

# A GENERATIVE UNITY: CHINESE LANGUAGE AND CHINESE PHILOSOPHY\*

CHUNG-YING CHENG

## I.

Language may embody philosophical outlooks and patterns of thinking of a people in many ways. Benjamin Whorf is not the first one to have made notice of this phenomenon, though he is perhaps the first conspicuous linguist who based his observations of this phenomenon on specific studies of some languages other than English. Many philosophers, from Aristotle to 18th century German linguist-philosopher Wilhelm von Humboldt, have taken language very seriously in order to construct views on logical reasoning or a philosophy of mind. More recently British analytical philosophy has thrived on the analysis of ordinary language and its uses for the clarification of philosophical puzzles, the most impressive example being the repudiation of the Cartesian myth of ghost in a machine through the examination of mental words in their use contexts in Gilbert Ryle's *Concept of Mind*.

It seems beyond any doubt that the proposition that to learn one's language is to learn one's philosophy is significantly true. But what abets one's uneasiness of such broad generalizations is the meaning of the terms "language" and "philosophy". It becomes therefore somewhat necessary to elaborate a little on the meanings of these terms here in use. Evidently, language is a complicated entity which has general levels of identity. In the first place it is a body of observable sounds or inscriptions which fall into well-formed strings according to rules of certain formation and transformation. In this sense language is a system of phonology, morphology and syntax, as modern linguists understand them. This might be called a particularistic concept of language, according to which, different languages will have different bodies of sounds and symbols and different rules for organizing them into meaningful sentences.

Aside from this particularistic view on language, language lends itself to another and opposite interpretation. According to this interpretation, language is a set of meanings which are understood, communicated, expressed, discussed and perhaps created by men who speak the language. Language in this sense of meaning is not an observable phenomenon, but an experience to be intimately realized in mind. Nevertheless, for the purpose of communication, language is not subjective:

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It is subjectively experienced, but objectively or intersubjectively conveyed and therefore has been referred to as propositions. From the perspective of this view of language, which can be called a universalistic view of language, individual languages are particular forms of language and are exterior means or carriers for universal or at least universally intended meanings or ideas of man in his activities to express himself, to communicate with others and so on.

I don't take these two views of language as incompatible. On the contrary, there is every reason to believe that they together represent a concrete model of what language is: namely, language is what expresses or communicates the universal in the form of the particular, and what generates and pictures the abstract in the form of the concrete. Now if we understand "philosophy" in a very broad sense so that philosophy will not only include speculative systems and conceptual constructions, but encompass general ways of thinking and reflections about man and reality, it is clear that philosophy should be the substantial basis or universally intended meanings in language. Conversely, language would be similarly considered the tools and methods which not only expresses its philosophy, but characterizes it in its typical or sometimes perhaps idiosyncratic forms and ways of organization. What then I am suggesting is that language and philosophy are two sides or two aspects of an organic whole or a living unity: they are not separable, but mutually supporting: not one-sidedly determining, but reciprocally enriching.

## II.

In the light of what I have said above I wish to explore the mutually supporting and reciprocally enriching relationships between Chinese language and Chinese philosophy. As an illustration of a general case, the relationship between Chinese language, in its synchronic as well as in its diachronic dimensions, and Chinese philosophy, in the development of its historical schools from the classical period to the present day and in its most generalized structured presentations, provides a tightly knit model of generative unity on the one hand, and exhibits a creative process of organic growth on the other. Specifically, we shall maintain the following:

- 1) From the particular forms and their rules of organizations of Chinese language we shall reveal the peculiar characteristics of Chinese philosophy (philosophical outlooks and ways of thinking and reasoning).

- 2) From the conceptions and reflections of Chinese philosophy we shall reveal the peculiar evolution of Chinese language in both its structure, vocabulary and semantics.

- 3) Chinese language and Chinese philosophy continue to influence each other in the present stage of the development of Chinese language and in the present stage of the development of Chinese philosophy.

We shall explain these points in terms of actual uses of Chinese language and

a standard understanding of Chinese philosophy as found in Confucianism, Taoism, Chinese Buddhism (including Chinese Ch'an) and other Chinese schools.

### III.

It is most remarkable that Chinese language as a morphology closely resembles reality of nature as man experiences. Indeed as a system of ideograms, Chinese language maps the real world on many levels. Not only concrete familiar objects are generally mapped in iconic forms, their relations are iconically represented in shapes which are written words standing for them. Thus among the well-known six principles of formation of Chinese characters at least four can be accounted on the basis of iconic or indexic mappings of the real world. These four principles are iconic symbolization (*hsiang hsing*), mimicking sounds (*hsing sheng*), token indication (*chih shih*), and understanding the meaning (*hui yi*). According to these principles, actual objects, human phenomena, and natural or social relations, such as exemplified by sun, moon, up and down, rivers and lakes, the military and the truthful, are well represented in the language as either icons or as indices or as a subtle combination of both. When human experience accumulates, and social and political organization becomes more complicated, and more understanding of nature developed, the need for more refined distinctions of things or their aspects in different life contexts and relative to different relationships, of course, prompt a development of vocabulary and concepts. Thus the other two principles of word formation, that of semantic extension (*chuan ch'u*) and that of phonetic borrowing (*chia chieh*), should develop from this more advanced state of culture and social organization. They are inductive principles generalized on the phenomenon of refined sub-distinctions such as "k'ao, lao" (考, 老) (an example of phonetic borrowing) and phenomena of semantic extension and abstraction such as "ling, chang" (令, 長) (an example of semantic extension).<sup>(1)</sup>

Broadly speaking, the above mentioned two principles are very significant for relating Chinese language to Chinese philosophy: They represent an opening of a new world, a new understanding of life, nature, society, man, reality on a deep and perhaps more abstract level. Almost, if not all, philosophical terms such as *t'ien* (heaven), *ming* (destiny or mandate), *sheng* (life), *te* (power), *ching* (reverance), *tao* (the way), *li* (patterns of jade), *ch'i* (vital force), *chi* (ultimate), *yin* (the female principle), *yang* (the male principle), *ch'eng* (sincerity), *jen* (love or benevolence), *yi* (righteousness), *li* (rites), *ching* (spirit), *yi* (change), can be considered as result of the application of the two principles. If we take seriously all the six principles mentioned above as the generative principles of Chinese characters and their meanings, a more interesting philosophical consequence ensues: the first four principles pinpoint philosophic concepts to concrete and particular things in the

world, the last two principles reveal the universality and independence of the philosophical concepts. In fact this combination of the abstract in the concrete, and the universal in the particular, is not merely a characteristic of Chinese language, which is amply provided in other cases including compound words in contemporary Mandarin, but a characteristic of Chinese philosophy. I shall explain this in the following:

From pre-Confucian writings like the *Book of Documents*, the *Book of Changes* and the *Book of Poetry* one can easily establish the view that the fundamental principles of life and reality always reveal itself in concrete and particular things, e. g. the “*t'ien-ming*” (the mandate of heaven) is clearly conceived to be only revealed in the likes and dislikes of common people: Thus the political authority of a ruler derived from “*t'ien-ming*” must rest on the concrete testimony of the support of common people. The whole *Book of Changes* can provide numerous examples of the philosophical principles as embodied in concrete instances of things and their relations. The later writings of Taoists Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu also provide ample evidence of thinking of the universal and the abstract in terms of the particular and the concrete. The nature of *Tao* is literally revealed in the softness of living things, the amorphous fluidity of water, the weakness of a newborn child, the emptiness of a vehicle, or the uncarvedness of a block. The lesson to draw from this is two-fold:

1) Ontologically or metaphysically, the universal and abstract principles are only realized in the concrete things and particular contexts. The concretization and particularization must be a testing ground for the authenticity of profound metaphysical thinking.

2) Methodologically or epistemologically, one has to see or understand the concrete processes and things in the world in order to realize and understand the ultimate way or the ultimate reality. Thus the principle of “inferring from observations on things close to you” (*neng-chin-ch'ü-p'i* 能近取譬) in the *Analects* and “I know the ways of all things at the Beginning by what is within me” (*wu-ho-yi-chih-chung-fu-chih-chuang-tsai-yi-tz'u* 吾何以知衆甫之狀哉以此) in *Tao Te Ching* are announced as fundamental principles of philosophical understanding. To summarize, the generative principles of vocabulary formation without distinguishing syntactic marks indicates a philosophy of continuity, unity, application and exemplification, extension and close observation.

#### IV.

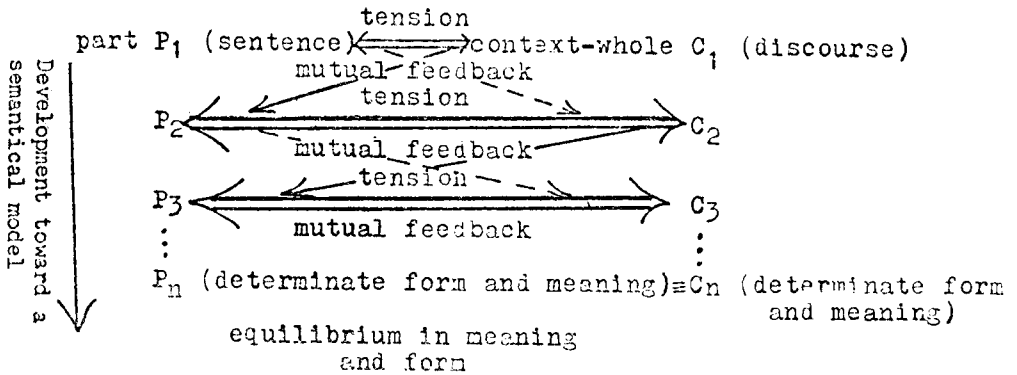
We should now turn our attention to the syntax and grammar of Chinese philosophy for possible philosophic illumination. As has been often stressed, Chinese syntax is one of no distinguishing grammatical marks. With exception in early classical Chinese such as the *Book of Documents* and the *Book of Poetry*, a Chinese sentence is not adorned with numbers, persons, cases, tenses, declensions, conjuga-

tions, for Chinese nouns generally have no number, cases and persons, whereas Chinese adjectives have no declension and Chinese verbs no tenses and conjugation. But this is not to say that Chinese sentences may not convey the information which a language conveys with its grammatical inflection. The functions of numbers, cases, tenses, declension and conjugation are delegated to semantical and contextual considerations in Chinese sentences and their contexts. In other words, they are either spelled out in semantic representations within a sentence or they are shown through an understanding of the total context in which the sentences occur. In the case of numbers and persons, either the terms such as *yü* (予), *erh* (爾), themselves incorporate the singularity or plurality in their meanings, or the overall semantic contexts impose a certain attribution of persons or numbers, such as in "Erh-wei-chiu-jen" (you are old followers) in the *Ta Kao* of *Book of Documents*: "erh" is known to be plural because the whole proclamation of which this a part is addressed to a plural audience. Similarly, tenses in verbs can be detected from semantic reference to present, past or future or from the overall semantical contexts in which a sentence with temporal significance occurs. As to case, declension and conjugation in nouns, adjectives and verbs, with early Chinese exceptions, semantical representation and contextual positioning of these terms will indicate the subject, the predicate, the object, the complement, the modifier-relations in the sentences. Though I cannot detail on these, I could indicate two fundamental principles of consequence in Chinese syntax, one for determining the intra-sentential structure of a sentence, the other for determining the meaning, reference, and scope of a sentence among all sentences in a given discourse.

First, there is the principle of relative positioning. A Chinese sentence in its normal and average use will have its subject phrase in the beginning position of the sentence and the predicate phrases in the succeeding position. For stress and other pragmatical purposes, the order may be reversed and the instantiation of the positions (in particular the subject phrase position) may be deleted. As I have pointed out elsewhere in my study of subject structure in Chinese Classical language,<sup>(2)</sup> we may regard the rule "sentence→subject phrase+predicate phrase" as representing a grammatical (deep) structure of the language and the topic-comment structure of the language as surface instantiations of the language. It is clear that in Chinese language there is sufficient surface evidence to indicate the constancy of grammatical ordering of subject phrase and predicate structure so that the deep structure nature of this ordering is only relative to the topic-comment distinction on the surface. With this understanding, it is not difficult to analyze the subject-predicate structure of a sentence once a person masters a sufficient class of sentences of this structure: the relative positions on a relevant level (grammatical vs. topic-comment or logical vs. referential) are the basic clues. In later development, when nonsubstantive words (*hsü-tzu* or *hsü-tz'u*) are introduced in abundance in classical Chinese, the positions of terms relative to these particles

which carry the syntactic information of phrase structure marks of other languages will exhibit the syntactic information in question. For example, particles such as *yi* (矣), *yen* (焉), *hu* (乎), *chih* (之), *yeh* (也), *che* (者), etc. in classical Chinese, and *ma* (嗎), *le* (了), *ne* (呢), *ya* (呀), *pa* (吧, 罷) etc. in contemporary Mandarin, will not only serve the purpose of presenting aspects or certain emotive moods or modalities of speech on the part of the speaker or writer, but will serve as an explicit categorematic syntactical device (but not syncategorematic markers) for marking out the punctuation, and both inter-and intra-sentential structures in the language. Any reader of unpunctuated passages in wood-engraved Chinese books can testify.

The second principle in studying the intra- and inter-sentential relationships is of a semantical-contextual nature. I shall call it the principle of semantical contextualism, and mean by this that a sentence structure may not yet become clear and determined unless a certain semantical interpretation is developed as a model of the sentence in and among other sentences. In order to develop a semantical interpretation of a sentence as a model of the sentence, (so that the sentence can be possibly true in that model, and therefore at least makes sense), one has to understand the sentence in a total discourse and derive semantical assignments from the understanding of the total discourse of which the sentence is a part. Thus the more we understand the semantical context of the sentence, the more we are able to see the structure of the sentence and therefore to determine its meaning and reference on the basis of its structure. One may object to this on the ground that, before one can understand the sentence, how it is possible for one to understand the whole context of the sentence. To raise this question is to assume that one has to begin with something atomic and elementary before one can advance to something molecular and complex of which the atomic and the elementary are supposed to be the constituents. This Cartesian assumption is typical of Western linguistic and philosophical traditions. But it is no more than an assumption. It is quite possible that one part, namely the atomic and the elementary, must depend on its existence on the whole or the context and that the understanding of part must depend, if not altogether, but gradually, on the understanding of the whole. It is quite possible in effect that understanding of the part and understanding of the whole mutually depend on each other: Thus, the more understanding of the whole we have developed, the more understanding of the part we will have because of this, and conversely, the more understanding of the part we have the more understanding of the whole we shall have because of this. The understanding of the whole and the understanding of the part will enfold with feedback from one into another, and they will mutually modify and improve until both simultaneously evolve into a clear picture. This process can be graphically illustrated like the following:



With this explanation of a new principle of form (structure) and meaning determination, I hold that this explanation is the essence for Chinese Classical syntax: The syntax is semantically determined and the part-whole relation as explained above effectively establishes the grammatical values of sub-sentential positions and sentential positions in a discourse. It is also an effective way for construing and understanding grammar of classical Chinese. For example, this explains why without copula the classical Chinese sentence can make attribution and class-membership assertions no less adequately than languages with copula. Without copula in classical Chinese the language does not lead the mind to speak of abstract universal being which is characteristic of Indo-European philosophical tradition. Yet this does not in any way, in my opinion, prevent the Chinese mind to think philosophically about a universal reality as indicated in fundamental concepts of Taoism, Confucianism and Chinese Buddhism. Furthermore this principle explains why some Chinese sentences may communicate even without subject phrase. This may be understood on the basis of an ontology (other than Cartesian type, but closer to that of modern process philosophy such as that of Whitehead and Bergson) which is compatible with this kind of organic determinism of part and whole in Chinese language.

Two examples will suffice to show the importance of a grasp of the semantical context for the determination of the sentence structure and the sentence meaning:

Example I: In *Shang Shu* of the *Book of Documents* a sentence from *K'ang Kao* reads "*Ju-wei-hsiao-tzu-nai-fu-wei-hung-wang-ying-pao-yin-min*" (汝惟小子乃服惟弘王應保殷民)。It can be read and in fact has been read in two ways:

1) "*Ju-wei-hsiao-tzu, nai-fu-wei-hung, wang-ying-pao-yin-min*" (You are young, and yet your responsibility is great as the king should protect the people of Yin,....)

2) "*Ju-wei-hsiao-tzu, nai-fu-wei-hung-wang, ying-pao-yin-min*" (You are young, and yet your responsibility is to cherish the king, and thus should protect the people of Yin,....) While both readings are possible, only a semantical understanding of the whole *K'ang Kao* may decide which one is better fitting.<sup>(3)</sup>

Example II: In the *Analecets*, a sentence from chapter 9 reads: “*Tzu-han-yen-li-yü-ming-yü-jen*” (子罕言利與命與仁) 。 Traditionally it has been read as “*Tzu-han-yen-li-yü-ming-yü-jen*” (Master k’ung seldom talks about profit, fate and benevolence). But clearly this creates a difficulty for reconciling with the actual frequency of the mention and discussion of benevolence in the *Analecets* by Confucius. Thus a better reading than the former Chu Hsi-type standard construal is suggested later: “*Tzu-han-yen-li, yü-ming-yü-jen*” (Master K’ung seldom speaks of profit, (but) he gives himself to fate and (practice of) benevolence).<sup>(4)</sup> It can be easily seen that the second semantical model is more realistic and intelligible in light of the whole context.<sup>(5)</sup>

## V.

It is quite evident and manifest that Chinese philosophy has fully taken advantage of the two fundamental principles which operate on and organize the syntax and semantics of (classical) Chinese language. The principle of relative positioning (or positional relativity) corresponds to the principle of *relative* determination of concepts in a philosophical system. The principle of semantical contextualism corresponds to the principle of organic unity in a philosophical system. In the former case, one can see from a survey of Chinese philosophy that all philosophical terms in a system of a school must be understood relative to each other. Thus in Confucianism all the concepts of virtues such as *jen, yi, li, chih, hsin, hsiao* etc. must be understood in relative definitions of each other. No such concept can be adequately understood apart from the others: for each presupposes the rest. Even the relationship between ethics and metaphysics must be understood in a relative sense. The theory of human nature in Confucianism is both an ethical theory and a metaphysical theory: if it is related to doctrine of *t’ien* (heaven) and *li* (principle), it is a metaphysical theory; if it is related to doctrines of virtues (moral *te*), it becomes an ethical doctrine.

The same situation is true in Taoism. In the first place, the concepts of *wu* (voidness) and *yu* (existence) must be understood relative to each other. The *wu* is not absolute nothingness, but an indeterminate *space*, or as I explain it in some of my writings,<sup>(6)</sup> the great indeterminate or the great receptacle, in which *yu* can originate and assume shape and form. Similarly, for other concepts such as *yin* and *yang, shan* and *o* (good and bad), *mei* and *ch’ou* (beautiful and ugly), they must be also relatively determined in a context of relative perspectives as alluded to by *Chuang Tzu* in his *Ch’i-wu-lun*. In Chinese Buddhism and Neo-Confucianism, this is again true. The distinctions between *ch’ien* (the masculine) and *k’un* (the feminine), *yu* (existence), *k’ung* (nothingness), *li* (principle) and *shih* (affairs), *li* (principle) and *ch’i* (vapor, vital force) and other categories such as the 36 relative opposites (*tui*) mentioned in Section 46 of *Platform Sutra* of the Sixth Patriarch, can be used to illustrate this point under discussion.



Organic unity is a practical-descriptive character of and a normative ideal for Chinese philosophy. It seems quite evident that all philosophical schools in China strive to achieve and realize certain organic unity. In such effort and in the attainment resulting from such effort, individual concepts are redefined, revised, positioned and enriched as well. This is a natural consequence from the principle of relative determination of concepts. For the full use of this principle will lead to an organically determined unity of concepts. But the present principle is dynamic in a singular sense: That is, all philosophical concepts will not have their individuality unless located in an organically unified system of ideas, and they become more individual and more profoundly significant in increasing proportion to the gradual enlargement of contexts of their occurrence, contexts, which represent different levels of abstraction, unity, scope and meaningfulness. This contextual dependence of the part on the whole is so strong that without this one cannot make correct and real subtle distinctions and unifications (by way of resemblance) of philosophical schools such as Confucianism of Hsün Tzu and *Ta Hsueh* from Confucianism of Mencius and *Chung Yung*; Taoism of Lao Tzu from Taoism of Chuang Tzu; Ch'an of *Niu T'ou* from Ch'an of *Huang-po*; Neo-Confucianism of the elder Ch'eng brother from that of the younger one, etc. For in all these individual pairs similar sets of concepts are used, but the difference in meaning of key terms (such as *hsing* (nature), *hsin* (mind), *li* (principle), *tao* (the way), *wu* (things) etc. are endowed by contexts of their occurrence. These differentiating contexts represent different philosophical understandings in accordance with the ideal and effort for implementation of organic unity on different levels and in applications to different spheres of life.

Many Western philosophers have complained about the vagueness and unsystematicness of Chinese philosophical thinking. Some have been bothered by lack of explicit criteria for making distinctions and definitions. The appearance of these occurs because the methodology for understanding Chinese philosophy is misunderstood. Like Chinese language, Chinese philosophy must not be understood from the point of the view of a Cartesian atomism. On the contrary, it must be understood from the point of view of a Whiteheadian holism: the part is determined by the whole, which again determines the whole. To understand the true spirit of Confucianism, one must understand Taoism; to understand the spirit of Neo-Confucianism, one must also understand Chinese Buddhism, Taoism and Classical Confucianism. To understand Chinese Ch'an, one must understand Taoism and Confucianism apart from the Buddhistic works. To understand one philosophical sentence one has to understand the whole philosophical wisdom in a chapter or in a book or in a set of books. This is true of classical writings such as *Five Classics* and *Four Books* of Confucianism. It is no less true of Ch'an (*kung-ans* 公案 or *k'oans*). A piece of *kung-an* is bizarre, nonsensical or absurd, irrelevant in and by itself, but in relation to other sayings, and more often than not, in relation to

the personality of the whole speaker and the whole listener and their experiences and what one's experiences or enlightenment represent, it becomes illuminating, profoundly significant, incisive and right to the point. Without specific illustrations, it might be concluded that the semantical contextual principle which organizes Chinese syntax is identical with the same principle which shapes Chinese ideas toward organic unity from the point of view of organic unity.

## VI.

From this point of view one may also see why Chinese philosophy does not seek to make hair-splitting surface distinctions or definitions as much as we see in the Western tradition, just as one has seen why Chinese language does not present a system of grammatical markers for explicitly specifying the structure and meaning of a sentence or sub-sentence as much as we have seen in Indo-European language. The reason is a uniform one: because a new methodology of understanding as understood in the above makes the explicit specifications and distinctions useless and unnecessary. This methodology as I have argued underlies both Chinese language and Chinese philosophy and thus makes them mutually supporting and highly comparable. A consequence from the operation of this methodology in Chinese philosophy is that all terms in a system by themselves are not explicitly specified in their meanings. Therefore by themselves they are necessarily vague or ambiguous. To confirm this, consider any philosophical term such as "*tao*", "*jen*", "*li*" or "*chi*" etc. This I think is closely comparable to the indeterminacy of a Chinese term in Chinese language with regard to its grammatical functions and roles. Is the word "*ping*" (sick) a noun or a verb or an adjective by itself? It is neither a noun nor a verb nor an adjective, because it is simultaneously a potential noun, a potential verb and a potential adjective: and because it can realize itself as a noun, as a verb or as an adjective in an actual sentence in an actual context. Thus "*ping-ping-shih-yi-pu-ping*" (病病是以不病) (If one is sick of one's sickness, one is therefore not sick) (*Tao Te Ching* 70) employs the same word in three places which exhibit their different grammatical values: the first gives use to a verb, the second a noun, the third an adjective. One may therefore conceive explicit grammatical values (not necessarily in the surface structure) as functions of semantical contexts and relative positions in a sentence. The words in the vocabulary remain, apart from having their relatively neutral semantical meanings, as potential and implicit entities to be flexibly and freely used and generated as various surface values in various systems determined by semantical understandings.

This indeterminacy in language vocabulary, structure and Chinese philosophy explains the creativity and generative power of Chinese language and Chinese philosophy, and in many ways, have proved to be able to express subtleties of

human emotions and logical order at the same time. The parallel couplets, for example, are highly suggestive in their potent meaning and semantical suggestiveness. The parallel structure gives rise to parallel semantical associations. On the other hand, it has logical significance: it represents or can represent the formal structure for reasoning in predicate calculus with simplicity as pointed out by Chmielewski.<sup>(7)</sup>

I will limit myself to three more observations regarding the indeterminacy of potential grammatical values of Chinese vocabulary.

1) Without explicit syntactic marks, Chinese lexicon has a creative capacity in its adjustment to understanding of life, nature and world on different levels. The relative freedom of a grammar which may give the impression of or sometimes lead to loose thinking is compensated with rewards of semantical freedom, which is conducive to new concepts and acceptance of new concepts, and for that matter, is conducive to reform or revision in ways of expression and generation of new lexicon in the language. This is amply substantiated by results of language use in and after the May 4th Movement through new experimental use of language and translations of literature from England, Russia, Germany and France.

2) Though, given the semantical-contextual principle, Chinese can afford to have a certain formal simplicity of lexicon without sacrificing potential distinctions, it is not true that Chinese philosophers will not make effort logically to distinguish one concept from the other when they find that this is necessary and useful. On the contrary, the distinction will be made an explicit semantical effort. It is not to be attributed to implicit or explicit syntactical markers as one may find in Western philosophy. What is explicitly distinguished must be semantically distinguished. Thus Mencius is able to make relevant distinctions between "*hsing*" (nature) and "*ming*" (fate), between the "*pu-tung-hsin* of Mencius" (the unmoved heart of Mencius) and the "*pu-tung-hsin* of Kao Tzu" (the unmoved heart of Kao Tzu). He is capable of arguing with Kao Tzu over the use of the term "*hsing*" (nature) in application to man as opposed to its application to animals, and query the validity of Kao Tzu's doctrine of "*jen*" being an inner virtue and "*yi*" being an outer virtue. Similarly, many philosophical distinctions of this type, from *T'ien T'ai* school, *Hua Yen* school and Neo-Confucianism (e. g. the "*yi-li-chih-hsing*" (the nature of reason and righteousness) vs. "*ch'i-chih-chih-hsing*" (the nature of temperament)) carry with them this awareness of necessity for conceptual and semantical differentiation, which is actually freely performed in the language.

3) Finally, one might wish to know why Chinese language and Chinese philosophy could have shared these above mentioned features in common. The most important reason for this is that they are basically rooted in Chinese understanding and experience of the world and humanity. Thus, Chinese philosophy and Chinese language could be regarded as two mutually supporting forms of manifestations of Chinese mind in activity. The point of indeterminacy in Chinese language (lexicon) and philosophical ideas reflect the dynamic way in which

Chinese thinkers and generally common people see the world and understand themselves. The metaphysical view from Confucian to Neo-Confucian writing or the philosophy of totality in *Hua Yen* all indicate a common point: the world in which man lives interchanges with man and changes against a background of non-change which is still creatively active (the *Tao* of *yin-yang*). This metaphysical view of change in non-change and non-change in change thus predisposes the ways of organization in both Chinese philosophy and Chinese language and predetermines and gives reason to the methodological principles which we use to explain the workings of Chinese language and the development and nature of Chinese philosophy.

## VII.

In the above, we have explained how principles functioning in Chinese language may illuminate content and ways of Chinese thinking. We may now ask: To what an extent has explicit Chinese philosophy affected the explicit development of Chinese language? The answer to this question can be two-fold. First, Chinese philosophy only indirectly and implicitly affects the development of Chinese syntax; Second, Chinese philosophy has directly and explicitly affected the development of Chinese vocabulary (lexicon). I shall explain these two points very briefly.

With regard to the influence of explicit Chinese philosophy on explicit Chinese sentence structures, it is manifest that the basic Chinese sentence forms remain the same from the time of early Chou writings to the present day. There is however change from more simple to more complex or more sophisticated ways of expression in inter-sentence organization. It seems quite noteworthy that the majority of Chinese "*hsü-tzu*" (nonsubstantive terms inclusive of conjunctions, prepositions and words for aspects and modalities) have been supplied in the period of late Chou as the writings of classical philosophers have testified. In fact there is evidence which shows a tendency of prepositionalizing words of substantial reference into words of syntactical connection. "*wei*" (爲) and "*yü*" (與) are good examples. All these indicate a growing awareness of relational structures and need for determining meanings and references in these structures. They must be prompted by a consciousness and a need which prompt the philosophical thinking of the classical period. In fact, all the classical philosophers, notably, Mencius, Hsun Tzu and Chuang Tzu, authors of commentaries on the *Book of Changes*, chapters of the *Book of Rites* and the *Annals of Spring and Autumn*, have inevitably enriched ways of structural organization and presentation of meanings. The logical forms one finds in Mo Tzu, Mencius, Hsun Tzu and other classical writings bespeak of the generative nature of syntax of Chinese language and its potential power because of philosophical consciousness. One can see many examples from classical writings. Here I shall give only one logical form in *Chung Yung*: "*Tao-yeh-che, pu-k'o-hsü-yü-li-yeh, k'o-li, fei-tao-yeh*" (The Way cannot be parted from for even a moment, what can be

parted from is not the Way). Clearly it syntactically formulates an inference of syllogism by *modus tollens*.<sup>(8)</sup>

The complication and sophistication of syntactic structural representation of meaning continue throughout the history of Chinese philosophy. A good example is to see how a certain root-idea is being explained in post-classical writings in comparison with the similar explanation in the classical writings. The complexity and flexibility of expression for conveying certain philosophical ideas match in proportion with the complexity and versatility of the idea itself. This could be regarded as an indication of how a conscious effort of expressing an existing idea may tax on and even lead to invention of new syntactic forms of expressing the idea. Thus compare Confucius' explanation of the root-idea "*jen*" (benevolence) in the *Analects* with Chu Hsi's *Essay on "Jen"* about two thousand years later. If one looks carefully, one will not only be struck by the richness of content of meaning in Chu Hsi, but will also be surprised at the much advanced sophistication of syntactic structures and their relations used to express the content of meaning. I am not, of course, suggesting that a certain meaning must determine a certain way of expression or a certain syntactical organization of expressions. I am merely saying that a meaning will need and force a certain way of syntactical expression and organization of their relationships. In order to capture certain basic meanings from Buddhist Sanskrit, Chinese syntax has again demonstrated its flexibility. This is also true in the case of the formulation of Taoist principles of *wu* (voidness) and *wu wei* (doing nothing) in Neo-Taoist writings of Wang Pi, Hsiang Hsiu and Kuo Hsiang. Unfortunately, at present time we do not seem to have made very many synchronic studies on the Chinese semantics and syntax of this kind.

More conspicuous is the influence of Chinese philosophy on Chinese vocabulary or Chinese lexicon. Though no systematic survey is available, it seems evident that common Chinese vocabulary which an averagely educated Chinese person uses could contain philosophical terms like "*hsing*", "*hsin*", "*chi*", "*li*", "*tao*", "*te*", "*t'ien*", "*ming*" etc. An uneducated man's common stock will include terms which can be traced to a philosophical beginning. Terms like "*tao-te*", "*tao-li*", "*ho-ch'i*", "*k'e-ch'i*", "*li-mao*", "*ho-ch'i*" (火極泰來), "*tao-yi*", "*hsiao-tao*", are basically philosophical. Idioms like "*p'i-chi-t'ai-lai*" (否極泰來), "*yin-yang-pu-t'iao*" (陰陽不調) are also derived from philosophical literature or literature of philosophical significance. The common speaker or the common listener may have no idea of their philosophical roots in using them in life situations. It may be said that Chinese philosophy has penetrated into Chinese language through a philosophical mind. But it may be also said that Chinese philosophy has gained an access to Chinese common mind through the incorporation of Chinese philosophy into Chinese language. The combination and unity of Chinese language and Chinese philosophy and their mutual generativeness is nowhere more illuminating.

## VIII.

In conclusion, we may quest for the competence and performance of Chinese philosophy and Chinese language in their interaction at the present day. What we will say will be again brief and programmatic. Since May 4th Movement of 1919, it is clear that written Chinese has undergone revolutionary changes in both vocabulary combinations and syntactical ways of expression. This parallels, but not merely parallels, but in effect is partially determined by, the revolutionary changes in outlooks of Chinese mind and ways of thinking in the modern world. The Western influence on ideas comes first and the language reforms follow. The successful changes in these language reforms not only demonstrate once again, as in the time of pre-Chin philosophers and the time of Buddhistic thinking, the rich flexibility and adjustability of Chinese vocabulary and syntax under semantical needs through a philosophical understanding; but also demonstrate, furthermore, the importance of philosophical awareness of an outlook and methodology for initiating the changes. One may say, though not in any idealistic sense, that it is the generative power of unity between Chinese philosophy and Chinese language under proper social environmental stimulation, which initiates the changes of both philosophy and language.

As a general thesis, therefore, I hold that the changes in Chinese language and Chinese philosophy are not coincidental but well-related: Change occurs as a result of reflection on the philosophy embodied in the language (syntax and vocabulary) or as a result of a reflection on the need for another philosophy embodied in another language. Thus, to understand Chinese language even today one cannot but seek within its philosophy to understand what it represents or purports to represent. Nor can we understand the philosophy without seeking to understand the ways of language one employs to effectively represent the philosophy. Generalizing may be very obstructive: But one may point to one generalization which is perhaps worthy of rethinking. That is, as Chinese philosophy has become more analytical in its ideas and ways of organizing its ideas, so Chinese language to the same extent has become more analytical in its grammar and semantics. An instructive case study on the Marxist philosophy, its interaction with new literature and new language in mainland China since 1949, would be highly instructive for illustrating the mutual determining effects of the old, the new, the form and the meaning in Chinese language and in Chinese philosophy.

University of Hawaii

## NOTES

- (1) "*ling*" in the primary mode of meaning is command, but the extended sense is commanding position of any kind; "*chang*" in the primary mode of meaning is lengthiness of an object and in the extended sense becomes the word for

- seniority in age and position.
- (2) Cf. my article "Toward Theory of Subject Structure in Language with Application to Late Archaic Chinese", *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 91, No. 1, January-March 1971, 1-13.
  - (3) The second one is traditionally more accepted. The justification still must depend on the understanding of the whole context and use of terms in the whole context. (Editor's note: Tseng Yün-ch'ien 曾運乾 in his *Shang shu cheng-tu* 尚書正讀, 1964, p. 162, punctuates the text like (1), but interprets *wei* as *sui* 雖 "although" and *ying* as *shou* 受 "receive".)
  - (4) Editor's Note: another possible rendering is "Master K'ung seldom talks about profit together with fate and/or benevolence."
  - (5) Without consideration of a semantical model through a whole context, one can play with the classical contexts to generate bizarre readings: e.g. Take the sentence from Chapter 5 of *Analects* "*Ch'ih-yeh, shu-tai-li-yü-ch'ao, ko-shih-yü-pin-k'e-yen-yeh, pu-chih-ch'i-jen-yeh.*" (赤也束帶立於朝，可使與賓客言也，不知其仁也) (Ch'ih, dressed up and standing in the court, can be made to converse with the guests. But I do not know (where is) his benevolence). One can repunctuate it to read "*Ch'ih-yeh-shu-tai, li-yu-ch'ao-k'o, shih-yü-pin-ke-yen-yeh-pu-chih, chi-jen-yeh.*" (赤也束帶，立於朝可，使與賓客言也，不知，其仁也。) (Ch'ih is dressed up.(He) can be made to stand in the court. If he is made to converse with the guests, he won't know it. This is his benevolence.)
  - (6) See my article "Chinese Philosophy: A Characterization" in *Inquiry*, no. 14, April 1971, 95-119.
  - (7) Cf. Januz Chmielewski, "Jezyk Starochinski Jako Narzedzie Rozumowania" (Old Chinese as an Instrument of Reasoning), *Sprawozdania 2 Prac Naukowych I Polskiej Akademii Nauk*, 8 (1964), no. 2, 108-133.
  - (8) Cf. my article "Aspects of Classical Chinese Logic" in *International Philosophical Quarterly*, vol. XI, no. 2, June 1971, 213-235.

# 中國語言和中國哲學的密切關係

成 中 英

語言以獨特形式表達一般事象，以具體形式描摹抽象概念。廣義來說，哲學不但包括思辨性系統和概念性架構；它也是一般的思維方法，又反映了人與現實的諸相。基於這種對語言和哲學的理解，我們可說哲學應是語言的基礎，又應是語言的意義所在。進一步說，語言和哲學是一個有機的整體的兩面，二者相輔相承，牢不可分。中國語言和中國哲學二者的關係就是這樣的。

中國文字中的六書，其中象形、指事、會意、形聲四種造字原則，把哲學性的概念落實為世界中具體的個別事物；轉注和假借則把哲學概念的一般性和獨立性表彰出來。中國文字和文法沒有動詞變化、字首、字尾、單數、複數等特徵，因此理解時常要把上下文連貫來讀，以領悟其正確含義。中文文法上的“相對位置法”(relative positioning)，正與中國哲學術語意義的相對性相應。儒家仁、義、禮、智等概念，道家無、有之說，以及其他陰、陽、事、理、善、惡等理論，都是相對性的。中文的“上下文義原理”(sematic contextualism)則與中國哲學上的“有機整體”論(organic unity)相通。西方哲學家常詬病中國哲學思想的曖昧不明和紊亂無章，有的則以缺乏用以界定術語的明確準繩為憾。其實，了解中國哲學，用笛卡兒的“元子論”(Cartesian atomism)是不可以的，必以懷海德的“整體論”(Whiteheadian holism)才行。要明白儒家的真精神，必同時要明白道家；要明白理學的神髓，必同時要明白儒、釋、佛三家。要明白中國哲學上的一語一句，必同時要明白一章、一書甚或一系列書中全部的哲學智慧。

中國文法簡單自由，因而中國文字可保持活躍常新的生命力。中國哲學的變和不變之道，則予思想界發展演變的餘地。中國哲學更予中國語言直接和間接的種種影響：中國哲學的發展，由簡單趨向繁複，諸子的哲學性著作，其句法結構正把這種發展表現出來。中文的字彙，大量套用哲學性辭語，可見語言、哲學互相衍生、利用之處。

五四新文化運動時，思想界先起變化，語言的改革繼之。我們在此一方面看到中國語言的彈性和適應性，一方面也看到哲學引生催化語言變化的作用。中國哲學和中國語言在某種社會環境的刺激下，同時產生變化，而這種變化實源於中國哲學和中國語言這有機整體那股生生不息的力量。