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Suter, Rafael ; Indraccolo, Lisa ; Behr, Wolfgang

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Rafael Suter, Lisa Indraccolo and Wolfgang Behr

The *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* and Other Neglected Texts – Aligning Philosophical and Philological Perspectives: An Introduction

The *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* 公孫龍子 (Master Gongsun Long) is traditionally attributed to the so-called “School of Names”. It stands out in the intellectual landscape of early China due to its marked interest in the relation between language and reality and its overall neglect of moral and political issues that are usually so characteristic of the thought of its time. Since the late nineteenth century, this philosophical orientation has invited modern scholars to study the text from the perspective of academic disciplines such as logic and philosophy. To the present day, most of the – increasing, yet still comparatively scarce – publications on the text appear in journals on Chinese and comparative philosophy, and thus continue this tendency. At the same time, the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* has an intricate textual history, which has led major scholars like A. C. Graham (1919–1991) and Shěn Yǒudǐng 沈有鼎 (1909–1989) – though for slightly different reasons – to doubt the pre-imperial origin of various chapters, or even the text in its entirety.¹ The increasing sophistication and precision of philosophical interpretations of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* thus risk being undermined by the brittle philological ground on which they stand. There is good reason to assume that our philosophical understanding of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* will profit from an increased awareness of these philological problems, just as philological research requires a heightened alertness to the far-reaching philosophical implications of the text. It is against this background that the editors of this volume are convinced of the need for a broader dialogue among scholars engaged in studies on the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* – one that attempts to bridge the extant gaps between various

1 Cf. Graham 1956/7; and, e.g. Shěn 1992d, 1992a [1978]. In 1979, Zhōu Yúnzhī 周雲之 had argued that all extant chapters of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* except the ‘Báimǎlùn’ (Discourse on White and Horse) are medieval, but he then revised this opinion in later publications (see Jin 2015: 280). Hé Qímín 何啓民 also considers the extant text to be an early Táng collection, different both in terms of content and scope from the homonymous text attested at the beginning of the common era (Hé 1967: 219). Among Japanese publications on the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, the work by Amano Shizuo 天野鎮雄 (Amano 1963, 1964, 1965a, 1965b, 1966, 1967a, 1967b, 1968, 1969) stands out by his detailed studies which combine philological analysis with philosophical interpretation in an effort to reconstruct the original version of all chapters. For a sketch on the textual history of the text see Graham 1993, for a detailed survey see Indraccolo 2010: 60–100.

academic disciplines and intellectual traditions. The international workshop on the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* that we organized at the University of Zurich on 27–29 August 2014 offered a first platform for the open and decompartmentalized academic exchange we had in mind. Most of the essays gathered in this volume are based on contributions to that workshop.

It is clear from what we have said so far that this volume, just as the workshop out of which it grew, brings together the work of scholars from various backgrounds. It includes contributions by philologists, philosophers, logicians, and linguists, established specialists and junior scholars alike, from within and beyond the disciplinary boundaries of sinology as traditionally conceived. Their essays may differ significantly in terms of the kinds of problems addressed, the methodologies applied, and occasionally the modes of presentation chosen, but they all share a common interest in the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* or other thematically related texts that are traditionally attributed to the “dawn” of Chinese philosophy during the Warring States period (475–221 BCE). And even if the title of the present volume suggests an “alignment of philosophical and philological perspectives”, this is an ideal to which this collection of essays subscribes rather than a promise it is actually able to realize. At best a first step toward this ideal, it aims to offer a representative survey of the variety of ongoing current research being carried out both on these texts and on the multifaceted problems they pose. Moreover, it brings together voices from Chinese and non-Chinese academia, i.e. from two all too often exclusive confines in the study of Early China.

The Eastern Hàn scholar Bān Gù 班固 (32–92 CE) classified the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* as belonging to the *míngjiā* 名家, conventionally translated as the “School of Names”.² This term, apparently coined by Sīmǎ Tán 司馬談 (d. 110 BCE) in the second century BCE, is conspicuously absent from pre-imperial sources.³

2 All remaining texts of this “school” that his *Hànshū* 漢書 (History of the Western Hàn Dynasty), the earliest relevant source at our disposition, lists under this rubric (‘Yìwénzhì’ 藝文志, p. 31–32) are either lost or have been proven to be compilations that do not predate the early medieval period (220–581 A.D.), cf. Graham 1956/7: 168. For a recent summary of textual studies on the *míngjiā*-texts see Jin 2015: 276–284, on the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, see pp. 280–283.

3 Scholars like Liáng Qǐchāo (Liáng 1936 [1902]), Hú Shì (Hú 1991 [1919], 1922), Wǔ Fēibāi (Wǔ 1983 [1949]) and Tán Jiēfū (Tán 1957) are responsible for the transfer of this originally bibliographical notion into a designation for a philosophical current of ancient Chinese thought which they first identified as a Chinese analogon of the Greek sophists and then, since Hú Shì, more generally (and in a less derogative sense) as a school of genuine Chinese logicians. On Tán’s specific view see sect. 2 of Ian Johnston and Wang Ping’s “Notes on the Relationship between the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* and the Dialectical Chapters of the *Mōzǐ*”, this volume.

Kidder Smith has convincingly argued that the meaning of *jiā* 家 in terms of a “philosophical” school that was associated with particular teachers, texts, and intellectual lineages is an anachronism even for Simǎ Tán’s time, let alone the Warring States period, and that it rather represents a reinterpretation by the very same Eastern Hàn scholars who mark the beginning of dynastic historiography.⁴ Possibly not least due to the lasting impact of this very tradition, many modern scholars up to the present day still treat the “School of Names” as a reality in pre-imperial China.⁵

The inventor of this term, Simǎ Tán 司馬談, has associated it with the concern for the relation between ‘names’ (*míng* 名) and ‘reality’ (*shí* 實)⁶ – that is, broadly speaking, with problems of language, logic, and their connection to reality. For this reason, it has been routinely related to the disciplines of logic and the philosophy of language adopted from the West since the early twentieth century.⁷ The *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* is a short text of less than 4,000 characters which consists of six chapters. Among them, the introductory ‘Jǐfǔ’ 跡府 (lit. Repository of Traces) is generally agreed to postdate the rest.⁸

While a majority of Chinese scholars accepts the extant *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* as an authentic pre-imperial text in its entirety, it is mainly due to the seminal work by A. C. Graham that large parts of the English-speaking sinological community today regard substantial parts of the received text as compilations dating from the early medieval period or even later (220–581 CE). In his influential 1956/7 study, Graham has gathered convincing evidence which suggests that three “chapters” (*piān* 篇)⁹ of the extant *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* are

4 Smith 2003: 130–131, 148–150. See also Nylan/Csikszentmihaly 2003.

5 For a recent book-length publication, though of posthumous and re-published articles, that adopts this view see Solomon 2013.

6 For a comprehensive study in English see Makeham 1994.

7 For an excellent discussion see Kurtz 2011: ch. 5, pp. 277–337.

8 Its compilation was traditionally attributed to the successors of Gōngsūn Lóng and dated to the early imperial period ensuing the Qín unification (Páng 1979: 1; Yáng 1981: 54; Asano 1990; Dǒng 1995: 102). Formal reasons like the use of Táng taboo characters rather speak in favor of a date of compilation in the 7th c. AD (Graham 1956/7: 172–173; Shěn 1992d: 502; Kubota 2003: 172–173).

9 The translation of the term *piān* 篇 is difficult, as it was used in the sense of textual unit, before its secondary meaning as “chapter” or “chapter section” was established around the 5th c. AD (Vittinghoff 1996: 168). The varying numbers of *piān* and *juàn* 卷 (“scroll/fascicle”) in bibliographical lists play a crucial role in Chinese studies on textual “authenticity” (*zhēn wěi* 真偽). Different counts of *piān* or *juàn* are taken as indicative of the existence of different versions of a text. For a critique of this practice see Karlgren 1929. For a case study on the *Guǐgǔzǐ* 鬼谷子, see Vittinghoff 1996: 167–169. For a more recent account on Chinese “authentication studies”, see Fischer 2008–2009.

“spurious”¹⁰ and that they were forged on the model of the so-called “dialectical chapters” of the *Mòzǐ* – i.e. the ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’¹¹ – which are among the very few other ancient Chinese texts dealing with the philosophy of language (among other topics).¹² Graham presents linguistic and philological evidence for their late compilation and ascribes to the alleged medieval imitators of the master only a truncated understanding of the Mohist original. Conversely, Graham has provided comprehensive interpretations of the remaining chapters, ‘*Báimǎ lùn*’ 白馬論 (Discourse on White and Horse) and ‘*Zhǐwù lùn*’ 指物論 (Discourse on Pointers and Things), which he considers to be “genuine”.¹³ Whether intentionally or not, Graham’s influential verdict has brought sinological work on the remaining chapters of the collection to a halt. This situation is similar to the case of the *Yīn Wénzǐ* 尹文子, another text treated in this volume, which is traditionally attributed to a Warring States debater and classified under *míngjiā* (“School of Names”) in the *Hànshū* 漢書 (History of the Western Hàn; first century CE). Dan Daor has gathered evidence suggesting a date of compilation no earlier than the third century CE.¹⁴ The detailed works of Graham and Daor have thus by and large confirmed age-old doubts about the authenticity of these texts that harken back well into the imperial period. Inadvertently, they have also contributed to the continued marginalization – at least in the anglophone academic discourse – of a large portion of the scarce textual witnesses of ancient Chinese views on the relation of language and reality.

It is important to stress that the consequent sinological negligence has affected texts that had already been marginalized for many centuries within the

10 The chapters Graham has identified as late forgeries are ‘*Jiānbái lùn*’ 堅白論 (his “Essay on Hard and White”), ‘*Míngshí lùn*’ 名實論 (Essay on Names and Actualities), and sections two and three of the ‘*Tōngbiàn lùn*’ 通變論 (Essay on Understanding Change).

11 Graham 1956/7: 157. “There is no unanimous external evidence for the existence of the “dialectical chapters” in pre-imperial sources. When the ‘*Tiānxià*’ 天下 (All-Under-Heaven) chapter of the *Zhuāngzǐ* describes the current situation among later Mohists, it states that while they “all recite Mò’s canon, their [respective] arts of contradicting [each other] are not the same (俱誦墨經，而倍謫不同相。). As the passage then mentions the topics of “hard and white” and “sameness and difference” prototypically associated with pre-imperial disputation, this short remark is commonly referred to the received ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’ which also deal with the rules of correct debate and argument. The *Jīnshū* (History of the Jin Dynasty) preserves the preface of a 3rd c. CE commentary on the *Mohist Dialectics* (*Mòbiàn* 墨辯), which describes the text as organized into ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’, a structural characteristic of the “dialectical chapters” of the received *Mòzǐ*. Therefore, this *Mòbiàn* is commonly identified with chapters 40–44 of the extant *Mòzǐ*. If this is true, the “dialectical chapters” would thus be attested for the 3rd c. CE.

12 Graham 1956/7: 147–148; 181.

13 Graham 1956/7: 147, 181.

14 Daor 1974: 12, 34, 37, 38.

Chinese tradition itself. Adversaries of debaters (*biànzhě* 辯者) like Gōngsūn Lóng happened to be the predecessors of the kind of Confucian orthodoxy which came to dominate the imperial period. The criticism of the “idle rhetoric” and “moral deficiency” of these specialists in eloquence in books like the *Mencius* perpetuated Gōngsūn Lóng’s bad reputation and that of the entire tradition he was associated with, which was considered representative of a group of “talkative sophists” who had little – if anything – substantial to say.

This state of affairs only changed after the eventual collapse of the imperial order in the early twentieth century. As the moralistic Confucian tradition was increasingly being blamed for the country’s weakness and backwardness, logic and epistemology were acknowledged as two indispensable prerequisites for the development of the natural sciences and, *a fortiori*, of a modern nation-state.¹⁵ Therefore, one important motive for studies of China’s intellectual traditions during the Late Imperial and Republican periods was the search for indigenous contributions to these disciplines, which had been ousted by two millennia of Confucian dominance. While early Chinese debaters like Gōngsūn Lóng were already associated with Western sophists in Meiji Japan,¹⁶ it was essentially the ‘Zhèngmíng’ 正名 (Correcting Names) chapter of the *Xúnzǐ* 荀子 and the Mohist ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’ – with their concern for problems of correct definitions, argumentation, and the relationship between language and reality – that were soon recognized as ancient Chinese texts dealing with questions of what in Western learning (*xīxué* 西學) was called “logic”. In contrast, the similarity between Gōngsūn Lóng and the Greek sophists, together with the depreciation of the “School of Names” inherited from the Confucian tradition, prompted pioneers of the study of logic in ancient Chinese texts – such as Liú Shīpéi 劉師培 (1884–1936),¹⁷ Zhāng Bǐnglín 章炳麟 (1869–1936),¹⁸ Liáng Qǐchāo 梁啟超 (1873–1929),¹⁹ and Wáng Guówéi 王國維 (1877–1927)²⁰ – to hesitate in accepting the role of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* in the development of logic in early China.

This only changed after Hú Shì 胡適 (1891–1962) reclassified Gōngsūn Lóng as a Mohist²¹ and once ensuing generations of experts in ancient Chinese logic,

¹⁵ Kurtz 2011: 8; Kurtz 2011: ch. 3, esp. 147–154.

¹⁶ The first traceable association of Gōngsūn Lóng with Greek sophists apparently goes back to the Japanese Buddhist scholar Matsumoto Bunzaburō 松本文三郎 (1869–1944) (See Kurtz 2011: 284).

¹⁷ Kurtz 2011: 292, 299.

¹⁸ Kurtz 2011: 303–304.

¹⁹ Kurtz 2011: 313.

²⁰ Kurtz 2011: 330.

²¹ Kurtz 2011: 349.

who were less burdened by age-old prejudices, undertook a less lop-sided approach to the text.²² It was in the aftermath of these developments, in the first half of the twentieth century, that studies on the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* in China began to thrive. In 1901–1902, at the very beginning of these radical historical changes, Alfred Forke (1867–1944), then an interpreter with a first degree in law working for the German consular services in Beijing, first presented the text to an English-speaking public.²³ By the early 1950s, Max Perleberg (1900–1972)²⁴ and Ignace Kou Pao-koh, S. J. (Gù Bǎogǔ 顧保鵠) (1915–2015)²⁵ published annotated translations of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*. These translations and the related secondary literature show that, during the first half of the twentieth century, the text had already attracted a considerable amount of interest, both within and outside China, among specialists from different fields, including philosophers and logicians, historians of Chinese philosophy and sinologists. As we have seen, just a few years later, A. C. Graham's 1956/7 study presented a strong case against the authenticity of most of the received *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*. While it is debatable whether this was due to the refutation of what he called the “spurious” chapters or rather on account of their intrinsic obscurity, the fact remains that subsequent research in both East and West tended to focus primarily on ‘Báimǎ lùn’ and ‘Zhǐwù lùn’.

As we have noted above, in contrast to Graham's pioneering philological exercise, most Western scholarship on the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* has adopted a broadly philosophical perspective on the text. Pertinent studies may be conveniently divided into two main approaches. The first can be traced back to Janusz Chmielewski's (1916–1998) pathbreaking series of articles “Notes on Early Chinese Logic” (1962–69),²⁶ which discussed the text from the perspective of formal logic and analytic philosophy. The second approach adopts an explicitly comparative vantage point, concentrating on the similarities and dissimilarities between the text and ancient Greek and Roman philosophy (see e.g. the extensive study by Jean-Paul Reding on the sophists in Greece and China, published in 1985).

Although of relatively limited influence in China – at least as far as philosophical studies on the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* are concerned – the logician and historian of philosophy Shěn Yǒudǐng, who discovered the eponymous set-theoretical paradox, also refuted the idea that the text could possibly be an early imperial or even pre-imperial work. In spite of the fact that he arrived at these conclusions independently from and for different reasons than Graham, the results

²² Kurtz 2011: 354.

²³ Forke 1901–2.

²⁴ Perleberg 1952.

²⁵ Kou 1953.

²⁶ Chmielewski 1962, 1963a, 1963b, 1966.

obtained by these two scholars largely coincide. Unlike Graham, Shěn mainly argues from the perspective of intellectual history, and he rejects the received text more or less wholesale. In Shěn's view, all the chapters were compiled during the Jin 晉 period (276–420 CE) and, with the sole exception of the short dialogue about 'right' and 'left' at the beginning of the extant 'Tōngbiàn lùn' (Discourse on Understanding Change), it contains no integral section representing early Chinese thought.²⁷ His results chime well with Graham's in their emphasis on the pivotal role played by the Mohist 'Canons' and 'Explanations' in the composition of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, and like his English colleague, he argues that the authors/compiler of the text have conspicuously misunderstood their Mohist source.

As we see it, both Shěn's and Graham's studies suffer from various shortcomings. Graham provides inconsistent renderings of core phrases and key terms, his grammatical analysis is sometimes rather loose, and his translations of the allegedly forged passages of the text tend to be rather casual. Shěn displays a rather uncritical stance towards the reliability of medieval sources for the dating of the text and has a tendency to jump to rash and rather speculative conclusions. On the other hand, both scholars undoubtedly deserve credit for having offered by far the most detailed analyses of the exceedingly thorny issue of the text's "authenticity". Moreover, the fact that they have reached almost identical conclusions not only independently from each other, but also on the basis of fundamentally different methodological approaches, certainly seems to strengthen their case. While it is obvious that their findings – if valid – are a serious challenge to the acceptance of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* as a source of Warring States thought, their consequences are in fact much more far-reaching.

We have noted above that most studies of the text are philosophical in nature, many of them striving to reach an adequate understanding of the entire collection, or at least of single chapters. It seems self-evident that one fundamental heuristic for evaluating the correctness, or at least the plausibility, of our reading of a particular text is the overall coherence of our interpretation. It also goes without saying that the applicability of coherence criteria rests on the assumption that the text indeed aims to convey a consistent intention, typically identified with that of "the author" – a notoriously elusive, often retrospectively "constructed" figure during the pre-imperial period.²⁸ If we assume that Graham and Shěn are right, most – or even all – of the chapters of the extant *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* would be compositions that incorporate and

²⁷ Shěn 1992c [1989]: 446; Shěn 1992d: 507.

²⁸ Cf. Steineck/Schwermann 2014; Schwermann 2014; Beecroft 2014; Richter 2013; Kern (in prep.).

imitate passages from early Chinese sources, such as the Mohist ‘Canons’ or the *Zhuāngzǐ* 莊子, as well as isolated fragments of unknown origin, and it would hardly seem plausible that the text allows for the reconstruction of any original intention whatsoever. It is therefore clear that the philological findings on the textual history of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* are of immediate relevance for its philosophical interpretation and its historical contextualization. Moreover, as Graham pointed out early on, it is a methodological *desideratum* to address philological and grammatical questions *independently* of our philosophical concerns. Whether or not this is feasible for layered texts of putative pre-imperial provenance, and especially in the case of texts as concise as the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, is another issue. In any case, it seems wise to keep in mind the complex conditions of our hermeneutical efforts.

Moreover, if we intend to reach a balance between a philological reconstruction and a philosophical interpretation of the text, we must also be aware of the antagonistic forces driving these two endeavors. Their aims are fundamentally different, more often than not diametrically opposite. Philology identifies and distinguishes different sections and layers of a text, which it then tries to critically attribute to different sources, authors, or periods, among other things. As this analysis advances, literally by “breaking up” and “loosening”, it dissects the texts under investigation and undermines their original appearance of unity. By contrast, as seen above, philosophy typically proceeds from the premise that the text can – and should – be read in a coherent fashion: only based upon this presupposition can we hope to arrive at a consistent interpretation. As plenty of examples of a happy marriage between philosophy and philology show, however, this dialectical opposition in no way excludes the possibility that parallel efforts in both fields will eventually succeed in leading us to a better understanding of the text, in terms of *both* its historical genesis (and *Sitz im Leben*) and its philosophical interpretation.

As for the former, both Graham and Shěn have emphasized the eminent role of the renaissance of the “School of Names” in medieval China. This is true not only for the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, but also for the Mohist ‘Canons and Explanations’ – that is to say, the main item of comparison. The heightened revival of interest in questions of language and logic in this period is attested not least by Lǚ Shèng’s 魯勝 famous “Preface” to his commentary on what he terms the “Mohist Dialectics” (*Mò biàn* 墨辯), commonly identified with the ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’.²⁹ Both Graham and Shěn invoke this short text to argue that not only would it have been possible, but in fact it was likely that someone might have

²⁹ *Jinshū* j. 914, 13–15, pp. 1539–1540.

engaged in the enterprise of “forging” a text on the basis of more or less well-understood chunks taken from the Mohist precedent.³⁰ Whether or not one follows their arguments, it is beyond doubt that the early medieval period in China was crucial for the transmission not only of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, but of the dialectical chapters of the *Mòzǐ* as well. That the third century had indeed seen the fabrication of “masters texts” (*zǐshū* 子書)³¹ claiming to originate in antiquity is indicated by the *Lièzǐ* 列子, a text which also contains palpable traces of Buddhist influence.³²

By the fourth century CE, Buddhism had gained prominence in educated lay circles, and eventually it came to dominate the intellectual scene in subsequent centuries. However, explicit references to the extant *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* are only attested as late as the seventh century CE, and both Graham and Shěn assume that it was only during this period that the received text took on its present form.³³ Trying to identify possible traces of our text in Buddhist sources, but also conversely finding Buddhist traces in the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, should therefore not be considered a moot undertaking *a priori*. That it is indeed worth taking the trouble to scrutinize Buddhist sources is highlighted by the fact that the first complete quotation from the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, which both records this very title for the text and cites the initial sentence of the extant ‘Míngshí lùn’ 名實論 (Discourse on Name and Actuality) chapter, appears in the preface to a sub-commentary on the writings of Sēng Zhào 僧肇 (374–414) by the Buddhist scholar–monk Yuánkāng 元康 (fl. 636).³⁴ In this context, moreover, it is worth considering that one of the oldest editions of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, widely held to be the most reliable,³⁵ was transmitted in the Daoist Canon (*Dàoàng* 道藏), an authoritative collection of the texts of a religious community.³⁶ This does not necessarily imply that the text was considered to be of any religious relevance. However, it shows that, in their competition with the Buddhists, who could rely on a seemingly inexhaustible

30 See Graham 1956/7: 180; and, e.g., Shěn 1992c [1989]: 446–447.

31 It is crucial to see that so-called “masters literature” flourished well into the early medieval period and that compositional principles of later texts do not essentially vary from earlier ones, on this cf. Tian 2006.

32 Graham 1960/1: 142; Barrett 1993: 300.

33 Graham 1956/7: 172–173; Shěn 1992d: 502.

34 Yuánkāng, *Sēng Zhào shū* 僧肇疏 (T 45, no. 1859, p. 116): “公孫龍子名實論云: 天與地, 其所產焉, 物也。” “The ‘Treatise on Name and Actuality’ in the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* (or: by Master Gōngsūn Lóng) says: “Heaven combines with earth. Whatever they produce in it (= this combination/themselves?) is a thing.”

35 Graham 1956/7: 169. This judgment goes back to Yán Kējūn 嚴可均 (1762–1843) (Hé 1967: 266). More recently, Kaji 1981 has provided a detailed argument that traces the version of the *Zhèngtōng Dàoàng* to the Daoist Canon of the Sòng dynasty.

36 For an outline of the *Dàoàng* see Schipper 2004.

influx of new and ever more sophisticated writings from India, the medieval Daoists tried to incorporate as many “autochthonous” texts as possible into their canon.³⁷ It seems useful to note that one of the seventh-century CE texts which repeatedly refers to texts attributed to Gōngsūn Lóng is the *Zhuāngzǐ* sub-commentary by Chéng Xuányīng 成玄英 (fl. 631–655). Chéng is a representative of the Daoist school of *chóngxuán* 重玄 (lit. ‘double darkening’), a variety of Daoism deeply indebted to the rhetoric of the scholastics of Buddhist *madhyamaka*.³⁸

In view of the flourishing of this doctrine in the seventh century, and given its predilection for paradoxical formulations, it is unsurprising that it is in this context that references to Gōngsūn Lóng multiply. It strikes us as by no means far-fetched, therefore, to speculate that it was precisely during this heyday of paradoxical formulations that the extant *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* was attested unequivocally for the first time. The uncertainties concerning the date and process of composition of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* thus strongly suggest that studies on the text would profit greatly from keeping a close eye on the almost 900 years of textual and intellectual history between the purported lifetime of Gōngsūn Lóng in the fourth–third centuries BCE³⁹ and the first firm evidence for the existence of our received text in the seventh century CE.⁴⁰ Regardless of the correctness of Graham’s and Shěn’s hypotheses, and even in view of the possibility that the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* – on the strength of some kind of new evidence – might eventually be proven to be a genuine

37 Cf. Schipper 2005: 18. Zhēn Luán 甄鸞 (535–566), author of the polemical work *Xiàodàolùn* 笑道論 (Treatise on Ridiculing Daoism), derides the practice of contemporary Daoists to include ever more ancient masters texts into their canon (point no. 36, “On Turning the masters into Daoist Books” [諸子為道書]), see *Hóngmíngjí* 弘明集, T22, no. 5103, fasc. 1, p. 86.

38 Assandri 2005; Kohn 1995; Liú 2008; Plassen 2002; Plassen 2015; On Chéng Xuányīng: Wáng 1989.

39 Biographical reconstructions draw on short passages in pre-imperial and early imperial texts like *Lǚshì Chūnqiū* 呂氏春秋, *Shǐjì* 史記, and others which give (partly conflicting) information about Gōngsūn Lóng’s place of birth and his encounters with datable rulers. With the exception of the short episode of Gōngsūn Lóng’s dispute at the court of the lord of Píngyuán 平原 (d. 251), which is included in the ‘Jǐfǔ’ chapter, and possibly the discussion about ‘hard and white’ which, however, is a topic generally associated with “debaters” in early sources, none of the topics discussed in the extant *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* is mentioned in these ancient sources. On the alleged biography of Gōngsūn Lóng see Qián 1934, Páng 1979. A revisionist view is presented in Shěn 1992b [1979]. For a survey in English see Indraccolo 2010: 21–46. For a historical sketch of the varying judgments on the debater see Kandel 1974: 1–34. For a critical view on the relationship between the “historical” Gōngsūn Lóng and the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* see Shěn 1992c [1989].

40 The earliest source to mention the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* along with the full titles of all extant chapters seems to be a certain *Nǐ Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ lùn* 擬公孫龍子論 (An Essay on the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*), dating from 672 AD, see, e.g., Shěn 1992d: 491–493, Graham 1956/7: 170–171: On an earlier quotation from the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* in a Buddhist commentary by Yuánkāng 元康 see fn. 35, p. 7, above.

product of the Warring States period, this widening of scope would seem to be an inevitable methodological requirement for the time being.

Still, as we have mentioned above, most studies on the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* are philosophical in nature. And it is clear that a *genuinely* philosophical interest in the text will often remain largely unaffected by the historical and philological concerns discussed so far. However, such approaches will only be convincing if they do not rely on what are essentially *historical* preconditions, such as the common assumption that the text is representative of late Warring States thought on language. Leaving the confines of the history of philosophy and going beyond the business of mere comparison, then, one might still legitimately ask whether the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* leads to any valuable insights at all. If modern analytic philosophy started, in a sense, with Bertrand Russell's (1872–1970) attempt to clarify a number of apparently irresolvable paradoxes going back to antiquity, might there be a prospect for a genuine dialogue of texts from the “School of Names” with analytic philosophy of the present day? To be sure, most essays in this volume deal with problems of textual and intellectual history, language use, and grammar. Others strive for a historically informed understanding of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* – or parts of it. Attempts to inquire into how this text could shed new light on problems in contemporary philosophy remain few and tentative. Yet we have good reason to think that precisely the kind of detailed and often preliminary studies that predominate in this volume will eventually establish the ground for a better-informed and hence more self-confident philosophical engagement.

The contributions to this volume are grouped thematically, according to the three broad categories of history, philosophy, and philology. It goes without saying that their boundaries are not clear-cut, nor are the categories themselves mutually exclusive or uncontested in a sinological context.⁴¹ They are merely descriptive and serve the practical purpose of facilitating the reader's orientation.

The section under the rubric of “history” gathers papers representative of the prevailing, “established” view of both the textual history and the interpretation of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* in present-day Chinese academia. Concentrating mainly on the foundational period of modern Chinese studies of the text, these contributions discuss some of the most relevant scholarship produced in twentieth-century China.

⁴¹ Of these academic disciplines, each have a peculiar history of their spread to and establishment in China. Still, it would seem to be a historicist fallacy to refuse their applicability to any of the scholarly practices, institutions, modes of argumentation etc. in premodern China. On a discussion on the processes of adoption of these practices and the problems of their use for premodern contexts in China see, e.g., the China-related contributions in Steineck et al. 2018 (esp. Sela 2018) (philosophy), Pollock et al. 2015 (philology), as well as Schmidt-Glintzer 2005 and Vogelsang 2007 (history).

In “The *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*: A Historical Overview”, Wang Ping and Ian Johnston give a comprehensive survey of early and pre-modern references to *Gōngsūn Lóng* and his eponymous text, from antiquity to the early twentieth century, and provide a concise summary of what can still be regarded as the standard, accepted view on such issues in China.

In their “Notes on the Relationship between the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* and the Dialectical Chapters of the *Mòzǐ*”, Johnston and Wang take up the problem of the relationship of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* to the Mohist ‘Canons’ and ‘Explanations’. They provide detailed documentation of the standpoints of some of the most influential specialists on these issues, such as Tán Jiěfū 譚戒甫 (1887–1974), Wǔ Fēibǎi 伍非百 (1890–1965), Wú Yùjiāng 吳毓江 (1898–1977), Móu Zōngsān 牟宗三 (1909–1995), and others, thus offering a larger historical context and background for the more radical, “iconoclastic” textual studies by Graham and Shěn, which feature prominently in this introduction.

Zhōu Chāngzhōng 周昌忠 is one of the pioneering scholars who, in the late 1970s, reinvigorated philosophical studies of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* in mainland China. In his paper “The ‘Discourse on the White Horse’: A Concrete Analytical Philosophy of Language – with a Coda on the Authenticity of the Received *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*”, he presents a summary of his interpretive approach to the text, which refers to and integrates both Kantian critique and analytic philosophy of language. His contribution concludes with comparative reflections on early Chinese philosophy of language and a defense of the traditional assumption of the authenticity of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* as a Warring States text.

Zhōu’s contribution, with its strong philosophical penchant, prepares the ground for the second part of the volume, which gathers papers subsumed under the title of “philosophy” and further divided into two subgroups. The first group collects papers discussing the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* from the perspective of contemporary analytic philosophy. The second consists of close readings of selected chapters, which are not necessarily committed to an analytical approach.

Fung Yiu-ming (Féng Yàomíng 馮耀明), in his “Reference and Ontology in the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*”, presents an outline of his interpretation of the text, which he develops from the perspective of modern analytic philosophy. Fung argues for the integrity and authenticity of the extant text and provides a comprehensive analysis including all the chapters of the received *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*.

In his “How *Gōngsūn Lóng*’s Double-Reference Thought in His “White Horse Not Horse” Argumentation Can Engage with Fregean and Kripkean Approaches to the Issue of Reference”, Bo Mou takes his interpretation of the “Discourse on White and Horse” as a vantage point for transcendental reflections on the problem of reference. Taking inspiration from the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, he tries to develop a position on reference that reconciles the extensionalist

approach highlighted by Kripke with the semantic view harkening back to Frege and Russell.

Dennis Schilling's "Place as a Category in the 'Treatise on Name and Reality' (*Míngshí lùn* 名實論)" develops a close reading of this chapter, focusing on the notion of 'place' (*wèi* 位). He highlights the innovative character of this concept in the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* and specifies its function in the peculiar theory of reference that is developed in *'Míngshí lùn'*.

Following a comprehensive survey of the different approaches to 'Zhǐwù lùn' (Discourse on Pointings and Things) across the ages, Liú Tǐshèng's 劉體勝 "A New Interpretation of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*'s 'Zhǐwù lùn' (Discourse on Pointings and Things) and 'Míngshí lùn' (Discourse on Names and Actualities)" presents his own detailed analysis of this notoriously difficult text. Unlike other interpretations, Liú emphasizes the crucial role of the term *wù* 物 'thing', which is considered largely unproblematic by most other scholars. Based on a detailed discussion of early and medieval sources, he reconstructs two verbal uses which he considers key for the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*: one in the sense of 'to name', the other meaning 'to create' or 'to render manifest'. While the former is pivotal for Liú's reading of 'Zhǐwù lùn', the latter proves essential for his interpretation of 'Míngshí lùn', for which he also provides a detailed analytical commentary.

Jiāng Xiàngdōng's 江向東 "A New Interpretation of 'Báimǎ lùn' (Discourse on White and Horse)" contributes a new translation of the "Discourse on White and Horse" based on an epistemological reading. In critical confrontation with the views of Féng Yǒulán 馮友蘭 (1895–1990), Móu Zōngsān, Láo Sīguāng 勞思光 (1927–2012), and Kirill Ole Thompson, Jiāng develops his own interpretation of the dialogue, which concentrates on the ontological arguments at its core.

The third part of the volume is dedicated to problems of "philology". It also branches into two groups, the first discussing problems of language and terminology from a linguistic and lexicostatistical approach, and the second dealing with intertextuality and its implications for questions of textual authenticity and philosophical interpretation.

In his "Logically Significant Words in the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*", Thierry Lucas presents statistical investigations of the (co-)occurrence of central, key logical terms across the various parts of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* in order to distinguish and identify different textual layers.

"Linguistic Affinities of the *Yīnwénzǐ* Text in the Light of Basic Corpus Data" by Lukáš Zádřapa resorts to a corpus-based approach in an attempt to draw conclusions regarding the plausible date of composition of the *Yīn Wénzǐ*. A detailed linguistic comparison with pre-imperial and early medieval texts suggests a decidedly late point in time. Zádřapa's close scrutiny of grammatical

and lexical peculiarities points to a promising way of reconstructing a relative chronology of the composition of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*'s various parts. Needless to say that the shortness and repetitiveness of the text also delimit the transferability of the proposed method.

Ernst-Joachim Vierheller's "Gōngsūn Lóng and the *Zhuāngzǐ*: On Classifying (Declassifying) Things ('Zhǐ [Qí] Wù Lùn' 指〔齊〕物論)" provides a detailed logical analysis of the crucial term *zhǐ* 指, which occurs prominently in the 'Qíwù lùn' chapter of the *Zhuāngzǐ*. Considering the usage of this term as a reference to Gōngsūn Lóng, Vierheller also provides an insightful new full-text translation of 'Zhǐwù lùn'.

In "Buddhist Murmurs? – Another Look at the Composition of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*", Rafael Suter argues in favor of Graham's and Shěn's claim of the spurious nature of at least parts of the received *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*. Looking for possible Buddhist traces and resonances in the received text, he draws a number of intriguing conclusions regarding the most plausible date for the text's compilation.

In spite of the plethora of delicate problems affecting both the philology and the philosophy of the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ* and of the other related texts discussed in this volume, and notwithstanding the vastly different approaches, assumptions, disciplinary methodologies, and backgrounds of the contributors to this volume, all of them share the ultimate aim of arriving at a more convincing – if not "correct" (正 zhèng) – interpretation of the text. It may well be the case that the dim and distant past of Chinese reasoning, as reflected in the *Gōngsūn Lóngzǐ*, is too remote and elusive to grasp in all of its facets. But to play on the figurative language of Hans-Georg Gadamer (1900–2002), even if the light of that remote Other should eventually turn out to be too faint to justify our hope for a hermeneutical fusion of its horizon with our own,⁴² the rich and varied interpretations presented in this volume illuminate different aspects of the text, each resembling one of the multiple, infinite colors of Eriugena's (c. 800–c. 877) famous peacock feather.⁴³

⁴² Gadamer 1997: 302.

⁴³ Cf. John the Scot 1976: 216.

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