1. The two kinds of negation involved had to be sharply distinguished — in order to make sense of "not non-cow".

2. The psychological aspect of the theory concerns the role which mental representations — themselves also particulars — play in the linguistic reference to external particulars.

3. The semantic complexities arose in connection with the question, whether the meaning of "cow" is entirely negative, or whether it consists of a positive element as well, and if so, what the relative weights of these components are.

4. Thus Raja, "spcosa is not the idea or the meaning, but it is that indivisible symbol which brings to light the idea of the thing-meant." (p. 145)

ABSTRACTION, MING—SHI AND PROBLEMS OF TRANSLATION

This paper is divided into four interrelated sections. First, I shall discuss the thesis that Chinese cannot express abstraction. This I shall refer to as the no-abstraction thesis. I will argue that this no-abstraction thesis is misconceived, and stems from a naive assumption that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the structure of language and the structure of thought, whence comes the belief that the expression of abstract entities must depend on certain grammatical devices. A lack of such devices has been taken as evidence for a nominalistic language and a philosophy that has no abstract entities. This assumption also seems to presuppose that for each linguistic sign, redness for example, there exists some entity such that the sign stands in the relation of naming to that entity.

Related to the no-abstraction thesis is the contention that Chinese philosophy, especially pre-Han, is nominalistic. Gongsun Long's thought, for example, entertains no abstract entities. And the Neo—moists do not talk about any intermediary between ming and shi, commonly translated as 'name' and 'object', respectively. Some attention will be paid to this translation, to see whether it contributes to labeling Neo—Moist semantics as nominalistic. Throughout the paper, I will analyse briefly some classical texts, mainly Pai ma lun, the white horse dialogue of Gongsun Long (in III) and the Neo—Moist Canons (in IV). If we carefully analyse a few grammatical points in the Gongsun Long text, which have hitherto been overlooked, we will arrive at an interpretation which calls for abstract entities. As for the Canons, it will be argued, speculative though the argument may be, that a Fregean interpretation of Neo—
Moist semantics is, with some qualification, also consistent with the text.

II

The peculiar grammatical features of Chinese have never failed to attract investigators' attention. The more linguistic-minded are puzzled by the complete lack of inflections and yet relatively free word order. Some work hard to determine just what type of language Chinese is: Subject+Verb+Object or Subject+Object+Verb? This is not easy, since Chinese possesses features of both types. The fascination that Chinese presents to the sinologist is of a different sort: attempts have been made to explain the nature of Chinese philosophy in terms of the grammatical, or, to be more specific, morphological structure of Chinese. Some of these attempts have not gone beyond a Humboldtian typology of languages. Lack of inflections, for instance, has led some to argue that Chinese cannot express, or can express only with great difficulty, abstraction. By contrast, they would say, languages like English can express abstraction with e.g. Due to this linguistic fact of Chinese, Chinese philosophy is nominalistic. This view is mistaken.

It has long been held in the history of linguistics that despite the surface differences among languages of the world, there are things—linguistic universals—which all languages share. The Port-Royal grammarians believed in it; most American structural linguists, though not all, believe in it. Greenberg et al., even went so far as to say, "Amid infinite diversity, all languages are, as it were, cut from the same pattern." The generative enterprise in linguistics has shifted its focus from particular grammars to the principles and parameters which compose the Universal Grammar (UG), which may be biologically endowed. Particular grammars are derived from UG principles; their differences are to be explained in terms of parametric variations. In so far as the linguistic universals, if empirically valid, reflect the properties of the human mind, it would be a mistake to say that one particular language can express abstraction while another cannot. The abstraction thesis is simply ill-conceived in the light of this deep analysis.

But this analysis may be countered on the ground that the concept of a universal grammar is merely a methodological assumption of a certain school of linguistics, and as such any argument which is based on it is relative to that assumption. One need not be a universalist and yet be able to investigate the idiosyncratic features of individual languages. Besides, it may be argued that there might be universals, linguistic or otherwise, without abstraction being one of them. Furthermore, in comparative studies of the influence of language on thought, it is differences rather than similarities that are more important and should engage the investigator's attention. So let us see whether a superficial analysis lends support for the abstraction thesis.

Take for example English and Chinese. A commonly observed grammatical fact not shared by the two languages is inflection. English inflects for number, while Chinese does not; English is furnished with an abstraction apparatus, such as -hood, -ity, -ness, etc., Chinese is not; Chinese nouns take sorts, their English counterparts do not. These grammatical features of Chinese have been held up as having explanatory power concerning the nature of Chinese philosophy. Some scholars have even argued, in a curious way, from these features to the non-existence of abstract entities in Chinese philosophy. Roughly the argument takes the following form. Chinese nouns, being without plural inflections and taking sorts, resemble English mass nouns; as such they motivate a concrete ontology. On the other hand, Chinese nouns, being without abstraction suffixes, express abstraction with great difficulty, if at all. The ontology admits no abstract entities; the language has no means for their expression anyway. The conclusion is obvious: Chinese philosophy has no abstract entities.

Granted that Chinese nouns are mass nouns, it is baffling why they motivate concrete ontologies. According to Quine, the opposite is more likely, since mass nouns like "water" do not involve individuation, whereas count nouns like "apple" do. But this view about Chinese nouns motivating concrete ontologies seems to rest on the supposition that one's modes of speaking, or, to be precise, the nouns, could be used as a criterion of one's ontology: to be is to be motivated by the nouns. Consider English. It has both count nouns and mass nouns. How many
ontologies do English nouns motivate? Two: one abstract, motivated by the count nouns; the other concrete, motivated by mass nouns? Where does virtute reside? Perhaps in the abstract ontology, for it lacks spatiotemporal locations. But if Chinese nouns do not motivate an abstract ontology, where does de
gender marking. Seen in this light, with loss of gender, (which is used in Old English8). Modern English has moved to higher economy.

Therefore, number or gender is not an essential grammatical category which has to be given overt expression in a language. Also nonessential is the so-called abstraction inflection, to which we now turn. Being nonessential, it is then neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for the expression of abstraction.

First it is not a sufficient condition. True enough, English provides such morphemes as -hood, -ity, etc., which can be used to convert nouns or adjectives to abstract terms which in turn express abstract entities. Thus horsehood and triangularity designate the abstract properties of being a horse and being triangular, respectively. But the mere use of singular terms like these does not entail that reality is attributed to things which they purport to name. To believe so is to confuse meaning with naming,9 as if for the term to be meaningful there must be some entity to which it stands in the relation of naming. It is not sufficient just to have these terms to express abstract entities. The so-called abstractly inflected terms do not impute existence or reality to what they name, i.e. the abstract entities. The existence or reality of these entities has to be asserted independently.

One may say, "Wait a minute. These terms are not sufficient for the reality of abstract entities they purport to name. Nonetheless they are sufficient for the expression of abstract entities once their reality has been asserted independently." Let us, for the sake of argument, call the two sides of the relation of expressing "term-side" and "entity-side." The entity-side constitutes one's ontology; the term-side, one's linguistic framework. The term-side does not presuppose the reality of the entity-side, as has been argued by Carnap and Quine. Suppose one argues from the term-side. There is a term X which purports to express an abstract entity E. If E does not exist, there can be no expression of it by X. The relation of expressing simply collapses. But this collapse does not mean that X is devoid of meaning. It only fails to express. The term-side does not shape what constitutes the term user's ontology, and it is precisely in this sense that terms like X-hood, X-ity, are not sufficient in expressing abstract entities. But if
one argues from the entity-side, this question does not arise. For an entity E, there are many different ways to express it.

The abstraction suffixes are not sufficient for the expression of abstraction in yet another way. These suffixes can be used otherwise than abstractly. Take again -hood, -ity for example. Childhood is formed by attaching the suffix -hood to the stem child. Hence it means (names?) the abstract property of being a child. But that is not the only- meaning the word has. Indeed it is not even its primary meaning. Ordinarily one uses childhood to refer to a period of growth. Similarly activity commonly denotes events rather than the abstract property of being active. An activity need not be abstract. These terms by themselves do not guarantee successful reference to abstract properties. One has to add, in the case of childhood, that what is meant is the abstract property of being a child.

But is the abstraction apparatus like the suffix -hood a necessary condition for the expression of abstraction? That it is not is not difficult to see. One has only to reflect on words like love, virtue, and language. These words certainly denote abstract entities, but they are not inflected, abstractly or otherwise. Quine’s example is also relevant: in “Humble persons are rare,” the predicate ‘rare’ forces upon us an abstract interpretation of “humble persons,” despite its ‘concrete’ appearance. Of course one can say, “Redness is a property,” but one is equally able to say, “Red is a property.” Both redness and red are being used as abstract singular terms. Similarly, in “The grass is green” and “Green is a color,” the first green is used concretely, the second, abstractly.

So even a superficial analysis of languages does not lend much support for the abstraction thesis. Suffixes like -hood, -ity, etc., are mere linguistic devices which to some extent morphologise, but by no means determine, the expression of abstraction. For English we have to use inflectional devices in some cases out of grammatical necessity. We cannot say, “Triangular is a property”; the word ‘triangular’ is an adjective and in need of nominalization. This fact follows from English grammar. There is no a priori reason why the expression of abstraction must depend on these devices. Amidst the diversity of human languages, it is an empirical question how they express abstraction, and it should come as no surprise that they differ from one another in their ways of doing it.

A comparison of the behaviour of Latin nouns and that of their English counterparts is quite illuminating in this respect. Latin has an elaborate case system. A noun used as subject in a sentence would receive the nominative ending, and as object it would receive the accusative ending, which is for a majority of cases distinct. As a result, Latin word order enjoys a high degree of freedom. English nouns behave differently. They do not inflect for cases. But no one is likely to argue that English sentences have no subject or object. One would rather say that case only morphologises grammatical relations, or the expression of them. The case is similar for abstract inflections.

So language-specific abstraction devices are neither necessary nor sufficient for the expression of abstraction. But does Chinese philosophy countenance abstract entities? To be specific, does Gongsun Long admit abstract entities into his ontological world? Are there abstract entities in Neo- Mohist semantics which play explanatory roles?

III

In light of the treatment accorded to generic terms and general sentences associated with English bare plurals, which are analyzed by some as terms denoting kinds of things, we can perhaps interpret bat ma ("white horse") and ma ("horse") as denoting their respective kinds. Now if fe ("horse") expresses the negation of identity, that is, it means "not identical with," then the statement bat ma fe ma ("White horses are not horses") can be plausibly asserted. Of course, the bat ma-kind is not the same kind as the ma-kind. Let us see some internal evidence for this interpretation.

It has been observed that the first argument of the white horse dialogue does not warrant the conclusion that white horses are not horses.

The word 'horse' denotes a shape; the word 'white' denotes color. That which denotes color is not that which denotes shape. Therefore I say that a white horse is not a horse.
The reasoning only proves that white is not horse, which fact needs no proving at all. But what is puzzling is the fact that the opponent, a skilled disputant himself, remains suspiciously silent on this obvious mistake in Gongsun Long's argument. One possible explanation for the opponent's silence is that perhaps there is a hidden presupposition which they share. One such clue can be found in the very dialogue, in Gongsun Long's summary remark:15

1. a. White [as such] is not fixed on any white object; it is all all right to forget it.
   b. As for white horse, it says that white is fixed on white objects.
   c. What is fixed on white objects is not white [as such].

2. a. The term "horse" does not involve exclusion or inclusion in terms of color, so yellow horses or black horses may answer [to the call of "horse"].
   b. But the term "white horse" does involve exclusion or inclusion in terms of color; yellow horses and black ones are excluded because of their color, for only white horses may answer [to the call of "white horse"].
   c. What does not involve exclusion is what does [involve exclusion].

3. Therefore we say white horses are not horses.

(For Chinese text, see Appendix.)

First, consider the grammatical structure of the first sentence (1a). Bai zhe1 here functions as the topic, bu ding suo bai2, as the comment. Suo bai3 is a nominalized constituent of the comment, meaning "thing(s) which is(are) white/white objects." It is capable of serving as the antecedent of an anaphoric element. In the second part of the sentence, we find the pronoun zhi4, functioning as the object of the verb wang5, ‘forget’. But what does the pronoun zhi refer to? Here ambiguity arises: zhi can refer to the topic bai zhe, or alternatively, to the nominalised phrase suo bai. The anaphoric relation is crucial in understanding the sentence, the entire paragraph, and, more importantly, Gongsun Long's ontology. Many commentators and translators take it for granted that the anaphoric relation holds between bai zhe and zhi. That is, one should forget about whiteness if it is not fixed to white things. Query: Why? Suppose we let the antecedent of zhi be suo bai. The second part of the sentence comes out like "One could forget about that which is white (white object)." Again the same question: Why? The reason is this. White, as an abstract quality (a kind of color), is not confined (ding6) to what is white, i.e. white things. Rather it is independent, and separated from concrete white things. Therefore when we talk about the abstract quality of white, we need not pay attention to concrete things in which whiteness manifests itself; it is all right to forget about them. In contrast, the white in white horse stays confined to white things (in this case, to white horses). Because of this confinement, when we talk about white we cannot forget about horses; these two things are inseparably together. The independent quality of white and the confined white belong to different ontological categories. The confined white is true of concrete particulars, whereas the unconfined white is not. Hence "what is fixed on white objects is not white [as such]." (1c) To identify them is to commit a category mistake. Just as white which is fixed on horses (concrete) differs from the independent quality of white (abstract), so the horse in white horse which possesses the quality of white would have a different ontological status from the horse which had no color. In addition, the truth conditions of statements containing 'horse' and 'white horse' are different, as is evidenced in the context of qiu7 ..., "seek...", where the dots indicate the argument position. (Note that this context, unlike you8 ..., "There is(f are)...' does not force us an existential interpretation of what occupies the argument position.) Thus we end up with three abstract objects, each of which is independent of the others: ma8, bai, and bai-ma9, which are to be interpreted as referring to horse-kind, white as such (a kind of color) and white-horse-kind, respectively.

Back to the first argument of Bai ma lun. The foregoing analysis of the quoted paragraph may shed some light on the seemingly bad argument. The argument is schematised below:16

A. white horse ≠ white ("What is fixed on white objects is not white [as such]")
The first argument of the white horse dialogue gives the third conclusion. By arguing that *white* in *white horse* is not the same as the independent *white* (in (1)), nor *horse* in the compound the same as the bare horse (in (2)), Gongsun Long concludes his first and second claims, which may be taken to be the presupposition for both sides of the white horse dialogue. The three terms, *bai*, *bai ma*, and *ma*, denote ontologically different kinds. If so, we can explain away the inadequacy of Gongsun Long's first argument and his opponent's silence in the face of such an inadequacy. By insisting that *white* differs from *horse* in denotation he drives home his thesis that white horses are not horses.

Gongsun Long's world is then seen as one which is populated not only by individual horses which are necessarily colored (concrete entities) but also by various kinds of things (abstract entities), natural or otherwise. Ontologically speaking, kinds are in a sense simple, despite the fact that some (nominal) kinds are denoted by compound terms such as *bai ma* ("white horse"). This is the point Gongsun Long makes when he claims that to say that having white horses is the same as having horses is to separate white (*li bai zhi wei*). If white is not to be separated, having white horses is not having horses. But for Gongsun Long, white in this case cannot be separated because it differs from white as such (cf. (1)). That white as such is independently real is also argued for in other chapters of the *Gongsun Long Zhi*, notably in the chapter on hard and white, where Gongsun Long concludes that hard as such and white as such are separate and so independent of the physical things which are hard or white. The separation of hard and white is Gongsun Long's thesis. Chan comments that to Gongsun Long things were absolute. Names may also be absolute. His rectification of names (there is a chapter on names and actualities) aims at the ideal that absolute names denote absolute things absolutely. In his absolute world of separate things, "each is alone and..."
Richards,21 contains a symbol (word, name, etc.), its referent (books, Plato, etc.), and the mediating concept (thought, meaning, etc.). This model is captured succinctly in the slogan of some conceptualistic-minded schoolmen: "vox significat mediantibus conceptibus." The Latin word "vox," from which English derives its 'vocal' and 'voice', can be rendered as 'word' in the context of this slogan. Yet in the words of one linguist, it "was commonly employed for words considered from the point of view solely of their form."22 The English word 'word' is ambiguous in that it blends form and content. In what follows I will use "linguistic sign" to mean words in their formal aspect, analogous to 'vox'. The nominalist position can be construed as one which attempts to do away with one angle of the semantic triangle, that of concept, and to take words (linguistic signs) as mere flatus vocis, i.e., blowing of sounds.

We now examine Neo-Moism in this light. Its semantics seems to be focused on the relation between ming3 and shi.4 Nowhere have they explicitly and consciously drawn and maintained a triangular picture. Thus, ming has essentially different values in its semantics from those of linguistic signs in traditional Western semantic talk. Ming and linguistic sign (e.g. names) are not synonymous, each playing a distinct theoretical role. Translating ming as 'name', which is construed as a linguistic sign (a vox), and shi as 'object' invites the label nominalism. It also transplants ming into a theoretical position which does not fit well. The Neo-Moist semantics becomes nominalistic partially, if not more, through the effort of the translator.

Translating ming and shi involves shifting one's vision from a bi-partite picture to a tri-partite one. This shift is not simply a one-to-one switch between the parts. Shi seems to be quite straightforward, corresponding snugly to referent. The problem is with ming: Does it correspond to the concept, or in Fiege's terminology, 'sense', or to the linguistic sign (e.g. 'names') or to both, mixed up ambiguously? Lacking a clearly articulated and consciously maintained statement on the part of the Neo-Moists makes all the above three translations prima facie plausible. We proceed to examine them in detail.

Suppose ming corresponds to linguistic sign, and is consequently translated as 'name'. Thus the semantic program is nominalistic, since nothing mediates names and objects. Let us see the consequence of this translation.

Canon B 48 says that one can know what one does not know by means of the name.5 Now if ming, the name, is what it is, i.e., a linguistic sign presumably devoid of cognitive content, how can one know what one does not know in advance? Suppose X is such a name. It refers to, say, a certain celestial body. I am to know the celestial body through the name X. I hear the name uttered; I see the name written on a sheet of paper. What can I know? All I have is a stretch of noises or a patch of marks, which I take to be the name X. So I end up not knowing what I am supposed to know. One may suggest pointing. One might say, pointing to the bright spot in the heavens at dawn, "That is X." So I know that X is the Morning Star. But I do not know the Morning Star by means of the name X. Instead I know what X refers to, which I did not know up to that point, by means of pointing, i.e. ostensive definition. I simply do not know what Canon B 48 promises me that I can know. And there are worse cases than that.

Take Canon B 53.6 This canon considers how one can show to others things he wants to show. There are two ways: by means of ming, and by means of the thing itself. Suppose my friend is a rich merchant. I can let you know about him by referring to him as a rich merchant. Here I have used the ming "rich merchant", which is, in Russell's terminology, an indefinite description. But if the ming is only a linguistic sign, how can you know what I have said? Pointing offers no help. I can only point to a person; I cannot point to the rich merchant that he is. Besides, my friend may not be present at the time when I try to inform you about him. So, construing ming as a linguistic sign would make it impossible to know what one does not know by means of ming, contrary to what Canons B 48 & 53 guarantee.

Let us digress a little from the Neo-Moist semantics into Confucian rectification of names. What is to be rectified? Putting aside the possibility that Confucius might have used the term ming in an entirely different way, one way of doing it is to change the pronunciation of the name to be rectified, from, say, the rising tone to the falling one. Confucius wants to rectify names once he holds a government position. It follows that
Confucius is a speech therapist, out to change the pronunciation habits of the citizens of the State of Yan. If so, the role of a cultural transmitter could hardly be attributed to him, nor could he be described as a philosopher who, caught in the sociopolitical turmoil of his time, teaches his ethical theory about proper human conduct guided by li, and so sets out to harmonize society by putting aright the social relationships with which ming such as 陟 (“father”) are associated. But speech therapy is certainly not Confucius’ practice; nor is speech correction the remedy he prescribes for rectifying names. What worries him is rather the maintenance of social relationships which are fundamental for social harmony and of the traditional li-regulated ways of a father, a son, etc. Ming in this connection is not a vox.

Another consequence of a nominalistic translation has to do with ming itself. Is ming itself abstract or concrete? Confucius laments that a gu is no longer a gu. Are these two gu two different ming or are they just two occurrences of the same ming-type? If the two gu are two names, Confucius should not complain, because they are different. Besides, a gu being no longer a gu is bad, and is surely subject to rectification. But it is plainly hard to imagine that the phonetic shape or the graphic pattern is at fault. An actual vessel being not what it used to be is certainly lamentable. What is even more lamentable is the disintegration of the sociopolitical and/or ritualistic order in which the ming gu has its fixed position, and from which it receives its value.

But interpreting ming as something like the Fregean ‘sense’ has none of the above defects. As we shall show, it is not inconsistent with the Canons. A direct result of this interpretation is that the Neo-Moist semantic program has nothing to do with nominalism, if by that term we understand lack of abstract entities, or abstract talk.

Ming and shi are defined in Canon A 80. That through which something is referred to is ming; that which is referred to is shi.

Canon A 78 classifies ming into three kinds, and it further says:

Sounds which issue from the mouth all have ming; like the pairing of a lady’s surname and her style name (zi).

In the definition of ming and shi, the Neo-Moists use the term wet, “to refer,” “to say.” This term is of three kinds (Canon A 79) ‘transfer’, ‘refer’ and ‘apply’. In addition, ‘refer’ is defined as “presenting the analogue for the object.” How does one refer? By means of speech (Canon A 32). According to the same canon, speech not only issues reference, it also gives out ming. What is interesting to note here is that although the Neo-Moists did not explicitly draw a tri-partite semantic picture, they have arrived at something like it. This point is made clear in their definitions of the key terms. Ming refer to shi, things in the extralinguistic world, by means of speech. Ming themselves are inseparably associated with speech-sounds and are so conveyed (cf. Canons A 32 & 78). So, to borrow a metaphor from Zhuang Zi, speech is not merely “the blowing of breath,” indistinguishable from a bird’s chirpings. It is thus highly suggestive that by ming the Neo-Moists have in mind something more than linguistic signs. Let us consider more textual details.

Canon B 41 advises us to clarify the meaning (yi) of a word before making a reply. For example, asked whether you know the word pair or not, you should first ask what the word means. When you are told a pair of , you know the word pair and you should so reply. Otherwise you will err, as when you reply right away without accounting of homonymy.

Canon A 14 gives a definition of xin, ‘faithfulness’. Xin (good faith/trustworthiness) is the words agreeing with the thought. Here, ‘words’ translates yan, and ‘thought’, yi. So in the Neo-Moist semantics we also find yi, the thought, which is abstract. Graham says: “The yi ‘idea’ is the thought which words convey from speaker to hearer.” On the linguistic side, corresponding to yi is ci. The exact grammatical status of ci is not clear. But it can be reasonably translated as ‘phrase’ or ‘sentence’. Thus it is a grammatical construction larger than, and containing, ming. This point is actually made by Xu Zi in his essay On the Rectification of Names. Yi then is conveyed by sentences (cf. xiao qu “the Lesser Pick”), and comprehended by xin (“mind”). For communication to be successful, xin is responsible, on the part of
the speaker, for clarifying the meaning (yi³) conveyed in his speech (yan³); and on the part of the listener, xin⁴d is responsible for making out what is there in his interlocutor’s words (cf. Canons A 90 & 91). However there is a curious asymmetry in their semantics. For them, sentences (ci²) express propositions (yi³). Yet at a subsentential level, they recognize no grammatical construction corresponding to word. They only have ming. This curious fact can be explained away if we take ming as an embodiment of sense and sign with a more versatile syntactic scope than names. They are the building blocks, so to speak, of both sentences (ci) and propositions (yi). (The last remark can be falsified if we reject the assumption of componentiality. There is no textual evidence for or against this assumption.)

That yi³ is an abstract mental object is made amply clear in Canon A 70. There the Neo-Moists lay out three standards for judging circularity. These are the idea (yi) of a circle, a compass and an actual circle.

Xun Zi’s position with regard to xin⁴d (‘mind’) and yan³ (‘speech’) is similar to that of the Neo-Moists despite the former’s criticism of the latter’s semantics. As we have seen, the Neo-Moists conceive the xin⁴d as that faculty which gives meaning (yi) to, and receives it from, speech. Although every mouth is capable of speech (cf. Canon A 32), it is the xin⁴d that interprets it. Likewise, for Xun Zi, xin is the faculty of knowing — the ear picks up speech, the xin knows it. Knowledge of the external world is obtainable by xin through the senses.

The mind gives meaning to impressions. It gives meaning to impressions, and only then, by means of the ear, can sound be known; by means of the eye, can forms be known.

Xun Zi’s conception of yi³ is also very much akin to that of the Neo-Moists. He says: “Sentences (ci²) combine names which denote different objects to convey one meaning (yi³).” This is exactly the view expressed in “the Lesser Pick.”

Consider again the distinction between “showing to others by means of the name” and “showing to others by means of the object,” which we have alluded to above. In light of Canon B 48, which says that we can know what we do not know by means of ming, “showing by means of the name” is an instance of making others “know what they do not know.” When the speaker says that his friend is a rich merchant, the ming “rich merchant” lets the listener know what he did not know, i.e., the fact that the speaker’s friend is a merchant and rich. But how does the listener know this fact? Through the person (shi³) to which the ming “rich merchant” refers to? But that is what he learns by the ming. The other way of knowing things is by pointing to them. Pointing at a crane, and saying, “That is a crane,” you have let your listener “know what he does not know,” cranes.

These two kinds of showing correspond to two kinds of knowledge, i.e. knowledge by description or explanation (suo zhi³³) and knowledge by acquaintance (qin zhi³¹) (reminiscent of Russell), which are defined and discussed in Canons A 72 / 80; B 48 & 53 & 80. In Canon B 70 there is an illustration of knowledge by description. Suppose you are outside a house, and so know its outside color. Now someone informs you that the inside color is the same as the outside color. This is an instance of “what one does not know is like what one knows.” The outside color of the house is known to you by acquaintance (qin zhi); the inside color, by description (suo zhi). But descriptions are fallible; they may describe reality wrongly, or what is described may change. In the case of the ancient ruler Yao⁴⁸, although he is an example for present rulers to emulate, what is taken as example (i.e. the person bearing the name ‘Yao’ and whatever good qualities he is believed to have possessed which made him an able ruler) “resides in the past” (cf. Canon B 53).⁴¹ The Neo-Moists observe that when we look at the past from the point of view of the present, Yao is an able king; but when we look at the present from the point of view of the past, because time has changed, Yao is not able to rule at all (cf. Canon B 15).⁴²

For the Neo-Moists, then, language contains ming, which makes suo zhi (knowledge by description) possible. But language gives out references (cf. Canon A 32), and reference are accomplished through ming. Xin⁴d, the ‘mind’, also figures importantly for the successful working of language. So, we are forced to assume that the Neo-Moists see more in ming than nominalists would be inclined to ascertain.
But the Fregean interpretation carries its own load of problems. We have perhaps read too much modern analytic philosophy into the Neo-Moist semantics. It invites the label Fregean or Russelian, which is just as misleading as the label nominalism. These labels tend to obscure important differences, which, in the case of the Moists and Frege or Russell, are greater than their similarities. Labeling Neo-Moist nominalism fares no better. Their semantics is not nominalistic enough: yi 第 is surely objectionable to those nominalists who always have their razors ready and who refuse to find any abstract talk intelligible. Goodman perhaps will not side with the Moists on all fronts. Yi 第 is alright; it exhibits enough individuality. Le 第, if we construe it as ‘class’, is not as lucky; it will be shaved off.43

The Fregean interpretation is in no sense better than the nominalistic interpretation. It is only meant to show that the Neo-Moist semantics entertains abstract entities which have explanatory roles in their program. To say, then, that Chinese philosophy has no abstract entities is merely “the blowing of one’s breath.”

The fact that both nominalistic and Fregean interpretations are possible is testimony to the fact that the Neo-Moists have never considered drawing a distinction between sign (wax) and sense. Thus a third alternative way of construing ming-shi relation would take ming as it is: the embodiment of sign and sense, each inseparable from the other. This perhaps can account for the inseparable from the other. This perhaps can account for the fact that the Neo-Moists also consider white, all, etc., as ming, as Graham has noted.44 It may then be speculated that for them language is one thing, not two things (sign being one, sense the other). If this interpretation is plausible, as I think it is, the Neo-Moist semantic program is an alternative account of meaning to the Western traditional semantic theory, which evinces the influence of the grammarian’s classificatory devices, words, phrases, and sentences. These devices are not recognized by the Neo-Moist semanticists.

I do not suggest here that the word “name” is a bad translation for ming and should be replaced by some other term. How to translated the term is a problem for the translator. What is appropriate to enter here is a plea for caution in matters of interpretation and translation. To attach labels is to oversimplify or cloud the issues which need to be elucidated. Labels such as nominalism are very vague terms which are at best misleading. Nominalism is not always the same doctrine, even in the Western philosophical development. Most probably Occam would find Goodman’s world of individuals utterly uninhabitable. As for the no-abstraction thesis, I think it does not stand up to close scrutiny. Abstract entities, theoretical or otherwise, abound in Chinese philosophy, notably in Gonggong Long’s thought and Neo-Moism, regardless of the lack of abstract inflection, number distinction, or the existence of sortals.

FUDIAN UNIVERSITY, SHANGHAI

NOTES

This is a revised version of the paper I read at the first International Research Conference on Comparative Philosophy, Honolulu, August 1984. I benefited from discussions with Professors Emmon Bach, Henry Rosemont and Robert Ware. Professor Cheng Yumin read the earlier draft of the paper with meticulous care, and eliminated many a solecism. In the revision I was helped by the Editors of this Journal, and Professor Chad Hansen, whose suggestions and criticisms I found most encouraging. My thanks to all.

1. See, for instance, Nakamura’s Ways of Thinking of Eastern Peoples (Honolulu: East-West Center Press, 1964). Having listed some grammatical features of Chinese, lack of the number distinction being one of them, he writes: “The various ambiguities described have meant that Chinese has been an awkward medium for expressing abstract thought.” (p. 188) One page earlier he advises us not to expect “that the Chinese language would be as suitable as the Greek for philosophizing.” Thinking in the same general spirit, Chad Hansen argues in his book Language and Logic in Ancient China (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1983) that Chinese philosophical theories have no role for abstract entities due to some peculiar grammatical features of Chinese. In his words, the nouns, which are masslike, are “what share the intuitive picture of the language-world relation in Chinese philosophy.” (p. 53) And this picture


Nakamura thinks that “the distinction between the singular and the plural is indispensable for logical mathematical thought,” but it is not necessary for “many aspects of ethics or practical philosophy.” (Nakamura, op. cit., p. 187) He does not explain why the number distinction is so important as to be ‘indispensable’. Modern Chinese does not inflect for number (although there is a marginal use of *men* as in *fuzhou-men*， “professors”), yet many modern Chinese think ‘logical mathematical thought’ logically as well as mathematically. That logic and mathematics as we now understand them are imported from the West is beside the point – the point is that logical mathematical thought is conducted in Chinese which lacks this ‘indispensable’ feature of number distinction. Furthermore, according to him, the same grammatical feature is inessential for ethics. Later in the book he notes the ethical nature of Chinese philosophy. Here one cannot help wondering whether he derives the former from the latter or conversely, or whether he intends the two remarks to be independent one from the other. Another question: What would he have said had there been no ethical philosophizing? Perhaps the number distinction would become ‘indispensable’ also.


5. Nakamura seems to identify abstract terms with superordinate terms when he claims that in Chinese “there is no word which corresponds to the English ‘old’.” (Nakamura, op. cit., p. 185) This is simply wrong. In Modern Chinese the terms he cites, *chyi* (sixty or so), *tieh* (seventy or more) and *mao* (eighty or ninety years old), are rarely used. *Lao* (old) is employed instead. In Classic Chinese these three terms do not have clear age demarcations. *Tieh*, for example, is defined as *lao* in both the *Er ya* (Hao Yixing) and *Er ya yi shu* (Beijing: China Bookshop, 1982), “Explaining Speech”, p. 58 and the *Fang yan* (Zhou Zhou) *Fang yan* in *tong lian* (Beijing: Science Press, 1956), p. 16, and ranges in age from sixty to eighty. The difference in these terms appears dialectal. According to the *Fang yan*, or Dialect, compiled by Yang Xiong (53 BC – 18 AD), *tieh* is spoken in what is now Henan and Shandong. Clearly, *lao*, which Nakamura ignores, is used in the same way as the English word ‘old’. Other superordinate terms include *shun* (for “mountain”, which is used to define (subordinate) terms denoting varieties of mountains, and *fu* for alcoholic beverages, for which, incidentally, English does not have a general term. That he failed to take note of these facts is an unresolved and perhaps unresolvable puzzle. Anyhow, he thinks that superordinate terms such as *lao* and *shun* designate universal (Nakamura, op. cit., pp. 185–6). So by overtly insisting that the Chinese language has many words which “denote subtly shaded variations of the same thing or action,” he is able to conclude that Chinese shares “[the] same phenomenon which can be seen in the languages of primitive peoples elsewhere”, unlike Greek and English, where “a high degree of universalization and abstraction has been reached.” (p. 185) This conclusion is based on unsupported claims about the languages in question.


13. *Fei* is ambiguous too. “X fei Y” is equivalent to “not-(X Y ye).” The configuration “X Y ye” can be used in many different ways, the assertion of identity being one. The lesser Pick seems to contain an exposition of the uses of this syntactic configuration. We will not discuss this matter here.


Translations and interpretations of (1) differ, sometimes widely. The difference is three-fold (a) whether to construe *bai* in *bai the* as mention or use; (b) whether to regard *ding* as a transitive verb taking *zuo* *bai* as its

For more detailed exposition, see Fung, op. cit.; Ren, op. cit.; or Tan, Gongsun Long Zi, op. cit.

17. I follow the interpretation of Tan, Gongsun Long Zi, op. cit., p. 29.

18. See, for example, A. Graham, Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1978); Hansen, op. cit.; and Shen Youding, Mo jing de luo ji xue (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 1982).


21. In discussing the Canons I follow, with Graham, Tan Jiefu's numbering. Where possible, I rely on his translation. This canon is on p. 417 of Graham, op. cit. Since Explanations and Canons are joined and numbered in both texts, I use “Canon” to refer to citations from the Explanations also.


24. Analectes 6:23, in Zhu Xi, op. cit., p. 90. Cheng Zitbd comments: “If gu loses its form, it is no longer a gu; and analogously, if a king loses his kingly way, he is no king.”


26. Ibid. p. 162, or Graham, op. cit., p. 325.


29. Ibid., pp. 182.

Here I follow Tan's interpretation. The original example appears to be a character in a dysyllabic word. See Tan, Mo bian fa wei, op. cit., pp. 288-90.

For a different interpretation, see Graham, op. cit., p. 409.

Hansen, who thinks that the Neo-Mohists are thoroughgoing nominalists, observes that semantically, yī never corresponds to ming ("name"); but it is limited to sentences (his book, op. cit., p. 114). (He appears to construe "name" in its formal aspect, i.e. as yīwǔ.) His observation is on the whole correct, although Canon B 41 may constitute an exception. Yet, the fact that yī as meanings of sentences are not cooked up from such ingredients as meanings of constituent parts does not justify the claim that they are nonabstract, or that they play no "abstract roles." Such a claim seems to be unduly motivated methodologically by the assumption that Neo-Mohists are nominalists who do not believe in anything abstract. For Hansen's discussion on yī, see his book, chapter four.


34. Ibid., p. 316.

35. See Tan, Mo bian fa wei, op. cit., pp. 185-6. Graham takes these two canons as part of a chapter he reconstructed by the title "Names and Objects." See Graham, op. cit., pp. 478-480.


37. Ibid., p. 316.


40. Here I follow Tan's interpretation. See Tan, Mo bian fa wei, op. cit., pp. 306-7. Graham's interpretation is different, but can serve our purpose just as well. See Graham, op. cit., p. 422.


42. Ibid., pp. 231-3.


44. Graham, op. cit., p. 197.
a 白者不定所白，忘之而可也
b 白馬者言白定所白也
c 定所白者非白也

a 馬者無去取於色，故黄黑馬皆所以應
b 白馬者有去取於色，黃黑馬皆所以色去，故唯白馬獨
c 無去者，非有去也

a 故曰白馬非馬
CHINESE PHILOSOPHY OR CHINESE "PHILOSOPHY"?
LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS AND THE CHINESE PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITION, AGAIN

I. Introduction

Is there any such thing as Chinese philosophy? This is the question Antony Flew really raises in one of the most thought-provoking articles in recent memory on the Chinese philosophical tradition (CPT). There he ostensibly compares the CPT with the European philosophical tradition (EPT) with respect to the presence or absence of linguistic analysis and finds, to his amazement, that the CPT is completely devoid of it. Since linguistic analysis is apparently essential to philosophy, the bottom line to his comparison is that the Chinese Philosophical Tradition is devoid of philosophy; it is not philosophical at all. Flew's indictment has generated surprisingly little in the way of response, and the responses have been extremely unsatisfactory, either agreeing with Flew or conceding too much to him. There is no reason to do either.

II. Flew's Claim

What phenomenon is Flew talking about? He focuses upon linguistic analysis. According to him, essential to it is a "concern with words and with language", which is "a concern with logic and with concepts." In general, these concerns are indicated by attempts to determine "what can and cannot be significantly or truly said" or "the logical presuppositions and the logical implications" of the employment of words. More specifically, they are indicated by attempts to arrive at definitions or determine "the conventionally correct" or "the actual usage" of the