind of grammaticalization, especially in sentential structure with nominalizers or complementizers such as "*zhi*" (之) "*shi*" (是) and "*zhe*" (者).

[5] As argued by many historical linguists, in classical Chinese language, there are several syntactic constructions which can be used to form subordinating clauses and small sentences, including pivotal construction and co-verbal construction. The small sentences formed with these constructions can be recognized as functional equivalents of that-clauses. This is similar to the case in the classical language of Latin.