

Lecture 10

The Pre-Qin School of Names and Their Thought

The thought of the pre-Qin School of Names [*mingjia*, also translated Logicians, Debaters, Nominalists] was not as tidy nor as systematic as Confucianism, Mohism, Daoism, or Legalism. Unlike them, it was not directed at the exhaustion of Zhou culture, and so not directly related to Zhou [1122?-255 BCE] culture. When the Confucians, Mohists, Daoists, and Legalists articulated their philosophy, they automatically brought up questions discussed by the School of Names. Thus the School of Names was a derivative and the immediate occasion of their derivation was indirectly related to the exhaustion of Zhou culture. This immediate occasion was what Confucius called “rectifying names/terms” [*zheng-ming*]. By the time of the Spring and Autumn [722-481 BCE] and Warring States [480-222 BCE] periods, Zhou culture had become difficult to sustain because of the corruption of the nobility and the increasing complexity of society. In other words, the aristocracy was no longer able to maintain the ritual, music, and institutions, names [i.e., titles and ranks], ritual implements, measures, and numbers institutionalized by the Duke of Zhou [Zhou Gong, 12th cent. BCE]. Once the nobility degenerated, it was unavoidable that name and substance/actuality, as well as names and implements (*mingqi* 名器), became at odds with one another and disordered. “Name and substance at odds and confused” [*mingshi guailuan* 名實乖亂] refers to what the *Analects* [*Lunyu*] described as “The ruler not being ruler, the minister not being minister, the father not being father, the son not being son.”¹ He who occupies the position of a ruler has a ruler's name and should also have the substance of a ruler, namely virtue. Similarly with the minister, the father, and the son. To have the “name” of the “ruler” and be without

the “substance” of the “ruler” is a condition where “name and substance are at odds and confused,” and the outcome is that “names and [ritual] implements are at odds and confused.”

In the aristocratic society, every grade and rank in the social fabric, from the Zhou emperor down, had a definite status, or “name.” In accordance with this name came a set of equipment and ornaments, namely honors, insignias, and decorations, in other words “ritual implements” [*qi*器]. Each grade and rank came with its prescribed apparel and ornaments, as well as implements and vessels, which could not be arbitrarily assumed. In other words, implements were to be consistent with names [ranks and titles]. By the time of the Spring and Autumn and Warring States periods consistency between names and implements could no longer be maintained. It was this disorder that prompted Confucius [551-479 BCE] to bring up the notion of “rectifying names.” School of Names philosophy arose because of the confusion between names and substance and between names and the respective prescribed implements.

Confucius’s “rectification” was the immediate occasion of the rise of the School of Names but it was not the intrinsic nature of School of Names. Historically scholars have discussed the School of Names as beginning with Confucius’s “rectification of names” but they have not distinguished between the immediate cause of its emergence and its intrinsic nature. The two are always confused.² If the origin of the School of Names lies in Confucius’s rectification of names, then is Confucius to be counted as a School of Names philosopher? No one, however, has ever looked upon Confucius as a School of Names philosopher. Then what is the distinction between Confucius and the School of Names ? To answer this question we must first distinguish between the

intrinsic nature of the School of Names and the immediate cause of its emergence. The intrinsic nature of the School of Names was one thing, and the immediate cause from which School of Names was derived is another thing. Thus Confucius was not a School of Names philosopher and we can understand the intrinsic nature of School of Names independently and apart from Confucius.

Historically, the intellectual history of China has passed judgment on the School of Names with the two phrases “*kecha jiaorao* 苛察繳繞 [hairsplitting and convoluted],” and “*qici guaishuo* 琦辭怪說 [curious expressions and bizarre views].” Sima Tan [d. 110 BCE] in his *On the Main Features of the Six Schools* [*Lun Liujia Yaozhi* 論六家要旨] described the School of Names as being “hairsplitting and convoluted,”³ which is not a favorable assessment. The School of Names philosophers were all very astute, being able to notice things that escaped ordinary people. That is why they were described as “*kecha* [exactly perceptive, hair-splitting],” where the word “*ke*”, “sharp” or “exacting” is added. “*Kecha*” [hair-splitting] does not necessarily mean faithful to the truth. By being hair-splitting they were convoluted and tortuous, simply confusing men’s minds.

The School of Names was generally scholars who lived in the households of, and whose patrons were, the Four Great Princes of the Warring States period [489-222 BCE]. They were the so-called “pure guests” [*qingke*]. Gongsun Long [fl. 284-259 BCE] was one such protégé of Pingyuan Jun [Prince, Lord, of Pingyuan]. When these scholars had nothing to do they would engage one another in conversation. Sometimes they talked of nothing of consequence, but occasionally they would discuss issues that escaped the notice of the average person.

Whenever any subject becomes specialized it becomes difficult for the average person to accept. The word “*ke*”, “sharp” or “exacting”, describes the average person’s impression. Thus this “*ke*” is not necessarily a defect. “*Ke*” means strict or rigorous. Being strict is not necessarily bad. Any specialty has this characteristic. It is the same with being convoluted. Kant’s works are hairsplitting and convoluted. Logical analysis is even more sharply *kecha* [hairsplitting, or exacting]. For instance, some people can analyze if-then into tens of thousands of words, although Kant [1724-1804] didn't go as far as that. Generally speaking, any specialized discipline, and that includes logic or philosophy, cannot escape from making fine distinctions and being convoluted. From this angle, then, being hairsplitting and convoluted is not necessarily a defect.

But when Sima Tan used the epithet he meant it in a pejorative sense. That was because Sima Tan, who was not a School of Names philosopher, was speaking from the standpoint of the layman. But if we are more objective, then we should not consider hairsplitting and convoluted as necessarily pejorative if it is appropriately hairsplitting and convoluted. For instance, although Kant and the logical analysts are hairsplitting and convoluted, their analysis is logical and well structured, and each step is rigorous and carefully thought out. So objectively speaking this kind of hairsplitting and convolutedness is not necessarily bad. But if the analysis were inappropriate or bizarre, then even if we looked at it objectively, it would be bad. In other words, “It can win people’s tongues but not their hearts.”⁴ Sima Tan’s assessment of the School of Names as being “hairsplitting and convoluted” may also be understood on this level.

Xun Zi [fl. 298-238 BCE]’s assessment of the School of Names was “curious expressions and bizarre views [*qici guaishuo*],”⁵ which was also a pejorative verdict. In

the same way, if the School of Names were indeed inappropriate, then this epithet would be disparaging. If the epithet is used from the standpoint of the layman, however, but there is objective merit in School of Names thought, then the epithet would not necessarily be disparaging. But when Xun Zi said “Engaging in bizarre views, playing with curious expressions” he was making an objective disparaging judgment on the School of Names.

When intellectual historians discuss the School of Names, they usually begin with Confucius’s “rectification of names”, and use the phrases “hairsplitting and convoluted” and “curious expressions and bizarre views” as the criteria. As a result, the essential character of the School of Names was obscured, and the thought of the school’s thinkers could not be passed down. We will now re-examine their thought. First we will separate the actual occasion of their rise --Confucius’s “rectification of names”—from the School of Names’s essential character. Then we will objectively examine whether the school’s essential character really deserved the phrases “hairsplitting and convoluted” and “curious expressions and bizarre views” in their disparaging sense, in other words, determine whether the School of Names had any objective value. To do this we must examine the writings they left behind, which is not an easy task, because the writings of the School of Names are not as lucid as those of Confucianism or Daoism, nor as complete.

Because the writings of the School of Names are obscure and difficult to understand, and historically no one has been able to decipher them completely, it is necessary to examine their language very carefully, sentence by sentence. Since the establishment of the Republic [1912], numerous scholars have directed their attention to

the interpretation of the School of Names. Although the interpretation given here may not be completely correct, for making some mistakes is unavoidable, at least we have made some progress, learning from the trials and errors of our predecessors' attempts, and gradually making the writings more understandable, with fewer errors, and closer to the original meaning.

The School of Names may be broadly divided into two schools: one represented by Hui Shi [fl. 350-260 BCE], the other by Gongsun Long [fl.284-259 BCE]. Although they represent two forms of School of Names, they have often been confused with each other, and they have been confounded as being both involved with the debate on “the hard and the white, the similar and the different.”⁶ In fact, “separating the hard and the white” and “uniting the similar and the different” belong to two different forms of School of Names, the former pertaining to the thought of Gongsun Long and the latter to the thought of Hui Shi. Of course these were not the only School of Names thinkers. The immediate impetus for the emergence of School of Names was Confucius's “rectification of names.” Before this there was Deng Xi [d. 501 BCE] of the state of Jin [737-430 BCE], who was a legal scholar. After him the principal School of Names thinkers were Hui Shi and Gongsun Long.

Zhuang Zi [c.369-c.286 BCE]'s "All Under Heaven [Tianxia]" chapter has recorded Hui Shi's “The Meaning of Things [Liwuh zhi yi 歷物之意]", or the theory of “uniting the similar and the different.” Generally speaking, these statements can be clearly explicated. For example: “Great similarity is different from small similarity. This is called the small similarity-and-difference. The myriad things are ultimately all similar to one another and ultimately all different. This is called the great similarity-and-

difference. The south is infinite yet finite. Going to Yue today I returned from the trip yesterday. The convoluted can be solved. I know that the center of the world is north of Yan and south of Yue.”⁷ Not only is there sense in these words but they can be explained. They are not really hairsplitting and convoluted nor are they curious expressions and bizarre views.

“The ultimate greatness that has no beyond is called the great unity. ...Universally love the myriad things, Heaven and Earth being one body.” Historically scholars have divided this passage into ten sections.⁸ But in my view there should only be eight sections. There appears to be ten sections because the three sentences “The south is infinite yet finite. Today I go to Yue and yesterday I returned from my trip. The convoluted can be solved” are seen as three independent sections.⁹ In the “All Under Heaven [Tianxia]” chapter, this passage is characterized by two or three sentences together conveying an idea. There are no one-sentence sections. For example, “When the great similarity is different from the small similarity, it is called the small similarity-and-difference. When the myriad things are ultimately all similar to one another and ultimately all different, it is called the great similarity-and-difference.” Here two sentences make up one section. If “The south is infinite yet finite. Going to Yue today I returned from the trip yesterday. The convoluted can be solved” are three sections, then “the small similarity-and-difference” and “the great similarity-and-difference” should be two sections and not one section. Before “The south is infinite yet finite” there are no one-sentence sections. Why should these sentences be one-sentence sections? If they are, then “When the sun is at noon it is setting. When things are living they are dying” should also be two sections. Then there would be more than ten sections; there would be

tens of sections. Therefore the three sentences “The south is infinite yet finite. Today I go to Yue and yesterday I returned from trip. The convoluted can be solved” cannot be taken as three sections. Like “When the sun is at noon it is setting. When things are living they are dying”, they are two or three sentences forming one section. Thus, the statements of Hui Shi in the “All Under Heaven” chapter are all intelligible.

“The south is infinite yet finite. Today I go to Yue and yesterday I returned from the trip. The convoluted can be solved.” Taken as one section it means: The superficial contradictions in the first two sentences are in fact intelligible. “The convoluted can be solved” does not stand alone but is a comment on the preceding two sentences.

“*Lianhuan* 連環 [circular, convoluted]” is an adverb. The "All Under Heaven" chapter says: “Although the books were circuitous [*kuaiwei*], their convolutedness [*lianfan*] did no harm .” The “*lianfan*” has a meaning similar to “*lianhuan*.” “*Lianfan wu shang*” means “convoluted but without detriment.” “*Lianhuan ke jie ye* 連環可解” means “The convoluted can be unraveled.” Although “solving the convoluted” [*jie lianhuan* 解連環] does not appear in pre-Qin writings, there are statements on understanding the “*bi* 閉 [closed].” During the Warring States period there was a man who built two “*bi* [closed doors],” one of which was movable and could be released, the other immovable and could not be opened or released. They were presented as a dilemma to see if anyone could solve it.¹⁰ “Unraveling the convoluted” [*jie lianhuan*] was later associated with this dilemma. Solving the “*bi*” is a practical question. Thus “The convoluted can be solved” is also a practical question and not a School of Names question. But then it would be meaningless. That is why “The convoluted can be solved” is not an independent section but is a comment on the preceding sentences.

“The south is infinite yet finite. Today I go to Yue and yesterday I returned from the trip. The convoluted can be solved” looks at the world as a sphere. The statement “I know the center of the world is north of Yan and south of Yue” also has this meaning. Yan is the present Hopei, in northern China. Yue is the present Zhejiang, in southern China. Going north of Yan and going south of Yue means going in opposite directions. If Euclidean geometry were followed, how could they arrive at the center of the world? This shows that Hui Shi had an insight, which is that the world was round. Only then would the two opposite lines meet in a center point.

“The south is infinite yet finite.” If we judged this from the standpoint of a straight line, the infinite can never be finite. Then this statement would be a contradiction. But if we are talking of a sphere, then whether we go north or south we will always return to the point of origin. Then there would be no contradiction and “The convoluted can be solved.” In physics the theory of relativity holds that the universe is boundless but finite, which is based on the notion that “the universe is round.”

But there is a misperception in Hui Shi’s statement. “The south is infinite yet finite” is speaking spatially. But “Today I go to Yue and yesterday I returned from the trip” is speaking temporally. Hui Shi has confused the spatial with the temporal. But time has only one dimension, and cannot be confused with space. It cannot follow the spatial sphere and go backwards, as in “Today I go to Yue and yesterday I returned from the trip.” That is why I say that Hui Shi has a misperception. If you think about this problem carefully you will be able to understand it.

Although Hui Shi had this misperception we should not fail to acknowledge his insight that “the world is round.” Thus although these statements appear contradictory,

they can be understood. This is an example of a School of Names question. From it we can see that there are eight and not ten sections relating to Hui Shi's thought in the "All Under Heaven" chapter. And all eight sections can be made intelligible.

For example, "When things are living they are dying." What is "living" and "dying?" "Living" does not have its own nature. Therefore "living" cannot become "living" by itself. Likewise "dying" cannot become "dying" by itself. It is just like high and low not being fixed (this is what is meant by "heaven is as low as the Earth, the mountains and marshes are on the same level.") "When things are living they are dying" is to dissolve the opposition and difference between living and dying. Hui Shi dissolved many differentiating concepts, his purpose being to arrive at "Universally love the myriad things, Heaven and Earth being one body." (*Zhuang Zi* 33, "All Under Heaven" chapter).

To say "When things are living they are dying" is to dissolve the opposition between living and dying. This means that the duality of living and dying cannot be established. Zhuang Zi said: "That-and-this is the doctrine of when living dying." ("The Equality of Things [Qi Wu Lun]" chapter). In order for Zhuang Zi's "Equality of Things" chapter to equalize true and false, right and wrong, living and dying, it had to demolish dualism. That is why Zhuang Zi used Hui Shi's "doctrine of when living dying [*fangsheng zhi shuo* 方生之說]" to enunciate his theory of the equality of things. When Zhuang Zi said "When things are living they are dying, when they are dying they are living; when something is possible it is impossible, when it is impossible it is possible," ("Equality of Things" chapter), he was inspired by Hui Shi.

Although Zhuang Zi's "Equality of Things" chapter borrows Hui Shi's "doctrine of when living dying" and through demolishing the duality of living and dying, of

affirming and negating, to level and equalize the myriad things, he is speaking from the standpoint of *xuan* 玄 metaphysics [see Lectures 6 and 11] . On the other hand, when Hui Shi speaks of “When the sun is at noon it is setting, when things are living they are dying,” it is from the standpoint of School of Names. To speak in the style of School of Names and to speak in the style of *xuan* metaphysics are two different things. In brief, when Hui Shi speaks of “uniting the similar and the different” he is speaking in the style of the School of Names, while when Zhuang Zi speaks of “uniting the similar and the different” he is speaking in the style of *xuan* metaphysics [*xuanli* 玄理]. Zhuang Zi said: “Heaven and Earth are born together with me; the myriad things are one with me,” and “Heaven and Earth are one denotation; the myriad things are one horse.” (*Zhuang Zi*, "Equality of Things" chapter). This is “uniting the similar and the different,” and is speaking *xuan*-metaphysically. When Hui Shi speaks, in the style of the School of Names, of “uniting the similar and the different,” he has an ultimate goal, which is to “love universally the myriad things, Heaven and Earth being one body.” Strictly speaking this statement is a conclusion and not a section by itself. This is the ultimate goal and the ideal of his “uniting the similar and the different.” Zhuang Zi also said: “Heaven and Earth are born together with me; the myriad things are one with me.” This shows that the two men shared the same goal. On the face of it the two are almost indistinguishable. But because one is speaking in the style of *xuan* metaphysics while the other is speaking in the style of the School of Names, they are in fact not the same. That is why we cannot completely explain Hui Shi’s “uniting the similar and the different” in terms of Zhuang Zi. Fung Yu-lan [Feng Youlan, 1895-1990] explained Hui Shi entirely on the basis of Zhuang Zi,¹¹ which, although not altogether wrong, failed to distinguish

statements made in the style of the School of Names and those made in the style of *xuan* metaphysics. If we cannot distinguish the two, then Zhuang Zi would also become “hairsplitting and convoluted.” But Zhuang Zi’s arguments are not hairsplitting! Thus it is very important to distinguish the School of Names from the *xuan* metaphysical discussion of “uniting the similar and the different,” and to do so we must sort out the differences between the two in philosophy, intrinsic character, and plane of thought.

Zhuang Zi was not a School of Names philosopher, and therefore did not shoulder the responsibilities of a School of Names philosopher. Although he borrowed the School of Names arguments to propound his theory of the equality of things, he did not pay attention to or analyze School of Names principles in a hairsplitting way. For example, take his statement “Heaven and Earth are one denotation [denote one], the myriad things are one horse.” The problem of “denotation” and “horse” came from Gongsun Long. Gongsun Long maintained that “All things without exception are denotations but denotations (things) are not denotations” (“On Denoting Things” chapter) [*Wuh mo fei zhi er (wu) zhi fei zhi* 物莫非指而 (物) 指非指 (指物論篇)] and “The white horse is not a horse.” (Baima Lun 白馬論 “Theory of White Horse” chapter). These two statements have a definite meaning, and Gongsun Long is speaking in the School of Names style. Zhuang Zi, however, paid no attention to the original meaning of Gongsun Long but simply borrowed the statements to speak of *xuan* metaphysics. The pointing/denoting [*zhi*指] and the horse when borrowed by Zhuang Zi to speak *xuan*-metaphysically no longer “can win men’s tongues but not their hearts,” but have become very accessible Daoist metaphysics.

“Heaven and Earth are one denotation; the myriad things are one horse” is Zhuang Zi speaking *xuan*-metaphysically of “uniting the similar [*tong*] and the different.” It is different from Hui Shi speaking in the style of the School of Names of “uniting the similar and the different.” “Great similarity is different from small similarity. This is called the small similarity-and-difference. The myriad things are ultimately similar and ultimately different. This is called the great similarity-and-difference.” In the statement “Great similarity is different from small similarity; this is called the small similarity-and-difference,” what Hui Shi means is that there is a difference between “great similarity [*da tong*]” and “small similarity [*xiao tong*]”. This is “the small similarity-and-difference.” In the statement “The myriad things are ultimately all similar and ultimately all different; this is called the great similarity-and-difference,” Hui Shi means that if we regard the myriad things as similar, then they are all similar; if as dissimilar then they are all dissimilar, and that this is called “great similarity-and-difference.” Here Hui Shi is speaking of the problem of the similar and the different directly in terms of the similar and the different.

On the other hand, when Zhuang Zi says “Heaven and Earth are one denotation; the myriad things are one horse,” he has confounded the question of the similar and the different, and of things and denotations, and is speaking of them *xuan*-metaphysically, ignoring the original meaning of Hui Shi and Gongsun Long.

Although when Hui Shi speaks of “uniting the similar and the different” he also talks about “Universally love the myriad things, Heaven and Earth being one body,” he has reached this conclusion as a School of Names thinker. It means something entirely different from the conclusion that Zhuang Zi has reached *xuan*-metaphysically. For

example, the conclusion that can be reached by means of Hume's analysis and Russell's logical analysis can also be reached through Buddhist thought. But there is a great difference between the two. For example, Seng Zhao 僧肇 [384-414]'s "Theory of the Immobility of Things [*wuh bu qian lun*]" discusses immobility (neither coming nor going) from the perspective of *prajna* or "dependent-origination substance-empty" of the *Middle Treatise* [*Zhong Lun*]. But this same conclusion can be arrived at using Zeno's proof. For example, in the proof of the race between Achilles and the tortoise, as long as the tortoise takes one step ahead of Achilles, Achilles will never be able to overtake the tortoise. Here the crux does not lie in whether Achilles can overtake the tortoise or not, but in proving that "motion is impossible." This is also "the immobility of things." Zeno [b. ca. 490 BCE] speaks of "the immobility of things" in a "School of Names" way, while Seng Zhao speaks of it "*xuan*-metaphysically." Therefore we cannot understand Seng Zhao's "doctrine of the immobility of things" in terms of Zeno's method. Zeno's method was precisely "explaining motion in order to seek rest [*shi dong yi qiu jing* 釋動以求靜], which Seng Zhao opposed, while Seng Zhao's doctrine was "seeking rest in motion". Here we see that making statements in the style of the School of Names is different from making statements *xuan*-metaphysically. By the same token, we should not use Zhuang Zi's *xuan* metaphysics as a basis for understanding Hui Shi's School of Names thought.

Thus, although School of Names and *xuan* metaphysics may arrive at similar conclusions, the two are different. As to exactly how the two are different, that is a deeper question and cannot be entered into in detail here. You might give it some thought yourselves.

Hui Shi's statements on "uniting the similar and the different" are relatively easy to understand. What is really difficult to understand are the fragmentary and isolated phrases and sentences that remain from the occasions when Hui Shi used these School of Names principles to debate Gongsun Long and others. The "All Under Heaven" chapter [Zhuang Zi 33] lists 21 such fragments. Historically no one has been able to completely ascertain their sources or their meaning. Fung Yu-lan has grouped these 21 fragments under the headings of "uniting the similar and the different" and "separating hardness and whiteness."¹² Classifying them should increase their intelligibility, for we can attempt to understand them with the help of classification. But I have come to the conclusion after examining them carefully that all those items that are grouped under "uniting the similar and the different" do not seem to express the idea of "uniting the similar and the different." For example, although such fragments as "eggs have hairs" and "white dogs are black" can be vaguely associated with "uniting the similar and the different," they do not make any sense and are therefore quite problematic.

Although Hui Shi's "uniting the similar and the different" is not *xuan* metaphysics, it tends towards *xuan* metaphysics. It is a metaphysical problem. In other words, it is metaphysical *mingli* 名理 [logical reasoning in the discussion of names/terms]. In Western philosophy, metaphysics is also *mingli*, which is why Kant called it transcendental logic. The *xuan* metaphysics of Zhuang Zi and Buddhism completely transcends Western metaphysics, and is different from what is called metaphysics in the West. Here *mingli* is used in a broad sense. "Uniting the similar and the different" is a

way of thinking which expresses a particular mental state. But it cannot be expressed by such isolated statements as “Eggs have hairs” or “White dogs are black.”

The fragments grouped under “separating hardness and whiteness [*li jian bai* 離堅白]” may be roughly understood according to the principle of “separating hardness and whiteness” because it is relatively easier for them to express the meaning of “separate [*li* 離]”. First of all we have to understand what Gongsun Long meant by “separating hardness and whiteness.” “Hardness” is a tactile concept while “whiteness” is visual. “Separating hardness and whiteness” refers to “Hardness and whiteness are separate” in the “On the Hard White Stone” [*Jian Bai Shi Lun*] chapter. According to Gongsun Long, when we see a stone as white, we can only obtain the concept of “whiteness” from our visual sense and not the concept of “hardness.” Touching it, we obtain the sense of its “hardness” but not of its “whiteness.” Thus we may conclude that the two concepts of hardness and whiteness cannot exist simultaneously in a single sensory organ, and therefore neither can they co-exist in the stone. Hence the statement “separating hardness and whiteness.” “Separating” leads to the discussion of “latent” [*cang* 藏]. “Hard,” “white,” and “stone” are three concepts that cannot be obtained simultaneously in one sensory percept. We can only simultaneously get the concept of “hard stone” or “white stone,” which is why we have the statement “the hard white stone” are “two” not “three.”¹³ This is what is called “the latent three,” meaning “the three are submerged and inaccessible,” for whiteness and hardness are always “separate.” In the concepts of “separate” and “latent” Gongsun Long had an ontological insight: each concept is independent and does not subsume any other. That is why he said: “As to the separate, the world has always been independent and straight [*du er zheng* 獨而正].” (“On

Hardness and Whiteness" chapter). In "separating hardness and whiteness" Gongsun Long had two principal points of view, one ontological and one epistemological, although in his writings they are not clearly distinguished. The sense of sight obtains whiteness but not hardness, while the sense of touch obtains hardness but not whiteness. From the epistemological standpoint, it is subjective idealism. But this remains debatable, and I have discussed all of it in my book *The School of Names and Xun Zi* [*Mingjia yu Xun Zi*].¹⁴ Gongsun Long's thought was quite unique. It pertained to abstract thinking, which is why his writings are mostly understandable. Thus, from an objective standpoint he is not really "hairsplitting and convoluted" nor "curious expressions and bizarre views." We should take a look at some of the other supposedly "bizarre views."

"*Cang san er* 藏三耳[hide three ears]" is a corruption of "*cang san* 藏三" [latent three]. Then the "*er* 而" which means "*er yi*" "[just, only] is misinterpreted as the "*er* 耳" meaning "ear." Thus "latent three" is mistakenly transmitted as "hidden are three ears." That is how it became a "bizarre view."¹⁵

Another example, "*ji san zu*" [chicken three legs], is also a similar error of transmission. Most people do not examine Gongsun Long's writings, but instead make conjectures based on "*ji san zu*" in Zhuang Zi's "All Under Heaven" chapter.¹⁶ From this we know that many of the passages recorded in the "All Under Heaven" chapter are errors of transmission. Added to this are the arbitrary interpretations of later generations, resulting in the loss of the intrinsic character of the School of Names and our inability to understand their philosophy, which is a pity.

“*Ji san zu* 雞三足” [chicken three legs] should be “*ji zu, san*” [chicken legs, three].

In the "Tongbian Lun Pian 通變論篇" ["On Change" chapter] Gongsun Long says:

“Speaking of the chicken’s leg makes one; counting the legs give two. Two plus one gives three. Speaking of the leg of the ox or sheep makes one. Counting the legs gives four. Four and one gives five. For legs of ox or sheep, five. For legs of chicken, three. So we say: cattle and sheep are not chickens.” Gongsun Long only said that in speaking about the chicken’s leg we can arrive at three, but he did not say that the chicken has three legs. The chicken has two legs, likewise the ox or sheep has four legs.

“Speaking of the chicken’s leg makes one” refers to the foot in general. Here the “foot” is an abstract concept, and so it is “one.” “Counting the chicken’s legs” is to speak of chicken legs concretely, and of course that makes two. To speak of the chicken’s leg and to count the chicken’s legs refer to two different levels. This is abstract thinking and is very logical. To be able to point out these two levels is certainly no mean accomplishment. Although using this to distinguish the difference between the chicken and ox and sheep does not mean much and is merely intellectual play, it can still train us to think and distinguish the two levels of thought. That is what we call School of Names.

“The white horse is not a horse” is mainly pointing out that the two concepts of “white horse” and “horse” are different. “Not” here means “does not equal.” “Is” and “not” in logic have many different meanings. For instance, the “is” in “A is A” does not refer to a subject-predicate relation but to a reflexive relation, representing the same rule. In terms of intension, the “is” [*shi*] of “The white horse is not a horse” refers to a subject-predicate relation. In terms of extension, it refers to a class or sub-class relation. On the other hand, the “are” [*shi*] of “Ox and sheep are ox, ox and sheep are sheep” refers

to still another relation. Generally, the “is” or “are” in logical analysis has four different meanings.¹⁷ When Gongsun Long said “The white horse is not a horse,” the “is not” [fei] means “is different from,” “does not equal.” It means that the intension and extension of “white horse” and “horse” are different. So this is not a “bizarre view.” Gongsun Long, however, only said “The white horse is not a horse;” he did not say what is known to ordinary people, namely “The white horse is a horse.” The purpose of Aristotle’s logic was to explain the class relation in “The white horse is a horse,” in other words, that the species “white horse” belongs to the genus “horse.” “The white horse is not a horse” does not really negate “The white horse is a horse.” The two are not mutually contradictory. From this we can see that Gongsun Long did not yet possess a completely logical mind. It was not that his statement was bizarre; it was just that he did not see the problem completely. Thus we can give a clear explanation of the "On the White Horse" chapter. Likewise the "On Name and Substance [*Mingshi Lun*]" chapter can also be clearly explained. They contain many fine and apt statements and are not bizarre.

The main gist of the "On Change" chapter [Tong Bian Lun 通變論] is a discussion of “Cattle and sheep are cattle, cattle and sheep are not cattle; cattle and sheep are sheep, cattle and sheep are not sheep.”¹⁸ This is the same question as that of “And that cattle and horses are not cattle and not horses presents no difficulty” in *Mo Jing* [*Mo Zi Classic*]. The two do not contradict each other. “Cattle and sheep are cattle and are sheep” and “Cattle and sheep are not cattle and not sheep” are neither of them subject-predicate propositions. “Cattle and sheep” is an aggregate. “Cattle and sheep are cattle and are sheep” refers to the relation between the aggregate and its parts. “Are” means imply.

“Are not” in “Cattle and sheep are not cattle and not sheep” means “do not equal.” The two have different meanings and do not contradict each other.

The emphasis in the "On Change" chapter lies precisely in the discussion of this question, which begins with a discussion of “Left and right make two,” namely with the number two. Russell [1872-1970] held that a number is a class of classes. The number two consists of the class of all classes of pairs. But the number 2 does not contain men and women, left and right, up and down. Gongsun Long, however, did not start by making a clear distinction. He said: “.Can left and right be called two? They can.” If “two” refers to “the two,” namely “the left and the right,” then “two” contains “both left and right,” which is only one class among dual classes and not the number 2. The number 2 is an abstract concept that is higher than that of left and right. From this he goes on to discuss the question of “Cattle and sheep imply cattle and imply sheep; cattle and sheep do not equal sheep and do not equal cattle,” which is a question of aggregates and is actually very simple. The two "*shi* [is, are] in “Cattle and sheep are [*shi*] cattle” and in “The white horse is [*shi*] a horse” obviously have different meanings. The *Mo Zi Classic* does not have the concept of an aggregate, but has the concept of “*jian* [concurrently],” meaning “concurrently have both.”

In the beginning when I wrote the book *Gongsun Long zhi Mingli* [The Logic of Gongsun Long], I explained all of the chapters “On Name and Substance”, “On Hardness and Whiteness”, “On the White Horse”, and “On Change”. But I was unable to explain “On Denoting Things” [Zhi Wuh Lun 指物論]. Even after referring to the works of many other scholars I was still unable to get the answer. For example, Fung Yu-lan

added some concepts and made the distinction between the two concepts of “*zhi* 指” [pointing, denoting] and “*wuh*” [things].¹⁹ But it didn’t work. The reason was that there were too few defining marks that could give a clue to the meaning. To make it intelligible it would be necessary to shift around words or interpolate, but there would have to be a basis for doing so. Thus the problem is very difficult.

Then I came across Mr. Chen Guimiao 陳癸淼’s work “Kongsun Long Zi *Shushi* 公孫龍子疏釋” [An Explication of Gongsun Long].²⁰ His interpretation is generally sound, the crux being in the sentence “*Wuh mo fei zhi er zhi fei zhi* 物莫非指而指非” [All things are denotations, but denotations are not denotations]. Based on the words that follow, “*Zhi yu wuh fei zhi* 指與物非指” [Denotations and things are not denotations], he changed this sentence to “*Wuh mo fei zhi er wuh zhi fei zhi* 物莫非指而物指非指” [All things are denotations but things and denotations are not denotations,] which makes it intelligible and, furthermore, compatible with the text. But in explaining the last section, “*Qie fu zhi gu zi wei fei zhi, xi dai yu wuh er nai yu wei zhi* 且夫指固自為非指，奚待於物而乃與為指” [However, since denotations are themselves not denotation, why do they have to depend on things and with them become denotations?], it becomes muddled again, and, furthermore, it contradicts other parts of the text. Thus the problem still remained unsolved.

Later I came across my schoolmate Kuang Jinglun 鄺錦倫’s work, “[Kongsun Long Zi ‘Zhiwuh Lun’ *Pian Shishi* 公孫龍子指物篇試釋” [A Tentative Explication of Gongsun Long Zi’s ‘Discussion of Denotations and Things’].²¹ He also changed the opening sentence to “*Wuh mo fei zhi er wuh [zhi] fei zhi* 物莫非指而物〔指〕非指”

[All things are denotations but things and denotations are not denotations]” and furthermore made a clearer distinction between two relations: one an epistemological relation, the other an ontological relation. “*Wu mo fei zhi* 物莫非指 “ [All things are denotations] is an epistemological problem while “*wu zhi fei zhi* 物指非指 “ [denotations and things are not denotations] is an ontological problem. This interpretation is in agreement with the “*li*離, separate,” in Gongsun Long’s “Separate hardness and whiteness,” in other words, it agrees with Gongsun Long’s view that “Each concept is independent and stands by itself.” Accordingly, the “*fei*” in “*Wuh zhi fei zhi* 物指非指” [things and denotations are not denotations] means “does not equal,” which is an ontological concept. In this way, the words that follow can be made intelligible. But at the very end, a similar problem comes up, and so the problem remained ultimately unsolved.

Actually the difficulties they have encountered can be solved. By keeping the adjustment of words they have made, I re-examined the original text carefully and discovered that by following the thought of the later part and inserting a “*fei*,” and changing the problematic passage to “*qie fu zhi gu zi wei [fei] fei zhi (gu zi wei zhi), xi dai yü wuh er nai yu wei zhi* 且夫指固自為(非) 非指(固自為指) , 奚待於物而乃與為指 “ [However, since denotations themselves are [not] not denotations (are themselves denotations), why do they depend on things and then with them become denotation], I could make the "Zhiwuh Lun" [Denotations and Things] chapter intelligible without radically changing the text as is usually done. Thus I need not explicate the text all over again but need only bring up these two points for you to be able to see the rest for

yourself.²² Besides Hui Shi and Gongsun Long, Xun Zi also made contributions to the School of Names. In the "Rectification of Names" [zheng ming 正名] chapter Xun Zi discussed the need for rectifying names. He also refers to the "*zhi ming* 質名" [qualitative term], and the "*liang ming* 量名" [quantitative term]. He failed, however, to mention the relational term. The ability to discuss the relational term would have been a very high level of thought.

What I have discussed so far is the development of pre-Qin School of Names. Let me recapitulate. Confucius's rectification of names was the immediate occasion for the rise of the School of Names. Before this there was Deng Xi, after this there were the true School of Names, Hui Shi and Gongsun Long. But their work still fell short of an analysis of logic itself. Although Hui Shi's "uniting the similar and the different" was "*mingli*" [logic] it tended towards the goal of human life, namely "Universally love the myriad things, Heaven and Earth being one body." Gongsun Long's "Separating hardness and whiteness" also had its goal. He had ontological insight, which is revealed in the concept "separate." This is close to Western thinking, where every concept can be pinned down. By continuing on this path Gongsun Long could have done analysis in the style of Plato [427-348/7 BCE] and Husserl [1859-1938]. The purpose of Husserl's phenomenological method was to enable phenomenon to present itself. This is pure objectivism. Gongsun Long showed this tendency when he held that every concept stood alone independently, which is why I describe him as belonging to the thinking of the West. Because historically the Chinese have never been comfortable with this kind of thought, Gongsun Long has seemed very peculiar. In the Wei-Jin period Xi Kang 嵇康's "On Sound Having No Joy and Sorrow" [*Sheng Wu Ai Le Lun* 聲無哀樂論] also

consisted of Western-style thought. Xi Kang [CE 223-262], a music theorist of a very high order, held that sound itself had neither feelings of sorrow or joy; it only had beauty of rhythm and harmony, while emotions evoked by music were subjective. This is to speak of the beauty of pure objectivism and is akin to Plato. Discussion of this sort was alien to the Chinese mode of thought, and as a result it was not developed any further.

Although Hui Shi and Gongsun Long are called School of Names thinkers, what they discussed was only the rudiments or the preliminaries of the School of Names, for they did not reach the questions of logic itself. After that School of Names thought was suspended, with the result that the Chinese School of Names would never develop to the level of discussing the questions of logic itself.

The logic of the West originated in Aristotle, who had already discussed logic itself. But from the perspective of the later development of logic, although Aristotle had reached full formalization, it was not sufficiently refined, for it still contained components of epistemology and ontology. Present-day symbolic logic is not adulterated with these components, which means that it has reached full formalization. All the same, Aristotle did reach logic itself. Logic is concerned with the question of the structure of inference itself. It is concerned with inference itself and not with inference about content or object. Aristotle's syllogism is concerned with the structure of the major premise, the minor premise, and the conclusion. This is the manifestation of logic itself, and has reached full formalization, a level not reached by the School of Names in China. Hui Shi and Gongsun Long did not deal with logic itself, although their path could have led them there. All the same, they represented the preliminary efforts of the School of Names.

That even such preliminary and preparatory work could not be sustained is indeed a great pity.

From the failure of the School of Names to develop in China we may see that the Chinese people do not have sufficient abstract thinking. Concrete thought is more congenial to the Chinese. The concrete does not necessarily mean the concreteness of the sensory object. *Xuan* metaphysical principles are concrete, belonging to concrete thought of a high order, which is the real. The Chinese people, therefore, are adept in *xuan* metaphysical thought, but are insufficiently skilled at abstract thinking on the level of the understanding [*zhixing*知性]. The Chinese may also be said to lack interest in this aspect of thought. Abstract thinking is thought that emphasizes the intellect. In China it bloomed briefly in the pre-Qin School of Names, after which it vanished. Mr. Lao Siguang has said: "Ever since the time of Greece, Western culture has emphasized the intellect, while in China the emphasis has always been on virtue." Strictly speaking, China is not without the side that emphasizes the intellect, but it has not been fully developed. It bloomed briefly and then withered away, which is a great pity.

In the intellectual history of China we find ways of thinking that are outside the mainstream of Chinese thought, such as, for example, the pre-Qin School of Names and Xi Kang's "On Sound Having No Sorrow and Joy," which emphasized abstract thinking and belonged to thought that stresses the intellect. Philosophy that stresses the intellect comprises the mainstream of Western thought, but in China it did not fully develop. Since the pre-Qin period, Confucianism and Daoism have both developed to a very high level, whereas School of Names, Mohism, and Legalism, and so forth failed to continue developing. There were a number of separate reasons for this. During the Wei, Jin, Sui

and Tang periods China had also to absorb Buddhism. Why was it possible for Buddhism to flourish in China? It was because in the *prajñā* aspect Buddhism was compatible with the *xuan* metaphysics and *xuan* wisdom of Daoism. Buddhist thought stood midway between Western and Chinese thought. The abstract concepts of India that appeared in Buddhism, such as “*yinming* 因明” [Skt. *hetuvidyā*, the science of cause; logical reasoning] which dealt with logic, were uncongenial to the Chinese, with the result that *yinming* was not able to continue developing in China. Even Kuei Ji 窺基 [632-682], who explicated *yinming*, is tedious and illogical. But such *xuan* [profound] metaphysical principles as nirvana, Buddha-nature, *prajñā*, and so on, were readily accepted by the Chinese. The Chinese concealed abstract logical thought in concrete *xuan* metaphysics, but they did not use their head for abstract logical thinking to lift it out for separate study.

Every culture has its limitations. Within its national limitations each culture slowly unfolds. Although logical thinking that emphasizes the intellect did not unfold in China historically, it can still unfold if that is necessary, for that kind of thought has appeared in China in the past, School of Names and Xun Zi being examples. Xun Zi’s philosophy belongs basically to the system that emphasizes the intellect and the cognitive mind. Xun Zi did not express bizarre views. His was a highly logical mind. He could talk about logic, but did not reach Aristotle’s level of full formalization. As a result, what fully developed out of the life of Chinese culture were the two schools, Confucianism and Daoism, to which was later added Buddhism, making up the Three Teachings. This is the mainstream of Chinese culture; it is also the peculiar trait of Chinese culture. Historically the School of Names and logic did not unfold in China because of national limitations.

However, even if we did not have it in the past, developing it in the future will be just as good. Cultural content does not have to be there from the very beginning. On the other hand, if we maintain that everything contained in Western culture already exists in Chinese culture, that would be a misguided way of discussing Chinese culture.

It may be gathered from what I have said in this lecture that the School of Names in China has been much misunderstood. It is possible to understand most of their principles and to see that their statements, far from being “hairsplitting and convoluted” or “curious expressions and bizarre views,” did have their objective value.

Transcribed by Shu-ching Ho 何淑靜

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¹ *Analects*, 7.11: "Duke Jing of Qi asked Confucius about governance. Confucius replied: 'The ruler being ruler, the minister being minister, the father father, the son son.' The duke said: 'Excellent! If indeed the king is not king, the minister not minister, the father not father, the son not son, even if I were to have grain, would I be able to eat it?'"

² The appendix, "Gongsun Long Zi *fawei* 公孫龍子發微 [Elucidation of Gongsun Long]", to *Gongsun Long Zi Jiao Quan* 公孫龍子校詮 [*Gongsun Long, edited and explained*] by Wang Qixiang 王啓湘, not only claims that the School of Names came out of Confucius, but that the discussion of hardness and whiteness also came out of Confucius. See Mou Zongshan, *Mingjia yü Xun Zi* [*The School of Names and Xun Zi*] (Taipei: Xuesheng Shuju, 1979), pp. 78-79.

³ Sima Tan in his *Lun Liujiia Yaozhi* [*Main Features of the Six Schools*] says: "The School of Names are hairsplitting and convoluted, making it impossible to get to their meaning. By concentrating on names they lose sight of commonsense. Thus they say: 'Let people reduce their efforts and it is easy to lose the truth. As to controlling the name and seeking the substance/actuality so that it is not lost in confusion, one cannot but be exacting [*cha*]." In Sima Qian, *Shiji*, "Taishigong Zixu" [Foreword by the Lord Grand Scribe], *juan* 130.

⁴ *Zhuang Zi*, "All Under Heaven [*Tianxia*]" chapter: "...Debaters responded in this way to Hui Shi, without ever coming to an end. The followers of the debaters Huan Tuan and Gongsun Long [try to] deceive men's hearts and alter their wills; they may triumph over their mouths, but cannot win their hearts. That is their limitation. Hui Shi uses his

intelligence daily to debate others. His debates with the most skilled debaters of the empire are particularly bizarre. That is their essence [*di* root]."

⁵ *Xun Zi* [fl.298-238 BC], "Rebutting the Twelve Masters [*Fei shi'er zi*非十二子]"chapter: "They do not emulate the ancestor kings, nor do they uphold propriety or duty. Instead they enjoy creating bizarre doctrines and playing with strange expressions. They are exceedingly rigorous, but irrelevant. They argue but to no purpose, are busy but accomplish nothing, and cannot be used to build principles and laws. However, they always have reasons [for their arguments], and their words always come out [sounding] logical, enough to deceive and confuse the foolish multitude. That is Hui Shi and Deng Xi." "Entertaining bizarre doctrines and playing with strange expressions" refers to "strange expressions and bizarre doctrines" [*qici guaishuo*琦辭怪說].

⁶According to *Zhuang Zi, Shiji, Siku Quanshu Zongmu Tiyao*四庫全書總目提要, Wang Qixiang 王啓湘, and others, Gongsun Long was author of "*Jian bai tong yi zhi bian* 堅白同異之辯" [The debate on hardness, whiteness, sameness, and difference]. For details see Mou 1979B, *Mingjia yu Xun Zi [The School of Names and Xun Zi]*, pp. 75-81.

⁷"*Zhuang Zi* 33,7: "All Under Heaven": "Hui Shi had knowledge of many areas, his books filling five wagons. His teaching was contradictory, his words missing the truth. Their confused drift was: 'The greatest without beyond is called Great One. The smallest without within is called Small One. Without thickness and impossible to aggregate, it is as big as a thousand miles. Heaven is as low as Earth, the mountains are as flat as marshes. When the sun is at noon it is at a slant. When things are living they are dying. Great similarity is different from small similarity. This is called the small-similarity-and-difference. The myriad things are ultimately similar and ultimately different. This is called the great-similarity-and-difference. The south is infinite and yet finite. Today I go to Yue and yesterday I return. The convoluted can be unraveled. Universally love the myriad things, Heaven and Earth being one body.'"

⁸ Fung Yu-lan [1895-1990] (in his *Zhongguo Zhexue Shi [History of Chinese Philosophy]* (Shanghai: Shanghai Shudian , 1990) pp. 249-250), and Fan Shoukang (in his *Zhongguo Zhexue Shi Gangyao [Concise History of Chinese Philosophy]* (Taipei: Kaiming Bookstore), pp. 92-93), among others, divide this passage into ten segments.

⁹ This passage has been divided into three segments by Sima Biao 司馬彪 [3rd century CE], Cheng Xuanying 成玄英, Li Yi 李頤, and Fung Yu-lan, among others. For details see Mou , *Mingjia yu Xun [The School of Names and Xun Zi]*, pp. 21-23.

¹⁰ For Mou 's study of *lianhuan ke jie ye* [the convoluted can be unraveled], see Mou *Mingjia yu Xun Zi*, pp. 66-70.

¹¹ Fung Yu-lan, *Zhongguo Zhexue Shi [History of Chinese Philosophy]*, *op. cit.*, page 245: "Zhuang Zi's philosophy appears to have been extremely influenced by Hui Shi....Since there is agreement between Zhuang Zi's philosophy and that of Hui Shi....I

have used this as a clue to arrive at the conclusion that in order to understand the ten segments of Hui Shi described in the "All Under Heaven [Tianxia]" chapter, we should seek to understand them by looking in the book *Zhuang Zi*, and thus avoid misrepresenting the ancients." For his interpretation see pp. 246-251 of the same book.

¹² See Fung Yu-lan, *Zhongguo Zhexue Shi (History of Chinese Philosophy)*, *op. cit.*, pp. 269-272.

¹³ The "Jianbai Lun" [Discussion of Hardness and Whiteness] chapter says: "Can we say that hardness and whiteness make three?' He replied: 'No we cannot.' He asked: 'Can we say two?' He replied: 'Yes.' He asked: 'Why?' He replied: ' Without hardness you get whiteness. This brings out two. Without whiteness you get hardness. This brings out two."

¹⁴ See Mou, *Mingjia yu Xun Zi*, *op. cit.*, pp.181-189.

¹⁵ See Mou, *Mingjia yu Xun Zi*, pp. 162-164, for how "cang san 藏三" [conceals three] was erroneously transmitted into "cang san er."

¹⁶ Those who hold this opinion include Xie Wuliang 謝无量 [1884-1964] in his *Zhongguo Zhexue Shi* [History of Chinese Philosophy] (Taipei: Chung Hua Bookstore) p. 202, Fan Shoukang, in his *Zhongguo Zhexue Shi Gangyao* [Concise History of Chinese Philosophy], *op. cit.*, page 96.

¹⁷ See Mou Tsung-san, *Lizexue [Logic]*, pp. 32-33, Taiwan: National Institute for Compilation and Translation, publisher; Cheng Chung Book Co., printer. Or *Mingjia yu Xun Zi*, *op.cit.*, pp.115-116.

¹⁸"Tong Bian Lun" [Discussion of Change] chapter: "The sheep is different from the ox. The sheep has teeth, the ox no teeth. But they may be [classified as] an aggregate." Here "sheep and cattle" are an "aggregate" [jilei 積類] of "sheep" and "cattle". That is why the statement "it is incorrect to say that sheep and cattle are not sheep and not cattle" indicates that "cattle and sheep are cattle, cattle and sheep are sheep". Here "are [shi]" means "imply." For details see Mou, *Mingjia yu Xun Zi*, pp. 128-138.

¹⁹ See Fung Yu-lan, *Zhongguo Zhexue Shi [History of Chinese Philosophy]*, *op. cit.*

²⁰ Chen Guimiao 陳癸淼, *Gongsun Longzi Shushi* 公孫龍子疏釋 [Gongsun Longzi, *Annotated*] (Taiwan: Lantai Shuju 蘭臺書局).

²¹ This article was published in *Youshi Yuekan* 幼獅月刊 [Young Lion Monthly], volume 40, number 5.

²² See Mou, *Mingjia yu Xunzi*, *op.cit.*, Introduction.