

In the formative years of Chinese philosophy, language commanded a great deal of attention from major thinkers. The philosophical discussion of language was not the sole domain of the School of Names, the school of thought which was devoted to the philosophical analysis of issues having to do with language. The concern with language transcended the usual divisions of the various schools of thought. The School of Names philosophers, the Confucians, the Mohists, and the Daoists and the Legalists were all interested in language, each approaching the subject matter from their own perspectives. Indeed it is Confucius who opened the whole enterprise with his rectification-of-names program. While Confucius was preoccupied with the self-imposed task of restoring the Zhou political and social order—hence the strong non-linguistic overtones of his interest in language—the Daoists showed their characteristic disdain for the vagaries of language in their pursuit of the *Dao*. Other thinkers, notably Gong-sun Long and the Neo-Mohists, do not seem at all to have been occupied in the same way as Confucius; they merely contented themselves with their brands of philosophical analysis of language. Unfortunately, this purely linguistic fascination with language lasted as long as its proponents, and faded away quickly. It ceased to be a conspicuous feature of, or exert an impact on, the subsequent development of Chinese philosophy.

My main objective in this article is to demonstrate that a common conception of language, which I will call the classical conception of language, serves as a thread which runs across the various theories of language advanced by these thinkers. The classical conception of language does not view language as a mere descriptive tool that is a separate entity independent of the world which it describes. Rather, language and the world are inseparably bound up. Language is able to describe the world by virtue of an isomorphic fit between them. By "isomorphic" or "isomorphic fit" I mean this: A is isomorphic with B if, for each event E_i which affects A, there is a corresponding event E_j which affects B, and E_i and E_j may, but need not, be the same event.¹ As an illustration, let us consider a hypothetical belief that the anger of heavenly spirits may have as its consequence the fall of a particular kingdom. An event E_i in heaven (the spirits getting angry) corresponds to an event E_j in human society (the fall of the kingdom). Within that belief system, heavenly affairs (among them the anger of the spirits) and human affairs (among them the fall of the kingdom) have an isomorphic fit.

The language-world relationship in the classical conception of language is analogous to the doctrine of the unity of Heaven and man (*tian ren he yi*^a).

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Just as man's social and political processes are conceived to be a reflection of, or in union with, heavenly processes—hence changes in heavenly processes will have their manifestation in human society—language is considered to be unified with the world (or reality), social or otherwise, which it describes. Hence, changes in language will lead to similar changes in reality, and vice versa. The notion of *he yi* is fundamental. The phrase “*he yi*” means “to combine into one,” or “to unify.” Thus, semantically, the phrase involves two different entities. The doctrine of the unity of Heaven and man implies that Heaven and man are two different entities which are conceptually combined into one. Analogously, although language and the world are two different things ontologically, they are unified conceptually. In other words, language is conceived to be isomorphic with the world which it describes.²

In what follows I will show how this conception of language helps explain the language issues discussed by philosophers in pre-Han China. Special attention is paid to the properties of the formulations of these issues, and their solutions (or lack thereof). Due to the nature of the inquiry, some of my arguments are schematic, while others are more detailed.³

The article is organized thus: The first two sections set the stage for later sections. In section one, I show that there is a presupposition in modern interpretations of both Confucius' rectification-of-names program and Gong-sun Long's white horse argument. This presupposition leads to controversy in interpretation. In section two, I discuss in some detail the world view and the conception of language in ancient China. In sections three through eight, I examine the various language issues in the light of the classical conception of language. The result is summarized in section nine.

I. A PRESUPPOSITION

The ancient theories of language come down to us scattered among such works as the *Analects*, the *Gong-sun Long Zi*^b, the *Lao Zi*^c, the *Mo Zi*^d, the *Xun Zi*^e, and the *Zhuang Zi*^f. The views which are expressed in these and other works, as reconstructed by various scholars, differ widely. This is inevitable, since the philosophers forming the various schools of thought started out with different theoretical assumptions and intentions, and the issues involved do not allow clear-cut formulations and answers. Controversy abounds in the exegetical literature on the ancient theories of language. Underlying the exegetical controversy among modern students of Chinese philosophy is the hidden presupposition that language is a separate entity from the reality which it describes. (I use the words “reality” and “world” interchangeably.) I will bring out this presupposition by reviewing the controversies surrounding Confucius' rectification-of-names program and Gong-sun Long's thought—in particular, his thesis that white horses are not horses.

The rectification of names has baffled modern scholars with two related questions:

Q1: What is *ming*s?

Q2: How do rectified *mings* lead to an orderly society?

We said that Confucius' concern with language has strong moral overtones, which makes it remarkably pragmatic for a time when the traditional social and political order was fast disintegrating. In Confucius' mind, an orderly society was one which faithfully followed the *li*^h of the Zhou court. People at different social ranks or stations had different sets of *li* that had been defined for them since antiquity; and terms such as "king" and "subject," and "father" and "son" had moral implications in accordance with the social ranks which the terms denote. Because of this, modern commentators often interpret Confucius' rectification-of-names program in the context of its moral implications. The moral character of the rectification-of-names program is unmistakable, and uncontroversial. What is obscure and controversial is the interpretation of the very notion of *ming*. Q1 does not have a unique answer.

There are two possible answers to Q1: either *mings* are things in language (linguistic) or they are things in the world (nonlinguistic).⁴ Are we to construe *mings* as linguistic entities naming (denoting or designating) sociopolitical hierarchies (as *ming fen*ⁱ), or are they the sociopolitical hierarchies themselves?

One view holds that the word "*ming*" is used to mean names, citing the *Analects* 17.8⁵ as saying that studying *The Book of Poetry* can "broaden one's knowledge of the names of birds, animals, and plants." There is no doubt that the word "*ming*" is indeed used in the *Analects* as the names of things, that is, as linguistic units. But if we consider *mings* as purely linguistic units which designate, among other things, sociopolitical hierarchies, the answer to the remaining question (Q2) becomes elusive. Given that *mings* are strings of sounds or graphic patterns,⁶ what is to be rectified in the rectification-of-names program? Let *W* be such a *ming* which designates a given sociopolitical rank *R* with its set of *li*-defined moral behavior. Consider now how to rectify *W*. One way to do it is to modify the pronunciation or written form of *W*. But this reduces the rectification-of-names program to a mere language reform with no philosophical significance. It is baffling why rectified names have the social and political (and moral) consequences which Confucius insists that they have. It seems hardly worth considering.

As an alternative, suppose that to rectify *W* is to modify its designation relation. By hypothesis, *W* designates *R*. A rectified *W* would designate *R'*. Both *R* and *R'* have their own sets of moral behavior, but only *R'* is deemed appropriate for the rank which *W* designates by the standard of the Zhou *li*. Rectified *mings* lead to good government (*Analects* 13.3 and 12.17). Now that the *ming* *W* has been rectified according to the Zhou *li* can we conclude that good government (or a harmonious society) will result from it? To answer the question positively, one would have to assume that for Confucius, rectifica-

tion of *mings* is in itself a necessary and sufficient condition for good government. Desired states of affairs can be realized by the rectified language. This is “to make the impossible demand that reality conform to language,” as David Nivison points out.⁷ Since *mings* are construed as linguistic entities, which are the targets of the rectification-of-names program, it is inevitable to attribute to Confucius the belief that language possesses a magical power which has unfailing influence on affairs both human and natural, an attribution hard to justify on the basis of the textual evidence of the *Analects*.

In the Marxian interpretive framework, which tries to squeeze everything into the dichotomy of idealism (or rationalism) and materialism, *mings* are construed as names having sociopolitical hierarchies as their referents (*shi*). Confucius is said to be a rationalist because he advocates rectifying sociopolitical relationships (*shi*, which is material) in terms of names which name them (*ming*, which is nonmaterial), rather than rectifying names in terms of social realities.⁸ There is, however, no reason to assume that Confucius sees the world in terms of the Marxian dichotomy. Certainly the *Analects* provides no evidence which would justify labeling Confucius a rationalist, or a materialist for that matter. Such labeling does not help us understand Confucius’ conception of language, which underlies his rectification-of-names program.

Other scholars shun the idea that the use of the word “*ming*” is linguistic. For them, *mings* are not names which denote the sociopolitical relationships of man; they *are* the sociopolitical relationships. The rectification of *mings* is not to rectify names as linguistic entities, but to rectify social relationships and political hierarchies.⁹ Thus, the rectification of names is not a linguistic reform but a political enterprise considered fundamental by Confucius for the badly needed order of a harmonious society. With this construal of the rectification of names, it is not difficult to see why Confucius emphasizes it so much in his urgent campaign to restore the Zhou order, for to rectify *mings* is to rectify the relationships of king and subject, father and son, and so on. “Let fathers be fathers, sons be sons” (*Analects* 12.11) is the prescription Confucius gives out to cure the social ills of his time. In Confucius’ ideal society, fathers behave in a way appropriate for fathers, and sons in a way appropriate for sons, and similarly for other sociopolitical relationships. For Confucius, morally appropriate behavior is defined by the Zhou *li*. Once the relationships are rectified according to *li*, an orderly society will ensue automatically.

This treatment of *ming* gives the word two entirely different and unrelated meanings in the *Analects*. On the one hand, *mings* are linguistic, serving as names of animals and trees and birds, as well as kings and subjects, fathers and sons, and so on. On the other hand, *mings* are themselves sociopolitical realities (*ming fen*), rather than names of them. It is then mysterious why Confucius chooses to use the word “*ming*” in such a confusing way. The fact

that no one who is mentioned in the *Analects* is confused about Confucius' use of the term indicates that this construal of *ming* is mistaken.

From the discussion above, it is evident that the various interpretations of the rectification of names share one presupposition alluded to above: that language is a separate and separable entity from reality, be it social or natural. This presupposition is consonant with a mechanical conception of the world, in which parts of the world are separable and each is independent of the others for its identity and function. When questions arise as to what *ming*s are and what exactly constitutes the rectification of names, naturally the answers are sought along the theoretical thrust of this presupposition: *ming*s are names (linguistic) which describe realities (nonlinguistic); or *ming*s are social and political hierarchies and relationships (nonlinguistic); hence rectification of names has little to do with language. In both cases, it is precisely this presupposition that leads to problems in the interpretation of Confucius' rectification-of-names program.

We now turn to the interpretation of Gong-sun Long's thought. If Confucius' notion of rectification of names has strong sociopolitical overtones, the School of Names philosophers are primarily interested in the philosophical analysis of language. Their interest is remarkably free of his ethical concerns. The most celebrated among the School of Names philosophers is Gong-sun Long; and the most bewildering of his theses is that "white horses are not horses." This thesis bewilders Gong-sun Long's contemporaries greatly; his debater in the white horse dialogue in the *Gong-sun Long Zi* can attest to that. It puzzles modern researchers to no lesser extent. It appears to be the implicit consensus of modern interpretations that the key to understanding Gong-sun Long's thought lies in his ontology: just what is it that he is talking about? The methodological and interpretive strategy is to postulate an ontology for Gong-sun Long or for the book which bears his name in such a way as to render true the proposition that white horses are not horses. Different ontologies are proposed for Gong-sun Long. We hear him talk about universals and particulars;¹⁰ about extensions and intensions;¹¹ or about naïve notions of sets.¹² Hansen rejects the ontological implications of these views, because they attribute to Gong-sun Long a realistic (or conceptual) ontology. He advocates his alternative "stuff" ontology of part and whole for the entire pre-Han philosophy in general, and Gong-sun Long in particular.¹³ Graham, using Hansen's ontological presuppositions, argues in a recent article¹⁴ that a part-whole ontology best elucidates Gong-sun Long's thought.

Again, we see here in the controversy surrounding Gong-sun Long the same presupposition that is behind the rectification-of-names controversy, namely, that language is a separate entity which stands apart from the world. In this case, the term "white horse" (which is linguistic) denotes White Horse (which resides in the ontology postulated for Gong-sun Long), and "white" denotes White.

I will show that, given a different conception of language, Gong-sun Long's thought can be elucidated without the postulation of an ontology, and hence the ontological controversy will not arise. In section five I will show that Gong-sun Long shares the same conception of language as Confucius.

II. LANGUAGE AND THE WORLD VIEW

In this section I shall provide a brief sketch of the world view in ancient China and its relation to language.

The world view in ancient China was heavily influenced by the doctrine of the unity of Heaven and man. It is one area in Chinese philosophy which was clearly articulated by the ancient philosophers. In the realm of society, the ethical code of conduct which regulated its hierarchical positions and the relation in which one stood to his fellow human beings reflected the natural processes of Heaven. An orderly society was one in which social cohesion was ideally regulated by *li*^h. But the validity of *li* needed to be justified, and it found its justification in nature:

Li is that whereby Heaven and Earth unite, whereby the sun and moon are bright, whereby the four seasons are ordered, whereby the stars move in the courses, whereby rivers flow, whereby all things prosper, whereby love and hatred are tempered, whereby joy and anger keep their proper place. It causes the lower orders to obey, and the upper orders to be illustrious; through a myriad changes it prevents going astray. But if one departs from it, he will be destroyed. Is not *li* the greatest of all principles?¹⁵

The title of Son of Heaven was reserved for emperors. Sitting at the top of the sociopolitical hierarchy, the Zhou rulers justified their claim to the title, as did their predecessors, in terms of the Mandate of Heaven (*tian ming*^k). They were fully aware that what Heaven gave them, it could also take back, just as it did to the Shang rulers. So it was imperative, in order to keep the Mandate of Heaven, that they behave virtuously, for lack of virtue on the part of the Shang rulers cost them their Mandate of Heaven. It was equally imperative that the spirits and the people be kept content. In response to a question posed by one of his students with regard to how one may receive the Empire and become the Son of Heaven, Mencius says:

He [the Son of Heaven] presides at the sacrificial ceremony, and the spirits enjoy it. This shows that Heaven accepts him. He takes charge of state affairs, and they are orderly, and the people are content. This shows that the people accept him. It is Heaven and the people who give the Empire to him. (*Mencius* 5A.5)¹⁶

This idea of the ruler receiving his mandate from both Heaven and the people was not Mencius' invention. It was the general belief of the ancient people that the prosperity of states was in the hands of a ruler whose "virtue is sufficient to make his sacrifice manifest, and his kindness is sufficient to unify the people. The spirits enjoy his offerings, and the people listen to him."¹⁷

Human affairs here are isomorphic with the affairs of the spirits, and social processes are merged (at least mergeable) with natural processes.

Just as natural and social processes are one, so linguistic processes are also conceived as mirroring the natural and social processes. Not only words are inseparably bound to what they signify, but syntactic processes of word ordering also are parallel to natural processes. This is the gist of the classical conception of language which forms the intellectual milieu of the period under consideration. It is not surprising that the *Chun Qiu*^l, a book which records the affairs of the Sons of Heaven (*Mencius* 3B.9), was held up as an exemplar of the proper use of language. Its propriety lay in the moral rectitude and the social ideal in its choice of words (*sha*, “kill,” versus *shi*, “regicide”). Mencius held the *Chun Qiu* in high esteem, and likened Confucius’ compilation of it to Yu’s flood-control effort and Lord Zhou’s military campaigns, all of which brought benefits to the people. In Mencius’ view, the *Chun Qiu* recorded the affairs of the Sons of Heaven, and scared off the renegade subjects and sons who made regicide and patricide a fact of life in the society (*Mencius* 3B.9). Mencius did not bother to explain how the *Chun Qiu* could prevent regicide and patricide from happening, and arrest the decline of society. To invest such power in a book appears to be gratuitous. We need not, however, assume that Mencius and others believed the *Chun Qiu* to be capable of casting a magical spell over those who were about to transgress their social positions either by allowing lapses in their filial duties towards their parents, or by committing violations of a more serious nature, such as performing rites reserved for their social and political superiors, which was considered an unforgivable moral offense (witness Confucius’ indignation over the performance of *ba yi*^m, reserved for Sons of Heaven, in the household of a powerful minister (*Analects* 3.1)). The power of the *Chun Qiu* came from its moral strength gained in part through the proper use of language.

Just as the choice of individual words in the *Chun Qiu* was believed to convey moral significance, the syntactic order of words was seen to mirror the natural processes being described. This can be seen clearly in the *Gong Yang*ⁿ commentary on two entries in the *Chun Qiu*. The *Chun Qiu* records, under *Yin Gong*^o 1:

yuan nian chun wang zheng yue^p
 first year spring king first month
 (First year, spring, the king’s first month)

The *Gong Yang* comments (the numbering is mine):

- (1) What is *yuan nian*? It is the first year of the ruler.
- (2) What is *chun*? It is the first season of the year.
- (3) What is *wang*? It is King Wen.
- (4) Why does it first say *wang* “king” and then *zheng yue* “first month”? It is the King’s first month.

(5) Why does it say *wang zheng yue*? To magnify the unification of the kingdom.

Here, each expression (which is a *ming*⁸) has more than its linguistic sense (compare (1), (3), and (5)); its political connotations are highlighted. Comment (4) is particularly interesting for our purpose, since it suggests that the word order—that is, the fact that the expression *wang*, “king,” precedes another expression *zheng yue*, “first month”—is not merely a syntactic fact of the language. The syntactic order puts moral emphasis on the importance of the month being “the King’s first month” and a kingdom unified under him. The syntax of the phrase *wang zheng yue* reflects the political order of the day.

Under *Xi Gong*⁹ 16, we read:

yun shi yu Song wu^r
fall stone at Song five
(Five stones fell in Song)

Here is the *Gong Yang* commentary:

How is it that the text first says *yun* “fall” and then *shi* “stone”? *Yun shi* is a record of hearing. First something was heard falling. Upon examining what had fallen, it was found to be stones. Further inquiry showed that there were five of them. . . .

In the exposition of this entry, the *Gong Yang* sets up a close correspondence between the word order of the phrase and the temporal sequence of the events being described. Thus, the fact that *yun shi*, “fall stone,” occurs before *wu*, “five,” indicates that the event of stones falling occurs before the event of examining the fallen objects, which leads to the discovery of five stones. The syntactic structure of the sentence is interpreted as reflecting the temporal sequence of these events. *Xing Gong* 16 continues:

shi yue liu yi tui fei guo Song du^s
this month six fish hawk backward fly pass Song capital
(In the same month, six fish hawks flew backwards past the capital of Song)

and here is the commentary:

Why does the text say *liu* “six” first and then *yi* “fish hawk”? *Liu yi tui fei* is a record of seeing. First, six things were seen. On examination they were found to be fish hawks. On more careful and leisurely examination they were seen to be flying backwards.

The grammatical subject of the phrase *liu yi*, “six fish hawks,” precedes its predicate *tui fei*, “fly backward,” out of grammatical necessity. In the *Gong Yang* commentary, however, we see an attempt to explain the word order in terms of the temporal order of events. The isomorphic correspondence between language and the world is unmistakable.

There are two passages in the *Chun Qiu* which contrast the syntactic order of *ci*, “halt,” and *jiu*, “save.” The difference in the ordering of these two words is held to send moral messages as defined by *li*^h. The two entries are as follows:

Xi Gong 1:

*Qi shi Song shi Cao shi ci yu Nie bei jiu Xing*¹

Qi army Song army Cao army halt at Nie north save Xing

(The armies of the states of Qi, Song, Cao halted north of Nie. To save the state of Xing.)

*Xiang Gong*²³:

ba yue Shu Sunbao shuai shi jiu Jin ci yu Yong Yu^v

eight moon Shu Sunbao lead army save Jin halt at Yong Yu

(In the eighth month, Shu Sunbao led the army to save Jin. Halted at Yong Yu.)

The first entry records the halting of the armies when the state of Xing had already been defeated. On this entry, the *Gong Yang* explains:

Why does it first say *ci* “halt” and then say *jiu* “save”?
Because of the king.

On the second entry, the *Gong Yang* says:

Why does it first say *jiu* “save” and then say *ci* “halt”?
To convey the king’s order first.

On the same entry, the *Zuo Zhuan*^w comments:

In the eighth month, Shu Sunbao led the army to save Jin, halted at Yong Yu. This is due to *li*.

The *Zuo Zhuan* commentary does not attempt to relate the syntax of the expression to the halting of the army’s advances. It attaches no significance whatsoever to the fact that the word *jiu*, “save,” precedes the word *ci*, “halt.” The *Gong Yang* commentary, on the other hand, leaves no doubt that the syntax has sociopolitical implications. The *Gu Liang*^x commentary also sees something extra in the syntactic order of *jiu*, “save,” and *ci*, “halt,” saying (on the *Xiang Gong* 23 entry) that “to say *ci* ‘halt’ after *jiu* ‘save,’ it is not saving.” In other words, according to the *Gu Liang*, mentioning *ci*, “halt,” indicates that Shu Sunbao had no genuine intention to save Jin.

If the *Gong Yang* commentaries are only indicative of the belief that language corresponds with the world (social as well as natural) isomorphically between words and things (or events) and between the syntactic order of words and the temporal sequence of events, Dong Zhongshu^y is quite explicit about it. For him, language is directly modeled on Heaven and Earth. By virtue of the direct modelling, Heaven is able to convey its wills and intentions to man through language:

The basis for giving good government to the world lies in the analytical discrimination of what is important. And the basis for discrimination of what is important lies in the profound examination of names (*ming*^e) and appellations (*hao*^z). Names are the representative symbols of great principles. One records the meanings of these representative symbols in order thereby to spy out the things that lie within them. Thereupon right and wrong can be known, conformity and non-conformity (to Heaven) become self evident, and one comes close to penetrating (the meaning of) Heaven and Earth. . . . The standards for names and appellations are derived from Heaven and Earth. Thus Heaven and Earth are the great standards for names and appellations. . . .

Names and appellations are variously pronounced, but have the same origin in that all consist of sounds and ejaculations uttered to make known the meaning of Heaven. Heaven speaks not, yet it enables men to make evident its meaning. It acts not, yet it enables men to conduct themselves in accordance with the mean. Names, therefore, constitute Heaven's meaning as it has been discovered by the sages, and as such they should be deeply looked into.¹⁸

Thus, the classical conception of language and its relationship to Heaven (or man by extension) finds its clearest formulation in Dong Zhongshu, who was instrumental in establishing Confucianism as the state orthodoxy and was responsible for suppressing all other schools of thought. His repressive attitude stemmed from his belief that any non-Confucian use of language was disruptive of harmonious *cosmic* order, which was the very same thing as harmonious *social* order.

I will now proceed to examine a few topics which involve language, and show how this conception of language helps explain the nature of theorizing in the period under consideration.

III. *XIN* (FAITHFULNESS) AND *CHENG* (GENUINENESS)

Etymologically, *xin*^{aa}, faithfulness, is related to language. In terms of the graphic structure of the character, it is composed of a person radical and a part which means a human mouth.¹⁹ Thus, *xin* is intimately related to human speech. The Neo-Mohist *Canons* explicitly define the term along this line:

A 14 *Xin* (good faith/trustworthiness) is the words agreeing with the thought.²⁰

Used as a verb, *xin* is also related to language. Confucius, for instance, used it to hear one's words and believe (*xin*) his actions (*Analects* 5.10).

Cheng^{ab}, genuineness, is related to language as well. In fact the *Shuo wen jie zi*^{ac} defines *cheng* in terms of *xin* and *xin* in terms of *cheng*. In the Confucian tradition, *cheng* is a technical term of great importance. Confucius himself does not talk about *cheng* much, but Mencius elevates it to the level of natural order:

Genuineness is the Dao of Heaven. Thinking about genuineness is the Dao of man. (*Mencius* 4A.13)

This conception of *cheng* is further articulated in the *Zhong Yong*^{ad}, and accorded a fundamental place within the Confucian cosmology. Tu Wei-ming writes that *cheng*

. . . is reality in its all-embracing fullness. It can perhaps be characterized as the self-manifestation of being in a multidimensional structure of existence. Yet *cheng* is not only being but also activity; it is simultaneously a self-subsistent and self-fulfilling process of creation that produces life unceasingly. . . . *Cheng* is therefore reality in its primordial state of genuineness, the living experience of the immediate inner self-revelation of true nature, and the ultimate basis upon which the unity of man and heaven becomes possible.²¹

Cheng is also a property of language. The *Zhou Yi*^{ac} says that the Superior Man "cultivates language (*ci*^{af}) to establish *cheng*."²² I am not saying that *cheng* in the *Zhong Yong*'s sense is reducible to language. It indicates strongly, however, that in an ideal state of affairs, the natural processes and social processes and linguistic processes are in perfect harmony in the manifestation of *cheng* and *xin*. The merging of social and natural orders is not sufficient for a superior man. He acts naturally, and his actions are in accord with his language (*Analects* 14.27).

IV. RECTIFICATION OF NAMES

We have seen that the rectification of names is subject to divergent interpretations, which have in common the presupposition that language is separate from the social and natural processes which it describes. Once this presupposition is removed, the problems which result from it disappear. Given the assumption that language is conceived to be unified with Heaven and Earth, the efficacy of the rectification of names presents itself forcefully. We can answer the two questions raised in section one in the following manner. For Confucius, human interaction is regulated by *li*^b. Through defining the code of proper conduct for each person born into his position within the sociopolitical hierarchy, *li* ensures the harmonious operation of the intricate network of interpersonal relationships (which can be mapped onto Heaven due to the doctrine of the unity of Heaven and Man.) Within this network, each position is defined in terms of other positions. Social roles, such as king and subject, are in essence relational, and they are defined interdependently. Likewise, the terms (*ming*^g) which name those social roles are believed to form a similar sort of network. We may say that the linguistic network is isomorphic with the social network. The terms are defined within the entire network. Thus, any change in meaning, to use modern terminology, will change the very nature of the network. Since language and social processes are considered to be unified, change in the linguistic network will ultimately result in change in the social network. The regulatory function of *li* is relevant to both social relationships and language. The harmonious operation of society and the proper use of language are two sides of the same coin.²³

Therefore, the proper use of language is essential for social order. Rectifying language consists of fine-tuning the linguistic network in accordance with *li*. Once the language has been rectified, social harmony will ensue as a matter of course. Unrectified language is a guaranteed way to social disintegration.²⁴ That is why rectification of names is Confucius' first priority in government:

If language is not rectified, then speech will not be smooth. If speech is not smooth, then what is to be done will not be accomplished. If what is to be done is not accomplished, then *li* and music will not flourish. If *li* and music do not flourish, then punishment will not be just. If punishment is not just, then people will not know how to move their hands or feet. (*Analects* 13.3)

Note that unjust punishment is among the consequences of unrectified names. In this regard, let us examine the Legalists' position. Their conception of language is similar to the classical conception which Confucius implicitly adopts, as we have shown. For the Legalists, "things have inherent (*gu*²⁵) shapes; and shapes have inherent names."²⁵ Their main concern is law and order; the key to them is rectified names. Things have their places in the world; names have their places in accordance with the things which they name. Han Fei²⁶ says:

In using the method of maintaining uniformity, names are of primary importance. When names have been rectified, things will be fixed. When names have not been rectified, things undergo change. Therefore the Sage holds to uniformity and rests in quiescence. He causes names to be self-applying, and commands that things remain fixed in themselves. . . .²⁶

Here, we see the importance of rectified names for Han Fei in maintaining law and order.

For the Legalists, the ideal state of the *ming-shi* relation is a one-to-one correspondence between language (*ming*) and the world (*shi*) as established by the Sages. To be sure, the Legalists (or other thinkers) do not discuss the one-to-one correspondence per se. From their discussions of names and actualities (that is, the referents of the names), we can see this correspondence as the underlying assumption in their discussion of the subject matter. For Han Fei, harmony can be achieved in the sociopolitical hierarchies if names (*ming*) and actualities (*shi*) are in agreement. "The ruler holds the names in hand, and his subjects model their actualities after the names. When actualities and names are in agreement, superior and inferior are in harmony with one another."²⁷ This state of affairs is hardly possible if we do not assume a one-to-one correspondence between names and actualities.

It was popularly believed that the maintenance of this correspondence was in the hands of learned men, just as communication between man and spirits was the exclusive domain of sorcerers and witches, who were considered to possess the ability to regulate "the dwelling places of the spirits."²⁸ If everybody had started to offer sacrifices, the spirits would have been confused. So if people had been allowed to interpret the law, they would have been conten-

tious. As contentions over the law arose, the *ming-shi* correspondence would have been lost. It was for this reason that plans to engrave the law on bronze vessels were met with opposition.²⁹ Language mirrors the structure of the world around man; it is not to be tampered with by him.

The view that there is a one-to-one correspondence between *ming* and *shi* (the so-called one-name-one-thing principle³⁰) is really a corollary to the classical conception of language as the mirror image of natural and social processes. This principle played a significant role in the ancient theories of language, and was shared by other thinkers as well. From a modern perspective, the view that one name (*ming*) names one thing (*shi*) and that one thing is named by one name is rather naïve. In the social realm, for instance, a man is (at least) both a father to his children and a son to his parents. That is, with respect to the man, there are two names, namely, father and son. But this problem did not bother Confucius. It appears that his notion of *shi* (referent) was different from the one presupposed in modern theories of language. This can be seen in his conception of man. The notion of man as an autonomous moral agent, which is the cornerstone of Western ethical theorizing, is absent in Confucius' ethical considerations. Man as a free-willing biological entity is unimportant; such a notion plays no role in the mechanism of social interaction. Ultimately, man is social, hence relational. His *raison d'être* in society is defined by the *li*-controlled relationships that he is in. Thus, John the son is not the same *shi* as John the father, each with his own sets of *li*, even if there is only one biological being involved. Man as an individual abstracted away from the social and political relationships he is born into never enters the picture of Confucius' ethical world.³¹

Therefore, the one-name-one-thing principle does not create problems for Confucius, due to the nature of the received conception of language and the ethical orientation of his concern with language. When the interest in language takes a turn away from Confucius' social and political preoccupation, this principle reaches its logical conclusion in the thought of Gong-sun Long, among others. A "language crisis," in the words of Schwartz,³² ensues. We will first discuss Gong-sun Long's thought, and then turn to the various responses to this crisis.

V. GONG-SUN LONG

We begin by considering the notions of *zheng*, "rectify," and *wei*, "position." The *Shuo wen jie zi* defines *wei* as positions in a courtyard. That is its literal meaning. By extension, it also means social positions and sequential order. In Gong-sun Long's theory of language, the term plays a technical role. In the *ming-shi* chapter,³³ he defines *shi* as things in the world and *wei* as a special state of *shi*: "*Wei* obtains when a *shi* fully possesses its characteristics." Exactly what constitutes the characteristics of a *shi* is a question of great ontological import, and, characteristically, Gong-sun Long shows no awareness of, or

interest in, the ontological implications of his views. Hence questions of an ontological nature are open to conjecture. This degree of indeterminacy is tolerable for our purpose, since it is possible to elucidate Gong-sun Long's thought without appeal to his ontology. Now, to rectify is for *shi* to be in its state of *wei*, that is, to be where it ought to be in the scheme of things which make up the world. The image is quite forceful. The things in the world are ordered into their natural positions, much like an orderly courtyard, or a ritual procession in the Imperial Court, where officials stand in their assigned positions according to their ranks.

With these terms, Gong-sun Long goes on to define his notion of rectification of names:

To rectify is to rectify the referent (*shi*); to rectify the referent is to rectify the name (*ming*) which denotes the referent.³⁴

For him, the rectification of names amounts to a dual operation: (1) putting things (*shi*) into their proper positions (*wei*) (in the world) and, correspondingly, (2) putting names (*ming*s) into their proper positions (in language). This is a rather lucid statement of the classical conception of language which unifies the linguistic processes with natural and social processes. Not surprisingly, Gong-sun Long is a firm believer in the one-name-one-thing principle. He says in the *ming-shi* chapter on the consequences of rectified names:

If names are rectified, then the referents of "that" and "this" are unique. It will not do to say "that" if "that" does not uniquely denote that; it will not do to say "this" if "this" does not uniquely denote this.³⁵

The argument in the white horse chapter is a showcase of Gong-sun Long's application of the received conception of language. The argument consists of three steps, which can be stated as follows:

- (1) "white" names a color, "horse" names a shape
- (2) WHITE is not fixed on any white object; WHITE_{horse} is fixed on white objects (namely white horses)
- (3) "horse" refers to horses without reference to color; "white horse" refers to horses with reference to color

where WHITE is used to refer to the white color and WHITE_{horse} to refer to the white color of the horse.

The first argument puzzles interpreters, for it does not prove that white horses are not horses.³⁶ From our perspective, this argument is a nontrivial link of the reasoning chain. Here, he states that the names (excuse the terminology) "white" and "horse" denote two different things in the world. (Here the question of Gong-sun Long's ontology comes in; but it is not crucial in our reconstruction of his arguments.) Next, he shows by (2) that "white" and the "white" of "white horse" denote different things in the world as well. This is

so because the first name “white” stands by itself in language, and, correspondingly, its referent, WHITE, stands by itself in the world as well. By contrast, the “white” of “white horse” is used with “horse” in language, and, correspondingly, its referent WHITE_{horse} is the color found only on horses. Given the isomorphic nature of language with respect to the world, it follows that “what is fixed on white objects [namely WHITE_{horse}] is not white [namely, WHITE].” Similarly for (3).

Two points concerning the white horse chapter need to be mentioned before we leave Gong-sun Long. First, horses have inherent (*gu*³⁸) color; therefore there are white horses.³⁷ Gong-sun Long is not denying the existence of white horses. Secondly, he says that when one has a white horse, one can be said to have a horse only when “white” is separated.³⁸ To separate “white” is to ignore the word “white” of “white horse,” and the color white of the white horse. So “white horses are horses” is reduced to “horses are horses.” This is the only condition under which Gong-sun Long will acknowledge the admissibility of the proposition that white horses are horses. By upholding the admissibility of the denial of the proposition, namely, that white horses are not horses, he insists, albeit implicitly, that one can not separate “white” from “white horse” (in language), and white from white horses (in the world).

But the proposition that white horses are not horses goes against common sense; it caused an outcry among the learned at his time. Nevertheless, the proposition follows from the classical conception of language. Language *can* mislead.

VI. ZHUANG ZI'S RESPONSE

The classical conception of language which is under discussion here is also relevant to the Daoists. According to the *Lao Zi*, the *Dao* cannot be described by language. The first four lines are rather revealing:

The Dao that can be said is not the constant Dao
 The Name that can be given is not the constant Name
 The Nameless is the origin of Heaven and Earth
 The Named is the mother of the myriad things

Language is seen as intimately linked to things under Heaven. They are symbiotic. There are distinctions among things in the phenomenal world; so there are distinctions among names (*mings*) in language. In other words, the possibility of naming (therefore the possibility of language) depends on there being distinctions in the world. But the *Dao* is where all the phenomenal distinctions are obliterated. Hence language as a descriptive tool loses its utility. Structurally, language is isomorphic with the world, but not with the *Dao*. This is the source of the Daoist skepticism toward language.

This skepticism is clearly articulated in the *Zhuang Zi*. In the *Autumn Water* (chapter 17), we find this passage:

What can be discussed with words are the coarse things; what can be reached with ideas (*yi*⁴¹) are the fine things. What words can not discuss and ideas can not differentiate and reach do not depend on the fineness and coarseness of things.

The distinction between fineness and coarseness among things “depends on their having shape.” (Shape is a property of the world. Recall the view quoted earlier, namely, “things have inherent shapes; shapes have inherent names.”) But the *Dao* is devoid of shape. It then follows that language can not describe the *Dao*.

Linguistic skepticism, coupled with philosophical relativism, characterizes Zhuang Zi’s response to Gong-sun Long and other like-minded thinkers. He is not impressed by Gong-sun Long’s arguments. In his opinion, they can outtalk other people without being able to persuade them.³⁹ For him, as for other Daoists, even the distinctions between true and false and between right and wrong are relative. The one absolute thing is the *Dao*. But from the perspective of the *Dao*, the question of right or wrong or the question of true or false is rather trivial, simply a matter of opinion. As expected, in Zhuang Zi’s view, the early rivalry between the Confucians and the Mohists is no more than pointless mutual denial. “Each of these two schools affirms what the other denies; denies what the other affirms.”⁴⁰ He is skeptical about the efficacy of the disputation of which the Neo-Mohists are fond. Such is not his concern. “From the standpoint of the *Dao*,” he says, “things are neither valuable nor worthless.”⁴¹

VII. XUN ZI’S RESPONSE

Xun Zi was the great synthesizer of his time.⁴² His idea of the rectification of names shows the influence of both the ethical concern of Confucius and the linguistic bent of the Neo-Mohists. His theory of language is thus a curious blend of the two, despite the fact that he attacks the Neo-Mohists resolutely in the chapter on the rectification of names. His mentalistic underpinnings of “the fundamental principles of instituting names” is Mohistic in inspiration. His theory of classification of names, decidedly not the concern of Confucius, parallels the same theory propounded by the Neo-Mohists. But his motivation in theorizing about language derives from the ethical utility of the rectified language. To make distinct the noble and the humble still remains the top priority of his linguistic preoccupation. Despite his conventionalism, the instituting of names is the job of the kings, who are entrusted with leading a unified people on their way to a harmonious society. Once the names are thus established, they are not to be tampered with by ordinary people, lest social chaos arise. (This view reminds one of the Legalists’ position with regard to legal codes.)

Things that can be named depend on their having shapes. This was a common view at the time. Xun Zi’s innovation in this regard is the mentalistic

(*xin*^{aj}, “heart-mind”) synthesizing of sensuous experience. The mind discerns the similarities and differences among things through the senses (which includes the mind itself, for distinguishing feelings).⁴³ Once the phenomenal distinctions are known, the task of naming proceeds. Thus, for Xun Zi, the name-referent (*ming-shi*) relation is not one between language and the world. Rather, it is a relation between language and the world as perceived by the mind.

This is particularly important in understanding Xun Zi’s attack on the fallacy of using names to confuse names. We will consider two examples which fall under this category:

S1: to receive insult is no disgrace (feeling insulted)

S2: to kill a robber is not to kill a man

Fung explains that “[t]he connotation of the phrase, ‘to receive insult,’ already implies the idea of disgrace; the connotation of the word ‘robber,’ implies the idea of man.”⁴⁴ Putting aside the question of reading connotation into Xun Zi’s theory of language, it might be argued that the meaning of “man” is contained in the meaning of “robber”; it is not so clear, however, that the meaning of “receive insult” already contains the meaning of “disgrace.” I think these two statements provide two illustrations of the fallacy of using names to confuse names. The first statement involves his theory of the mind, whereas the second statement has to do with his classification of names.

First, consider S1. Disgrace is a feeling, one which is caused by insults. *Xin* (heart-mind) is considered to be the faculty of feelings. Just as shapes are perceived by the eye, insults are perceived by *xin*, giving rise to the feeling of disgrace, which is named by the name “disgrace.” Xun Zi’s premise is that insults psychologically imply disgrace on the part of the insulted. S1 denies just this premise. S2, on the other hand, focuses on the name type of “robber” and “man.” The word “man,” being a great classifying name, denotes people that include robbers. Thus, the fact that John is a robber implies that he is a man. S2 denies this consequence.⁴⁵ Hence, the two statements come under attack as examples of the fallacy of using names to confuse names.

Xun Zi shares with Gong-sun Long the one-name-one-thing principle:

One should let different referents (*shi*) always have different names. . . . And similarly referents should always have similar names.⁴⁶

Here referents are distinguishable through the mind. It is precisely this principle that enables him to say that “when names are heard, referents are revealed.”⁴⁷ For him, such is the utility of language.

To summarize: In Xun Zi, we find the ethical concern of the Confucian tradition in theorizing about language. His theory of language is still an ideal one; it attempts to regiment to a certain extent the daily use of language.

Language rigidly corresponds with reality, albeit the reality as perceived through the senses and organized by the heart-mind.

Naming, that is, the establishment of the name-referent correspondence, proceeds by convention. "Names have no inherent appropriateness," he says, "names have no inherent referents (*shi*)."⁴⁸ His conventionalism with regard to naming is not incompatible with his rectification-of-names principles. In his view, once an actuality (*shi*) A is named by the name N through convention, in the use of N, N must always be used to refer to A. His conventionalism involves naming; once naming is done, it is fixed. Although he explicitly states the one-name-one-thing principle, his classification of names presents an implicit challenge to it. He is a man committed to fight the social evils of the misuse and abuse of language. The rigor with which he formulates his theory of language is rivaled only by that shown in the writings of the Neo-Mohists, to which we now turn.

VIII. THE NEO-MOHISTS' RESPONSE

While Xun Zi is still lingering within the limit of the classical conception of language in his attempt to provide a theoretical justification for the rectification-of-names program, the Neo-Mohists go a step further. Nowhere do we see traces of ethical concern in their analysis of language, nor do we see a mentalistic approach to differentiating reality, as we do in Xun Zi. Their use of example sentences which are ethically relevant does not indicate their interest in the ethical implications of language, as it would indicate for Confucius and to a lesser degree for Xun Zi. It is a matter of convenience, or a conscious effort to defend their own expressed ethical beliefs. What they have done, in reaction to the language crisis, is a rigorous analysis of language in its ordinary usage.

For Xun Zi, the notion of *ming*⁸ is a given, undefined within his theory. Hence it has the traditional sociopolitical connotations. For the Neo-Mohists, *ming* is a defined term:

A 80: What something is called by is its name.⁴⁹

The focus shifts to the study of language as a system of names, removed from the sociopolitical limits which the classical conception of language imposes. The one-name-one-thing principle is rejected,⁵⁰ which sets the Neo-Mohists apart from the rest of the thinkers. This rejection is a consequence of the shift of focus in theorizing about language. When the inquiry is directed at the ordinary usage of language, rather than its social and ethical implications, questions concerning words like "whelp" and "dog," and "robber" and "man" arise. Here, we have linguistic evidence of two names denoting one *shi* (referent). Since robbers are men, the statement that to kill robbers is not to kill men appears to be a piece of sophistry. The Neo-Mohists counter that the statement is assertible. For justification of its assertibility they draw on the

ordinary usage of the syntactic frame X Y ye^{ak} in the chapter *Xiao Qu*^{al} (the Lesser Pick), which we will discuss shortly.

The main thrust of this chapter, and other relevant canons, is linguistic, rather than logical. The Neo-Mohists made no attempt to abstract the formal structure of reasoning from actual instances of disputation, which are numerous for this period. The system which they developed was a historically motivated theory of disputation. By “historically motivated” I mean that the set of problems with which they were confronted had been discussed by their intellectual predecessors. The long-standing interest in the rectification of names and the contentions among the philosophers of different schools, prior to or contemporaneous with the Neo-Mohists, provided them with the intellectual milieu from which their linguistic theory of disputation received its imprint. As with Xun Zi, their approach was systematic and rigorous; unlike Xun Zi, and Gong-sun Long for that matter, they do not display a belief in language as having an ideal fit with reality. To be sure, the scope of discussion in the *Xiao Qu* contains some of the subject of logic proper, in the Aristotelian or modern sense of the word. We see an awareness of temporal reasoning (the particle *qie*^{am}, in *Canon A 33*); quantification (the notion of *zhou*^{an}); negative polarity items (*bu* and *fei*^{ao}, for instance); and their scopal interaction. *Ai ren*, “love people,” is construed as “love all people.” The bare noun phrase *ren*, “people,” functions as if it is universally bound. Thus, the statement “John loves people” is true if and only if he loves all people; and its negation is true even if there is only one person whom John does not love.⁵¹

In temperament, these discussions are indeed logical. But it is a logic that is immanently immersed in the expression of natural language, rather than an abstract system of the reasoning structure not corrupted by the vagaries of natural language. In contrast to Daoist skepticism, the Neo-Mohists firmly believe in the positive role which language plays in disputation. The bulk of the Neo-Mohist language-related *Canons*, and most notably the *Xiao Qu*, are concerned with a theory of disputation. For them, language does not require regimentation of the kind that Confucius and Xun Zi would prescribe. It is certain, for the Neo-Mohists, that with argumentation by means of language there is no smooth sailing. But despair is not in order; rather, care and skill are needed to navigate the unpredicable waters of ordinary language. Here is their advice:

... propositions which illustrate, parallelise, adduce and infer become different as they “proceed”, become dangerous when they change direction, fail when carried too far, become detached from their base when we let them drift, so that we must on no account be careless with them, and must not use them too rigidly. Hence saying has many methods, separate kinds, different reasons, which must not be looked at only from one side.⁵²

So they proceed to look at language from many sides. Recall that in Gong-sun Long’s argument, the syntactic construction “x y ye,” or its negation “x

fei y (ye),” plays a crucial role. (In fact the negative element *fei* has been interpreted as “different from” as well as “not identical with.”) A large section of the *Xiao Qu* picks this structure out, and looks at it from more than one side—three sides, to be exact.⁵³ The general format of their analysis is this: For any statement of the form “*x y ye*,” what can we say about the following schema, where *P* is any predicate?

$$P(x) \rightarrow P(y)$$

There are four possibilities (where T is true and F false):

	x is y	$P(x) \rightarrow P(y)$	Neo-Mohist classification
(a)	T	T	<i>shi e ran</i> ^{ap} (true and is the case)
(b)	T	F	<i>shi e bu ran</i> ^{aq} (true and is not the case)
(c)	F	T	<i>bu shi e ran</i> ^{ar} (not true and is the case)
(d)	F	F	?

The Neo-Mohists only talk about the first three. Both *shi* and *ran* can be rendered roughly as “true” and “is the case,” respectively. Here are their illustrative examples:

- (a) A white horse is a horse.
Riding a white horse (=P(x)) → Riding a horse (=P(y))
- (b) A robber is a man.
Many robbers (=P(x)) → Not many men (=not – P(y))
- (c) Reading a book is not a book.
Like reading books (=P(x)) → Like books (=P(y))

It is in discussing the second case (b) that the Neo-Mohists counter their critics’ attack on the principle of universal love, which is the hallmark of Mohism:

How shall we make this clear? Disliking the abundance of robbers is not disliking the abundance of people, desiring to be without robbers is not desiring to be without people. The whole world agrees that these are right; but if such is the case, there is no longer any difficulty in allowing that, although robbers are people, loving robbers is not loving people, not loving robbers is not not loving people, killing robbers is not killing people.⁵⁴

The Neo-Mohist defense of their positions is rather unceremonious. There is no logical or semantic analysis of the names involved, although they have the theoretical apparatus to do so (compare *Canon A 78*). Nor is there any appeal to the ethical implications of killing robbers and killing people, although they are equally concerned with the ethical questions of their time. Their defense is purely linguistic, and based on the ordinary language in actual use. They are content to describe the use of the syntactic frames in question, and show that their statements follow the common usage of those syntactic frames. In this regard, their discussion of language is remarkably

descriptive, in contrast to the prescriptive theorizing of Xun Zi and, less obviously, Confucius. The descriptive nature of the Neo-Mohists' linguistic analysis parallels the lack of ethical inclination in their discussion of language.

IX. CONCLUSION

We have identified a presupposition in modern interpretations of the ancient theories of language, and offered an alternative conception of language. The conception of language in ancient China does not resemble its modern counterpart, which is the basis of the "hidden" presupposition. Once the presupposition is removed in our elucidation of the theories of language of the period in question, interpretational puzzles dissolve. Just as social activities are thought to reflect natural processes, so language reflects processes which are both social and natural. An immediate corollary is that *ming* (linguistic) can not be separated from the *shi*, "referent" (nonlinguistic).

In modern terminology, terms refer uniquely and fixedly to things in the world, be they natural or social. The contention that in ancient China language was conceived to be isomorphic with natural processes not only has textual evidence (some explicit, some circumstantial), but provides a perspective from which the linguistic concerns of the time can be explained in great clarity. Confucius' rectification of names is well motivated; it is not puzzling why it has sociopolitical implications, as he insists. Gong-sun Long carries the received conception of language to its logical conclusion. What he shows, whether intentionally or unintentionally, is that if we proceed from this conception in our linguistic analysis, "white horses are not horses" is exactly the consequence.

This noncommonsensical conclusion led to outrage among learned circles, and many reacted to it in their own ways. Zhuang Zi kept himself in his *Dao*, denying in typical Daoist fashion the usefulness of language as a tool for shedding light on the *Dao*, or for engaging in disputations. Xun Zi rushed to Confucius' defense in a decidedly non-Confucian way in his theorizing about language. The coolest of them all were the Neo-Mohists, who began to dissect language with unprecedented thoroughness and rigor. Although it may not have been their intended goal, it appears that what they were doing was to move in the direction of treating language as an object of study, a giant step away from the traditional ethical concern with language.

NOTES

1. The definition of "isomorphic fit" is rather strong, since to show that two systems are isomorphic one must show that for each event which affects one system there is a corresponding event which affects the other system. This involves the notion of sets of all events, which is untenable within the context of our inquiry. In other words, it may be impossible to construct a set of *all* events or other entities relevant to the exposition of the relationship between language

and the world. The intuition behind the definition is clear. It strikes home the property of interdependence between language and the world in the conception of language in ancient China.

2. The relationship between Heaven and man is a controversial issue in Chinese philosophy. Opinions differ as to whether Heaven and Man, or the *Dao* of Heaven (or Nature) and the *Dao* of Man, are the same thing. Dong Zhongshu systematically expounds the doctrine of the unity of Heaven and man by explicitly attributing human characteristics (such as feelings and emotions) to Heaven; see Tang Junyi, *Zhongguo zhaxue yuanyun*²⁸ (On the origin of Chinese philosophy) (Hong Kong: Rensheng Press, 1966), pp. 548–559 for an exposition of Dong's doctrine. Even so, it is not clear whether Dong conceives Heaven and man to be the same entity or different entities of the same kind. Tu Wei-ming interprets the relationship between Heaven and man as "an indivisibly single oneness." "Despite the possibility of a conceptual separation between Heaven and man, inwardly, in their deepest reality, they form an unbreakable organismic continuum." See his *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Chung-yung* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1976), p. 129.

3. This is not to be construed as an exercise of linguistic determinism. I make no claim about the role that the structure of language (classical Chinese, say) plays in philosophizing. I do not see how a convincing argument can be made to establish a plausible link between the syntactic structure of languages in general—and classical Chinese in particular—and the formal properties of philosophizing. Rosemont (1974) raises serious questions about using classical Chinese to construct a linguistic deterministic argument, since classical Chinese is a highly artificial language, and not based on speech. The present study makes no use of the grammatical structure of classical Chinese in presenting arguments, nor does it speculate on the origin or cause of the classical conception of language which this study tries to establish.

4. I use the language/world (or language/reality) dichotomy for expository convenience. The notion of language is by no means a clear-cut one—do we understand language as a set of speech sounds, words, phrases, and sentences, or as an abstract mental system which generates words, phrases, and sentences? Current research in linguistics tends to view language as an abstract (and mental) system of principles and rules. In other words, language in the first sense is a derivative notion. On this point, see N. Chomsky, *Knowledge of Language: Its Nature, Origin, and Use* (New York: Praeger, 1985). Vagueness notwithstanding, the notion is still useful for our purpose. The issues which are raised in this article remain the same regardless of the notion of language that we employ.

5. Citations from the *Analects* follow *Concordance to the Analects* (Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1940.)

6. I am here purposely simplifying the notion of linguistic unit. Linguistic units are abstract entities of which the phonetic or graphic shapes are physical representations. The pronunciation and spelling of a word, say "horse," are representations of the word "horse." The word "horse" itself remains an abstract linguistic entity. Such simplification, however, will not obscure the issues which are under discussion. See also note 4.

7. David Nivison, "The Problem of 'Knowledge' and 'Action' in Chinese Thought Since Wang Yang-ming," in Arthur Wright, ed., *Studies in Chinese Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953). For a discussion of this topic, see Chad Hansen, *Language and Logic in Ancient China* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1983), pp. 59–61.

8. See Ren Jiyu, *Zhongguo zhaxue fazhan shi*²⁹ (A developmental history of Chinese philosophy) (Beijing: People's Press, 1983), p. 176.

9. Feng Qi, *Zhongguo gudai zhaxue de luoji fazhan*³⁰ (The logical development of ancient Chinese philosophy) (Shanghai: Shanghai People's Press, 1983); and Lao Sze-kwang, *A History of Chinese Philosophy* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Chinese University Press, 1968).

10. Fung Yu-lan, *A History of Chinese Philosophy*, trans. Derke Bodde (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1952), vol. 1, p. 205. See also Feng Qi, *Zhongguo guda: zhaxue*, and Chung-yung Cheng, "Kung-sun Lung: White Horse and Other Issues," *Philosophy East and West* 33, no. 4 (October 1983).

11. See Qian Mu, *Zhongguo sixiang shi*³¹ (A history of Chinese thought) (Taipei: Student Press, 1977) and Ren, *Zhongguo zhaxue*, p. 501.

12. Lao Sze-kwang, *History*.

13. Hansen, *Language and Logic*.
14. A. C. Graham, "The Disputation of Kung-sun Lung as Argument about Whole and Part," *Philosophy East and West* 36, no. 2 (April 1986).
15. *Xun Zi*, chap. 19. Translation quoted from Donald Munro, *The Concept of Man in Early China* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1969), p. 33.
16. Citations from the *Mencius* follow the format of *Concordance to Mencius* (Harvard-Yenching Institute, 1941).
17. *Guo Yu*^{ax}, quoted from Fung, *History*, vol. 1, p. 24.
18. *Chun Qiu Fan Lu*^{ax}, vol. 10, chap. 35. Translation quoted from Fung, *History*, vol. 2, pp. 85–86.
19. Xu Sheng^{ay}, *Shuo wen jie zi*^{ac}, annotated by Duan Yucui^{az} (Shanghai: Shanghai Classics Press, 1981).
20. A. C. Graham, *Later Mohist Logic, Ethics and Science* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1978), p. 276. I use *xin* instead of *hsin*, for consistency.
21. Tu, *Centrality*, pp. 125–126.
22. *A Concordance to Yi Ching* (Harvard-Yenching Institute Sinological Index Series Supplement No. 10), p. 2.
23. Arguing from a different perspective, Fingarette says that "correct language is not merely a useful adjunct; it is of the essence of executing the ceremony." See his *Confucius: The Secular as Sacred* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), p. 15. Chad Hansen is right when he says that among the assumptions about language in ancient China is its regulative function. "Words have an impact on people's attitudes and inclinations to act." See his *Language and Logic*, p. 59. This is consistent with the assumption of language that I am addressing here.
24. *Mings* are of utmost importance. The *Zuo Zhuan* quotes Confucius as saying that "ceremonial vessels and *mings* alone can not be lent to people, because they are in the exclusive control of the ruler. . . . To lend them is like giving away government. When government is gone, the fall of the state follows" (*Chun Qiu, Cheng Gong*^{ba} 2, p. 211). Elsewhere the *Zuo Zhuan* reports the fall of the State of Lu into the hands of the powerful Ji family as a direct consequence of "lending ritual vessels and *mings* to people" (*Chun Qiu, Zhao Gong*^{bb} 32, p. 436)—in the case of the state of Lu, to the Ji family.
25. *Guan Zi, Xinshu*^{bc} A; see Wu Feibai, *Zhongguo gu mingjia yan*^{bd} (The language of the School of Names in ancient China) (Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press, 1983), p. 769.
26. Quoted from Fung, *History*, vol. 1, p. 324.
27. *Ibid.*
28. *Guo Yu*, quoted from Fung, *History*, vol. 1, p. 23.
29. Fung, *History*, vol. 1, p. 38.
30. See Hansen, *Language and Logic*, for discussion on the topic.
31. Fingarette notes that in Confucius' ethical system, which centers on the Way, the imagery of a crossroad is absent; see Fingarette, *Confucius*. A crossroad metaphor would be the functional equivalent of the notion of moral choice. In view of Fingarette's insightful observation, the notion of *junzi*^{bc} (variously rendered as the exemplary person, the Consummate Person, or the Superior Man) must not be understood as one who achieves moral perfection by making all the right moral choices. The *junzi* embodies the Confucian ideal of human perfection through persistent self-cultivation. Self-cultivation is a gradual process of eliminating those things which are against the standard of *li*. "See nothing against *li*; hear nothing against *li* say nothing against *li*; practice nothing against *li*" (*Analects* 12.1). In the state of moral perfection, the distinction between moral (that which is in accord with *li*) and immoral (that which is not in accord with *li*) is obliterated. The *junzi* is able to perform his actions at will without transgressing the bounds of *li*.
32. Benjamin Schwartz, *The World of Thought in Ancient China* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1985), p. 169.
33. Gong-sun Long's writings can be found in Wu, *Zhongguo gu mingjia yan*, pp. 501–628.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 514. This passage is quoted from the *ming-shi* (name-actuality) chapter in the *Gong-sun Long Zi*. Graham argues that this chapter is a likely Six Dynasties forgery; see his "The Composition of the Gongsuen Long Tzzy," *Asia Major*, n.s., 5, no. 2 (1956): 147–183. Whether the *ming-shi* chapter is a forgery or a genuine piece of Gong-sun Long's work is not of

substantial import, since the white horse chapter is sufficient to illustrate the conceptual underpinnings of language in Gong-sun Long's thought. However, on the *ming-shi* relation, the view in the *ming-shi* chapter helps to illuminate the arguments of the white horse chapter. I therefore follow Wu, *Zhongguo gu mingjia yan*, in including the *ming-shi* chapter together with other chapters in the *Gong-sun Long Zi*.

35. Wu, *Zhongguo gu mingjia yan*, p. 515.
36. See, for instance, Graham, *Composition*.
37. Wu, *Zhongguo gu mingjia yan*, p. 518.
38. *Ibid.*, p. 562.
39. *Zhuang Zi*, chap. 33.
40. *Ibid.*, chap. 2; English translation from Fung, *History*, vol. 1, p. 232.
41. *Ibid.*, chap. 17.
42. Wu, *Zhongguo gu mingjia yan*, p. 715. According to Wu, Xun Zi gets his principles of instituting names from the Mohists; his ideas of phenomenal distinctions from Gong-sun Long; and his conventionalism from Zhuang Zi. The chapter on names and referents of the *Xun Zi* can be found in Wu, pp. 713–752.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 725. Following A. S. Cua, I construe this paragraph in the chapter on names and referents as talking about how we know the differences and similarities among things, rather than among names. Cua argues that Xun Zi has “three tasks that underlie the regulation of the uses of terms: (1) the purpose for having terms, (2) the formation of terms on the basis of observed similarities and differences among things, and (3) the standard of conventionality which governs the proper uses of terms.” “Term” translates “*ming*.” See his *Ethical Argumentation* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1985), p. 149. For a different interpretation, see Hu Shih, *The Development of the Logical Method in China* (New York: Paragon Reprints, 1963), p. 162.
44. Fung, *History*, vol. 1, p. 309.
45. S2 is an ethically loaded statement. So it is curious that Xun Zi does not pay attention to the ethical aspect of S2.
46. Wu, *Zhongguo gu mingjia yan*, p. 728.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 743.
48. *Ibid.*, p. 728.
49. The numbering is that of Tan Jiefu, *Mo pian fa wei*¹¹ (An analysis of the Mohist dialectic) (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 1958), which is followed by A. C. Graham, *Later Mohist Logic*. Reference to the Mohist *Canons* comes from Graham's book. This canon is in Graham, *Later Mohist Logic*, p. 327.
50. Canon A 86: “There being two names but one object is the sameness of ‘identity’.” Graham, *Later Mohist Logic*, p. 334.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 487.
52. *Xiao Qu*, in *ibid.*, pp. 483–484.
53. The same chapter also deals with quantification (“‘He loves people’ requires him to love all people without exception”) and conventional linguistic practice (“If these oxen's hairs are yellow we say that these oxen are yellow; though these oxen's hairs are many, we do not say that these oxen are many”). See Graham, *Later Mohist Logic*, pp. 491–492.
54. *Ibid.*, p. 487.

a 天人合一
b 公孙龍子
c 老子
d 墨子
e 荀子
f 莊子
g 名
h 禮
i 名分
j 實

k 天命
l 春秋
m 八佾
n 公羊
o 隱公
p 元年春王正月
q 僖公
r 隕石於宋五
s 是月六鶴退飛過宋都
t 齊師宋師曹師次于聶北救开