

## *Introduction: If Aristotle Had Spoken and Wittgenstein Known Chinese. . .*

Remarks regarding logic and epistemology: a comparison  
between classical Chinese and some Western approaches

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“If Aristotle had spoken Chinese or Dakota, he would have arrived at a totally different logic—at least at a totally different doctrine of categories.”

In using this famous statement, Fritz Mauthner (vol. 3, p. 4, my translation), a very original philosopher of language and an important forerunner if not predecessor of Wittgenstein’s later linguistic philosophy, tried to illustrate the thesis that Aristotle would have extracted his logic and categories from the structure of the Greek language “by considering Greek grammar from an interesting perspective” (ibid.), and that it would be tantamount to circular reasoning to attribute priority to logical and categorical structures over linguistic forms.

This thesis was not only revived in the linguistic relativism of Sapir and Whorf, but also had a remarkable influence on Wittgenstein’s linguistic transcendentalism, culminating in the thesis that the limits of our language are the limits of our world. According to the later Wittgenstein, we reveal and constitute the structures of our world by means of “language games” integrated as “life forms” (*Lebensformen*) into everyday life, and any structure of knowledge can in the final analysis be reduced to such a pragmatic foundation.

For logic, however, this thesis at first sight appears valid only if one opts for a relatively wide interpretation of the respective term “logic”—if, for example, a structure of subjects and predicates and their separation within the grammar of the Indo-European languages figures as belonging to “logic.” But there are many languages of American Indian tribes which do not avail themselves of sentence structures with separable predicates and subjects (see, e.g., Pinnow 1964, Whorf 1963). Not even all logical constants may be directly represented in any language whatsoever by a term within the object language:

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for instance, the extremely important connective “not” has to be represented by a linguistic circumlocution in Finnish, Arabic, ancient Egyptian, as well as a Tibetan dialect: the ancient Egyptian, the Finnish, and the Tamil languages all use special negative verb forms to represent negations (Basson and O’Connor 1947). As for logical constants, therefore, the relativity of languages may be substantiated by analyzing their linguistic expressions (see also Döhmman 1966). Nevertheless, logical structures and inference forms can be represented in all linguistic systems, even if only by resorting to circumlocutions. At least, this is a viable hypothetical requirement which thus far stands up to potential falsification, although it may become necessary to use such circumlocutions, deviations or formulations, metalinguistic terms so to speak, or at times even specific logical reconstructions. The validity of the thesis hinges upon how narrowly or how widely one conceives of the repertory of logical forms and rules. An inference logic reduced to the minimum of formal logical deduction without connectives or only using the negator—that is to say, a positive implication logic—would turn out to be intercultural, and thus accessible to reconstruction in every language. (This might also be true if one restricted the rules of negation to the intuitionist rules after Brouwer.) Lorenzen proved that the rules and the formal theory of positive implication logic as well as of intuitionist-“effective” logic can be derived from the rules of schematic operations, that is, from the rules of operating with calculi in science according to generally admissible rules (admitting of nothing new, that is, of formulae that cannot be deduced in the calculus itself) (Lorenzen 1955, 1958).

However, such a foundation for logic would typically presuppose specific interpretations, for example, that the logical connective “if-so” can be mirrored in the “operative subjunction” (that is, in the schematic sequence of operations). In that respect it would be conceived of as universalizable and representative for schematic operations per se. The same is *mutatis mutandis* true for the logical and the operative implication. In any case, positive implication logic or consequence logic seems to be easily distinguishable and separable from pure linguistic factors. Its foundation cannot just be reduced to linguistic factors, because the structural rules have to be traced back to the functional meaning—to structural rules of sequences and conditions of schematic operations by themselves—if only by further interpretation. This does not hold to the same degree for all logical particles or connectives, for example, not for those which in Lorenzen’s original foundation of operative logic via the rules of calculi can only be introduced by additional general, relatively admissible rules, as for instance the particle “and.” As mentioned above, some languages do indeed dispense with “not” and “and.” One could however conceive of ambivalent circumlocutions of these particles by means of metalinguistic formulations or terms, so that such logical connectives would not necessarily be universally given in the object-language but would be expressible in the metalanguage nevertheless (Lenk 1968, p. 625ff). For one may conceive of a mediating position here. If one understood the metalinguistic circumlocutions of

logical function as belonging to the operational spectrum and to the meaning of the connective, one could say that such logical constants have to be determined only up to a special equifunctionality. Some constants could be represented by functional equivalents, for example, by metalinguistic circumlocutions such as "this is wrong" for "not" (Lenk 1973, p. 106f). We cannot at this time discuss at length the question of a universal foundation of logic independent of language (see, e.g., Lenk 1968). Here, we can only ponder about and judge Mauthner's thesis and reflect on it in a slightly more differentiated way.

In any case, with regard to relativity the foundation and development of logical systems, a comparative analysis of logic in different cultures with largely different languages seems to be in order. In its strictest form, Mauthner's thesis does not appear to be confirmed with respect to logical rules, at least not with regard to rules of inference, as is argued in one article contributed to this volume (Paul; cf. also 1987, p. 72ff). Gregor Paul convincingly corroborates his thesis that Later Mohist logic avails itself of inferential structures equivalent to Aristotelian syllogisms. Thus the structure of logical inferences seems to be the same even if represented in structurally very different language types as, in this case, Chinese and Greek. This is all the more true if you concentrate on the core of inferential structures in logic. The more the analysis is restricted to this core of logic (for instance, in the form of positive implication logic or consequence logic [the rules of formal logical inference without negation]), the more you would expect that intercultural constants of formal structures and inferences may be identified. This turns out to be especially true if one restricts the analysis to the genuine frame of application of logical functors to logical arguments (that is, the variables, places, individual constants to be represented within functors as the so-called "arguments" or "argument places"). Nevertheless, it may be of interest for the philosophy of language and also for empirical linguistics to conduct an interlanguage comparison by means of a contrastive linguistic analysis of additional versions of logic in order to find out if, and how far, specific logical forms are dependent on specific linguistic and cultural contexts and their respective world interpretations.

Comparative philosophy, and particularly the comparative philosophy of language that Mauthner had in mind, may provide important incentives for such an enterprise. Unfortunately, such incentives and the results of the respective analyses of an interlanguage comparison, have up until now not been systematically conducted and utilized for philosophical perspectives, in spite of Wilhelm von Humboldt's endeavors. Probably many culs-de-sac or wrong tracks might have been avoided, if serious attention had been paid earlier to a philosophical consideration of such comparative linguistic insights.

All of what has been said so far, holds even more for the categorical forms Mauthner wrote about in the second part of his statement. It is here that his thesis gains its genuine boldness and philosophical import. And here it seems to be partly true. It is in this field of categorical structuring of the world that the

analyses of comparative philosophy, which can no longer be reduced to the philosophy of language, are necessarily topical and essential. Comparative philosophy has to embrace anthropological, historical as well as conceptual studies. This has been true for systematic philosophy for some time now—for at least as long as the philosophy of language in the form of theories of meaning and reference has had the status of a *prima philosophia*, a fundamental methodological or categorical discipline which in previous times was reserved for epistemology alone. We can say that comparative philosophy—particularly the comparative philosophy of language in cultural contextual integration—is no longer only a cabinet of curiosities for different philosophical world descriptions and esoteric fields of study, but has gained systematic relevancy for analytical and foundational disciplines with considerable import for all other philosophical fields. Ontology can no longer be separated from epistemology, epistemology from the philosophy of language, and philosophy of language from the philosophy of culture and institutions, including “life forms.” And this is true whether or not one would like to naturalize epistemology *sensu Quine*.

In this sense, contrastive philosophical analyses of classical Chinese epistemology on the one hand and Western approaches on the other suddenly gain particular relevance. Are the forms of world description and conceptualization really dependent on the forms of language? Are there fundamental differences amounting to completely different categorical forms and to totally diverse approaches, due to very different linguistic structures and cultural traditions as well as to alternative modes and habits of structuring and characteristic rule systems? Can an intercultural and contrastive linguistic analysis lead to new insights in this respect? May it not at least point to the usually undebated and uncritically accepted matters of fact of one’s own philosophical tradition and world order, and thus lead to deeper problems? Can the results of such a comparison between the alternative conceptual structures of Chinese language and culture on the one hand, and Western Indo-European languages and culture on the other hand, be reconciled or integrated with classical epistemology as well as with newer developments of analytical epistemology in the West? Are these parallels or extant contrasts conducive to the problematisation and recognition, at times to solutions or dissolutions of our own fixations? At least, such a comparison might yield a decisive incentive for analysis.

An in-depth and detailed study of classical philosophical texts of the Chinese tradition may, if conducted in a manner attentive to language structures, open up aspects of epistemology which turn out to be highly relevant to the newest debate within the interface between epistemology, philosophy of language, analytical methodology, and ontology, as well as the analysis of categories. Such studies may offer a very important alternative example which facilitates the on-going demise of the epistemological imperialism of Cartesian dualism, the overstated philosophical relevance of the grammatical subject-object separation, the accentuation of traditional fact-value problems, and the difference be-

tween reality and appearance. Surprisingly enough, interesting parallels can be found with post-idealistic interpretationist approaches as seen in Nietzsche's perspectivism of knowledge, and more recently the new approaches of post-analytic philosophy such as Hilary Putnam's internal realism, Rorty's neo-pragmatism, or my approach which I call a methodological or transcendental interpretationism. A methodological interpretationist is struck by the studies of prominent sinological philosophers when he tries to relate the results of their theories of meaning, reference, and knowledge to interpretationist, hypothetical realist and neopragmatist points of view. At the same time, classical Chinese epistemology may also provide an alternative example of a philosophy which is not basically logocentrically oriented, and not dominated by ideas of Cartesian dualisms, but which nevertheless seems to fit very nicely into later-Wittgensteinian interpretations of social contexts and "life forms" with all their constitutive and historically developed pragmatic functions. Even a transcendental-pragmatic approach to the constitution of meanings and validities and communicative processes may be interpreted, compared, and easily integrated with parts of this Chinese tradition. At least parallels as well as characteristic differences might be highlighted.

For most representatives of classical Chinese epistemology, the one position which seems to be of overriding importance can be dubbed a radical internalism. It is indeed an interpretationist internalism not relying on a model of a transcendent world as such, or on hypostatizing a thing in itself and a respective representation by models or pictures. Characteristically, such an approach does not admit of a strict separation between reality and representation, as was the case, for example, in classical European dualistic ontology. Hall and Ames convincingly stress the absence of any model of transcendence classical Confucian philosophy (Hall and Ames 1987). Consequently, knowledge and its linguistic representation cannot identify independent things in themselves, represent and mirror them in the realm of representation, but rather structure reality by means of representational forms which are necessarily interpretively impregnated. This implies that meanings cannot exist as and in ideal objects or propositions independent of conceptual and representational processes. Rather they are rendered within conventional linguistic communication. This means, according to Ames, as he argued in a paper contributed to the Karlsruhe symposium but published elsewhere, that knowledge, recognition as well as constitution of meanings are socially mediated, performative, productive, affectively laden and primarily esthetic, beyond the cognitive realm: Ames stresses that *Chih* is more a sort of presentation than of representation: "*Chih* means a successful configuring of one's world through the process of modelling," that is to say, by a socially embedded, in part ritualized and conventionalized, in any case historically developed and tradited cultivation of linguistic and representational forms of conception. There is no mentalesé "private language" for mirroring or representing a world in itself. Rather, "the shared social language replaces the private lan-

guage of western folk theory” (Hansen in this volume). Accordingly, there is in fact a Wittgensteinian approach to language and the learning of a language: in order to learn world concepts and expressions of any kind, one does not rely on external things, but is introduced to and exercises language through training in social situations that leads us to know how to correctly apply an expression. And language is, by the classical Chinese model, not an offspring of the metaphor of picturing which represents a transcendent reality, but only learned and grasped via the model of attuning behavior. The function of linguistic expression is mainly pragmatic, namely, to orient oneself within the world (including the social world), to follow the right way (“Tao”), not to explicitly and intentionally “initiate” it (Confucius). Language is not, at least not primarily, an enterprise to represent or depict or describe an external reality independent of man and society. Thus, Confucius’s program of the rectification of names is indeed a social program, socio-philosophically founded and not just a subjective-individualistic epistemological strategy. Interestingly enough, the interpretation of the Confucian “rectification of names” (*cheng ming*) is different in Hansen and Hall and Ames (1987, p. 263), a difference which parallels the differences in their basic interpretations. These authors all agree that the main function of language according to classical Chinese epistemology consists in erecting, initiating, motivating, and insinuating actions and action-oriented attitudes, not in describing a transcendent world independent of actions and consciousness, or in transmitting representations and opinions about this world in itself. However, Hansen seems to lean more toward a rather traditional interpretation of the rectification of names, which might be due to his basic thesis that Chinese language and classical philosophy conceive of grammatical nouns primarily as nominalistic-mereologically interpreted “mass nouns” in contrast to the Western individualistic-objectifying “count nouns.” In Chinese, one organizes structures and divides up the world according to mereological dissections, rather than ordering it by the accumulating, juxtaposing, and counting of individual things characteristic of Indo-European languages. Hansen even hypothesizes that Confucianism after Mencius avails itself of a non-historic standard (as, for example, an inner moral sense) by which the rectification of names can be measured or towards which it can be oriented, whereas Hsün-Tzu favors a strict conventionalism in which the meaning of names is constituted by social groups. By contrast, Hall and Ames criticize the “stuff” or “substance” ontology on which Hansen’s interpretation of “mass nouns” is based. Instead, they rely on an event and process ontology with special foci in “fields” instead of mereological connections between parts and wholes, and on a holographic ontology within classical Confucian philosophy. Naming is a focussing process. The rectification of names is internal: an ordering process rather than rectification proper, a process which has to be understood in a dynamic way: “. . . naming and the attuning of names is a dynamic enterprise in which the existing structure and definition is qualified by the understanding that names and their achieved harmonies are always fluid within the

parameters of a context, and are in continual need of attunement. The challenge that this fluidity of names and their patternings represents to a purely logical, referential explanation of *cheng ming* is reinforced by the performative force of naming” (ibid. 274). The performative function also refers to the fitting of people into contexts: “in an important sense they ‘perform’ people” (ibid.). Hall and Ames thus interpret the rectification of names in a dynamic and variable fashion as a real interpretation, directed against formal preconstructions and static reductionist labelling or correcting processes, and against any given, so to speak a priori, pattern of meaning, value, and sense of life. This dynamic interpretation takes seriously an interpretationist approach, conceiving of names as constructs which permanently have to be actualized, reactivated, and adapted to flexible and varying interpretations. Here we find at a methodologically central point how radical interpretationist internalism in classical Chinese epistemology figures as an ontological anti-essentialism.

Chad Hansen (in this volume) identifies the central function of the problem of interpretation in classical Chinese epistemology, what it means to follow or abide by a traditional institutional ritual (*li*) in a correct way: “It was the problem of interpretation . . . How do we know we have projected our terms on the world in the way that we should? If we have not, using the code in guiding our behavior will not produce the correct moral outcome. Let us call this the Wittgensteinian problem in contrast to the Socratic one . . .” Confucius’s most philosophical doctrine was an attempt to solve the Wittgensteinian problem.

Also David Hall (in his paper contributed to the Karlsruhe workshop but published elsewhere) stresses the central function of embedding and contextual dependence of meanings on social and cultural traditions, the historicity of which only allows for their indefinite allusiveness: “Rituals as rules of action and disposition rather than propositions as candidates for belief will constitute the ‘objective’ elements of a coherent context which provides the place within which questions of ‘truth’ or ‘falsity’—of ‘appropriateness’ and ‘inappropriateness’ may be addressed.” Thus we find also here “immanence” and internalism. The same holds for the application of polar pairs of concepts in Chinese figuring as quasi ideal-typical concepts, admitting after Max Weber of gradual accentuations (gradings, overlappings and liquification so to speak in the form of a more or less prominent application of both extremes in a middle range on the continuum between both of them). The interpretative and constitutive character of such conceptual constructs is clear. They have to be differentiated and illustrated by further linguistic examples, analogies and correlative connections as, e.g., A.C. Graham does (in this volume), when he applies Jakobson’s semiotic forms of relations of the paradigmatic and syntagmatic type to such schemata, e.g. the pair of Yin and Yang.

The conclusion of many of the studies in this volume shows that a later Wittgensteinian theory of an internalist constitution of meaning and learning, and of a contextual embedding of language and knowledge into life forms, did

indeed shape classical Chinese epistemology (with the possible exception of the Mohists and Later Mohists who did not gain much historic prominence). If Wittgenstein had spoken Chinese, it would have been easier for him to make the transition to his later philosophy. Apparently, analytic philosophy in the West had to make great and prolonged efforts to get beyond the dualistic Cartesian epistemology and arrive at a philosophy of interpretive internalism which was evidently prominent in classical Chinese epistemology, and especially in Confucianism, some two-and-a-half millennia ago. (A similar conclusion is true for Popper's epistemology regarding the hypothetical and tentative character of all knowledge whatsoever: the respective theses were already implied in the Anekanta philosophy developed by Jainism [*circa* 500 B.C.]).

It is interesting that Nietzsche's perspectivism designed similar structures, not with the socio-philosophical contextual embedding found in Wittgenstein, but rather through a Darwinistic biologicistic interpretation. In his posthumous works he repeatedly stressed the central role of interpretation: for instance, he contended that a "will for power" and even the conditions of the body and bodily existence are dependent on perspectival interpretations. This philosophy must indeed be understood as a radical perspectivism, interpreting the entire constitution of the world, its conception and representation, as dependent on interpretational constructs which we as living and interpreting beings constitute, bodily as well as intellectually. It is indeed an interpretationalist internalism.

We find this same internalism to be a prominent feature of classical Chinese epistemology, but with a strong emphasis on attunement to social contexts and cultural traditions as well as historical developments—in similar fashion as the later Wittgenstein's approach.

For more than one-and-a-half decades I have tried to develop a philosophy of interpretational constructs which takes into account methodological factors and standards as well as transcendental problems. It could turn out to be a comprehensive overarching connection between the Eastern model of knowledge and the later Wittgensteinian Western model, which emphasizes social life forms, the usage-oriented model of language, and the cultural constitution of knowledge.

Following an interpretation of Nietzsche, Gunter Abel (1984) independently developed a philosophy of interpretation which conceives of all representations, all knowledge and modelling of the world as "an internal function of the interpretation schema" (1984, 163). However, he seems to arrive at a comprehensive interpretational idealism: "everything which 'is', is interpretation, and interpretation is everything, which 'is'" (Abel 1985, 60). Instead of this "axiom or thesis of interpretation," I begin from a basic thesis that the grasping and identifying of everything conceived of or recognized at all is impregnated by interpretation. Any process of knowledge, recognition, or thinking and its consequences are essentially constituted by or at least infused with interpretation and the interpre-



tive processes. Every element of knowledge and every judgment whatsoever reside in and remain fundamentally dependent on interpretation. This basic insight is nevertheless reconcilable with a hypothetical realism, which in itself can only be expressed in an interpretation-dependent model. (Even the epistemological concept of a philosophy of interpretational constructs is a higher-level interpretive model, and hence is itself a “meta-interpretive” construct.) Restricted to epistemology in a narrower sense, that is, to the analysis of processes, strategies, and conditions of knowledge, it is an epistemological or methodological interpretationism. (Of course, this also applies to normative judgment.) Considered from a more comprehensive constitutionalist viewpoint, for example, in the Kantian sense, one could speak of a transcendental interpretationism. Perhaps it would be even better, if not more clumsy and linguistically speaking unattractive, to talk of a methodological and transcendental internalistic interpretational reconstructivism. In any case, it is an internalist approach which does not depend on a classical Cartesian dualism, and which is reconcilable with the transcendental idealism of Kant without being obliged to retain obsolete categories.

This philosophy of interpretational constructs cannot be developed or delineated here in detail (cf. Lenk 1988, 1993, p. 232 ff; Abel 1988). It is clear, however, that it undercuts the traditional dichotomies and dualisms of realism and idealism and the distinction between the “world in itself” and its mental representation. Insofar as such constructs are interpretation-impregnated, they are secondary constructs for gaining and modelling knowledge and world orientation.

There is a narrow parallelism and remarkable similarity between this interpretationist approach and Hilary Putnam’s internal realism, and—at least methodologically speaking—Nelson Goodman’s pragmatic nominalism and fictionalism. However, it seems to me that the interpretationist approach is not obliged to maintain a “many worlds” doctrine, with theses of total incommensurability and idealisms of diverse sorts, and with classical truth pragmatism. There may, however, be a very close connection between the criterial methodological pragmatism developed by Nicholas Rescher and a sort of transcendental-interpretationistically modified critical realism.

Surprisingly enough, many of the interpretationist insights were in one form or another already highlighted in classical Chinese epistemology, particularly in Confucianism, although not explicitly. These similarities, parallels, and agreements of approach which are seemingly far from the main stream of Western philosophy are really exciting. Thus, Chinese epistemology seems to gain topical relevance in current philosophical debates. In any case, the connection between classical Confucianist epistemology, and later Wittgensteinian analytic philosophy and other approaches of post-analytic philosophies would seem to recommend more detailed studies of a comparative nature.

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